

**Inscribing the City: Women, Architecture, and Agency in an
Indian Kingdom, Jodhpur 1750-1850**

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Abstract

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In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the urban landscape of the city of Jodhpur, capital of the kingdom of Marwar in western India, was reshaped by a slew of monuments sponsored by women patrons from its royal zenana. These patrons included queens, princesses, queen mothers, and concubines who lived under the strictures of the veil. A majority of the monuments they commissioned were waterbodies and Hindu temples, several of which still dominate Jodhpur's urban landscape. This corpus of monuments have never received scholarly attention—having been produced in a period of frenetic architectural activity that is nevertheless largely dismissed as a phase of 'decline' in evolutionary histories of architecture in the Indian subcontinent. A majority of the female patrons examined in this study are similarly unknown despite their prolific careers as builders.

Inscribing the City : Women, Architecture, and Agency in an Indian Kingdom, Jodhpur 1750-1850 is centred on two related sets of evidence produced by zenana women patrons in Jodhpur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the buildings they commissioned, many of which still survive, and an extensive archive of handwritten accounts books of the zenana from the same period. Through a detailed study of mainly these two parallel archives, this doctoral dissertation describes the circumstances and processes that enabled elite women in an early modern Indian city to intervene decisively on its urban landscape. The work outlines the various motives that propelled zenana women patrons to reshape Jodhpur's urban sprawl through building projects—from material and commercial interests to a desire to memorialise themselves—and examines the afterlives in the city of both prominent patrons and the monuments they built. The study pays close attention to the Jodhpur zenana, the institutional and spatial structures of which fundamentally shaped the lives of the patrons studied here. Issues of agency in architectural patronage are examined through a close examination of archival documents related to construction from nineteenth century Jodhpur. Architecture's relationship to the city, communities, and collective memory, are

explored through an examination of the career of one of the most prolific zenana patrons to emerge from the Jodhpur—the concubine Gulāb Rai.

This research project is the first study to systematically address the mechanisms through which architectural patronage unfolded in an early-modern Indian context. It does so by delving deep into the life worlds of a charismatic set of women patrons who lived on the ‘peripheries’ of South Asian art history, in a city on the edges of the Thar desert. The objective of the study is not only to excavate instances of women’s agency in the creation of art and architecture and the building of cities in India, but also to find ways to reconceptualise agency itself in an art historical context, away from fundamentally androcentric models centred solely on figures such as the artist or the patron. Agency is instead conceptualized in this study as a distributed phenomenon—as *distributed agency* (or *agencies*), which can be envisioned not as held by certain privileged subject positions but as diffused within dynamic networks of relationships that connected members of a community. Various chapters in this dissertation thus pay close attention to the processes and relationships through which acts of patronage unfolded in Jodhpur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, situating architectural production against transactional networks that bound zenana women to a range of individuals and groups active in Jodhpur in this period—local and itinerant communities of artisans and labourers, architects/head masons, the officialdom, religious sects, and myriad users of urban space among them. In doing so, this study challenges andro-centric, style-centred narratives about the histories of art in the region it studies, exemplified by terms such as ‘rajput architecture’ that reinforce the gender and caste hegemony of certain elite groups and erases the agency of others. *Inscribing the City* argues instead for a social-historical approach that relies on the creative use of sources to recover the productive labour and agency of women and lower caste artisanal and labouring communities in architectural production.

In addition to being a microhistory of architectural patronage as it unfolded in a largely unexplored region and period, this dissertation is an alternate history of the city of Jodhpur that illuminates the urban landscape from marginalised perspectives, paying attention to the dynamics of both gender and caste. As such, it is of interest to historians of art, architecture, women, and cities, and to the general reader interested in South Asia.

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List of Abbreviations

MMPP – Maharaja Man Singh Pustak Prakash, Jodhpur

RSAB – Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner

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Introduction

Folklore from Jodhpur tells the story of an eighteenth century queen and the monumental stepwell¹ she commissioned. The queen, Jai Kanwar Tunwar from Patan, Rajasthan, had arrived in the city upon her marriage to Maharaja Abhai Singh (r. 1724-49), the ruler of the kingdom of Marwar.² On Abhai Singh's death in 1749, Jai Kanwar's curtained palanquin passed through Jodhpur's streets taking the newly widowed queen on her very last journey, as she left the royal zenana in a procession to become *sati*.³ As the *sati* procession moved through the streets, it passed a monumental *jhālrā* or stepwell that the Tunwar queen had commissioned some years before. Observing the structure through peepholes on the cover of her palanquin, apparently for the very first time, Jai Kanwar the patron is said to have become very upset, lamenting to her retainers: "I had asked for the steps leading to the *jhālrā* to be kept low enough for animals to enter and drink water, but you have disobeyed me."⁴

Though unverifiable, this story of a veiled woman being escorted to her death expressing disappointment with an architectural project that she had commissioned and apparently sought to direct carefully raises many questions—about the processes of architectural patronage, the lives of women patrons, and the nature of urban spaces in early modern Jodhpur—that first inspired this study. It points us to the significant ways in which patrons from the royal *zenana*⁵ of Jodhpur seem to have shaped the architecture of their capital city while themselves remaining remote from it as veiled women. It also contains clues to the extent of involvement (or at least public perceptions of it) that royal women seem to have had in the design and construction of the structures they commissioned, and their motives in investing tremendous resources on them. The story also acts as an entry

¹ *Stepwells* are wells or square ponds in which a series of steps lead down to water level from one or multiple sides.

² Jodhpur is the capital of Marwar. The terms Marwar and Jodhpur are often used interchangeably, with the name of the capital city often standing in for the kingdom itself.

³ *Sati* refers to the custom whereby mainly upper caste Hindu women, in this case rajputs, self-immolate on the pyre of their husbands, thus achieving at death the status of *sati*—an ideal wife and woman worthy of veneration.

⁴ The Jodhpur-based historian Dr. Mahendra Singh Tanwar, a member of the same Tunwar Rajput clan as Jai Kanwar, narrated this account to me. Personal conversation, Jodhpur, December 2018. Both Tunwar and Tanwar are accepted as alternate spellings for the same name.

⁵ The royal zenana, a heavily guarded institution located in Jodhpur's citadel Mehrangarh, housed the women of the royal family. For more on the zenana, see Chapter 2.

point into questions around these themes that this research project sets out to answer: What were the circumstances that shaped the lives and activities of aristocratic women such as Jai Kanwar Tunwar in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur, enabling them to act as patrons of architecture? How do we conceptualize their agency in this context? What kind of structures were built through their patronage, how, why, by whom, and for whom? How have their acts of construction shaped Jodhpur's urban landscape, and the lives and collective memories of the communities inhabiting it? These and other questions are explored here across four chapters organised thematically. Before we delve into these themes, a word on the city of Jodhpur and its ruling elite.

Jodhpur and the Rathore Clan

Jodhpur, a walled city on the edges of the Thar Desert, was the capital of the kingdom of Marwar, ruled by a rajput clan⁶ called the Rathores. The Rathores had begun their ascent to power in the region around the thirteenth century. By the fifteenth century, their territories roughly occupied the southwestern parts of what is now the modern Indian state of Rajasthan. By this period, the Rathore chieftain Jodha had established himself as the leader of the clan with the title rao. His male descendants inherited clan leadership, forming a dominant subsidiary line by descent within the larger Rathore clan, called Jodha Rathores, who would later become the kings of Marwar. In 1459, Rao Jodha moved his headquarters from the town of Mandore to a new city that he named after himself—Jodhpur. In Jodhpur, the dynasty established a walled city with a formidable hill fortress called Mehrangarh at its centre.

Encompassing the desert and semi desert regions of Western India, Marwar was also known as *Mārudesh* or *Mārusthali* (the land of death). It was so named for its arid, unforgiving landscape, which was subject to frequent drought-induced famines. Sources of water were scarce and mainly rain-fed, including the sole river that ran through the region,

⁶ Rajputs (literally, sons of kings), the military-landowning class in Rajasthan and surrounding regions, are a minority that consider themselves a part of the *kṣatriya* (warrior) *varṇa* within the four-fold division of caste Hindu society envisioned by the *varṇāśramadharmā*, the Indian caste system. Though internally highly diverse, rajputs consider themselves a *jāti* or caste within the *kṣatriya varṇa*. Research conducted in northern India has traced rajput identity back to traditions of mercenary warfare and pastoralism in the region from within which some groups ascended to elite 'rajput' status around the late sixteenth century. Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 71–72.

called Luni. Though the land was cultivated in parts, and pastoralism was a significant part of the economy, the major driver for urbanization in the region was trade. Through the desert tracts of Marwar ran trade routes that connected the cities and fertile plains of medieval North and Central India to the busy ports of Gujarat and Sindh, and cities in the Deccan to those in the North West.⁷ By the seventeenth century, major towns in Marwar like Jodhpur, Pali, Merta, or Nagaur, were famed trading centres where commodities were exchanged and merchant communities congregated. Rajput dynasties such as the Rathores grew in power by securing the trade routes that ran through their territories and taxing them, first directly, and later under the imperial authority of the Mughals. Marwar accepted Mughal suzerainty under Emperor Akbar in the last decades of the sixteenth century and remained a part of the empire until the end of the eighteenth century.

As they accumulated power in the early days of the dynasty, the Rathores' administrative system was based on the idea of brotherhood (*bhāi-baṃdh*⁸) between members of the clan. As the clan conquered more territories, chieftains such as Rao Jodha assigned parcels of their expanding domain as estates (*ṭhikānā*) to male relatives from the within the clan to administer, keeping only the capital and chosen regions under direct rule. These relatives of the ruler thus became intermediary chiefs (*ṭhākurs/sardārs*) who accepted the leadership of Rao, but ruled their own territories independently. This decentralized system also incorporated allied chiefs outside the Rathore clan under a system of clientship (*cākri*), whereby they received estates in return for service rendered in times of battle.⁹ Under a horizontal administrative system based on *bhāi-baṃdh*, the Rathore *sardārs* treated the Rao headquartered in Jodhpur as *primus-inter-pares* or first-among-equals. In turn, the Rao depended on the *sardārs'* support to retain his position as chief.¹⁰ In fact, the anointment ceremony of a new Rao was conducted by the *sardārs*. The *bhai-baṃdh*-based system changed under Mughal rule. As successive Rathore Raos in Jodhpur usurped more

⁷ Tanuja. Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 49.

⁸ Norman P. Ziegler, "Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 253. The term has also been interpreted as *bhāi-bant*, meaning division among brothers. See Ramya Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan," in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 52.

⁹ Ziegler, "Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," 256.

¹⁰ G. D. Sharma, *Rajput Polity: A Study of Politics and Administration of the State of Marwar, 1638-1749* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977), 5.

power and territories in the course of their incorporation into the Mughal Empire, they sought to transform what was once a horizontal relationship with the *sardārs* based on hereditary clan membership and equality among brothers into a vertical monarchical arrangement contingent upon on service (*cākri*)-based contracts. Such a relationship replicated the Jodha Rathores' own contract with the Mughal Empire. The vertical consolidation of power by Rathore chiefs in Jodhpur in this period is reflected in the monarchical titles—*rājā* (king) and *mahārājā* (great king)—that they assumed in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the approval of Mughal emperors. Rathore kings in this period were able to hold on to their thrones with the force and legitimacy bestowed by imperial Mughal authority. This meant that they were less dependent on cooperation from their *sardārs* and thus more determined to suppress their assertions of equal status.¹¹

Apart from *bhāi-baṃdh*, with its association to clan lands held in common, another important unit of identification for any rajput male was his *sagā*, composed of relatives acquired through marriage. The rulers of Jodhpur contracted polygynous marriages with rajput families outside their *gotra* (*gotra* is a patrilineal kin group based on a common male ancestor within which marriage is forbidden; all the Rathores belonging to one *gotra*). A circle of such politically expedient marital alliances with other clans outside Marwar acted as a counterbalance to the power of local *sardārs*, providing access to military support and resources outside the Rathore chief's immediate territory and inherited networks when the need arose. As the prestige of the Jodha Rathores rose with the expansion of territories, they were able to contract marital alliances with powerful royal rajput lineages in the region, such as the Sisodiyā clan of Mewar. Many of the zenana women patrons in this study arrived in Jodhpur as brides received by Rathore kings through marriages contracted with other rajput clans, while others reached positions of power and influence in the zenana as concubines.

The Zenana Women of Jodhpur

The women patrons at the centre of this study were members of Jodhpur's royal zenana, which was both an architectural entity housed within Jodhpur's citadel, Mehrangarh, and a royal institution meant to safeguard and cater to the needs of the female members of the

¹¹ Ziegler, "Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," 257–58.

ruling family. The customs of the rajputs forbid marriage between members of the same *gotra*. Thus, the rulers of Marwar obtained their spouses from other rajput clans that ruled Western and Central India, both from among families of *ṭhākurs* ruling small principalities (*ṭhikānā*) within and outside Marwar, and from among more powerful royal lineages ruling neighbouring kingdoms, such as the Kachwāhās of Amber, the Sisodiyās of Mewar, or the Hāḍās of Kota-Bundi. Some of the female patrons we will examine who were Jodhpur’s queens, queen mothers, or princesses (by marriage) were thus born outside the city, and arrived in the zenana through marriage alliances that the Rathores contracted with other houses.¹² Others, including some of the most prolific patrons examined here, came from the ranks of concubines (*pardāyats, pāsvāns*). These were non-Rajput women drawn from communities lower in the social hierarchy set by the caste system than rajputs (but not so low as to be deemed ‘untouchable’) who were drawn into conjugal relationships with Rathore Maharajas through the institution of concubinage. Rathore princesses were also among prominent patrons of architecture from the zenana. Women patrons also came from the ranks of laywomen who were attached to the royal family as wet-nurses (*dhāī*).¹³ Due to a paucity of sources on the lives of *dhāīs*, this study focuses primarily on the concubines, queens, queen mothers, and princesses of the zenana and their patronage of architecture in the city. Since all of these figures spent a considerable part of or the entirety of their time in Jodhpur in the royal zenana and led lives defined to a large extent by their membership of this institution, I refer to them together as ‘zenana women’ for ease. In the course of their lives, zenana women patrons commissioned architectural structures both within and outside Jodhpur. The monuments that they raised within the limits of the walled city of Jodhpur and issues surrounding their patronage, creation, and use form the primary focus of this study.

Jai Kanwar Tunwar’s stepwell or *jhālṛā*, referred to in Jodhpur as *Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā* (the Tunwar queen’s stepwell), with a reference to which this chapter began, is among the earliest extant structures in Jodhpur that can be reliably attributed to a zenana woman patron. However, there is evidence that royal women were involved in commissioning

¹² Marriages were central to the establishment of political alliances between Rajput families, and were often used as the means to settle old scores through the exchange of bodies (for example, a bride was given as amends for a life taken in the past) and to gain access to new territories through the establishment of matrimonial ties. See Ziegler, 261–63.

¹³ For a discussion of available information on *dhāīs* and other individuals attached to the zenana as patrons, see Chapter 2.

architectural structures, primarily waterbodies, as early as the mid-fifteenth century, when the wife of the city's founder Rao Jodha is believed to have commissioned a tank called Rāṇīsar¹⁴ (the queen's tank) next to Jodhpur's citadel, Mehrangarh. Apart from a handful of early structures, a majority of the material and textual evidence for queens, queen mothers, concubines, and princesses of Jodhpur acting as patrons of architecture that we now have access to dates to the period right after Jai Kanwar Tunwar, from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.¹⁵ For this reason, this work focusses largely on this period. Archival records from this time document architectural commissions made within and around the walled city by a large number of zenana women. These buildings range from mammoth water tanks and towering temples to small shrines and stepwells tucked away in quiet streets. Several zenana women patrons commissioned multiple structures. Most early zenana women patrons chose to commission waterbodies such as stepwells and tanks, though temples increasingly begin to dominate starting in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Many of the monuments women patrons raised in Jodhpur of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries now lie hidden, likely to be missed by all except those who come seeking them. A large percentage of structures that we find references to in archival records, especially those sponsored by concubines, are no longer extant, having been driven into the ground as other buildings took their place or swallowed by garbage and debris in Jodhpur's march into the twenty first century. However, some, like the massive Gulāb Sāgar tank or the Kunjbihārījī temple, both commissioned by the eighteenth century concubine Gulāb Rai, or Jai Kanwar Tunwar's *jhālra* nearby, are imposing structures that still form major landmarks at the heart of the walled city.

The corpus of buildings commissioned by zenana women patrons from Jodhpur in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as they now survive, embedded in the life of the city, and an extensive archive of related handwritten Marwari language records (*bahīs*) of the Jodhpur zenana, also dating to this period, together form the primary sources for this study. The themes covered in this book have emerged from evidence assembled mainly

¹⁴ Rāṇīsar is still extant and supplies water to the Jodhpur fort, Mehrangarh. It is also used as a water source by Brahmins and other upper caste Hindu groups settled around the fort in the old city quarters known as Brahmpuri.

¹⁵ See Appendix 1.

through an analysis of these two parallel archives, supplemented by other sources.¹⁶ These sources have been examined within a theoretical framework, which, though rooted in art historical training, is heavily inflected by my readings on gender, caste, and transculturality. The theoretical frameworks and ideological standpoints that guide this work, as well as some of the terminology used are examined in sections that follow.

Great Matrons? Women and Patronage in Art History

In 1972, Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, USA, organised an exhibition titled ‘Old Mistresses: Women Artists of the Past’. The title, as the organisers explained, alluded to “...the unspoken assumption in our language that art is created by men. The reverential term ‘Old Master’ has no female equivalent; when cast in its feminine form, ‘Old Mistress’, the connotation is altogether different, to say the least.”¹⁷ One is confronted with a similarly entrenched bias when using the word ‘patron’. Now commonly understood to mean a donor, financier, or client, the word derives from the Latin word *pater*, meaning father. Along with that of the artist, the figure of the (male) patron has a long history in art history, starting with Giorgio Vasari’s valorisation of Lorenzo de’ Medici in his biography of Michelangelo. As Holly Flora writes in her work on patronage, the approaches of Vasari and the nineteenth century Swiss art historian Jacob Burckhardt set the tone for a spate of studies in the early twentieth century that elevated the patron of art to iconic status, often at the cost of artists.¹⁸ This approach evolved through the years to account more fully for the agency of artists and even audiences in the creation of an artwork and its meaning. In the last few decades, the term patron has also begun to be widely applied to women. In fact, the study of ‘female patrons’ has become an established branch of research, especially within scholarship on medieval Europe, particularly ‘renaissance’ Italy, where Jaynie Anderson, Catherine King, and Sheryl E. Reiss, among others, have laid the foundations of a flourishing field.¹⁹ The wealth of

¹⁶ Sources are discussed at the end of this chapter.

¹⁷ A Gabhart and E. Broun, Walters Art Gallery Bulletin, vol. 24, no. 7, 1972, quoted in Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, 6.

¹⁸ Holly Flora, “Patronage,” *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 207–18.

¹⁹ Jaynie Anderson, ed., *Women patrons of Renaissance art: 1300 - 1600*, Renaissance studies (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996); Catherine E. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy, C. 1300-1550* (Manchester University Press, 1998); Sheryl E. Reiss and David G. Wilkins, eds., *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy* (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2001). See also, Elizabeth A. Sutton, ed., *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands, 1500-1700*, Visual and Material Culture, 1300-1700 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019); Susan Bracken, ed., *Women Patrons and Collectors*, Collecting and Display (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); Cynthia Miller Lawrence, *Women*

scholarship that has been produced on European women as patrons has had an impact on scholarship on other geographic areas, most notably inspiring a handful of similar studies by historians working on the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal empires, whose work on the subject is especially relevant to this project.²⁰ This range of scholarship centred on women as patrons has claimed a place for pre-modern women in art history as influential patrons, compensating for their conspicuous absence for the most part as artists and architects. However, even as many of the underlying androcentric assumptions behind early uses of the term 'patronage' have been questioned through this historiography, the word 'patron' itself has retained its hold, posing a problem of terminology and of entrenched disciplinary bias that those who seek to study women's roles in artistic production need to reckon with.

The closest feminized alternatives to the term patron are 'matron' (which has connotations that mirror that of 'old mistress') or 'patroness' (which merely means female patron). Some scholars have chosen to sidestep the issue by coining 'matronage' as an alternative.²¹ However, in addition to reaffirming a false gender binary, this cosmetic change does little to question the disciplinary foundations of the field known as art history that continuously reproduce narratives that privilege archetypal male heroes. The fundamental androcentric nature of terms of reverence such as 'patron' and 'master' is only an extension of the androcentrism of art history, which is implicit even in neutral categories we routinely use, such as 'artist'.²² As Griselda Pollock writes in *Whither Art History*: "the discipline of Art History systemically produces an androcentric and exclusivist canon as its (desired) effect. A selective canon is secured through the already gender-freighted terms "art/ artist," whose apparently unmarked neutrality disguises the appropriation and occupation of these terms

and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Stefanie Solum, *Women, Patronage, and Salvation in Renaissance Florence: Lucrezia Tornabuoni and the Chapel of the Medici Palace*, Visual Culture in Early Modernity (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2015).

²⁰ Examples include Ruggles, *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*; Gavin Hambly, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety* (Basingstoke: Mcmillan, 1998). Afshan Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India: The Piety and Patronage of Jahanara Begum* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017).

²¹ Ellison Banks Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites," in *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 91–121; Felicity Graham, "Art, Gender, and the Renaissance: Where My Matrons At? – Part 2: Take Me To Church," *Burning Man Journal*, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://journal.burningman.org/2016/03/philosophical-center/tenprinciples/art-gender-and-the-renaissance-where-my-matrons-at-part-2-take-me-to-church/>.

²² Griselda Pollock, "Whither Art History?," *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 1 (2014): 9–23.

by a geopolitically, socially, and ethnically privileged masculinity.²³” It is this disciplinary framework of *art history* that this work ultimately seeks to swim against, by producing a *history of art* (among many possible histories) that challenges the dominance of an ethnically privileged masculinity—in this case that of the rajput—in the context of architectural production in Jodhpur between mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

To return to the problem of terminology, faced with a minefield of terms to denote agency exercised through sponsorship of art and architecture, I have chosen to retain the word patron, qualified in this book as ‘woman patron’ or sometimes as ‘zenana patron.’ I use these ill-fitting terms much in the same way that the curators of the Baltimore exhibition used ‘old mistress’—in the hope that it will create a productive tension throughout the work which will consistently make the deeply entrenched androcentric framework of the discipline of art history visible and thus possible to resist. I am also partly reassured in the understanding that this book as a whole works to diminish some of the hushed reverence attached to the androcentric term ‘patron’, replacing it with an expanded definition of what constitutes agency in art production.

The Concept of Style through a Transcultural Lens

The dominant mode of writing and teaching art history across the world today is one predicated on the concept of style and stylistic difference as an essential aspect of finished works of art including architecture. As a result, most students of art history inherit a procession of stylistic categories using which all the art of the world is ordered, forming a veritable tree of art. Different styles and their substyles split from the tree trunk to form ever smaller branches variously named after periods, places, ethnicities, and dynasties—Renaissance, Baroque, or Rococo in European Art and Gupta, Gandhara, Chola, Mughal in Indian Art (many come with attendant sub-categories—for example, northern Baroque or late Mughal). This classificatory regime based on perceived formal qualities of art works has its origins in turn of the twentieth century writings of European, especially German-speaking scholars that form the bedrock of the discipline of art history. Prime among them is Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), a Swiss art historian and the author of *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Principles of Art History, 1915). The Wölfflinian model, which envisions the

²³ Pollock.

development of artistic styles over time, arose as a response to what Wölfflin and an allied group of formalist art historians in fin-de-siècle Vienna saw as the dominance at the time of an approach to art history that privileged philological and historical sources (“extra-artistic documents”) related to an artwork above the object itself.²⁴ The formalist method they proposed was based on the intuitive experience of the art object itself, which with training would enable one to delineate its stylistic characteristics through a process of comparison. This approach to art was developed further in the work of other art historians who followed them.

Monica Juneja in her essay “‘A Very Civil Idea ...’ Art History, Transculturation, and World- Making – With and Beyond the Nation.” traces art history’s style-based evolutionary classificatory regime as it emerged in the work of Wölfflin and his contemporaries back to the establishment of ethnological collections amassed from across the world in German-speaking regions at the turn of the twentieth century. Shaped by their encounter with artefacts streaming in from the colonies, European scholars in this period sought to remake art history as a quasi-scientific discipline that could encompass art from regions far beyond Western Europe.²⁵ They sought to describe a *Weltkunstgeschichte* (world art history) by drawing on classifications of people (*völker*, literally people, but also standing for race and nation) and cultures set out by the discipline of ethnology. Such classificatory regimes simultaneously emphasised cultural difference and the discrete, internally undifferentiated nature of different ‘world cultures’ which ranged from the ‘savage’ to the ‘civilised’. As this evolutionary model of world cultures, of which art became the aesthetic domain, was replicated in art history, the concept of style arose as a convenient tool to “coordinate and stabilize mobility and metamorphoses of forms.”²⁶ A reductive understanding of culture—one that sees the culture of a demarcated region or people as a static, homogenous, bounded unit—is thus elemental to notions of style and stylistic difference. Such an understanding of culture has been most effectively challenged in the last decade by the field of transcultural studies, which posits a fundamentally processual understanding of culture that draws attention to the dynamic processes through which cultural artefacts emerge in

²⁴ Daniel Adler, “Painterly Politics: Wölfflin, Formalism and German Academic Culture, 1885-1915,” *Art History* 27, no. 3 (2004): 431–56.

²⁵ Monica Juneja, “‘A Very Civil Idea ...’ Art History, Transculturation, and World- Making – With and Beyond the Nation,” *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 81, no. 4 (2018): 461–85.

²⁶ Juneja.

local contexts within circuits of exchange.²⁷ The concept of transculturality forms the basis of Juneja's critique of style.

Transculturality first emerged in the work of Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who, in his 1940 book *Cuban Counterpoint* used the term 'transculturation'²⁸ to describe the transformations that migrant cultures underwent in Cuba. Many decades later, German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch was the first to use transculturality to critique bounded notions of culture.²⁹ However, Welsch saw transculturality purely as an aspect of modernity, ignoring the fact that human history in most ages and places has been defined by constant mobility and contact with the 'other'. In 2013, Monica Juneja offered a more comprehensive definition of the concept, stating:

"The discursive category of "culture," as it emerged in the social sciences in tandem with the modern nation was premised on the notion that life worlds of identifiable groups were ethnically bound, internally cohesive, and linguistically homogeneous spheres. Culture, applied as a conceptual category to societies, past and present, invariably existed in tension with unruly and contradictory trends generated by mobility and extended contacts that have characterized regions and societies over centuries. The terms "transculture/transculturality" are an explicit critique of this notion, for the prefix "trans" enables emancipation from the concept."³⁰

The emancipation that transculturality offers from bounded notions of culture enables us to question the epistemic foundations of disciplines such as art history whose categories, most prominently that of style and stylistic development, stem from such notions. Juneja's critique of style is outlined in her essay "*A Very Civil Idea*": *Art History and World-Making – With and Beyond the Nation*. In it, she argues that the evolutionary mode of art history centred on style "implies a scheme that is artificially maintained by attending to a geographic location as self-contained, and by suppressing the plurality of agency and the circulation of objects, forms, and practices". Such a scheme inevitably "subsumes experiences of cultural braidedness under the taxonomic categories of 'influence',

²⁷ Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna, "Understanding Transculturalism," in *Transcultural Modernisms* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 25.

²⁸ Fernando Ortiz, Harriet De Onís, and Bronislaw Malinowski, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 97–98.

²⁹ Wolfgang Welsch, "Transkulturalität. Zur Veränderten Verfassung Heutiger Kulturen," in *Hybridkultur. Medien, Netze, Künste*, ed. Irmela Schneider and Christian W. Thomsen (Cologne: Wienand Medien, 1997), 67–90.

³⁰ Juneja and Kravagna, "Understanding Transculturalism," 24–25.

'borrowing', or 'transfer.'"³¹ This analysis of modern art historical writing rings painfully true for anyone trained in the discipline, which though it originated in Europe, carried its premises across the world, especially to colonial/newly-post-colonial societies where they formed the basis of narratives of cultural uniqueness that were articulated both because of and in response to colonial encounters.³²

In her essay "Style is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again" Svetlana Alpers delineates the establishment of a normative mode of analysing all art, hinged on style and iconography, that was established through the works of art historians such as Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) and E.H. Gombrich (1909-2001) who followed Wölfflin.³³ In her history of style, Alpers notes how a Wölfflinian understanding of style as something intrinsically possessed by a harmonious, unified, and 'already made' art object came to be crowned as the normative mode through which all art was analysed in the work of Gombrich and Panofsky. This narrow vision of style sidestepped rival processual understandings of the concept that put art works in relation to viewers and makers, and thus always in the process of being made, as put forth by Alois Riegl (1858-1905), the Viennese art historian and the keeper of textiles at the Vienna Museum of Arts and Crafts.³⁴ Alpers argues that in the former understanding of art, a false dichotomy is built between a period style and the individual style of an art object. The incongruity between an object and the assumed unified style of a period of culture, creates an instability that is then explained away by formulations such as 'stylistic decline', or hybridity engendered by 'influences' from an alien style. Crucially, in her work, Alpers notes how ideas of style and stylistic categories first developed as a way to analyse the 'art object' within the specific context of studies on Italian renaissance art, pointing out its unsuitability to the task of interpreting art produced in the same period by the Dutch artists she studies. "Questions about style and iconography are appropriate for Italian art, but we need questions that are appropriate for all art," Alpers

³¹ Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...' Art History, Transculturation, and World- Making – With and Beyond the Nation, 266"

³² Juneja. See also Parul Dave Mukherji, "Whither Art History? Whither Art History in a Globalizing World," *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 96, no. No. 2 (June 2014): 151–55.

³³ Svetlana Alpers, "Style Is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Pennsylvania USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 95–117.

³⁴ Alpers.

states. “How can one conduct a study of all art using tools and assumptions developed in the service of one?”³⁵

In her work on Dutch artists, Alpers has proposed a ‘modal’ way of looking at art. Such an approach is circumstantial, situating art in wider socio-cultural processes, rather than within the schemes of a grand stylistic fiction. As Alpers writes in “Style Is What You Make It”, “In taking on a modal way of thinking we realistically link the maker, the work, and the world and leave the fiction of the stylistic problematic to be just that—one of the many modes in which man makes meaning of his experience.”³⁶

In the last decades of the twentieth century, as departments of art history began to be established the world over, the Wölfflinian model of style-based instruction had been transported to all manners of contexts, becoming the dominant mode of making sense of the history of art.³⁷ Pedagogical tools developed by formalist proponents of style, such as the use of image projections to help students differentiate and identify the nuances of different period or regional styles visually and intuitively, are the primary mode of art historical instruction in classrooms across the world even today. My own Masters-level training in art history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi in 2012-14 was centred on the style and iconography-based approach, which translated to teaching methods that emphasised the ability of students to recognise and categorise works of art into styles, stressing connoisseurship and a grasp of chronology.³⁸ My subsequent experiences in the field as a museum professional, both in India and in Germany, has demonstrated to me that more than a century after “Principles of Art History” was published, and despite a rich range of scholarship that has questioned the usefulness of style and iconography-centric approach, it remains the dominant prism through which professional art historians across the world assess and interpret works of art drawn from across the globe. Such assessments are often carried out in indirect or direct service of the

³⁵ Alpers.

³⁶Alpers. See also the introduction to Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³⁷ See Mukherji, “Whither Art History? Whither Art History in a Globalizing World.” For a brief outline of the history of Indian art history with its twin legacies of colonialism and cultural nationalism.

³⁸ Mukherji.

art market.³⁹ The limitations of a style-centred approach to art, especially architecture, was laid bare for me as I sought to draw up the contours of an art historical study that examined architectural production not from the perspective of buildings ‘already-made’ but through the historical processes that went into creating them, inflected as they were by the dynamics of caste and gender in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur. As anyone attempting to explore such perspectives within ‘Indian Art History’ soon realises, the academic obsession with fictional accounts of stylistic progression, alongside the primacy given to figures such as artist, patron, or architect, all coded male and elite by default, are maintained at the cost of telling a complex social history of art. What is lost in the process is a history of art that accounts not only for the dynamics of caste and gender, but also the constant mobility of people, things, and ideas across assumed geographical or ethnic boundaries, the simultaneous establishment of collaboration and co-production alongside resistances and divergences, and the exercise of agency by multiple individuals and groups within networks of circulation and production. Moreover, by imposing time-coded, period-bracketed stylistic categories on artefacts, we also do them the disservice of fixing them into time capsules. This is especially stark in the case of architecture, where such an approach amounts to a refusal to view living monuments— such as the ones examined in this study—as contemporary structures that are part of the daily life of cities and shape urban communities in myriad ways, even as they themselves are transformed and reshaped through continuous use, reuse, restoration, and even neglect.

The limitations of a style and iconography-based art historical approach posed an impediment to my attempts to tell a history of architectural production in Jodhpur that pays attention to the social and cultural formations and processes underlying it. It is here that Juneja’s and Alpers’ critiques of style, both of which, despite differences, propose alternate modes of analysis that pay attention to processes and specificities of location opened a way forward, allowing for a rethinking of the epistemic foundations of the discipline, and for a reimagination of *Art History* as multiple and particular, if connected, *histories of art*.

³⁹ As Svetlana Alpers has argued, it is often the need for “discriminating possession”, in other words, the art market, which drives stylistic placement of individual works. Alpers, “Style Is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again,” 139.

Style, Continued: How Rajput is 'Rajput Architecture'?

Stylistic categories are undoubtedly a useful way to conceive of and make sense of art objects in their historic progression. This often makes it easy to forget that the concept itself is a fiction—a tool or lens that art historians employ to construct coherent narratives out of disparate works of art. A style-dominated art history that we have inherited is one of many exclusions and erasures. What we lose when we overemphasise style in our reading of artefacts, especially architecture, can be demonstrated by an analysis of a term commonly used to describe the monumental architecture of regions in and around the modern Indian state of Rajasthan of which Jodhpur is a part. Under the established style-based classificatory regime of Indian art history, the architecture of this region, including the corpus of buildings considered in this study, would come under the rubric of what is known as 'rajput architecture' or 'rajput art', one of the sub-branches that make up the tree of the world architectural styles. The term 'rajput' (sons of kings) refers to a large and internally stratified endogamous caste group or *jāti* within the Indian caste system whose elite members, such as the Rathores of Jodhpur, established dominance over a region that came to be known in British colonial India as 'Rajputāna'—literally the land ruled by rajputs. Rajput claims of their divinely ordained and ancient royal lineage are elaborated in mythic dynastic histories of ruling clans such as the Rathores that trace their ancestry back to various Hindu deities. Compilations of such genealogies in the form of dynastic histories called *khyāt* and *vigat* composed for rajput patrons by local bards began to appear around the seventeenth century. Among other factors, scholars associate this emergence of genealogies and dynastic histories with the regional rajput elites' contact with the Mughals, who placed great value on such claims of pure and royal descent.⁴⁰

In his work on North India, Dirk Kolff has traced the historical origins of rajput group identity back to traditions of mercenary warfare and pastoralism in the region. According to Kolff, the term rajput was "first used to denote various individuals who achieved such statuses as 'horse soldier', 'trooper', or 'headman of a village'" and claimed association with a kingly line. It soon became a generic term for the military and landed class as a whole. Some groups from this class ascended to elite royal 'rajput' status in Rajasthan around the

⁴⁰ Norman P. Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra: A Study in the Evolution and Use of Oral Traditions in Western India," *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 133.

late sixteenth century.⁴¹ In her work on Rajasthan, Ramya Sreenivasan has noted that the process of ‘rajput *jāti* (caste) formation’ continued into the seventeenth century. The boundaries of this *jāti* identity, which were inherently unstable and porous even in this period, progressively crystallised through the century as a concept of ‘purity’ in descent began to be touted as a prescriptive norm by the authors of rajput genealogical texts.⁴² An elite rajput identity, articulated in terms of an endogamous *jāti* identity based on pedigree and pure descent in such genealogical narratives was embraced by the elite patrons of these texts. These articulations of a purity-based *jāti* identity took on new shades of meaning as these accounts were interpreted by orientalists—prime among them Captain James Tod—under colonial rule in the nineteenth century. As Ramya Sreenivasan notes, Tod, who interpreted these narratives ahistorically and from a European Romantic perspective, considered rajputs an ethnic group and a nation with intractable links to their then territorial holdings. As elite rajputs internalised colonial versions of their history, Tod’s assignment of ethnic and national status to the group transformed and strengthened their own perceptions of themselves as a nation. Thus, in the nineteenth century the ruling rajput elite imbued a “primal and transcendent ‘national’ identity” linked to their hold over territories they claimed as inalienably theirs.⁴³ A key component of this self-definition and one that has acquired great importance in post-independent India is the idea that rajput kings (such as Mahārāṇa Pratāp) had valiantly resisted Muslim rule on the subcontinent in defense of Hindus.⁴⁴ An idea of exemplary rajput resistance was held up even as the more dominant trend of pragmatic collaboration and filial ties between various rajput dynasties and the Mughal Empire was underplayed or denied entirely.⁴⁵

The above recounting of the very recent origins of a collective rajput identity is essential to deconstructing the dominant category of a distinct ‘rajput style’, variously

⁴¹ Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, 71–72.

⁴² Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India, c. 1500-1900* (University of Washington Press, 2017), 139–45; Sreenivasan, “Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan.”

⁴³ Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 144–46.

⁴⁴ Renu Bahuguna, “James Tod’s Portrayal of the Life and Deeds of Rana Pratap: A Critical Examination,” 2021, 12.

⁴⁵ Rajputs and Mughal intermarried frequently. These alliances were one-sided, involving the marriage of Rajput women to Mughal princes rather than vice versa. Several Mughal emperors were sons of rajput princesses, and thus nephews and grandsons of rajput kings. Emperor Shahjahan (r.1628-58) was the grandson of Raja Udai Singh of Marwar and nephew to his son Raja Sur Singh.

articulated through terms such as 'rajput painting', 'rajput architecture' or 'rajput art' that historians now use to interpret cultural production from periods even before such identities were articulated. The idea of a racialised rajput nation or Rajputana as articulated by colonial agents is germinal to this conception. Nationalist scholars who laid the foundations of Indian art history in the early twentieth century had responded to early orientalist scholarship on India that portrayed Indian art as inferior to or derivative of 'outside influences'. Invented against this context, the category rajput art was explicitly coded 'Hindu' and non-Muslim, and in that respect a 'pure' Indian art.⁴⁶ Prime among these nationalist scholars was Ananda Coomaraswamy, who, in his 1916 book *Rajput Painting*, was the first to delineate the contours of a Hindu rajput art that he took great pains to distinguish from the arts of the Muslim Mughals. Coomaraswamy's formulation Rajput Art (originally applied to painting) as a representative of a Hindu Rajput nation, and consequently an Indian nation implicitly coded Hindu, has been highly formative of the discourse on 'rajput architecture' that we have inherited.

In *Rajput Painting*, printed under the patronage of the Hindu Gaekwad rulers of Baroda, Coomaraswamy applies the term to the "Hindu painting of Rajputana and the Panjab Himalayas."⁴⁷ As he explains, the label is appropriate, as this art, which he counts among the many strands of 'Hindu' painting in India, was produced under the patronage of rajputs. Though he acknowledges the contemporary nature of much Mughal and Rajput painting and multiple strands of cross-fertilisation, Coomaraswamy in his introduction delineates Rajput painting as the expression of an Indian vernacular tradition whose spirit was untainted by encounters with the Mughals. The vague and unsupported nature of this claim is in evidence in a passage from the book where he teeters between a denial of processes of transculturation between Mughal and Rajput courts and reluctant acknowledgement of the common sources of these two lineages of painting, all the while struggling to establish 'rajput painting's status as the bearer of a pristine 'prakrit' Hindu

⁴⁶ This articulation ignored the fact that rajput identity through the centuries had been claimed by both Hindu and Muslim warrior clans. See Cynthia Talbot, "Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2009): 211–43.

⁴⁷ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting: Being an Account of the Hindu Paintings of Rajasthan and the Panjab Himalayas from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century Described in Their Relation to Contemporary Thought* (London, New York etc.: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916), 1, <http://archive.org/details/rajputpaintingbe01coom>.

Indian tradition: “It is no longer necessary to argue the distinction of Rajput from Mughal painting”, Coomaraswamy argues:

...for every addition to our knowledge makes it only more evident that there could scarcely exist two contemporary schools more diverse in temper. That the few Rajput paintings which formerly came to light were confused with Mughal or Indo-Persian ' works was due partly to their comparative rarity, partly to the fact that the two schools are nearly contemporary, partly to the fact that a majority of works in both cases are portfolio pictures of moderate size, and finally to the fact that certain Rajput paintings show some traces of Mughal influence, while on the other hand many Mughal works are based directly on Rajput originals.⁴⁸

Coomaraswamy's attempts to separate 'Hindu' rajput painting as a stylistic category from the what he calls the “eclectic” (a euphemism for bastardly?) painting of Mughal foreigners is expressed in an intriguing diagram depicting the relationships between different schools of Indian painting that he includes in the introduction of this book (Fig. 0.1). In this scheme, the two are consciously set wide apart to reinforce the belaboured point expressed in the accompanying text. As with early modern conceptions of rajput identity, purity is stressed here as being of paramount importance. Towards the end of the book, Coomaraswamy refers to 'rajput architecture' as a parallel phenomenon to 'rajput painting'. Here again, he stresses that the processes of interaction between the two sources of patronage was largely one-sided, with Hindu rajput architecture shaping Mughal buildings such as those at Fatehpur Sikri and not vice versa. This claim too conveniently ignores centuries of varying degrees of interaction that took place between various Hindu dynasties and the Mughals starting in the sixteenth century. This, along with a host of other processes of cultural interaction and mobility—of artisans, of materials—at work throughout the Indian subcontinent in this period, shaped the architecture patronised by both groups until at least the nineteenth century.

Following Coomaraswamy's work, the label rajput was increasingly applied to other arts, creating not only 'rajput painting' and 'rajput architecture', but also 'rajput sculpture', all belonging to the assumed rajput nation. The contours of this stylistic category were widened and defined in the work of the German art historian Hermann Goetz (1898-1976) who served as the Director of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery between 1936 and

⁴⁸ Coomaraswamy, 5.

1953⁴⁹ and who is credited with having built on many of the Coomaraswamy's early ideas on rajput painting and art in his research.⁵⁰ Goetz's many essays on rajput art were edited posthumously into a volume titled 'Rajput Art and Architecture.' In the essay 'Rajput Art: Its Problems' Goetz describes Coomaraswamy as the 'sole discoverer' of rajput art but is critical of his assertions of a 'pure rajput' tradition of painting. He points out evidence of circulation and exchange between courts, including the fact that Muslim artists painted a lot of 'rajput' painting. Nevertheless, Goetz rehabilitates 'rajput art' as a racialized category of style, describing it as an offshoot 'neither of Muslim nor Hindu art' but having a 'medieval Hindu spirit' that was an expression of the "assimilation of originally 'Āryan' ruling castes akin to the Iranians, by pre-Āryan (Dravidian?) Indigenous Indian ruling castes."⁵¹

The first scholar to systematically argue for the establishment of 'rajput architecture' as a distinct architectural style through an analysis of formal character of buildings produced under royal 'rajput' patronage in western and central India was Giles Tillotson, whose canonical work on the topic describes it as "a late Hindu architecture."⁵² Mindful of the entangled histories of the region, Tillotson is careful to note that the rajput style, though distinct from Mughal architecture, evolved alongside it, both drawing from already existing Hindu and Buddhist architectural traditions, and most importantly, often employing the same groups of craftspeople. However, despite alluding to processes of transculturation and the mobility of artists across north and west India who worked on buildings now classified as irreconcilably different, Tillotson too is unable to let go of rajput-ness as the primary mode of analysis for the wide variety of buildings that he presents in his book. This begs the question—of what use is this *jāti*-coded term of analysis, which focuses entirely on a source of patronage deliberately seen as a monolith despite great internal differentiation (note that Tillotson even includes building patronised by merchant castes in Jaisalmer or by the *jāt* rulers of Bharatpur and Dig within his definitions of 'rajput architecture') in deepening our understanding of the architectural history of a large and varied region that stretches from the deserts of Jaisalmer to the forested plains of central India? While there are undeniably

⁴⁹ Goetz spent the later part of his life at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg

⁵⁰ Milo C. Beach, review of *Review of Rajput Art and Architecture.*, by Hermann Goetz, Jyotindra Jain, and Jutta Jain-Neubauer, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 40, no. 3 (1981): 631–32.

⁵¹ Hermann Goetz, *Rajput Art and Architecture*, ed. Jyotindra Jain and Jutta Jain-Neubauer (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), 23–31.

⁵² Giles Tillotson, *The Rajput Palaces The Development of an Architectural Style 1450-1750* (Avon: Yale University Press, 1987).

some formal similarities across this wide swath of architectural expression, shaped as they were by histories of mobility and cultural interaction across north and western India that a stylistic analysis could draw our attention to, the term obscures much more than it reveals. The problems I encountered in working with this historiography of ‘rajput’ architecture’ as a framework for understanding the architecture of the erstwhile kingdoms of Rajasthan were two-fold. One is its unbridled focus on ‘style’ as a category of analysis, with a volley of terms such as influence, borrowing, etc. used as an armature to stabilise the wobbly sandcastle this produced. This form of analysis, which is deemed scientific using an evolutionary classification regime,⁵³ represents a structural resistance to what might be more fruitful modes of art historical analysis that put social and cultural processes, and the histories of circulation of people, ideas, and material at its centre. The other are the regressive ideologies of race, nation, caste, and gender implicit in the term ‘rajput architecture.’ In the absence of competing terms for other groups, this formulation claims cultural production that was result of the collective efforts and energies of a wide variety of *jātis* and genders, whether as patrons, mobile ‘low caste’ artisanal communities, intermediaries, or users, in the name of a hegemonic *jāti* identity explicitly coded male. Here, it is worth pointing out that the most prolific woman patron to emerge from Jodhpur, the concubine Gulāb Rai, was not a rajput at all.⁵⁴ Moreover, by terming the architecture that was produced at the intersection of sustained contact between the Mughal Empire and Hindu dynasties of western and central India ‘rajput architecture’ with implicit notions of a ‘pure’ Hindu tradition, art historical writing plays into retrospective claims of a pure, untainted (by contact with Islam) Hindu rajput identity made by contemporary rajputs who have wholeheartedly adopted colonial era constructions of a rajput nation that heroically resisted ‘Muslim invasions’. In this respect, art historians working in modern Rajasthan who often carry out their research and publication with the direct and indirect patronage of wealthy rajput royal families,⁵⁵ have consciously or unconsciously weaponised material culture to

⁵³ Juneja, “‘A Very Civil Idea ...’ Art History, Transculturation, and World- Making – With and Beyond the Nation.”

⁵⁴ Gulāb Rai’s caste identity remains a mystery, though she is generally considered to have been a *jāt*.

⁵⁵ It is a fact rarely acknowledged that many prominent volumes on rajput art were produced by scholars working under various kinds of patronage and necessary cooperation from rajput royal families or otherwise entangled in the interests of elite rajputs. At least some books that canonise rajput art of various kinds have in fact been commissioned and published by these royal houses. A recent example is Robert Elgood, *Rajput Arms and Armour: The Rathores and Their Armoury at Jodhpur Fort* (Jodhpur: Niyogi Books, 2017) which was published by the royal Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur. The Jaipur royal family has for long employed Giles Tillotson as a consultant. Full disclosure: the author of this dissertation was employed by the Mehrangarh

lend support to conservative rajputs' caste hegemony and their warped, Hindutva-charged versions of Indian history, with repercussions for the present. Claims of a pure Hindu identity made by elite rajputs in Rajasthan, who have historically sought to erase and suppress their and the region's sustained contact and partnership with the Mughals and other Islamicate dynasties have manifested in terribly violent ways in modern India.⁵⁶ While art historical writing is generally deemed benign, by hoisting the rajput label on architectural heritage produced through the labour of mostly lower caste and Muslim artisans, art historians have also played into narratives that alienate the claims of these groups on urban spaces now claimed as 'rajput heritage.' This alienation is reflected in ongoing urban processes in cities such as Jodhpur. Elite groups, primarily well-heeled, erstwhile royals of the rajput *jāti* who control the tourism and heritage industries in these cities exercise their caste hegemony and monopoly over historic urban architecture in the name of 'heritage conservation' and 'development,' often progressively marginalising through gentrification and threats of violence the claims traditionally exerted on these spaces by marginalised non-rajput communities. The latter include Muslims and lower caste populations inhabiting these areas.⁵⁷

The art historical reification of 'rajput art' or 'rajput architecture' perpetuates multiple levels of exclusions and erasures, going beyond an erasure of the transcultural

Museum Trust in Jodhpur, run by the Jodhpur royal family, from July 2015 to August 2017. The trust supported research stays in Jodhpur undertaken as part of this research project.

⁵⁶ An example is rajput mobilisation under the banner of a violent extremist organisation called Karni Sena. The Karni Sena reacts violently to any allusions to the well-documented history of familial or conjugal ties between rajput royal houses and Muslim dynasties in popular culture. The group sought national fame by orchestrating violent attacks on filmmakers for depicting fictional narratives (allegedly) featuring relationships between rajput women and Muslim rulers on screen. The makers of the historical dramas *Jodha Akbar* and *Padmavati* were the most prominent victims of these attacks. "'Jodhaa Akbar' Too Felt the Wrath of Notorious Rajput Karni Sena" | Jaipur News - Times of India," *The Times of India*, accessed March 22, 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/jodhaa-akbar-too-felt-the-wrath-of-notorious-sena/articleshow/56841956.cms>; "How Is Karni Sena, the Group behind Padmavati Protests, so Powerful?," *The Indian Express*, August 20, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/beyond-the-news/how-is-karni-sena-the-group-behind-padmavati-protests-so-powerful-4948391/>; Tanuja Kothiyal, "Persistence of Memory: Never Mind History, Padmavati Is as Real for Rajputs as Their Famed Valour," *Scroll.in* (<https://scroll.in>), accessed March 22, 2021, <https://scroll.in/article/827966/persistence-of-memory-never-mind-history-padmavati-is-as-real-for-rajputs-as-their-famed-valour>.

⁵⁷ To notice this phenomenon, one only needs to look at enclaves in the city of Jodhpur where tourist dollars are primarily spent, almost all of which are controlled by elite rajputs. Newly developed tourism enclaves such as the Tunwarjī Jhālra (stepwell) quarters in the city of Jodhpur are examples of sites where the rajput patronage of the monument is emphasised over all other community claims on this space. In this context, markers of rival community claims on the structure, especially the presence of a Muslim Sufi shrine on the stepwell, appear increasingly incongruent to Hindu audiences, forming a palpable source of anxiety. For more, see the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

history of the region and the suppression of the roles of non-rajput groups in cultural production. The term 'rajput' being inevitably coded male implicitly refers to a male ruler whose sovereignty is manifest in the buildings he commissioned. This has had the consequence that the role of women in architectural production has never been fully investigated for settings covered by the term. The centrality of processes of style to art historical scholarship has also rendered a large corpus of architecture from Rajasthan unworthy of analysis. According to Tillotson, the rajput style attained maturity in the seventeenth century, flourished in the first decades of the eighteenth century, and entered a phase of stylistic "decline" towards the end of the eighteenth century. Such an evolution—marked by a periods of latency, maturity, and an inevitable decline, is typical of art historical descriptions of style, and mirror orientalist 'decline' narratives on the history non-western civilisations and dynasties.⁵⁸ As evident from Juneja's critique of style, 'stylistic decline' is generally identified in material culture that does not neatly fit fictional categories imposed on it. The term thus usually refers to architecture or art from periods where categories of style are unable to hold inconsistencies and complexities that emerge in practice, especially on the peripheries. Such a period of stylistic decline is often presented as a symptom of overall civilizational decline. As a result, the architecture of Rajasthani cities such as Jodhpur in the period after the eighteenth century are not given any serious consideration in the narrative of 'rajput architecture' as put forth by Tillotson. Moreover, the arguments for a 'rajput style' are based almost exclusively on royal residential architecture such as the *garh* (fort) palace, along with a few prominent examples of the *havelīs* (town houses) of the merchant elite. Thus, buildings of the type and period under consideration in this project—composed largely of eighteenth and nineteenth architecture of ostensibly 'public'⁵⁹ use such as temples and water bodies—are considered unworthy of attention within this framework even as they are subsumed under the umbrella term 'rajput architecture' which is applied indiscriminately to all architecture of the alleged rajput nation.

Set against this backdrop of exclusions and elisions perpetuated through the dominance a narrowly defined style-based framework in the historiography it is in conversation with, this book seeks to present an account of architectural patronage and

⁵⁸On the seemingly organic, life-cycle-based evolutionary model of style, see Meyer Schapiro, "Style (1962)," in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 69.

⁵⁹ As discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, access to these structures were not always open to everyone

production that is grounded in its social settings—aiming to write a social history of the architecture sponsored by zenana women in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur. Across chapters, close attention is paid to the processes through which architecture was produced and received. These processes are contextualized against the urban landscape, the people and relationships involved, and the agency each group exercised.

Feminist Approaches to Art History and the Re-conceptualising of Agency

Dealing as it does with the subject matter of women patrons, a feminist perspective on received narratives on women's roles in cultural production is implicit in this project. My approach to art history and feminist interventions within the discipline owes much to the works of Linda Nochlin, Griselda Pollock, and Rozsika Parker. In her polemical 1971 essay 'Why There Have Been No Great Women Artists,' Nochlin argued that the task of the feminist art historian is not to counter androcentric art historical narratives merely by digging for names and works of unknown women artists, but to expose the structures that made it near impossible for much of human history for women to produce art.⁶⁰ Pollock and Parker in their 1981 book *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* recognized and radically challenged the androcentric and exclusivist framework of art history that by design minimised and marginalised cultural production by women.⁶¹ Decades after their interventions, 'feminist art history' is deemed in the new millennium to have gone thoroughly mainstream, with scores of publications and departments across the world enthusiastically practicing it. However, if we survey the wide range of scholarship that has been produced under the term, it is clear that little of it has served to effectively challenge or dent what is and remains an androcentric disciplinary framework. Pollock laments this in her 2014 essay 'Whither Art History', writing:

Labeling it as "feminist," and by this naming, setting it aside while appearing to acknowledge its presence, refuses the feminist transformation of the practice of Art History to the point at which gender and sexual difference would become part and parcel of our thinking operations rather than a special case, an addition, something with which those "feminists" occupy themselves. Put in simple terms, the idolatry (of the artist) deep within Art History has resisted and repressed the critical iconoclasm of feminist and other interventions. Worse, I have recently begun to notice how pathetically inadequate what is presented or taught

⁶⁰ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," ARTnews, January 1971, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/>.

⁶¹ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*.

as the "feminist" intervention in art or the history of art has been. Both androcentric and feminist art histories are creating for feminism what I can only name a bad memory.⁶²

Drawing from this critique, this book sets out not to merely add women to the discourse on Indian architecture as patrons, but to allow the knowledge of their involvement to change the discourse itself. However, given the near-complete lack of investigations into women's agentive roles in the production of architecture in the erstwhile kingdoms of Rajasthan, this project must necessarily teeter between what Nochlin referred to as the 'digging up' of names and addresses of women patrons, and the work of challenging the male-hero-worshipping disciplinary framework of art history as described by Parker and Pollock; between revealing the common place nature of women's involvement in cultural production in pre or early modern India as patrons of architecture, and dismantling the authorial fantasies embodied by the figure of the patron in histories of Indian art. However, any scholar attempting to rework art history from marginal points of view encounters the discipline's resistance to change as noted by Pollock, which is most evident in the lack of a vocabulary within it to articulate alternate narratives. As Pollock has written, the seemingly neutral vocabulary of art history produces an exclusivist and androcentric canon as its effect.⁶³ "Hegemonic resistance" to feminist critical interventions is embedded in the terms art history uses to note cultural achievement, which are in fact the discipline's "modes of thinking."⁶⁴ At the centre of these 'modes of thinking' about art is the modernist fiction of the creative male genius, the artist, in whose figure, produced through scholarly discourse and practices, is invested fantasies about authorship, intentionality, and interiority of an artistic subject.⁶⁵ In a context such as pre or early modern Indian art and architecture, where the 'artist' in the way art history understands the term, are in most cases unknown, art historians, especially those studying architecture, have invested many of these fantasies of authorship and intentionality onto the shoulders of another fictional and inevitably male figure—the patron. Aware of this legacy of art history writing on the sub-continent, this book seeks to imagine ways of writing a history (among many possible histories) of architectural patronage and production that envisions creativity and agency as diffused within

⁶² Pollock, "Whither Art History?"

⁶³ Pollock.

⁶⁴ Pollock.

⁶⁵ Pollock.

collaborative networks and relationships through which architectural production unfolded. Thus, even as it puts a group of charismatic women patrons from Jodhpur at its centre, partly as a provocation to the resistance and ridicule scholarship centred on women continues to encounter within academia despite the strides feminist historians have made, the aim of this work is to demonstrate how architectural production and acts we call patronage unfolded in early modern Jodhpur within networks that brought a variety of actors, both individuals and groups, together around a construction site. As successive chapters will show, the objective of this research project is not only to excavate instances where women have exercised agency in the creation of art and architecture and the building of cities (though this is an important goal in itself) but to also find ways to reconceptualise agency itself away from narrow and fundamentally androcentric models centred on the figures of the artist and the patron. Agency in the production of art and architecture is instead conceptualized in this study as a distributed phenomenon—as *distributed agency*⁶⁶ (or *agencies*), which can be envisioned not as held by certain privileged subject positions (such as the patron/artist/architect) but as diffused within dynamic networks of relationships that connect members of a community. The word community is here used in an extended, geographically unbounded sense, as people who have entered into multivalent transactional relationships with one another. As a result, chapters that follow pay close attention to the networks and processes through which acts of patronage unfolded in early modern Jodhpur within a set of relationships that bound zenana women to a range of groups active in the city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—local and itinerant communities of mainly ‘low caste’ craftspeople and labourers, architects/head masons, the officialdom, zenana staff, religious groups, and the myriad users of urban space among them. It is by reconstructing the interactions between these various actors and locating architectural production squarely against this context, that the study seeks to demonstrate the workings of distributed agency. Used as a framework for analysing nineteenth century archival data on the everyday processes through which architectural production ensued in Jodhpur, the term *distributed agency* contributes in this work to the task of dismantling a reductive straightjacket of implicitly male, largely elite or upper caste coded categories

⁶⁶ Monica Juneja has previously employed this term. Juneja, “‘A Very Civil Idea ...’ Art History, Transculturation, and World- Making – With and Beyond the Nation,” 476.

based on assumed sources of patronage that we usually use to conceptualise agency in architectural production in pre- or early modern Rajasthan.

Sources and Methods

This study is based equally on archival and architectural evidence. One of the main archival sources used here are handwritten *bahīs* of the Jodhpur state dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The word *bahī* or *bahīkhātā* in Rajasthan and neighbouring Gujarat refers to a foldable leather-bound book with long leaves into which accounts are entered by hand. While the term can refer to any book made in the format, it typically refers to accounts books and inventories maintained by traders and clerks.⁶⁷ A majority of the *bahīs* I refer to are records of the Jodhpur zenana. They are termed *janānā bahiyān* (plural) or *rājlokā rā bahiyān* (*rājlok* being royal women). Of these, the most important are early to mid-nineteenth century *bahīs* of individual zenana women, which record the daily transactions they engaged in, from making payments in cash and kind to their staff and dependents to purchasing clothes, jewellery, or paintings. Some of these zenana *bahīs* are dedicated specifically to architectural projects undertaken by individual zenana women. Such documents are termed *kamṭhā* (construction) *bahīs*. Like other *bahīs* maintained by scribes in the royal house in this period, zenana *bahīs* are written in Marwari language using the *nāgari* script. I have referred to over fifty *bahīs* of the zenana in the course of my research, in addition to other kinds of *bahī* records from Jodhpur.

Zenana *bahīs* include account books maintained by scribes working for the central zenana administration at the Jodhpur fort or by those keeping the books of individual zenana women. The former record goings-on in the zenana or transactions overseen by the zenana administration, such as the disbursal of salaries or allowances to staff or residents. The latter record the income and expenses of individual zenana women. Evidence suggests that scribes in the direct employ of zenana women maintained their personal accounts.⁶⁸ Both kinds of documents shed light on the zenana institution and the daily life and activities

⁶⁷ For a full discussion of the term *bahī* see Marzia Balzani and Varsha Joshi, "The Death of a Concubine's Daughter: Palace Manuscripts as a Source for the Study of the Rajput Elite," *South Asia Research* 14, no. 2 (October 1, 1994): 136–62.

⁶⁸ Accounts of zenana women record scribes being employed by them on a monthly salary. For example, among the *mahīndār* (salaried employees) of the queen Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī was the scribe (*nāvisanda*) Pandit Kusal Raj. MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, f.10.

of zenana women. A majority of the *bahīs* referred to in this study are the personal accounts of different zenana women. Such *bahīs*, almost all of which available to us today date from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, are classified into various subtypes based on their content, such as general income-expense books (*jamā-kharac bahī*), accounts of expenses met from treasury allowances (*hāth kharac bahī*), those dealing with construction projects (*kamṭhā bahī*) and so on. I have relied on information from *hāth kharac* and *jamā kharac bahīs* of zenana women to tease out biographical details. They are also helpful for reconstructing aspects of their life in the zenana, especially the connections they forged with individuals and groups within and outside palace. These *bahīs* are also a good source of information on zenana women as patrons and consumers of a wide variety of arts, apart from architecture. *Kamṭhā bahīs* of zenana women, of which only a small number survive, are a valuable source of information on the composition and organization of a construction site. In listing all the transactions that transpired in the course of a construction project, they document the names and contributions of every person or group directly or indirectly involved in raising the buildings that zenana women commissioned. All those who were involved in a construction project, from the head mason the *gajdhar* and other artisans, to merchants who brought supplies required for religious rituals at a site, are named in these *bahīs*. As such, they help reconstruct the processes and networks involved in executing a construction project. *Kamṭhā bahīs* have been analysed in some detail in Chapter 3.

In addition to zenana *bahīs*, I have also referred to other handwritten court documents from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One such group are the *hakikat bahīs* of Jodhpur's Maharajas. They are compilations of formulaic daily diary entries made by clerks recording the activities of the ruler of Jodhpur on any given day. These documents record such events as processions through the city or a visit to a temple accompanied by zenana women. *Paṭṭā bahīs*, which record the revenue allocations made by the state to various subsidiary chiefs, zenana women, and other dependents of the crown too were useful to this study.

Very little is known about the circumstances under which the *bahīs* referred to above, especially zenana *bahīs*, came to be maintained or the circulation or intended use of their contents. While colonial archives have been the subject of several studies that have

critically looked them through an ethnographic lens as subjects rather than sources,⁶⁹ the precolonial archive has not received this type of attention from historians or ethnographers. Such an examination of the zenana archives from Jodhpur are beyond my abilities as an art historian. Hence, I have relied on what is already known about Jodhpur state's relationship to record keeping from references to the subject in earlier studies. Both Nandita Sahai and Divya Cherian have examined the extensive archival trail left by Jodhpur state in the late eighteenth century, especially under Maharaja Bijai Singh (r. 1752-93), as it collected and compiled vast amounts of information from all corners of the kingdom through a network of spies, informants, and a powerful, literate upper caste bureaucracy.⁷⁰ Cherian notes that the state under Bijai Singh invested tremendous resources to establish and maintain a highly effective and centralised surveillance and bureaucratic apparatus that significantly expanded state power in this period.⁷¹ Under his rule, an officer in charge of royal records (*śrī hajūr rā daftar rā dārogā*) recorded and filed (using various categories) all communication between the ruler and state officials located throughout the kingdom. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, this office, like most administrative positions in Jodhpur were held almost exclusively by men of the brahmin or *mahājan* (merchant) castes and scribal communities such as *kāyastas*.⁷² Clerks or scribes known by the terms *mutsaddī* or *nāvisanda*, who worked in the zenana, also belonged to these communities.

Zenana *bahīs* maintained under the names of individual zenana women record their expenses and incomes in exacting detail. The preoccupation with minutiae indicates that these documents were designed to be scrutinised by state officials reporting to the king's administration. Records of the zenana tell us that state (*khālsā*) employees working in the zenana included male and female news gatherers or spies (*uvākā-nāvis/uvākā-nāvisaniyā*)

⁶⁹For a summary of such approaches towards colonial archives, see Ann Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 87–109. For an exploration of early twentieth century Jodhpur zenana *bahīs* as anthropological sources, see Balzani and Joshi, "The Death of a Concubine's Daughter."

⁷⁰ Divya Cherian, "Ordering Subjects: Merchants, the State, and Krishna Devotion in Eighteenth-Century Marwar" (Columbia University, 2015); Nandita Prasad Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest: The State, Society, and Artisans in Early Modern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195678963.001.0001/acprof-9780195678963>.

⁷¹ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects," 78.

⁷² Cherian, 57–58. Cherian, 351. On scribal castes in India, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, "The Social Worth of Scribes: Brahmins, Kāyasthas and the Social Order in Early Modern India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (October 2010): 563–95; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The Making of a Munshi," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 61–72.

who transmitted information to the central administration. Moreover, the zenana administration, at least in the late nineteenth century, kept a diary of events in the zenana in the form of zenana *hakikat bahīs*. It also maintained a paper trail of the entry and exit of both people and things in and out of the zenana.⁷³ All of these mechanisms point to a highly developed system of surveillance within the royal household directed at occupants of the zenana that mirrored the state's information gathering networks that monitored events across Marwar. The zenana archives consulted in the course of this research were a part of this surveillance apparatus that sought to regulate and monitor zenana residents' day-to-day interactions with the world with the aim of securing the interests of the crown. The *bahīs* consulted in this dissertation were produced within this context. However, this does not in any way render them useless to those seeking to use these documents to flesh out the ways in which zenana women engaged with architectural patronage or the world around them at large. In fact, the record-keeping apparatus's obsession with noting down minute details of daily life has proved useful to creating a richly descriptive image of the world zenana women operated in, and the plethora of communities and individuals that populated it.

As a beginner learning to read and interpret *bahī* sources from Jodhpur, I have drawn heavily from the work and guidance of senior scholars of Rajasthani archival sources. Prime among them is Monika Horstmann, whose extensively annotated studies of textual sources from Jaipur state have helped me navigate Jodhpur *bahīs*.⁷⁴ Documents from both Jodhpur and Jaipur often use the same persianised administrative terms and employ similar formats for organizing information. Moreover, Prof. Horstmann's empirical approach and the prominent ways in which she foregrounds primary sources in studies has inspired my own approach to the material I work with, where I have tried to let my source materials, whether textual or architectural, rather than pre-ordained theories, guide various chapters in this

⁷³ On surveillance in the zenana, see Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Monika Horstmann, *In favour of Govinddevjī: historical documents relating to a deity of Vrindaban and Eastern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1999); Monika Horstmann, *An Annual Budget of Govinddevjī: A Document of V. S. 1784 (A. D. 1728)*; in *Memoriam T. P. Mukherjee (1928 - 1990)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995); Monika Horstmann, *Jaipur 1778: The Making of a King*, Khoj (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verl., 2013); Monika Horstmann, *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt: religiöse Herrschaftslegitimation und Religionspolitik Mahārājā Savāi Jaisinghs (1700 - 1743)*, Khoj (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009); Monika Horstmann, "The Preambles of Official Letters from Rajasthan: Towards a Stylistic Typology.," *The Indian Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (1998): 29–44. See also, Monika Horstmann, "The Mālik in Rāmānandī Documents of the 18th and 19th Centuries," in *Studies in Historical Documents from Nepal and India*, ed. Simon Cubelic, Axel Michaels, and Astrid Zotter, *Documenta Nepalica* 1 (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2018), 401–44, <https://doi.org/10.17885/HEIUP.331.C4142>.

dissertation. My interpretation of archival sources is also indebted to the work of senior scholars from various institutions in Jodhpur. Among others, they include Mahendra Singh Naggar, Narayan Singh Bhati, Vikram Singh Bhati, and Mahendra Singh Tanwar. They have painstakingly transcribed many Jodhpur *bahīs* and translated them into simple Hindi, essentially cracking the code of formulaic eighteenth and nineteenth century archival Marwari for non-native scholars.⁷⁵ In the absence of dictionaries or any systematic approaches that can guide those seeking to learn archival Marwari, these works have been of use to many generations of students. In familiarizing myself with zenana sources, I have also relied on the work of historians of Jodhpur zenana who have used these *bahīs*. These include Varsha Joshi, Priyanka Khanna, and Geetanjali Tyagi.⁷⁶ Their work has been especially useful to Chapter 2 of this thesis. Among the few art historians who have systematically used archival sources from Rajasthan in their studies is Shailka Mishra, who has worked with records from both Jaipur and Jodhpur. She has made use of *paṭṭā bahīs* from Jodhpur in her work on artists from kingdom's royal painting atelier.⁷⁷

Archival sources quoted in this thesis are preserved in various state and private archives in Rajasthan. In my research on Jodhpur zenana *bahīs*, I have relied mainly on the excellent services of the Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash (MMPP) at Jodhpur fort, which has made the private archives of the royal family (among which are the corpus of zenana *bahīs* I have referred to) as well as digital copies of collections of Jodhpur *bahīs* that are now

⁷⁵ Mahendra Singh Naggar, ed., *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahī* (Jodhpur: Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash, 2002); Mahendra Singh Naggar, *Khāṇḍā Vivāha kī Bahī*, 1st ed. (Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2004); Mahendra Singh Naggar, *Mandiron kī Kamṭhā Bahī*, 1st ed. (Jodhpur: Maharaja Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2014); Narayan Singh Bhati, ed., *Maharājā Takhat Singh Rī Khyāt* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachyavidha Pratishthan, 1993); Jitendra Kumar Jain and Narayan Singh Bhati, eds., *Maharājā Mān Singh Rī Khyāt* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Insitute, 1997); Vikram Singh Bhati, *Jodhpur Rājya Kī Astra-Śastra* (Jodhpur: Maharaj Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2016.); Mahendra Singh Tanwar, *Jodhpūr Kile Rā Kamṭhā Bahī* (Jodhpur: Maharaj Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2018). On archival sources from Rajasthan courts, see also Mathias Metzger, *Die Sprache der Vakīl-Briefe aus Rājasthān*, Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2003).

⁷⁶ Varsha Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs* (New Delhi and Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1995); Balzani and Joshi, "The Death of a Concubine's Daughter"; Priyanka Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)" (New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2011); Geetanjali Tyagi, "The Invisible Lives of Davris and Badarans: Exploring Affiliations and 'Friendships' within the Janani Deorhi in Early Modern Marwar," in *Servants' Pasts*, vol. 1 (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2019), 175–96.

⁷⁷ Shailka Mishra, "Map and Map-Making at the Amber-Jaipur Suratkhana in the 18th Century," *Jñāna-Pravāha Research Journal* 18, no. 2014–15 (2015): 139–53; Shailka Mishra, "Painting at the Court of Jodhpur: Patronage and Artists," in *Dakhan 2018: Recent Studies in Indian Painting*, ed. John Seyller (Hyderabad: Jagdish and Kamla Mitta Museum of Indian Art, 2020), 109–33.

in the custody of the Rajasthan State Archives in Bikaner, available on site to scholars. For twentieth century administrative records of Jodhpur relating to temples and public works, I have relied on the Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives. On occasion, I have also referred to documents in the collection of the National Archives of India in New Delhi. Apart from *bahī* sources, other textual sources on Marwar referred to here include the various bardic histories and genealogies of the Rathore dynasty in Jodhpur. Among such sources are the various *khyāts* of the rulers of Jodhpur, which have been edited and published by the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur.⁷⁸

One of the major impediments to research that seeks to examine any aspect of history from the perspective of marginalised subjects, whether women or lower caste labouring communities, is the absence of direct sources. As detailed above, the archival sources we have available are largely geared towards the objectives of dominant actors and institutions, the king of Marwar and the royal establishment in this case. Researching the roles of marginalised groups such as women or lower caste artisanal groups using documents produced in service of kingly authority involves filtering a large corpus of such documents for traces of the history and agency of these groups. The best example of such use of sources related to Marwar is Nandita Sahai's work on the artisanal castes of the region. Using petitions received by the king from these groups and reading them against the grain, Sahai has traced artisanal castes' relationship to the state in intricate detail.⁷⁹ In my study, I am fortunate to have had access to a substantial corpus of *bahī* sources that directly document the lives, albeit only in financial terms, of many zenana women, especially in the nineteenth century. However, recovering the role of architects, artisans, labourers, and intermediaries has meant trawling through reams of financial documents related to construction maintained by the royal administration for traces of their presence and involvement in building projects, and their interactions with zenana patrons. Disparate pieces of data culled in this manner were then pieced together to reconstruct the roles played by different individuals, groups, and networks in a construction project sponsored by the zenana. More importantly, the research for this dissertation has meant tapping into a

⁷⁸ Bhati, *Mahārājā Takhatasimh Rī Khyāt*; Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhijī Rī Khyāt*; Anandkumar and Brajeshkumar Singh, eds., *Mahārājā Śrī Vijaisimhijī Rī Khyāt* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 1997).

⁷⁹ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*; Nandita Prasad Sahai, "Crafts and Statecraft in Eighteenth Century Jodhpur," *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 4 (2007): 683–722.

range of sources outside the conventional written archive and using them creatively to flesh out the skeletal outlines emerging from textual sources.

Many of the arguments advanced in this dissertation cannot be pursued beyond a point by relying solely on archival sources. A full history of the zenana's architectural patronage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is only made possible by considering material traces they have left on the city. These take the form of surviving monuments as well as other kinds of evidence, such as collective memories and practices of use that surround these spaces today. While the use of architectural sources in itself is not unusual in what is primarily an art historical study, the kind of questions posed in this dissertation have necessitated innovative ways of reading architectural evidence beyond traditional modes of stylistic analyses that art historians are trained in. I have used architectural sources much in the same as I have used archival sources, by reading them closely like texts in search of traces left by women patrons, artisanal communities, and other actors this study is interested in. Analyses of living monuments commissioned by zenana women, seen against the context of contemporary life in Jodhpur and the collective memories and experiences of its inhabitants, have been especially crucial in guiding explorations into the social history of the architecture produced by the zenana. In various chapters, I have attempted to combine close readings of existing spaces and practices of use surrounding them with information available on a site or the city in general from archival sources and existing studies. In Chapter 4, following such a methodology enabled me to draw connections between the types of architecture produced under the zenana's patronage in late eighteenth century Jodhpur and the state administration's increasingly hostile attitude towards lower caste communities inhabiting the city in this period. In reading architectural spaces in the context of their relationship to inhabitants of the city across centuries, I have made use of the framework of architectural memory as put forth by Monica Juneja,⁸⁰ as well as other scholarship that has examined the lives and 'afterlives' of monumental architecture within communities and national cultures in South Asia.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Monica Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Memoir*," in *Memory, History, and Colonialism Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts*, ed. Indra Sengupta (London: German Historical Institute, 2009).

⁸¹ Deborah Cherry, ed., *The Afterlives of Monuments* (London: Routledge, 2014); Mrinalini Rajagopalan, *Building Histories: The Archival and Affective Lives of Five Monuments in Modern Delhi* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Architectural evidence related to zenana women's patronage is analysed throughout this dissertation as a parallel archive that complements and complicates information gleaned from textual sources. In the absence of other sources, marks left by patrons on their buildings, such as a series of murals created for the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyānī at her temple, which are analysed in Chapter 3, are often the only indicators of direct involvement and exercise of agency by zenana patrons in determining formal aspects of their commissions. Moreover, textual sources such as dynastic histories and royal genealogies from Jodhpur often exclude or display a stark bias against lower caste concubine patrons from the zenana. To overcome this, I was compelled to emphasize other kinds of evidence that give us direct access to the careers of concubine patrons. In cases where no personal *bahīs* are available for a concubine patron, this has meant actively foregrounding the scarce architectural evidence left behind by concubines over and above dynastic accounts. Thus, Chapter 5 of this dissertation, dedicated to the illustrious eighteenth century concubine Gulāb Rai, relies on Gulāb Rai's monuments as the primary source material.

The significance and affective strength of material sources in illuminating women's histories in the city of Jodhpur can be illustrated by one of the more macabre kinds of evidence they have left behind on the urban fabric. Apart from the monuments analysed here, the ghostly presence of zenana women who once inhabited the city can be found in 'sati handprints' (Fig. 0.2) that are engraved on the gates of the walled city and the citadel. These 'handprints' are remnants of the crimson palm imprints that were left on various thresholds by groups of zenana women as they bid goodbye to the fort and the city on their way to commit *sati* on the funeral pyre of a king. When a ruler died, his queens and concubines, as well as female performers and servants from the zenana often committed *sati* en masse on his pyre. On their death by immolation, the palm impressions the *satis* left on gateways were shaped into representative stone reliefs complete with bangles. The city's inhabitants consider these marks sacred, as they are memorials to what is considered a great sacrifice.⁸² Many of these handprints are still in worship at various gateways leading to the

⁸² It is important to note that hierarchies divided zenana women even upon their death, as lower caste concubines and servants who immolated themselves on a pyre were not always exalted on par with queens. On aspects of *sati* in Jodhpur, especially the self-immolation of concubines and servants, see Ramya Sreenivasan, "Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850," in *Slavery in South Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 136–61; Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 141–53.

city. They are specters that haunt the urban landscape, reminding us of the hidden ways in which women of all statures have historically remade Jodhpur's urban spaces.

In addition to textual and architectural sources detailed above, I have made use of several painted images from eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur in this study. Paintings depicting the city, especially cartographic works, have been helpful in gaining an understanding of the urban landscape of Jodhpur in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both as it was laid out, and as it was imagined in courtly circles. Most of the painted images used here are in the collection of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur.

Organisation of Chapters

This doctoral thesis is organised in four thematic chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the history of women's engagements with architectural patronage in Jodhpur in broad strokes, focusing especially on their early associations with water architecture. Covering a period from the foundation of the city in the mid-fifteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, this chapter summaries Jodhpur zenana's architectural patronage citing major patrons and monuments. Architectural patronage by zenana patrons is contextualized in this chapter against the history of the city and broader trends within women's patronage of architecture across the Indian subcontinent, especially in western India. Considering growing evidence that indicates that elite women's participation in architectural patronage was in fact commonplace across the subcontinent, the chapter argues that zenana women patrons from Jodhpur were not exceptions, despite perhaps appearing to be such due to the state of scholarship on women and architectural patronage for the region. Conditions that enabled zenana women to undertake architectural projects are examined here, such as the surplus income and financial independence that they enjoyed. Zenana women's motives for sponsoring architecture, from familiar tropes of piety and desire for religious merit to commercial concerns and assertions of power and legitimacy as queens too are discussed here.

Chapter 2 examines the zenana as an institution and a physical space that shaped the lives of women patrons at the center of this study. Using nineteenth century *bahīs* as the main source, this chapter seeks to recreate the lifeworld of the Jodhpur zenana. The zenana or the *janānī dyodhī* as it was referred to, was housed in Jodhpur's Mehrangarh fort. The

original extent of its spaces is no longer apparent as many of the palaces were torn down in the early twentieth century. These lost palaces are outlined in this chapter using archival references and models. Zenana spaces at the fort were arranged in courtyards oriented inwards. Zenana architecture, especially several royal temples and shrines housed within it, were central to ideas of kingly sovereignty as they were articulated in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Jodhpur. The zenana was also a space traversed daily by a multitude of men and women of various ranks and professions. The people of the zenana thus included not only queens, princesses, and concubines who resided in its apartments, but also large numbers of dependents, staff, servants, craftspeople, performers, security personnel, and others, all of whom were under the supervision of administrators called *nājar*. Zenana women were closely connected to each other and to the world outside through transactional networks, whether negotiated through familial bonds, customary zenana protocols, or patron-client relationships. The spatial ordering of royal women's life in the zenana is examined in this chapter, as also the relationship between mobility and the exercise of power within this context.

Chapter 3 covers what I see as a particularly fertile period in the history of women's patronage of architecture in Jodhpur, roughly stretching from 1800 to 1850. Evidence from these decades suggests that an unprecedented number of zenana women, many of them concubines, participated in architectural patronage in this period, with a majority of them commissioning temples in the city. This phase of heightened activity roughly matches the reign of Mahārājā Mān Singh of Jodhpur, whose turbulent hold over the city is discussed here as the context against which architectural patronage by zenana women, especially efforts directed at building temples, unfolded in this period. Much of this chapter is devoted to the archives of two of Mān Singh's spouses, the concubine or *pardāyat* Pan Rai and the queen Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī. *Bahīs* recording architectural commissions made by these two women help us recreate construction sites as they operated in nineteenth century Jodhpur, illuminating them as spaces where a multitude of agents who participated in architectural production—from architects/head masons (*gajdhar*) and suppliers of materials to excavators (*beldār*), sculptors (*silāvaṭ*), and petty labourers (*majūr*), some of them women—converged, brought together by local and regional networks that connected them. By closely describing these various groups, the relationships that connected them, and the processes they were

embroiled in, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that agency in architectural patronage in pre- or early modern India did not lie with the patron alone, but was dynamically distributed across networks that connected an array of agents.

Chapter 4 is centred on monuments commissioned in Jodhpur by the late eighteenth century concubine Gulāb Rai from the court of Maharaja Bijai Singh of Marwar. In the context of their marginalisation within mainstream histories of the dynasty composed by bards and administrators working for male patrons, zenana women such as Gulāb Rai used architecture as an effective medium to claim a place for themselves in the collective memory of the city. Caste iniquities within the zenana and in the city come sharply into focus in this chapter. In late eighteenth century Jodhpur, access to power, legitimacy, and dynastic memory for concubines such as Gulāb Rai were determined to a large extent by their caste status that placed them outside the tightening boundaries of the elite rajput *jāti*. Ideas of caste-purity and pollution also determined the ability of many urban groups to access architectural spaces in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur. Brahmins and merchant castes in late-eighteenth century Marwar under Bijai Singh had mobilised around the influential Vaishnava cult, the Vallabha Sampradāya, to lobby the state to deny access to common resources such as temples and water bodies to lower caste groups and Muslims citing concerns of pollution. The latter were together branded *acchep* or ‘untouchable’ by the state in this period as it pursued a policy of caste segregation.⁸³ The ensuing denial of access and contestations over urban spaces in Jodhpur are reflected in the architecture erected in this period under the patronage of Gulāb Rai and Bijai Singh, both of whom were initiates of the Vallabha Sampradāya.

Together, the various chapters of this dissertation form a complex microhistory of architectural production in early modern India, as seen from the vantage point of monuments sponsored by zenana women in a walled city that lies in the ‘periphery’ of South Asian art history, away from metropolitan centres such as Delhi or Agra. Relying on a rigorous examination of primary sources, this study challenges art historic approaches centred on andro-centric, style-centred frameworks that obscure our understanding of the social histories of architecture in this region. The dissertation pushes against the dominance

⁸³ Cherian, “Ordering Subjects,” 90–155.

in art historical discourse on the region of ostensible style-based labels such as ‘rajput architecture’ or ‘rajput art’, pointing out the ways in which scholarship hinging on such terms reinforces the gender and caste hegemony of certain elite groups and erases the productive labour and agency of others, including women and lower caste artisanal and labouring communities. The deployment of these arbitrary, *jāti*-coded terms in framing the histories of art in India is an eminently political, consequential, and regressive act.

Stylistic categories and art historical approaches based on them that privilege male, elite caste subject positions by investing them with authorial fantasies prevent a fuller understanding of the histories of architectural production in South Asia. They do not hold up against evidence-based scrutiny, and are ripe for a challenge. In taking a social historical approach, this study seeks to demonstrate that complex processes of collaboration and co-production were instrumental to the production of monumental architecture in pre and early modern India. It is hoped that the discussions that follow in this dissertation—on the real world nature of the patronage, production, and use of architecture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur and the exercise of agency by zenana women and a wide range of urban groups, especially artisans, in these processes—is useful to a range of South Asian contexts outside the city.

1. The Women Builders of Jodhpur: Placing Architectural Patronage in Context

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the activities of Jodhpur zenana women as patrons of architecture. It spans an extended period from the founding of the city in the fifteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. The chapter summarises the architectural contributions of zenana women in Jodhpur, picks out dominant trends in their engagement with different types of built structures, and contextualises these engagements against local and regional realities and the history of the Rathore dynasty's rule over the region. It also describes the circumstances that enabled zenana women to act as patrons of architecture, and examines possible ways to interpret their involvement in architectural patronage.

Women Patrons of Architecture in the Indian Sub-Continent: Exception or Rule?

Scholars working in the field of patronage studies with reference to renaissance Europe have commented on the exception narrative built around women's patronage of arts, especially architecture, where praise and attention heaped on a handful of well-known female figures works to prop them up as exceptions or anomalies amidst a sea of male patrons, confirming the general perception/rule that women in general contributed little to the history of arts and architecture.⁸⁴ Such narratives of exception are upheld even as evidence to the contrary are ignored and disciplinary frameworks that suppress a fuller engagement with marginalised histories of art and patronage are reinforced.

Patronage studies are yet an underdeveloped field within art histories of India, yet we can see a similar trend in what constitutes 'the field' with respect to women and patronage. Here too, we are given access to a small number of prominent and 'exceptional' women patrons operating in the imperial centres of South Asia, the Empress Nur Jahan and princesses of the Mughal empire for example, even as women's presence in the histories of Indian art or the building of Indian cities in general (not to mention the presence of other

⁸⁴ See Prologue, Reiss and Wilkins, *Beyond Isabella*.

marginalised groups) is neglected in favour of heroic narratives surrounding elite male patrons.

What little we know of women's involvement in the patronage of architecture in the Indian subcontinent—both from well-documented examples and from other largely unknown structures—indicates that it was in fact commonplace for wealthy women across the history of the region to sponsor architectural structures. In ancient India, Buddhist women of various social classes are known to have participated in architectural patronage on a wide scale, gaining esteem by acting as patrons and donors to shrines and monastic communities spread across the subcontinent.⁸⁵ For medieval South India, the patronage of temples and associated structures and institutions by both royal women from the Chola and Kakatiya dynasties, and laywomen patrons is well documented.⁸⁶ As Padma Kaimal has pointed out, the patronage of temple architecture among Cholas until the eleventh century was in fact mainly female—executed by women from other families who married the Cholas.⁸⁷ As is widely known, the queens and princesses of the Mughal Empire built mosques, gardens, *madrasas*, and caravanserais in addition to sponsoring a wide array of charitable activities.⁸⁸ Less well known are Sultanate women patrons, such as the Ahmedshahi queens of Gujarat who commissioned several prominent mosques as well as funerary monuments in fifteenth and sixteenth century Ahmedabad.⁸⁹ The eighteenth

⁸⁵ Janice D. Willis, "Female Patronage in Indian Buddhism," in *The Powers of Art Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 46–53; Peter Skilling, "Nuns, Laywoman, Donors, Goddesses. Female Roles in Early Indian Buddhism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, December 31, 2001, 241–74; Sushma Trivedi, "Female Donors at Sanchi: Issues of Gender and Faith," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66 (2020): 94–101; Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites."

⁸⁶ On Chola women and their sponsorship of temples in the 10–12th centuries, see, among others, Leslie C. Orr, "Women's Wealth and Worship: Female Patronage of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism in Medieval Tamilnadu," in *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India*, ed. Mandakranta Bose (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124–47; Leslie C. Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Padma Kaimal, "A Man's World? Gender, Family, and Architectural Patronage, in Medieval India," *Archives of Asian Art* 53, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 26–53; K Girija, "Chola Royal Women and Temple Endowments," *Indian Journal for Arts, Humanities and Management Studies* 1, no. 9 (2015): 1–12. On women patrons and donors in Andhra see Cynthia Talbot, "Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 2 (May 1991): 308–40; Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 88–125.

⁸⁷ Kaimal, "A Man's World?"

⁸⁸ See Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India*; Ellison Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan: Empress of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites."

⁸⁹ Prominent women patrons from the Ahmedshahi dynasty include figures such Rani Rupmati, Rani Sabrai and Bai Harira. I am thankful to Riyaz Latif for sharing his unpublished work on the architectural patronage of

century Maratha queen Ahilya Bai was the patron of the renowned Vishwanath temple in Benares.⁹⁰ A handful of studies in recent years on early modern Indian states have brought to light the architectural patronage of figures such as the illustrious Begum Samru, the Begums of Bhopal, and queens from the state of Jaipur.⁹¹ Among others, the structures that these women sponsored in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included palaces, forts, gardens, caravanserais, mosques, churches, and temples.

Inscriptional evidence from Rajasthan too points to widespread patronage of architecture by women. Early examples include the seventh century queen Yashomati who constructed a temple to Krishna in Nagada in Mewar.⁹² The thirteenth century queen Jaytal Devi's commission of a temple to Parshavanath has been recovered in an inscription from Chittor, also in Mewar.⁹³ Examples from the Marwar region include a temple commissioned in the ninth century by a woman identified as the wife of Bhambhushka in Buchakalan village.⁹⁴ A queen of Bundi was the patron of the Lakshminathji temple in the city, built in 1575.⁹⁵ There is also evidence to suggest that women were among those sponsoring architectural structures in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan in the eighteenth century.⁹⁶

Ahmedshahi queens, which he presented at the American Council for Southern Asian Art Symposium in Edinburgh in November 2019. For published references to these structures, see Theodore Cracraft Hope et al., *Architecture at Ahmedabad, the Capital of Goozerat* (J. Murray, 1866), 45–56; Jutta Jain-Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat In Art-Historical Perspective* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981), 7.

⁹⁰ Catherine B. Asher, "Making Sense of Temples and Tirthas: Rajput Construction Under Mughal Rule," *The Medieval History Journal* 23, no. 1 (May 2020): 9–49.

⁹¹ Julia Keay, *Farzana: The Woman Who Saved an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Alisa Eimen, "Reading Place through Patronage Begum Samru's Building Campaign in Early Nineteenth-Century India," in *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2014); Preeti Sharma, *Begum Samru, Her Life and Legacy* (Delhi: Academic Excellence, 2009); Mrinalini Rajagopalan, "Cosmopolitan Crossings: The Architecture of Begum Samrū," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 77, no. 2 (2018): 168–85; Barbara D. Metcalf, "The Buildings of the Begums of Bhopal 'Islamic' Architecture in a Nineteenth-Century Indian Princely State," in *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2014), 10–36; Shaharyar M. Khan, *The Begums of Bhopal: A Dynasty of Women Rulers in Raj India* (London: Tauris, 2000); Claudia Preckel, *Begums of Bhopal* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, Roli Books, 2000); Catherine B. Asher, "Breaking the Rules Purdah, Self-Expression and the Patronage of Maharanis in Jaipur," in *Woman's Eye, Woman's Hand, Making Art and Architecture in Modern India* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2014); Rajagopalan, "Cosmopolitan Crossings."

⁹² Ratanlal Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, vol. 1 (Udaipur: Himanshu Publications, 2006), 33–34.

⁹³ Mishra, 1:71.

⁹⁴ Ratanlal Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, vol. 2 (Udaipur: Himanshu Publications, 2006), 9.

⁹⁵ Asher, "Making Sense of Temples and Tirthas," 33.

⁹⁶ This is indicated by a 1750 inscription on a funerary structure (*chattrī*) in Shekhawati commemorating Sardul Singh, which refers to one of his wives, Mertaniji as one of the patrons. Some scholars have interpreted the inscription to suggest that Mertaniji was in fact the chief patron of the structure. See Ilay Cooper, *The Painted Towns of Shekhawati: A Mapin Guide to India* (Mapin, 1994), 180. Others have interpreted the inscription in favour of Sardul Singh's sons whose names appear alongside Mertaniji's in the inscription. Melia Belli Bose,

Women Patrons in Western India: Early Engagements with Water Architecture

The effects of women's participation in architectural production were perhaps most transformative and crucial to human life and settlement in the desert tracts of Western India, where Jodhpur is located, and which straddles the modern Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. This is because we find women patrons in this region engaging extensively with life-sustaining water harvesting systems. Both Rajasthan and Gujarat are rich in examples of water monuments whose construction was funded by either lay or aristocratic women. The most striking and among the earliest known examples are the stepwells of Gujarat, among which, many, including two monumental structures—the Rūdādevi stepwell in Adalaj (named after its patron the Vaghela queen Rūdādevi and completed in the fifteenth century) and Rāñī kī Vāv in Patan (commissioned by the Chalukya queen Udayamati sometime in the eleventh century) — are attributed to royal women patrons based on inscriptional evidence.⁹⁷ Jutta Jain-Neubauer in her pioneering study of Gujarat's stepwells notes several examples of women in medieval Gujarat who commissioned stepwells: Apart from the queens Rūdādevi and Udayamati, there was Bai Harīra, a zenana superintendent to the Sultanate ruler Mahmūd Begarah who commissioned a stepwell in 1499 CE, and the queen Mināl Devi, who commissioned the Mināl stepwell in Virpur, Saurashtra in the eleventh century.⁹⁸

Examples of women sponsoring water architecture is also available from the erstwhile kingdoms of Rajasthan. Apart from structures in the city of Jodhpur, which are examined later in this chapter, in the sixteenth century, the queen Premaldevi is recorded in an inscription as the patron of the Naulakha *bāvaḍi*, a stepwell in the Mewar region.⁹⁹ Also in this period, a woman named Karpuradevi is recorded in Marwar having commissioned a stepwell named Tārā Vāv after her deceased son Tarachand.¹⁰⁰ In the eighteenth century, Champaji, the mother of Rawat Hari Singh, was the sponsor of a Govardhan temple, a

Royal Umbrellas of Stone: Memory, Politics, and Public Identity in Rajput Funerary Art (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 48. My sincere thanks to my colleague and Shekhawati scholar Saumya Agarwal for this reference. Agarwal herself agrees with the former interpretation, which views Mertaniji as the patron, and believes the names of the sons serve only to establish genealogy. Personal correspondence, December 2020.

⁹⁷ Jain-Neubauer, *the Stepwells of Gujarat in Art-Historical Perspective*, 7.

⁹⁸ Jain-Neubauer.

⁹⁹ Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 1:131.

¹⁰⁰ Mishra, 1:64.



stepwell, and a garden.¹⁰¹ The inscription also records the donations she made **on** at the time of consecration of these structures.¹⁰² A well-known example is Rāñijī kī Bāvaḍi in Bundi, said to have been commissioned around 1699 by the queen Nāthāwatjī. A recent inventory of the stepwells of Bundi indicates at least two more water bodies commissioned by women.¹⁰³ An early eighteenth century map of the city of Amber in the collection of the National Museum in New Delhi refers to several water structures built by women officials called *baḍāraṇ* who served in the Jaipur *zenana*.¹⁰⁴ Among others, it refers to Baḍāraṇ Radha's *kuām* (well) and two *bāvaḍi* (stepwells) commissioned by the *baḍāraṇs* Gogadasi and Kunjkali respectively. In the nineteenth century, the queen Canaṇ Kanwar Shekhavat commissioned the Canaṇsāgar Lake in Bikaner.¹⁰⁵

The importance of manmade water bodies to human settlements in rain-starved western regions of India that lie around the Thar Desert is perhaps self-evident. In their various sizes and shapes, water structures helped conserve rainwater for later use, either on the surface, or through the recharging of underground aquifers, thus sustaining crops, people and animals. In his studies on irrigation in early medieval Rajasthan, B. D. Chattopadhyay has meticulously reviewed inscriptional evidence on the construction of a variety of water architecture such as wells, wells with Persian wheels (*arhaṭ*), stepwells, and tanks in the region sponsored by royals and merchant classes, among others. In doing so, Chattopadhyay has concluded that the construction of water bodies was central to the expansion of agriculture and urbanisation in the region.¹⁰⁶ As a result, human settlements in the Thar and surrounding regions developed in areas where rainwater could be effectively harvested, “almost always in depression, and often where ‘kankar’ or hard ground is on, or

¹⁰¹ Mishra, 1:150.

¹⁰² Mishra, 1:150.

¹⁰³ Anārkālī kī Bāoli (attributed to the 17th century courtesan Anārkālī) and Bachlā Bāshā kī Bāoli (attributed to the 17th century queen Nāthāwatjī who also commissioned Rañijī kī Bāoli), respectively. Divay Gupta, *Baolis of Bundi: The Ancient Stepwells* (New Delhi: INTACH, 2015), 1–126. The inventory also lists Chan Rai kī Bāoli, (date unknown) the name of which is perhaps indication of it having been commission by a courtesan. Courtesans in many Rajasthani kingdoms were referred to by the suffix ‘rai’.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of this map, see Susan Gole, *Indian Maps and Plans From the Earliest Times to the Advent of European Surveys* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1989), 170–71. I have relied on a private image of this map taken at the National Museum, New Delhi, in February 2015. My thanks to Dr. Shaika Mishra for this image.

¹⁰⁵ Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 2:134.

¹⁰⁶ Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India* (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1990), 38–56. See also Cynthia Talbot on water bodies and agrarian expansion in Kakatiya Andhra. Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice*, 94–100.

not far, from the surface.¹⁰⁷ The walled city of Jodhpur, for instance, is located in a steep depression surrounding the rocky outcrop on which its citadel, Mehrangarh, stands. All over Jodhpur, water bodies, large and small, are lined up to catch and store rainwater as it runs easily down rocky hillsides during the brief spell of rain that arrives in July-August.

While small scale facilities for rainwater conservation such as mud dams and shallow *kacchā* reservoirs scattered across rural areas in Western India could be raised and maintained by local communities, the construction of elaborate stone structures and *pucca* reservoirs required significant financial investment and marshaling of resources. Skilled artisans had to be recruited from outside the region, and stone and other raw materials procured in large quantities. Thus, it is the region's elite — aristocratic men and women, as well as wealthy merchant groups—who commonly sponsored these.¹⁰⁸ This does not mean that patronage of waterbodies for communal use was the exclusive preserve of the upper-caste elite. Evidence from Jodhpur shows that smaller structures—tube-shaped wells called *kuāms* and *berās*—were also routinely commissioned by relatively wealthy individuals within lower caste communities for common use. Examples include wells built by members of the *kumbhār* (potters) or *mālī* (gardener) castes in Jodhpur for the use of their respective communities in the *mohallas* or localities in which they resided (the city being organized on caste lines).¹⁰⁹

Women Patrons in Jodhpur and their Buildings: An Overview

In Jodhpur too, in line with what seems to be a regional trend among women builders, a large percentage of structures and the earliest buildings that were commissioned in the city by zenana women are water bodies such as tanks and stepwells.

The general term stepwell encapsulates two main types of structures found in Jodhpur and Rajasthan in general: the *bāvaḍī* (or *baori* as it is commonly transcribed from Hindi; I have transcribed the term as locals in Jodhpur pronounce it) and the *jhālṛā*. Both are

¹⁰⁷ Powlett, *Gazetteer*, 93, quoted in Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ For some examples of merchants and traders, among them brahmins, commissioning water bodies, see Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 1:150; Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 2:8; Mishra, 2:27.

¹⁰⁹ Narayan Singh Bhati, ed., *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, vol. 1 (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 1968), 585–87.

underground structures built in stone. The term *bāvaḍi* (Fig. 1.1) in the Rajasthan context, as well as *vāv* in neighbouring Gujarat refer to rectangular stepped wells where steps descending from one side lead down to rectangular pools framed by stone pavilions, and finally to a cylindrical well at the end. Water emerges from the well and fills the pools. It can then be accessed either from the pool or drawn up by Persian wheels (*arhaṭ*) from the well. Though the main shaft is open to the sky, the pools are usually sheltered and provide cool respite from the desert climate.

A *jhālṛā* (Fig. 1.2) on the other hand is technically a square-shaped stepped pond, open to the sky and accessed by steps leading down from three or more sides. *Jhālṛās* in Jodhpur also feature *arhaṭs* to draw water up without descending into the well. In general, *jhālṛās* are more closely associated in Jodhpur with religious rituals and often stand close to temples. *Bāvaḍīs* are considered quotidian, and were more frequently used for irrigation or as refuge by travellers for their cool sheltered interiors. Compared to *bāvaḍīs*, *jhālṛās* are often more visually arresting at the outset because of their open plans. While this might suggest that one is 'sacred', and the other 'secular', such distinctions make little sense since all fair-sized traditional water structures are in effect, both. It is common to see niches meant for the worship of images of deities in both *jhālṛās* and *bāvaḍīs*. In addition, water from all manners of wells, lakes, and reservoirs are used by locals both for daily needs and for the conduct of different sacred rituals.

The terms *kuām* or *berā* are used in Jodhpur for simple cylindrical wells while the terms *sāgar* and *tālāb* are used for large tanks and reservoirs. The term *tāṅkā* is also used to refer to smaller reservoirs.

Despite their dominance in the early stages, waterbodies were by no means the only types of structures commissioned by women patrons in Jodhpur. In fact, zenana women often built waterbodies such as *bāvaḍīs* in association with enclosed gardens. All gardens by necessity require a water source for irrigation in a rain-starved region, and it is unsurprising that the two should appear together. In Jodhpur, the Maharajas as well as zenana women laid out large gardens, usually enclosed by fortifications and in some cases featuring palaces. Starting at least in the seventeenth century, rulers such as Raja Sur Singh and Maharaja Jaswant Singh, both of whom served in the Mughal court, commissioned extensive lake-side

palaces laid with Persianate *cahārbāg* gardens of the type favoured at the time.¹¹⁰ As scholars of South Asian gardens such as Daud Ali have pointed out, gardens were also an integral part of courtly life in pre-Mughal and pre-Sultanate India, though being poorly preserved, and generally passed over in favour of symmetric and well-preserved Mughal *chahārbāgs*, they have rarely been studied.¹¹¹ Though the maintenance of gardens were accomplished through the daily toil of armies of lower caste gardeners and other specialists, most gardens we know of from India, whether ancient or medieval, can be understood to have been largely privileged spaces whose enjoyment was restricted to royal or otherwise wealthy households that commissioned them. Instances of individuals commissioning ‘public’ or ‘charitable’ gardens are rare, though not unknown.¹¹²

Recent scholarship on early textual sources on courtly gardens in India suggests that such gardens were spaces of private and intimate royal pleasures, much more so than other arenas of courtly life such as assembly halls. The lush setting formed the backdrop for romantic encounters and sensory indulgences—picnics and meetings with courtesans, games, the celebration of the spring festivals.¹¹³ Daud Ali in his study of garden culture in the *Mānasollāsa*, a prescriptive courtly manual composed in medieval Deccan, describes the activities that a king was meant to undertake in the garden. According to the text,

“...the king was to ornament himself, ascend his elephant, which was itself decorated for a *līlāgamana*, or ‘play excursion’, and, along with his attendants and female lovers, make a procession to the garden. There, the king was to play with the women, sitting on benches or at the base of the fabulous trees in the garden. He gave out gifts to his favoured courtiers, and continued sporting with desirous women in the shady parts of the garden, along the banks of artificial streams and ponds, where he plucked and gathered fragrant smelling flowers for the purpose of making ornaments”.

¹¹⁰ The Sursāgar palace and garden in Jodhpur were commissioned by Maharaja Jaswant Singh on the banks of a lake built by his father Raja Sur Singh. The palace and remnants of its *cahārbāg* garden have been extensively restored in recent years. For more on the palace, see Giles Tillotson, *Mehrangarh* (Jodhpur: Mehrangarh Museum Trust, 2018), 60–61.

¹¹¹ See Introduction, Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt, eds., *Garden and Landscape Practices in Precolonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2012).

¹¹² See Phillip B. Wagoner, “Charitable Gardens in Qutb Shahi Andhra,” in *Garden and Landscape Practices in Precolonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2012), 98–119. Daud Ali also refers to what may have been public gardens maintained by kings. See Daud Ali, “Gardens in Early Indian Court Life,” *Studies in History* 19, no. 2 (August 1, 2003): 221–52.

¹¹³ Ali, “Gardens in Early Indian Court Life.” See also Ali and Flatt, *Garden and Landscape Practices in Precolonial India*.

And in spring,

“...the king was to show each plant and creeper to the women, and sit with them in a spot in a beautiful mandapa, surrounded by trees and creepers. He then concealed himself from the women while they searched for him in a sort of game of ‘hide-and-go-see’. All the while, the king was to move about the garden with his companions, plucking flowers, fruits and tender leaves. He was to make the women happy by tying flowers in their hair. After some time, the entourage was to proceed to the lake where they washed their feet or bathed. The women fanned the king with plantain leaves, and they all entered the plantain grove to enjoy fruits, coconut water and roots; they then assumed seats suitable to their rank and the king distributed betel leaves with camphor, cloves and sandal to each, as per their status.¹¹⁴”

These impressions can easily be applied to evidence on the use of gardens from eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur. Paintings from the period (Fig. 1.3, 1.4) depict royal gardens as guarded intimate spaces, much like the zenana, where the ruler took part in the pleasures of music, dance, wine, and fine foods in the company of his royal women, with the group often depicted frolicking in pools or engaged in play. In spring, kings marked the season by swinging on decorated *jhūlās* (swings) in the garden watched by courtiers and the zenana.¹¹⁵

Gardens in early India have also been shown to be spaces for horticultural innovation, with more aesthetic aspects seamlessly coexisting with botanical knowledge and experimentation.¹¹⁶ As we will see in subsequent sections of this chapter, in nineteenth century Jodhpur, diverse concerns—pleasure, hospitality, horticulture, and commerce—intersected in gardens commissioned by zenana women patrons.

From at least the eighteenth century, we find zenana women in Jodhpur commissioning temples large and small to various Hindu cults. Towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century, the rise of two divergent cults—the Vallabha Sampradāya and the Nāth Sampradāya—would inspire a series of temple commissions by zenana women. This temple-building spree saw zenana women take an active role in propagating and reinforcing state-sponsored religious ideologies. The

¹¹⁴ Daud Ali, “Garden Culture in Manasollasa,” in *Garden and Landscape Practices in Precolonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2012), 39–53.

¹¹⁵ See paintings RJS 2072, 2074, 2102, 2121, 2122, among others, from the collection of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur.

¹¹⁶ Ali, “Garden Culture in Manasollasa.”

temple building also served to reinforce newly reconfigured claims to sovereignty and legitimacy of rule put forth by Rathore kings in Jodhpur of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Apart from waterbodies, temples and gardens, another architectural type that zenana women in Jodhpur seem to have engaged themselves with are funerary monuments called *chattrīs* (umbrellas).¹¹⁷ However, zenana documents examined in this study only shed light on one such commission by a nineteenth century patron.¹¹⁸

Women Patrons of Architecture in Jodhpur: From the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries

The earliest woman patron of architecture we know from Jodhpur was one of the wives of the Rathore chieftain Rao Jodha (r. 1453-1489) who is credited with founding the city of Jodhpur in 1459. The ‘Hāḍī Rāṇī,’ as she is known, was a queen who hailed from the Hāḍā Rajput clan that ruled the Hadoti region of Rajasthan (comprising the erstwhile states of Kota and Bundi). She is believed to have commissioned the ‘Rāṇīsar’ (the queen’s tank), a large rock-cut tank (Fig. 1.5) that lies against the ramparts of Jodhpur’s Mehrangarh fort, close to its first defensive gate—the Fateh Pol. The tank is believed to have been sponsored at the time of the city’s foundation. Multiple wells at the bottom connect the Rāṇīsar to aquifers below.

Narratives in Jodhpur around the Rāṇīsar claim that the queen had the tank built for the people of the city, and that it was later brought within the fort’s walls and closed to the public by one of Rao Jodha’s descendants, Rao Maldeo (r. 1532-1562) in the sixteenth century. Perhaps attesting to this history, in times of great drought in the early twentieth century, inhabitants of Jodhpur successfully appealed to the crown to let them draw water from the tank citing precedence.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ For more on *chattrīs* across Rajasthani kingdoms, see Bose, *Royal Umbrellas of Stone: Memory, Politics, and Public Identity in Rajput Funerary Art*.

¹¹⁸ MMPP Bahī 434 VS 1937-39/ 1880-82 CE details the construction of a *chattrī* to commemorate the queen Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāṇī that was paid for by another zenana woman.

¹¹⁹ Letter dated 23.03.31, Major Head PWD File No: 255 C/19/1 B- I, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

Though supplemented by small emergency rainwater reservoirs and a spring¹²⁰ within Mehrangarh fort, the Rāṇīsar always was and continues to be the main water source for the inhabitants of Jodhpur fort.¹²¹ Thus, its importance in sustaining the Rathore dynasty in Jodhpur is unquestionable, though rarely acknowledged. One must assume that the Rāṇīsar was built simultaneously as the fort, if not earlier, since, without its water, the kind of human population required to build and maintain the fort would have been unthinkable. If one were to think about the founding of cities in the Thar region in terms of the fundamental need to procure enough water for its inhabitants, then the Rāṇīsar, commissioned by an unnamed Hāḍī queen, is as much of a foundational monument to this urban settlement as the strategically designed fortress that Rao Jodha built.

The Rāṇīsar collects rainwater runoff from a pristine uninhabited portion of land on the North West front of the citadel Mehrangarh. Rain that flows down the hillslopes collects first in manmade ravines, which lead to the tank. Surface water collected in the tank was lifted up to the fort through an elaborate system of Persian wheels and terracotta pipes. During the monsoons, overflow from the Rāṇīsar flows into waterbodies lower in the slope of the city, first into adjoining Padamsar tank, and then into a stepwell immediately downhill from Rāṇīsar called the Chand Bāvaḍī.

Chand Bāvaḍī was commissioned by another queen of Rao Jodha's, a Chauhan rajput princess called Chand Kanwar.¹²² The Padamsar, according one account, was commissioned by a Sisodiyā queen from Mewar (there is also a rival claim upon it, attributing the structure to a merchant Seth Padam¹²³), wife of the early sixteenth century Rathore chieftain Rao Ganga. Unlike Rāṇīsar, which was reserved for royal use (and is still managed privately by the Jodhpur royal family), the Padamsar seems to have always served as a community water source for the inhabitants of Brahmpuri, a *mohalla* nearby inhabited by Brahmins and other

¹²⁰ A natural source of water that likely first attracted Rao Jodha to the site is a small spring that emerges from the side of the hilly outcrop where the fort now stands. Here once lived, according to legend, a holy man called *Chīḍiyānāth* (lord of the birds) who was the only resident of the hill before Rao Jodha arrived to build his fortress. *Chīḍiyānāth* was displaced as a result of the construction and as he fled, he turned and cursed the chieftain, "may your city never have enough water". Rao Jodha is then said to have taken drastic steps to reverse the curse and sustain his project, including a human sacrifice and the institution of worship in *Chīḍiyānāth's* former abode.

¹²¹ The fort is still home to many families.

¹²² Y. D. Singh, *Rājathān Ke Kue Evam Bāvaḍiyān* (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Grantaghar, 2002), 59–61.

¹²³ Naggār, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 21.

upper caste communities. It remains an important part of the ritual life of the local community today.

There are references to two other tanks sponsored by Jodhpur queens in the sixteenth century— the Phūlelāv Tālāb and Bahūjī re Tālāb (see table in Appendix 1). Though information on women patrons active in the city before the eighteenth century is sketchy at best, there are also isolated references to other figures, such as a court singer (*olgaṇi*) who around 1600 appears to have commissioned a stepwell near a royal lake retreat called Balsamand near Jodhpur¹²⁴ among royal women who were active as patrons in this early period in the city's history is the fabled Anara Begum, an aristocratic Muslim woman who was one of the concubines of Maharaja Gaj Singh of Jodhpur. She sponsored a garden with a stepwell within it known by the name Anārā rī Bāvaḍi. Her sister Kesu is also recorded to have commissioned a *bāvaḍi* referred to as Kesu rī Bāvaḍi.¹²⁵ None of these structures can be traced today.

Groups other than royal women who were associated with and at least partially resident in the zenana were also active as patrons of architecture. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, when Mughal-style zenana-*mardānā*¹²⁶ division of the royal household crystallised in Jodhpur, administrators called *nājar* began to serve in the zenana.¹²⁷ Perhaps following the example of zenana women, and in the fashion of court elite at the time, they too commissioned architecture in the city. We find references to at least two such seventeenth century figures: Nājar Daultrām who commissioned a *bāvaḍi* near a temple called 'Dauji re Mandir'¹²⁸ and Nājar Basant who commissioned a tank called Basant Sāgar.¹²⁹ A stepwell termed Nājarjī rī Bāvaḍi appears in nineteenth century sources on the city.¹³⁰ The nineteenth century zenana administrator Nājar Harkaraṇ commissioned an extant temple in

¹²⁴ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:580.

¹²⁵ Bhati, 1:586.

¹²⁶ *Mardānā* refers to the part of a palace where male members of the royal family resided.

¹²⁷ On the *nājar* in Jodhpur, see Chapter 2.

¹²⁸ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:567.

¹²⁹ Bhati, 1:588.

¹³⁰ See E.P. Leach, *Plan of the City and Environs of Jodhpur*. (Calcutta: Surveyor General of India, 1877), Maps I.S. 98, British Library. The map also refers to a 'Nazar Bag' or garden of the Nājar.

the city, the Lāl Bābājī Mandir near Gulāb Sāgar. The temple's day-to-day patrons included zenana women.¹³¹

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we also see another group associated closely with zenana, royal wet nurses and foster mothers (*dhāī*), emerging as a significant group that sponsored architecture. The *dhāī* appear to have commanded abundant resources. In 1689, Dhāī Rūpa, who was in the service of Maharaja Gaj Singh's daughter Manbhāvathi Bāī, is recorded to have commissioned a stepwell (*bāvaḍi*) referred to as Rūpa Dhāī rī Bāvaḍi.¹³² In 1716, another wet-nurse known by the name Gorā Dhāī (apparently belonging to the Gorā clan of Rajputs) commissioned the still-extant Gorā Dhāī rī Bāvaḍi (the name has now corrupted to 'Gorindā Bāvaḍi') near the grand *havelī* of the Pokhran chiefs in Jodhpur.¹³³

It is only in the eighteenth century that we find evidence of zenana women commissioning temples in Jodhpur. This shift appears to have first occurred during the reign of Maharaja Ajīt Singh (r. 1707-1724). Ajīt Singh's chief queen Udot Kanwar Rāñāwat is recorded to have commissioned a Krishna temple in Makrana Mohalla, just below a horse path leading down from the fort to the city. A disused temple to Krishna as Ṭhākurjī does still stand here, tucked away inside a private property. However, the façade of this temple resembles buildings from nineteenth century Jodhpur. If this is indeed Udot Kanwar's temple, it has been subjected to several refurbishments in its career.

The story of Ajīt Singh's reign is narrated ad nauseam in histories of Marwar but a brief summary is in order here as relevant context to the above-mentioned shift, which saw zenana women engage in temple building.¹³⁴

Ajīt Singh was the posthumously born son of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar (r.1638-78), a prominent Mughal commander. A powerful presence in the imperial court,

¹³¹ The concubine Pan Rai is among zenana women who are recorded visiting and sponsoring worship at this temple. MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1899-1904/1842-47, f. 59.

¹³² Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:586.

¹³³ Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 166. You can still (in November 2019) find this *bāvaḍi* in the city directly on the street in front of the Pokhran Havelī. However, it is hidden behind modern constructions jutting out into the street. The gates are usually locked but keys can be found in one of the teashops in front.

¹³⁴ For a detailed summary of the events of this period, see Reema Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co., 2006), 589–603; Hooja, 704–10.

Jaswant Singh found himself on the wrong side of the succession battle between Mughal princes Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh. When Aurangzeb won the Mughal throne, Jaswant Singh found himself fall out of favour with the new Emperor. Not long after, in 1678, he died while on a military campaign in Jamrud in the northwestern frontier of the Mughal Empire, leaving no male heir to inherit Jodhpur's throne. Though two of his wives were apparently pregnant at the time, and one eventually gave birth to a male heir—Ajit Singh—Aurangzeb refused to recognise the boy as the ruler of Marwar. Thus began a long conflict between the Rathores and their allies and the Mughal Emperor. Though a partial reconciliation occurred in 1698 and Ajit Singh was allotted a part of Marwar's territories, the *parganā* of Jodhpur itself was placed under direct imperial rule. During this period, the city and the ancestral fort of the Rathores were occupied by Mughal forces. It was only after Aurangzeb's death in 1707 that Ajit Singh managed to expel Mughal forces and wrest these territories back. A full reconciliation with the Mughals and a pardon followed, during the reign of Aurangzeb's successor Bahadur Shah I.

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, with Ajit Singh back in power in Jodhpur, and the unravelling of Mughal hold on its provinces already underway, a distinctly different period in Jodhpur's history began. It is in this period that Marwar's rulers, more or less freed from imperial assignments that once kept them away from their ancestral lands and capital city for much of their reign, were able to concentrate on consolidating their positions within the kingdom and in the region. Even as they maintained largely symbolic and opportunistic ties to the Mughal emperor in Delhi, Marwar's kings in this period began striking alliances with other Hindu Rajput kingdoms in the region against the Mughals.

The sway of the Mughal Empire in the provinces waned through the eighteenth century. As a result, emperors in Delhi (with all the weight of the imperial army behind them) who once acted as the central legitimising authority that granted and protected the claims of various Rajput monarchs on their thrones, ceased to perform this legitimising role effectively. As a result, successive rulers in Jodhpur, among other Rajput kingdoms in the region, looked for other sources of legitimation. Across what is now the state of Rajasthan, religious cults that rose to prominence in this period—such as the Vallabha Sampradāya—

began to occupy the place vacated by the Mughal Emperor, and many Rajput rulers started fashioning themselves as divinely ordained Hindu kings.¹³⁵

Sovereignty as it was encoded in the practices of Ajit Singh and his successors—especially in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century by when a second interim of close relationship with Mughals under Ajit Singh's son Abhai Singh too had ended—was rooted in distinctly regional, Hindu modes of kingship, legitimised by public expressions of devotion that sought to represent the ruler as the representative of a beloved deity and often, a defender of distinct, orthodox strains of Hinduism. Jodhpur's rulers also sought to buttress their inherited authority and combat threats from rebellious Rajput chiefs within the kingdom in this period through alliances with powerful non-Rajput groups, among them wealthy merchant communities. Both strategies intersected in the reign of the Maharaja Bijai Singh (r. 1752-93), when the Rathore state became an enthusiastic patron of the pan-Rajasthani Krishna Bhakti cult the Vallaba Sampradāya, the primary devotees of which in Jodhpur were upper caste merchants.¹³⁶

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, as Rathore kings, freed from military obligations to the Mughals, began to spend more time in the capital, the patronage of court arts such as painting began in earnest in Jodhpur.¹³⁷ Painting ateliers were established at Mehrangarh fort in Jodhpur and Ahicchatragarh fort in Nagaur that produced portraiture and illustrated epics reflecting the spiritual persuasions of various eighteenth century kings.¹³⁸ We also see building activities accelerate in the city in this period. Immediately after

¹³⁵ For more on 'Hindu Kingship' in Rajasthan, see Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Monika Horstmann, *Visions of Kingship in the Twilight of Mughal Rule* (Amsterdam: The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2006).

¹³⁶ See Divya Cherian, "Fall from Grace?: Caste, Bhakti, and Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century Marwar," in *Bhakti and Power: Debating India's Religion of the Heart* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2019), 181–91; Cherian, "Ordering Subjects."

¹³⁷ The itinerant courts the Rathores of the seventeenth century established in various Mughal provincial capitals such as Aurangabad or Lahore, also fostered artists. For an example of such patronage, see folios of an illustrated Siddhānta-sāra made for Jaswant Singh I in Aurangabad, exhibited as part of the 2015 exhibition 'Sultans of Deccan India' (catalogue number 169). Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 285–308.

¹³⁸ Starting from the Ajit Singh period, portraits of Rathore kings produced by ateliers in Jodhpur and Nagaur increasingly picture them with their tutelary deities, in addition to illustrating religious epics. In Ajit Singh's case, he portrayed himself an ardent devotee of the Rathore's clan deity, the great Goddess variously known as Sakti, Durga, or Chamunda. His late eighteenth century successor Bijai Singh embraced the Vallabha Sampradāya, aligning himself with the merchant groups that patronised the cult, whereas Maharaja Mān Singh in the first half of the nineteenth century embraced an esoteric cult of Shaivite ascetics called the Nāth Sampradāya. In all reigns, paintings depict the rulers as devotees in possession of divine grace. See Debra

Ajīt Singh reclaimed Jodhpur in 1707, a spate of construction was necessitated to rebuild and refurbish the Jodhpur fort after years of neglect under Mughal occupation.¹³⁹ Ajīt Singh added a new defensive gate with battlements, called the Fateh Pol, to the citadel. He also revamped the residential spaces, building multi-storied palace apartments. Like his wife, the queen Udot Kanwar, he is known to have commissioned a temple—to Krishna as Ṭhākurjī Gaṅśyāmjī—in a busy market area called *Juni Dhān Maṇḍī* (grain market) in the walled city.¹⁴⁰

The presence of formerly itinerant Rathore kings in their capital Jodhpur in the eighteenth century also meant that their zenanas, which generally travelled with them on Mughal assignments to distant imperial territories, also returned to the city. It is perhaps against this backdrop of the renewed presence of Rathore kings and their courts in Jodhpur, and the reconfigurations of Rathore sovereignty that took place throughout the eighteenth century which put devotional practices at the centre of courtly life, that we can assess women patrons and their forays into temple-building in ‘post-Mughal’ Jodhpur.

After Udot Kanwar in the early eighteenth century, the next record of a zenana woman commissioning a temple appears in 1756, when a *gāyaṇ* from the court of Maharaja Bakhat Singh (r. 1751-52) built a temple to house a royal icon.¹⁴¹ This was followed by Rani Jatan Kanwar Shekhāvat, a member of the zenana of Maharaja Bijai Singh of Jodhpur, who built a Vaishnavite temple dedicated to the deity Lakshminarayan c.1768.¹⁴² Another of Bijai Singh’s queens, Indar Kanwar Tanwar is recorded having commissioned a Ṭhākurjī temple.¹⁴³ A princess from the same reign, wife of Bijai Singh’s son Fateh Singh, also commissioned a Krishna temple in the period, near the Mertiya city gate.¹⁴⁴

The most notable example of a zenana woman engaging in temple building in the eighteenth century also comes from Bijai Singh’s reign, when his concubine Gulāb Rai

Diamond, Catherine Ann Glynn, and Karni Singh Jasol, *Garden & Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur* (Thames & Hudson, 2008), 21–41.

¹³⁹ Many of the palaces now extant at the Jodhpur fort such as the buildings surrounding the Daulat Khana courtyard date from the reigns of Ajīt Singh and Abhai Singh when the fort was extensively rebuilt and repaired and very little survives from the period of or before Mughal occupation. See Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 11–12.

¹⁴⁰ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:591–92.

¹⁴¹ Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 2:79.

¹⁴² Naggār, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 60–65.

¹⁴³ Naggār, 60–65.

¹⁴⁴ Naggār, 60–65.

commissioned a monumental temple to the Vallabha deity Śrīnāthjī. The temple, completed c.1778, was dedicated to Śrīnāthjī in his form as the garden (*kunj*)-dwelling deity Kunjbiḥārījī. It is built on a scale that both mirrors and rivals a similar temple that Bijai Singh himself established for the Vallabha Sampradāya in Jodhpur, the Gangśyāmjī Mandir. In addition to the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, Gulāb Rai commissioned two large tanks in the city—the Gūlab Sāgar and the Fateh Sāgar, of which, the latter, was still incomplete at the time of her death.¹⁴⁵ She also commissioned a garden near the tanks, called the *Māylā Bāg* (enclosed garden) or *Pāsvānjī Bāg* (the Pāsvān’s garden) in records, and a stepwell nearby.¹⁴⁶

Even as zenana women in the eighteenth century began to commission temple architecture, water bodies continued to form a significant portion of the corpus of structures that they built. A striking example from the early eighteenth century is the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā (now corrupted to “Tūrji kā Jhālṛā”); a stepwell built by the queen Jai Kanwar Tunwar from Patan in Rajasthan, who was married to Ajīt Singh’s son and successor Abhai Singh (r. 1724-49). The *jhālṛā* stands in the very same locality called Makrana Mohalla (located right below an erstwhile path for horses that leads down to the city from the eastern face of the citadel Mehrangarh), as the temple that Ajīt Singh’s queen Udot Kanwar is recorded to have commissioned. The location chosen by Jai Kanwar, which put her stepwell in proximity to another structure by a queen, does not seem to have been accidental. Such clustering of monuments appears to have been a part of a larger phenomenon whereby zenana women gradually added more structures in and around a site where a preceding queen or concubine had raised buildings. The most striking example of such a cluster can be seen on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank, sponsored in the late eighteenth century by the concubine Gulāb Rai. In the nineteenth century, other patrons from the zenana constructed a number of new structures—all of them temples—directly on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. Incidentally, the Gulāb Sāgar itself is only a few hundred meters away from the equally monumental Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā— with the two structures acting as nodes in an extended area dotted with buildings commissioned by zenana women.

¹⁴⁵The Fateh Sāgar was completed by Bijai Singh’s successor Bhīm Singh and named Fateh Sāgar after his son, Fateh Singh. Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:572.

¹⁴⁶ Gulāb Rai’s legacy is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Another notable eighteenth century patron of water structures is the princess Motī Bāī, who was the daughter of a *khavās* or concubine of Maharaja Bakhat Singh, the ruler who succeeded Abhai Singh. Motī Bāī commissioned a stepwell called Motī Kuṇḍ. She is also credited with having commissioned a temple to Krishna.¹⁴⁷

The most prolific and presumably the wealthiest (considering the scale of the buildings she commissioned) patron of architecture from among Jodhpur's zenana women was the concubine Gulāb Rai in the late eighteenth century. However, the most fertile period in the history of the zenana in terms of widespread engagement by its members with city architecture seems to have occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. Between 1800 and 1850, we find evidence of a large number of queens and concubines—around fifteen of them—participating in architectural patronage within a short stretch of time mainly composed of the reign (1803-43) of Maharaja Mān Singh of Jodhpur. Most zenana women in this period chose to build temples. A majority of these were dedicated to an esoteric cult of ascetics called the Nāth Sampradāya, which rose to prominence in Jodhpur in the nineteenth century with royal patronage from Maharaja Mān Singh. Other zenana women commissioned stepwells and gardens.

Among prominent patrons from the reign of Mān Singh is the concubine Pan rai, who commissioned a garden and stepwell in this period. Prominent temples built by zenana women in this period include the grand Nāth temple, Jas Mandir (which straddles the Gulāb Sāgar and the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā) and the Macch Mandir, which is strategically located in the Juni Dhān Maṇḍī, facing the Krishna temple completed by Mān Singh's grandfather Bijai Singh. One of Mān Singh's wives, the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāñijī would make a name for herself as a patron and devotee after Mān Singh's passing. As a queen mother in the 1840s, she commissioned a Vaishnavite temple in Jodhpur called the Tījā Mājī temple, as well as other structures. Mān Singh period patrons from the zenana and their buildings are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁷ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:580.

Jodhpur Zenana at the Dawn of Colonial rule

It is important to note that by Mān Singh's reign, British power in the region was on the ascent. In 1818, Mān Singh, following other rulers in the region, grudgingly accepted British paramountcy over his kingdom in return for protection from relentless attacks by Maratha forces from the south. The period that followed, until his death, was a period of constant friction between the Rathore monarch and the East India Company's agents in Rajputana, caused by Mān Singh's attempts to assert his autonomy and the East India Company's efforts to bring the ruler (who they saw as an errant king under the spell of the Nāth Sampradāya) in line. This state of things was made worse by internal rebellions by Mān Singh's subsidiary chiefs. The zenana, though party to these conflicts and negotiations, seems to have largely been able to maintain its structures, including existing systems of patronage, in this period, as proven by its prolific patronage of architecture and other arts at the time. In fact, commentators have noted that British officials in this period were held by Mān Singh to an agreed-upon policy of 'non-interference in internal affairs,' as a result of which the internal workings of the state and the royal household were not directly affected by British paramountcy for much of Mān Singh's reign.¹⁴⁸

Looking at his reign in the light of the changes that were unleashed later, Mān Singh's rule in Jodhpur can perhaps be judged to be the last to preserve the Jodhpur zenana as considered in this work—an institution more or less in possession of its powers of influence and unaffected by the changes that would be wrought on the spatial and administrative organisation of the royal household starting around the mid-nineteenth century, by when, British involvement in Jodhpur's internal affairs became more resolute. The zenana during Mān Singh period retained most of its powers, spaces, institutions, and patterns of patronage as described in Chapter 2 of this work. Much of this would change drastically in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As Jodhpur passed into the reign of Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh (r.1843-73), an outsider who moved to Jodhpur from the Rathore subsidiary kingdom of Idar in modern-day Gujarat to be adopted as heir (Mān Singh having died without a male heir), British

¹⁴⁸ P. R. Shah, *Raj Marwar During British Paramountcy : A Study in Problems and Policies up to 1923* (Jodhpur: Sharda Publishing House, 1982), 12–15.

control over Jodhpur's administrative affairs progressively became much tighter. Takhat Singh's adoption itself was a result of negotiations between the dowager queens of the Jodhpur zenana and British authorities. Jodhpur's incorporation into the British Empire became absolute after the rebellion of 1857, in the aftermath of which, the British Crown took direct control over territories in India. The British Government in India then set out on a project to integrate various 'princely states' into the fabric of the empire, with campaigns to westernise and modernise their 'princes' through English-style education, and crucially, by separating them from what they saw as the corruptive influences of the zenana.¹⁴⁹ 

The zenana's long standing involvement in administrative matters and the influence of its members over the sovereign were deemed by the British as well as rebel *thākurs* in this period to be 'interferences' and signs of misrule. A political dispatch from the reign of Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh, for example, accuses him of the "delegation of power into the hands of concubines and slave girls."¹⁵⁰ As their power in administrative matters grew, British administrators enforced controls on the zenana's influence beyond its walls. In 1869, Takhat Singh was forced to sign a treaty whereby his ministers were forbidden from receiving instructions from the zenana or its servants without the express agreement of the Maharaja and the British Political Agent.¹⁵¹ References to influential zenana administrators called the *nājar*, who were once the main conduits for transfer of information between the zenana and the ruler cease in the period after Takhat Singh.

Towards the turn of the twentieth century, several institutions of the zenana that defined it in the previous century either disappeared or were made illegitimate. These included polygamy, concubinage, and the practice of employing *nājar* as zenana administrators. Some practices disappeared even sooner, such as *sati*—the self-immolation committed by zenana women on a ruler's funeral pyre. Mān Singh was the last ruler whose

¹⁴⁹ For more on the zenana institution and attitudes to it under British colonial rule, see Barbara N. Ramusack, "The Indian Princes and Their States," Cambridge Core, December 2003, 88–205; Angma Dey Jhala, *Courtly Indian Women in Late Imperial India* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 1–27.

¹⁵⁰ Report on the Political Administration of Rajputana States 81: Jodhpur, 1868-69. Political dispatch number 365 P, 12 November 1969, quoted in Shyam Singh Tanwar, *State Administration in Rajasthan, 19th Century: With Special Reference to Jodhpur State*, 1st ed. (Jodhpur: Zugl.: Rajasthan Univ., Diss., 2005), 38.

¹⁵¹ Tanwar, 39.

death rituals saw royal women and female servants from the zenana commit *sati* before it was finally outlawed under pressure from British administrators.¹⁵²

The zenana's loss of influence and the demise of several of its defining (for better or for worse) institutions in the late nineteenth century was perhaps effected as much by administrative changes ushered in by treaties with the British government, as by changes to the spatial organisation of power in Jodhpur in this period. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, as the threat of invasions by other Rajput rulers disappeared under British paramountcy, Jodhpur's rulers began to abandon the cloistered palaces perched within their hilltop defensive fort for more spacious European-style Bungalows in the plains below. In fact, Takhat Singh was the last Rathore ruler to reside fully within palaces in Mehrangarh fort and who is depicted in paintings and photographs spending time in the zenana courtyards in the fort in the company of his wives and concubines. There are also indications that, in line with British policies aimed at the modernisation of Rajput states through English education among other things, zenana women, like the rulers, were 'encouraged' to patronise newer types of structures in keeping with updated ideas on what constituted public or charitable utilities. We can see zenana women in twentieth century Rajput kingdoms sponsoring modern facilities such as schools and hospitals.¹⁵³ Some others however, resisted such stipulations. The latter was the case with the early twentieth century Jaipur queen Mājī Tanwarjī. The colonial government in Jaipur gave Tanwarjī permission to build a temple she wished for only on the condition that she agreed to spend an equal amount of money to build a new school nearby. Though the queen initially agreed to this demand, she refused to build the school despite several warnings, choosing to spend her resources on the temple alone.¹⁵⁴

Despite the changes ushered in by the integration into the British Empire, there are isolated instances of royal women acting as patrons of architecture in late-nineteenth century Jodhpur. There are records from the reigns of Takhat Singh (r. 1843-73), his son Jaswant Singh (r. 1873-95) and even the early twentieth century monarch Sumer Singh (r.

¹⁵² *Sati* was officially banned in British territories in India in 1829. Indirectly ruled princely states such as Marwar were only persuaded to enforce the ban in the decades after.

¹⁵³ The Rāj Dādīsā Hospital and the Rājmātā Krishna Kumari Girls High School, both in Jodhpur, and the Mahārāṇī Gayatri Devi Girls School in Jaipur are some examples of such patronage.

¹⁵⁴ Asher, "Breaking the Rules Purdah, Self-Expression and the Patronage of Maharanis in Jaipur."

1911-18), that attest to some royal women commissioning architecture, albeit on a much smaller scale than in previous periods; mainly building temples and memorial *chattrīs*, and no known waterbodies. Among notable zenana patrons of architecture we know from late nineteenth century Jodhpur is the concubine Nainī Jān or Nainī Bāī, whose commission, a temple known by the name Nainī Bāī kī Mandir, can be found on the busy street leading to the Mertiya city gate of Jodhpur. However, late nineteenth and early twentieth century patrons and monuments remain outside the purview of this study in its present form.

Women of Means: Zenana Patrons' Access to Resources

The large-scale involvement of zenana women in the financing of architectural structures in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur is evident in the overview above. This section examines the kind of resources they had access to that enabled them to execute architectural projects. Architecture is arguably the most expensive and resource-intensive of the arts to patronise. Thus, a central factor naturally was money. As documents from Jodhpur show, zenana women held a great deal of financial autonomy even if their fortunes were inevitably determined to a great degree by the policies of the sovereign. While all zenana women would have sought a favourable relationship with the Maharaja as a route to greater status in the zenana and better access to resources, this was more so the case with lower-caste, non-Rajput concubines than aristocratic Rajput queens or queen mothers. The latter were assured certain privileges simply by the prestige of their natal families and the ruler's desire to maintain ties to them, as also by their elevated status as queens or mothers to male heirs.

The main source of income for zenana women were revenues from their landholdings and the allowances they received from the royal treasury. As members of the royal family, all zenana women were assigned revenue allocations (*paṭṭā*) of villages in Marwar to meet their expenses. As with revenue allocations that the king made to the *ṭhākurs* or to other court officials and dependants, the land thus conferred did not belong to the grantee. Rather, they were temporarily assigned its yield and rights of administration even as the ownership resided with the Maharaja. When a zenana woman died, the *paṭṭā* reverted to

the Maharaja to be reassigned elsewhere.¹⁵⁵ The revenue collected as taxes from *paṭṭā* villages formed the bulk of a zenana woman's income.

Paṭṭā villages were assigned to all zenana women, whether queen mothers, queens, concubines, or princesses.¹⁵⁶ However, the number and yield of the villages and thus the amount of revenue allotted, depended on the hierarchies of the zenana and the discretion of the Maharaja. Personal favourites of the ruler or the most senior queen (*paṭṛāṇī*) were assigned more revenue than others. These differences can be illustrated through the *paṭṭā* revenues assigned to zenana women in nineteenth century Jodhpur under the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh. The highest amount then assigned to a zenana woman was 25,500 rupees a year from nine villages granted to the chief queen and favourite Lāḍī Rāṇāwatji. The queen mother Bhaṭianīji was entitled to 22,500 rupees from five villages while Takhat Singh's daughter the princess Sire Kanwar was allotted 25,000 rupees from four villages. The courtesan (*gāyaṇ*) Mang Rai, who appears to have held great influence in Takhat Singh's court from frequent references to her in zenana records, was allotted 17,000 rupees in *paṭṭā* revenue. Concubines of Takhat Singh's predecessor Mān Singh, who still lived in the zenana during Takhat Singh's reign, were given revenue villages of relatively lower worth—valued between 5000 rupees and 500 rupees depending on their status. A wet-nurse (*dhāī*) of Mān Singh's then living in the zenana however was given a *paṭṭā* village worth 10,000 rupees.¹⁵⁷

In being assigned *paṭṭā* villages, zenana women became administrators in their own right of the territories they held. Records demonstrate them not only collecting taxes including a share of the produce from their revenue villages, but also imposing fines as punishment for offenses committed in the territory.¹⁵⁸ The collection of taxes and fines as well as routine administrative matters were handled on their behalf by men in the employ of zenana women who acted as their representatives (*havāldār* or *kāmdār*) in *paṭṭā* villages.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Except in cases where they were awarded in perpetuity or could be inherited by descendants after the payment of a tax (*rekh*) to the crown. In the case of zenana women, upon their death, the crown annexed the villages. See RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 04, VS. 1859-96/AD 1802-39, f. 32-33.

¹⁵⁶ Other significant members of court attached to the zenana such as the *nājar* were also assigned revenue villages. See RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 03 VS 1818 (Bahī dated c.1850 CE; wrongly attributed to an early period in RSAB catalog), f. 36.

¹⁵⁷ RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 03 (Bahī dated c.1850 CE; wrongly attributed to an earlier period in RSAB catalog), f. 19-32.

¹⁵⁸ MMPP Bahī 355, VS 1942/ 1885 CE, f.22.

¹⁵⁹ MMPP Bahī 355, VS 1942/ 1885 CE, f. 31-35.

During the harvest season, these officials collected a portion of the harvest from the villages and transported it to Jodhpur, often arranging for the sale of the grain in the market and depositing the cash with the zenana women in question.

Apart from the income from *paṭṭā* villages, zenana women can often be seen receiving regular allowances for personal expenses from the royal treasury. These payments were called *hāth kharac*. These were paid out monthly, as in the case of the queen Tijā Bhaṭiyāñī, who, in the year 1856, as queen mother, received a monthly allowance from the royal treasury of 1000 rupees. Of this, she dutifully set apart 100 rupees every month towards expenses incurred in the construction of a temple she had commissioned.¹⁶⁰

Zenana women also borrowed money from lenders in the city to meet expenses,¹⁶¹ and sometimes received money from the royal treasury expressly to cover expenses towards a construction project.¹⁶² Such special allowances were likely responses to petitions for funds made directly to the Maharaja. An unlikely source of revenue came from the monuments they commissioned themselves. This was the case with the *bāvaḍis* that many concubines commissioned in the nineteenth century. As discussed earlier, *bāvaḍis* were usually built within gardens, and served as a means of irrigating crops planted in the garden, which included flowering plants, fruit trees, as well as various vegetables and tubers. The accounts of many of these gardens show that the produce from the garden was sold in the market by the gardeners who managed the garden for the patron and the revenue thus generated was deposited with zenana women. In some cases, the money was interred into accounts maintained for construction expenses at the same site, thus letting it be invested back into the garden when expenses arose.¹⁶³

All of these various sources of income formed the personal funds of zenana women from which they paid household expenses of their own, including salaries of their personal servants, the costs of running their households, as well as obligations of gifting and donations to religious institutions. However, major general expenses of the zenana, such as

¹⁶⁰ MMPP Bahī 254 VS 1913/ 1856 CE

¹⁶¹ MMPP Bahī 91, f.45 VS 1914/1857 CE; MMPP Bahī 609 (?) VS 1911/1854 CE (there is some confusion prevailing at the archive regarding the document number of this bahī recording the income and expenses of the queen Lāḍī Rāñawatjī from the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh)

¹⁶² MMPP Bahī 226 VS 1913/1856 CE, f.3

¹⁶³ MMPP Bahī 10 VS. 1892/1835 AD, f.57.

salaries of general administrative and security staff, repairs and upgrades to the residences, expenses incurred in celebrations organised at festivals, and even the procurement of clothes for zenana women on special occasions, were covered by direct allowances to the zenana administration from the royal treasury.¹⁶⁴ This meant that prominent members of the zenana had a large amounts of disposable income available after personal expenses to do with what they will, enabling them to commission not only architecture but paintings, jewellery, textiles, and other luxury goods as well.

Money aside, the execution of a construction project was an enormous exercise in marshalling resources, both human and material, from diverse sources, and bringing them together at a construction site. As women living under the rules of purdah, zenana women do not seem to have enjoyed—or rather as aristocratic women, they did not need to debase themselves to—a range of mobility¹⁶⁵ that would have allowed for their bodily presence at construction sites they had commissioned. Neither did they personally supervise the task of procuring materials or labour required to execute a construction project. Instead, these tasks were devolved to a team of personal servants who acted as a patron's eyes, ears, and arms at various sites in the city. These staff members included the male *kāmdār* and female *dāvaḍīs* as well as a range of others that zenana women employed to manage their household and businesses. It is these individuals, as well as the master mason or architect of the construction project—the *gajdhar*—who handled everyday responsibilities of supervising labour and materials towards the goal of realising a patron's architectural ambitions. Of these, the *kāmdār* and *dāvaḍīs* can be seen going back and forth between the zenana and the city often, transmitting information as well as money and materials on behalf of the patron towards various ends. The role of acting as a patron's intermediaries at construction sites in city appears to have been carried out largely by male *kāmdār*, although one does occasionally find references to female *dāvaḍīs* performing the same role.¹⁶⁶ The *kāmdār* carried out myriad duties, such as the disbursal of salaries and the maintenance of attendance sheets and accounts books. One also sees them travelling out of Jodhpur, along

¹⁶⁴ The general expenses of the zenana institution were met by separate revenue allocations of villages. MMPP Bahī 1951 VS 1872/1815 CE, f. 1-2. The zenana also received regular allowances of money from the royal treasury (*khāsā khazānā*) for miscellaneous expenses such as the procurement of clothes or for organising birthday celebrations of the Maharaja to be held in the zenana. MMPP Bahī 272, VS 1889-90/1832-33 CE, f. 36.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter 2 for a discussion on zenana women, purdah, and mobility.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 2 on the personal staff of zenana women.

with the *gajdhar*, to acquire raw materials such as stone.¹⁶⁷ The importance of these intermediaries to the patron and to the successful execution of construction projects is discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Suffice it here to say that without their work as agents and mediators, a patron's financial resources could not have been translated into monuments in the city.

Zenana women in Jodhpur thus had financial independence and access to the human resources required to commission architecture. It also seems self-evident that they had the ruler's sanction to build, as without it, commissioning monuments in the city of Jodhpur, a territory that fell directly under crown rule, would not have been possible. However, it is a matter of speculation what kind of building activities were given sanction and if any were rejected. In other words, what were zenana women patrons not allowed to build? It appears that there were certain prescribed spheres where zenana women were allowed to exercise their ambitions of commissioning architecture. The primary genres of architecture that the Jodhpur zenana seems to have engaged with—stepwells, temples, gardens, and funerary architecture—align with some long-established precedents for women commissioning architecture in the Indian subcontinent. The primary socially permissible spheres of building activity for wealthy women in the region, as in many other parts of the world, appear to have been architecture ostensibly oriented towards piety or public good. This can be seen in the preponderance of temples and water structures built by women in medieval and early modern western India, as also in the widespread engagement with temples of royal and laywomen patrons and donors in medieval Tamilnadu and Andhra. Prominent women patrons from the Mughal Empire such as the empress Nur Jahan or the princess Jahanara did build private royal gardens, but also commissioned caravanserais, mosques, mausoleums, and *dargahs*, in addition to subsidising Hajj pilgrimages.¹⁶⁸ Laywomen patrons of Buddhism in ancient North India donated to monasteries and shrines. Normative texts such as the *Kāmasūtra* prescribe that courtesans spend their wealth on charitable commissions such as temples and reservoirs.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 2 for more.

¹⁶⁸ See, among others, Findly, *Nur Jahan*; Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites"; Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India*.

¹⁶⁹ Findly, "Women's Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites," 101.

The women of the Jodhpur zenana thus appear to be following a tradition of devout female donors investing in charitable enterprises. They built not only water structures, temples and funerary monuments, but also donated extensively to various religious cults, organised worship rituals and readings, undertook pilgrimages, and fed Brahmins as a meritorious activity. What we do not have are records of them sponsoring defensive architecture such as forts or city gates as various Maharajas did. Strategic architecture of this type appears to have largely been outside the purview of zenana women. In spite of references to many queens maintaining modest town residences (referred to in records as *nohrā*¹⁷⁰) outside the fort, we also do not have any evidence of them commissioning grand residential spaces or pleasure palaces as the Maharajas did. In all of the entries in the genealogy of Jodhpur's queens that refer to their patronage of architecture, I could only find one vague entry that referred to a queen constructing a palace or a residential building (*mahal*).¹⁷¹ It is also notable that zenana women appear not to have been at liberty to commission structures in or around the royal zenana where they resided. Construction activity in the zenana was undertaken on the orders of the Maharaja, with funding from the royal treasury.¹⁷² This indicates a policy of keeping the palace and zenana environment firmly under the supervision and control of the ruler, a strategy that is also reflected in the administrative structures of the zenana institution. Key administrative and security staff and general servants at the zenana (as opposed to staff employed privately by individual zenana women) were on the payroll of the Maharaja rather than zenana women, and owed their loyalty to the ruler rather than the residents of the zenana.¹⁷³

Merit, Mirth, Money, and Memory: Interpreting the Motives of Zenana Women Patrons

It is a foregone conclusion that architectural patronage is a public expression of the power and wealth wielded by a patron, and a means of gaining social standing as well as political legitimacy and influence. In the case of women patrons in societies where the veil was prevalent, the visibility and sheer materiality of architecture takes on a special significance.

¹⁷⁰ Not much is known about these residences except isolated references in documents to particular buildings such as 'Lāḍī Bhaṭṭiyāṇī kā nohrā'. These townhouses were likely used by queens to host their natal families in Jodhpur or as a rest stop during trips out of the zenana.

¹⁷¹ The genealogy refers to a queen of Takhat Singh's commissioning buildings (*mahal*) outside the Nagori City Gate. It is unclear what purpose the buildings served. Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 81.

¹⁷² MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.3.

¹⁷³ See Chapter 2 for more.

Architectural monuments in such cases seem to act as counterweights to the largely disembodied public personas of their patrons. As Afshan Bokhari has argued in the context of the Mughal Empire, architectural patronage shaped the public persona of elite women who were unable to access public cults centred on their bodies as their male counterparts could.¹⁷⁴ If one examines the north Indian context, male royals, however remote from their citizens, cultivated personal cults centred on their adorned bodies as presented to the public at rituals such as the *jharokhā darśan* (in the case of Mughal emperors) or splendid royal *asvārī* processions that were witnessed by thronging crowds in the streets of their capital cities (common in Jodhpur). This was in addition to the circulation of painted portraits and other materials representing their sovereign body. Female royals on the other hand were largely denied these avenues for mythologizing themselves or their power. In such contexts, the buildings that women commissioned formed a point of contact that acquainted subjects with female authority, in essence “reifying¹⁷⁵” on the urban landscape the power that royal women wielded within court hierarchies.

Within the historiography of women’s patronage of architecture in the Indian subcontinent, one of the dominant ways in which acts of construction by women patrons is understood and framed is as charitable deeds executed to gain religious merit or *punya*. Scholars such as Ellison Banks Findly have thus located architectural patronage by prominent women patrons, from the Mughal empress Nur Jahan to courtesan donors in ancient Buddhist Mathura, within a tradition of *dān* or donative activity by Indian women cutting across religious affiliations.¹⁷⁶ Findly links this donative activity to Hindu scriptural prescriptions on women’s’ roles in the household as the providers of hospitality to visitors on behalf of a married couple (*dampati*). These ideas of charity and hospitality square well with women’s involvement in the building of water bodies, rest houses, and even temples, all of which provided solace to travellers, pilgrims, and other weary citizens by making provisions for rest and nourishment. In fact, in Jodhpur, these ideas align with royal women’s sponsorship of not only architecture but also other public charitable enterprises such as the distribution of food and water, or the sponsorship of various religious rituals.

¹⁷⁴ Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India*, 192–306.

¹⁷⁵ Bokhari, 304.

¹⁷⁶ Findly, “Women’s Wealth and Styles of Giving: Perspectives from Buddhist, Jain, and Mughal Sites.”

Findly's use of *dān* as the overarching framework to speak of religious donations by South Asian women is however open to dispute. As Cynthia Talbot points out in her work on temple patronage in Kakatiya Andhra, religious donations were often made in expectation of or as thanks to a deity for specific blessings. Thus these actions, which are akin to the execution of a vow, must be distinguished from actions that constitute *dān*, which, according to scriptures, is a gift that accrues merit specifically because nothing is expected in return for it.¹⁷⁷ Despite this distinction, Talbot acknowledges that devotion and a desire for a religious wellbeing, both for the patron or donor as well as the members of the family to whom the merit accrued from a donation was dedicated to, were prime drivers for the patronage of temples in the Andhra region in the period¹⁷⁸. Quoting Richard Eaton, Talbot cautions against reducing this religious behaviour to a "bowlful of strategies"; to be explained away as selfish manoeuvring for power alone.¹⁷⁹ However, it is undeniable that donative activity such as commissioning or pledging resources to temples was one of the few avenues of power and influence permitted to courtly women in pre-modern India. This is brought to focus in Leslie C. Orr's definitive study of temple women donors in Medieval Tamil Nadu, where she draws attention to the fact that while their male counterparts had access to multiple ways of securing rights and influence in a temple, such as the inheritance of rights and positions from their in-laws or through the purchase of rights, temple women were denied these options. Donative activity was thus one of the few avenues available to them to secure their status within localised social, economic, and ritual structures associated with their 'home temples', which were largely small and medium sized shrines located away from imperial Chola strongholds.¹⁸⁰ Talbot also echoes this view in her study of donative activity by women in medieval Andhra.¹⁸¹

While religious beliefs were certainly a factor motivating zenana women in Jodhpur to engage with architecture, it is hard to separate those beliefs and the desire to accrue merit for oneself and near ones, from other factors that might have propelled them—ranging from the need to cultivate political influence and a desire for popular approval, to the material gains that they stood to gain through the commissioning of architectural

¹⁷⁷ Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice*, 93–94.

¹⁷⁸ Talbot, 94.

¹⁷⁹ Talbot, 94.

¹⁸⁰ Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God*, 75–87.

¹⁸¹ Talbot, "Temples, Donors, and Gifts."

structures in the city. In the following section, an attempt is made to unpack some of these various motivations for the Jodhpur context, in the hope that this might help us arrive at a nuanced and complex understanding of the various motivations underlying Jodhpur zenana's engagements with architectural patronage.

Religious Devotion and the Accrual of Merit

A large portion of architectural patronage by zenana women in Jodhpur, especially as they relate to structures such as temples, some water bodies, and funerary architecture, certainly appear to have been driven by a desire to accrue religious merit and spiritual wellbeing, even if with attendant benefits of visibility, power, and influence. To bring the religious aspect of their patronage of architecture into focus, it is essential to situate zenana women's architectural patronage in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur within a web of other religious and charitable practices that they routinely engaged in.

Queens, concubines and queen mothers were frequent donors who sponsored worship in temples of all denominations both in the city and within the zenana. In addition, they sponsored other religious rituals such as the feeding of Brahmins and the recitation of religious texts at temples. Each high-ranked zenana woman in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur also maintained small personal shrines called *sevās* in their own apartments in the zenana complex, where they conducted worship and organized rituals for Hindu deities. It is the personal *bahīs* of zenana women that provide us a window into this world of devotion,¹⁸² depicting daily lives in the zenana animated by what seems to be a determined pursuit of religious merit that prompted queens and concubines to spend their considerable wealth on a range of religious/charitable donations. Such merit-accruing donations are indexed in zenana *bahīs* with the phrase *dharam tālke* or *śrī dharam bhare* (regarding *dharam*-merit or duty) and occur frequently. Take for the example Mān Singh's queen Lāḍī Bhaṭṭiyāñī, who in the early nineteenth century commissioned a Jalandharnāth temple in Jodhpur. Her personal *bahīs* not only describe her activities as the patron of the temple, but also reveal her wide-ranging patronage of religious sects in the city. She was a regular donor both to various Nāth shrines in Jodhpur, as well as dozens of Hindu temples belonging to other religious denominations. These also included various temples within the fort where

¹⁸² See also Chapter 2 for more on the devotional life of zenana women.

the queen lived. Also recorded are gifts Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī distributed to large numbers of Brahmins, donations she made to organize recitations of holy texts in temples, and money spent on the ritual worship of ancestors and the celebration of various religious festivals.¹⁸³ *Bahīs* of other zenana women record similar activities, as well as visits to temples in Jodhpur and feted pilgrimages to visit holy towns such Benares, Mathura or Pushkar. As widows, both the concubine Pan Rai and the queen Tīja Bhaṭiyāṇī are recorded undertaking pilgrimages to bathe in the river Ganga in Benares,¹⁸⁴ thus accomplishing the preeminent meritorious rite for pious Hindus, meant to wash away sins and ensure salvation in the afterlife. The celebration of the after-death rituals of relatives, whether of deceased kings or fellow zenana women, also find a prominent place in zenana women's *bahīs*,¹⁸⁵ forming valuable context to their investment in funerary monuments. Religious interests also expressed themselves in literary form. Many zenana women are recorded having composed poetry in praise of various deities.¹⁸⁶ When viewed together, all of these activities demonstrate that religion was a powerful presence in the lives of zenana patrons, forming a primary avenue for their self-fashioning rooted in devotion, and a sphere of socially sanctioned activity where they could exert their influence far beyond the walls of the zenana.

In eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur, the act of making provisions for water—now considered an ostensibly secular concern—also stood within the realm of meritorious activities. In zenana *bahīs*, such transactions can be found indexed using the same phrase—*śrī dharambare*—that is used to describe donations to temples. An example of such a reference can be found in the 1830-31 *hāth kharac bahī* of the queen Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī. In it, she is recorded having made provisions with the help of workmen to distribute drinking water outside the Chand Pol city gate in Jodhpur around the month of Jyestha (May-June), the height of summer in Marwar¹⁸⁷  similar references are also found in

¹⁸³ MMPP Bahī 405, f. 6-16.

¹⁸⁴ MMPP Bahī 72 VS 1911/1854 CE; MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE; MMPP Bahī 420 VS 1911/1854 AD, f. 1-20.

¹⁸⁵ The concubine Pan Rai for instance can be seen organising annual *shrādh* rituals for the former king Mān Singh as well as a prince, in addition to making payments towards the construction of a *chattrī* commemorating the prince and worship at the same site. MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1899-1904/1842-47, f. 12-13, 41.

¹⁸⁶ Bhagavatilal Sharma, *Mān Padāvali Sangīt* (Jodhpur: Maharaj Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2008), 199–120; Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 834.

¹⁸⁷ MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/ 1830 CE, f. 19

the accounts of another prominent zenana patron, the concubine Pan Rai.¹⁸⁸ That the act of providing water during a drought is considered a religiously meritorious act is no surprise, but that it is framed as such in records perhaps helps us clarify the motives underlying the dominance of water bodies among structures commissioned by women patrons, and helps connect these to a wider concern with gaining religious merit.

Spiritual gains from architectural patronage—though undoubtedly important to zenana women in their careers as patrons of architecture, naturally overlapped with other aspects of their life, among them commercial interests and the desire to claim a legacy and memory for themselves, both through the act of building itself, and by the commemoration of such acts in court documents. Archival evidence from Jodhpur holds several indications to the ways in which varied interests and motives that animated zenana women's life in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur converged in the sites they commissioned.

Pleasure and Industry in the Garden

Evidence from nineteenth century Jodhpur suggests that, of the many types of structures that royal women sponsored, the gardens that they established, and some of the water structures that were commissioned within them for irrigation, most of them *bāvaḍīs*, were unlikely to have been spaces that catered to the public. While many of the monumental water structures that zenana women built in Jodhpur, such as the Tunwarjī Jhālṛā or the Gulāb Sāgar tank, were meant for public use, it is hard to estimate the nature of use of the *bāvaḍīs* that some royal women such as the concubines Pan Rai and Kān Rai commissioned amidst private, enclosed gardens in order to irrigate them. It is more likely that the water drawn from these structures were used for irrigation of the surrounding garden alone, with public access restricted to circumstances such as droughts. As for the gardens, they appear to have been reserved for the use of the concubine and the royal family alone. The *bahīs* of Jodhpur concubines such as Pan Rai and Kān Rai reveal that, to their patrons, such irrigated gardens were not only sites of pleasure (as courtly gardens tended to be) and means of earning popular prestige, but also lively sites of industry where they were able to earn modest incomes.

¹⁸⁸ MMPP Bahī 17 VS 1936/ 1879 CE, f. 38, 57.

Pan Rai and Kān Rai, both nineteenth century *pardāyats* from the Jodhpur zenana, are known to have been patrons of stepwells (*bāvaḍi*) as well as large gardens that were established near or around them. The wells were fitted with *arhaṭs* (waterwheels) and equipped with bullocks to spin the wheels, enabling them to irrigate surrounding land. Though these gardens are now untraceable, references to them in *bahīs* reveal them to have been elaborate structures. Descriptions of the garden commissioned by Kān Rai note an outer (*bārīla bāg*) and an inner, enclosed garden (*māyīla bāg*) with paved paths running through it.¹⁸⁹ Managed by teams of gardeners from the *mālī* caste employed by the concubines, these gardens were planted with fruit trees and flowering plants. One finds references to pomegranates, roses—as well as beds of vegetables and herbs. Commercially viable crops that the gardeners cultivated for the concubines were harvested to be sold in local markets by the gardeners who deposited the amounts with the zenana women. In over 200 folios of a *bahī* of Pan Rai’s which details transactions related to the construction of a *bāvaḍi* within a garden in the years 1834-35, multiple references can be found of small sums earned from the garden’s yield (*āvdaṇi*) being deposited into the account maintained for the maintenance of the garden and stepwell. In the Hindu calendar month of Jeth, V.S.1892 (May-June, 1834) for instance, the yield from Pan Rai’s garden was six rupees ten annas. Crops from the gardens of the concubine that are recorded being sold in the market included radishes (*mūli*), cucumbers (*kākaḍi*) and other vegetables, as well as corn (*mak*), sweet potatoes (*sakkarkadd*) and Indian jujube (*ber*).¹⁹⁰

Such agricultural activity was not accidental, and seems to have been central to activities in the garden alongside the cultivation of more aesthetic flowering plants. Thus, the *mālīs* whom the patrons trusted with these sites can be regularly seen acquiring not only flowering plants, but also seeds for various food crops to plant in the gardens they managed. Ahead of the winter in V.S. 1892 (1834 AD) for example, Pan Rai’s gardeners bought seeds for her garden of winter crops *methī* (fenugreek), *sarsū* (mustard), and *mūlā* (radish).¹⁹¹ They also travelled to Ajmer, a city nearly 200 km away, to acquire rose plants for the garden. A total of 38 rupees 4 annas—a large sum at the time—was spent on acquiring the rose saplings, including the cost of the plants (25 rupees), the transport, and the *dalālī*

¹⁸⁹ MMPP Bahī 91 VS 1915/1858 CE, f.33

¹⁹⁰ MMPP Bahī 10 VS 1892/ 1835 CE, f. 57, 161; MMPP Bahī 91VS 1915-16/ 1861-62 CE, f. 2-3.

¹⁹¹ MMPP Bahī 10 VS 1892/ 1835 CE, f. 20.

(brokerage) paid to the *mālī* (gardener) who travelled to Ajmer to make the purchase. References to Kān Rai's garden indicates that pomegranates—a fixture in North Indian gardens and a tree both commercially viable and aesthetic—was a key crop in her garden.¹⁹² Varied produce from this garden too was sold in the market.¹⁹³

The garden was also a space to host valued guests, including the Maharaja, thus raising the patron's esteem in the eyes of the court and the zenana. In 1862, the widowed concubine Kān Rai had her garden renovated in honour of a royal visit when the then reigning maharaja Takhat Singh and his son and crown prince, Jaswant Singh, arrived at the garden in procession accompanied by members of the zenana.¹⁹⁴ The renovations to the garden were quite extensive, including the re-laying of paths in the inner garden, the renovation of a *cauk* (a platform or gathering space), and the walled enclosure (*koṭ*) of the garden.¹⁹⁵ The Maharaja's visit to the garden accompanied by an entourage composed of his children and members of the zenana indicates that the group likely spent several hours taking in the pleasures of Kān Rai's garden. That she was able to host the reigning ruler thus would have meant a boost to Kān Rai's status and prestige in the court, explaining why she went to considerable trouble preparing the site for the visit.

We also find zenana women using the sites they sponsored to host relatives and friends from the zenana, thereby strengthening their networks within the zenana. In the year 1839 for instance, Kān Rai's stepwell saw a visit by the sister of fellow *pardāyat* Udai Rai. As recorded in documents of the time, the guests arrived at the stepwell, then newly completed, with the express purpose of admiring the structure. Udai Rai's sister brought with her an entourage of *dāvāḍis* (female servants who were employed at the zenana). Kān Rai facilitated the visit by paying for a cook and provisions such as flour (*āṭṭā*) and pulses (*dāl*) so that the visitors could hold a feast at the stepwell.¹⁹⁶ That the completion of the stepwell attracted admiring visitors is an indication of the prestige that patrons could expect within the zenana on sponsoring monuments, as well as a clear indication that stepwells and associated garden sites were widely used for courtly entertainments and leisurely activities,

¹⁹² MMPP Bahī 11 VS 1896/ 1839 CE, f.25—the bahī also refers to botanical remedies in use at the garden—such as using *palash* tree (*butea monosperma*) leaves as a growing agent in the cultivation of pomegranates.

¹⁹³ Bahī 11, f.161

¹⁹⁴ MMPP Bahī 91 VS 1915/1858 CE, f.33.

¹⁹⁵ MMPP Bahī 91 VS 1915/1858 CE, f.33.

¹⁹⁶ MMPP Bahī 11 VS 1896/1839 CE, f.3.

even as they acted sites of industry and commercial gain managed by teams of gardeners and *kāmdār* in the patron's employ.

While not much is known from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century of the financial accounts of the temples that royal women commissioned, these structures, like the gardens, and much like temples in India today (though not to the same exaggerated, globalized scale) certainly had commercial aspects to them as well. Clues to this can be found in the temple architecture and the locations of some of the most prominent shrines that zenana women commissioned. Generally, temples from all over Marwar and beyond¹⁹⁷ that had Rathore patronage were maintained by land grants from the ruler that ensured them a reliable income that supplemented donations received from devotees (such grants were also assigned to other religious institutions such as *dargāhs*).¹⁹⁸ The same was the case with at least some of the temple that zenana women commissioned. Documented instances include a land grant awarded by the Maharaja Mān Singh to a Vaishnava temple that a young princess erected in Udai Mandir area of the city.¹⁹⁹ Gulāb Rai's temple to Śrīnāthjī was endowed with the revenue from four villages, three stepwells, and a field.²⁰⁰

At other temples, a part of the running cost seems to have come from sources other than land grants. As pointed out earlier, many of the temples commissioned by zenana women in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur are located in what were and what continue to be bustling commercial areas of the city of Jodhpur. The Kunjbiḥārījī temple commissioned by the eighteenth century concubine Gulāb Rai and the Tījā Mājīsa temple commissioned by the queen Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāñī are both located in what is historically one of the busiest market streets in the city—the historic Tripolia Bazaar where, even today, locals gather in throngs to buy everything from wedding dresses to betel leaves. The Nāth temple Macch Mandir (Fig. 1.6) commissioned by the queen Bhom Kanwar Lākhasar is similarly located in a commercial area—at a junction smack in the middle of the grain market Juni Dhān Maṇḍī. That they were allowed to build in such prime locations is also an indication of

¹⁹⁷ The rulers of Jodhpur also issued land grants to prominent temples outside their territories, such as the shrine in Nathdwara in Mewar. RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 04 VS. 1859-96/AD 1802-39, f.10-26.

¹⁹⁸ RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 04 VS. 1859-96/AD 1802-39, f.10-26.

¹⁹⁹ RSAB, Paṭṭā rī Sigā rī Bahī 04 VS. 1859-96/AD 1802-39, f.20

²⁰⁰ Letter from then Mahant Vallabhdās describing the history of Kunjbiḥārījī temple. File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

the status of the patrons involved, all three of whom were high-ranking zenana women of their time. The fact that these temples occupied prime commercial real estate in the city of Jodhpur would have been no accidental choice on part of their patrons. The locations meant that they would attract a steady flow of visitors, both from within and outside Jodhpur, who traded wares in the market. Their location also attracted the patronage of some of the richest communities living in the city, its merchant classes, who lived and worked in these localities. Such patronage by visitors and well-heeled citizens of Jodhpur would have assured a steady flow of donations to these temples, in addition to the money that the patrons themselves dedicated to these institutions, and regular contributions sponsoring worship from other members of the zenana. It is also worth remembering that, without pledging their financial resources to charitable building projects, women of the zenana would scarcely have been able to exert control and in a manner, ownership, over central areas of the capital city of the Rathores, all while they, as veiled women, remained largely cloistered within zenana palaces. Taking advantage of the commercial importance of these spaces, the ground levels of all of three of the temples mentioned above are lined with rooms to be rented out as shops. Temple-related records from the early twentieth century confirm that at least a part of the expenses for running these temples were met by rents from the shop buildings built into their ground levels. In the case of the Kunjbihārījī temple, such references in the twentieth century include official correspondence related to hikes to be applied to the rent charged on its shops (Fig. 1.7) to meet rising costs of running the temple.²⁰¹

Inscribing the City: Monuments as Legacy Projects

The sheer visibility that their central locations and monumental size assured many of the monuments discussed above allowed zenana women to establish themselves as powerful presences in the life of the city, sealing their fame and legacy as pious, powerful women and generous patrons. Through their sheer materiality, these monuments have shaped the communities that surround them in significant ways through centuries, by organising urban space and the movement of people within it and acting as focal points for social interactions and religious life in the city. As referred to earlier, these monuments also acted as proxies for their patrons, creating a public persona for zenana women whose bodies and faces were

²⁰¹ Jodhpur Branch of the RSA, Major Head Devastan Dharampura (DD) File No: 127 A C/6/1A

shielded from public view through the institution of purdah. These proxy presences, which announced their authority and influence to the citizens of the capital, have ensured a legacy for zenana women patrons that has endured centuries. In the twenty-first century, the many temples, tanks and wells that zenana women commissioned in Jodhpur of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continue to be known by the titles or names of their patrons. They are sites where the memories of these figures are constantly renewed and reinforced in the public imagination. This is in contrast to the overwhelming absence of zenana women from mainstream histories of the city and of the Rathore dynasty.²⁰²

Across eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is evidence that powerful zenana women in Jodhpur sought to memorialise themselves through their architectural commissions, strategically using architecture to resist their erasure from histories of the dynasty and the city. A notable example is the illustrious eighteenth century Jodhpur concubine Gulāb Rai whose monumental commissions dominate Jodhpur's urban landscape to this day. Gulāb Rai's architectural legacy and her quest to memorialise and mythologise herself through monumental architecture is examined fully in Chapter 4. The desire to be remembered prompted zenana women in Jodhpur to not only commission buildings in strategic locations all across Jodhpur city, thus forcefully inscribing their presence on the urban landscape, but to also take care to ensure that these commissions were recorded for posterity in the genealogies of the zenana that the *rāṇī maṅgā bhāṭṣ*, bard-genealogists to Jodhpur queens, composed.²⁰³ The names of the monuments that various queens (concubines were excluded from this genealogy) commissioned appear prominently in the genealogical entries of various queens. Lists of monuments commissioned are in fact given equal weight as the names of the royal offspring that were born to queens. In construction records left behind by queens, *rāṇī maṅgā bhāṭṣ* can be seen present as witnesses at the consecration ceremony of the monuments that they commissioned. *Bahīs* record the generous rewards that queenly patrons bestowed on the bards when they made a record of their architectural projects in the genealogy.²⁰⁴ This demonstrates clearly that architectural commissions were legacy projects for queenly patrons, meant to glorify their name and

²⁰²See Chapter 4 for more on zenana women and dynastic histories.

²⁰³ For a note on the *Rāṇī Maṅgā Bhāṭon kī Bahī*, see Introduction.

²⁰⁴ Rewards included money and ceremonial robes. For instance, the *Bhāṭ Bherudan* records that he was awarded a *sīropāv* (a robe of honour) on recording the completion in 1808 of a Nāth temple known as Nij Mandir by Mān Singh's queen Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī. See Nagar, *Rāṇī Maṅgā Bhāṭon kī Bahī*, 72.

preserve their memory not only through their material presence in the city, but also through their being recorded for posterity in histories of the dynasty. This desire on the part of zenana women to claim a memory for themselves through architectural patronage and processes built around it, as well as the afterlives in the city of the monuments they built is explored more substantially in Chapter 4 of this work.

Generosity as a queenly ideal

In various normative texts on kingship from ancient and medieval India, generosity and refinement as a patron of various arts is often counted as one of the prime attributes of a ruler. Scholars of Indian kingship have argued that patronage of religious institutions and Brahmanical orthodoxy were key to the legitimation of kingship in medieval India.²⁰⁵ However, why was patronage important to zenana women? What were the attributes of the ideal queen or consort that royal women were measured against? Clues to an answer to this question can perhaps be found in eulogies praising queens that the bards of the queens of Jodhpur composed for their patrons. In these *dohās*, many of which can be found in the genealogical *bahī* of Jodhpur's queens, the *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, the generosity of various queens as patrons is invoked and feted repeatedly as proof of their queenly virtues. One thus finds the bards describe queens as possessing of “a hand that gives away elephants²⁰⁶” (*hāthī devaṇā hāth*) and as givers of gifts to poets.²⁰⁷ These praises appear alongside exaggerated descriptions of a queen's physical beauty or spiritual glory (she is as “bright as the sun”). While some of the emphasis on generosity in these texts can be explained away by the bard's self-interest in royal women's generosity as patrons, on which their own incomes depended, it nevertheless indicates that their reputation as generous patrons was as important to queens as it was to kings as a defining attribute of their public royal persona. Such *dohās* of praise, as well as lengthy genealogies exalting the pedigree of a queen, were not only recorded in *bahīs*, but also recited aloud to the public by the queens' bards as they accompanied their patrons on journey out of the zenana. Popular accounts from Jodhpur describe bards walking alongside a queen's *pālkī* (litter), reciting their praises

²⁰⁵ For a critical look at the links between kingly authority and patronage, see Ramya Sreenivasan, “Rethinking Kingship and Authority in South Asia: Amber (Rajasthan), ca. 1560-1615,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57, no. 4 (September 26, 2014): 549–86.

²⁰⁶ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 44.

²⁰⁷ Naggar, 47.

to the crowds that gathered on the streets. This is corroborated by *bahīs* of the zenana that record the bards accompanying queens on widely publicised journeys out of the zenana, such as pilgrimages to the river Ganga.²⁰⁸

“Bringing Ganga forth”: Women Patrons and Waterbodies

As the overview at the beginning of this chapter has demonstrated, a major type of architecture that women patrons in Jodhpur involved themselves with, at least in the early period, were water bodies. Temples began to make an appearance starting in the eighteenth century, and take predominance only around the turn of the nineteenth century. In addition to these two types, records also attest to zenana women building stone memorials called *chattrīs*—umbrella-shaped domes that commemorate the dead—for their relatives.²⁰⁹ Of these major types of buildings preferred by women patrons in Jodhpur, the earliest choices—water bodies—attract notice. These structures were fundamental to life and the building of cities in a kingdom such as Marwar, composed entirely of desert and semi-desert territories, and as such deserve closer attention as a genre that women patrons appear to have preferred.

What might have prompted women patrons to invest predominantly in water architecture, especially monumental structures meant for public use? As referred to in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, there is a long history of women’s involvement in the creation of water architecture in Western India, whether in medieval Gujarat or in other kingdoms in what is now the state of Rajasthan. This is not surprising considering the topography of the region, composed almost entirely of desert and semi-desert areas plagued by constant water insecurity. Marwar, like other parts of Western Rajasthan and Gujarat, was subject to famines that arrived with regularity every couple of years. They occurred often enough to merit different names based on the severity of the disaster. Locals called a shortage of water due to scanty rainfall, *akāl*. A shortage of both water and grain was called

²⁰⁸ MMPP Bahī 420 VS 1911/ 1854 CE, f. 18.

²⁰⁹ A *chattrī* commissioned to commemorate the queen Pāñcmā Bhaṭṭiyāñī in 1880-82 appears to have been paid for by another queen from the zenana. MMPP Bahī 434 VS 1983-39/1880-82 CE.

dukāl, and one of water, grain, and fodder for animals, *tinkāl*. An even greater calamity, a shortage water, grain, fodder, and fuel, was termed the *mahākāl*, the great famine.²¹⁰

The anticipation of famines and the trauma of past famines permeates Marwar's inhabitants' relationship to their homeland. Thus, though official data on famines is sketchy before the nineteenth century, the region's oral traditions preserve memories of several great famines, as well as local wisdom related to predicting them. A wealth of such literature exists in the form of couplets or *dohās* that wearily lament the misfortunes the Marwar's terrain and climate brings its inhabitants.²¹¹ In *Famines of Rajasthan*, O. P. Kachhawaha scans available sources to note that major famines lasting up to 12 years occurred in Marwar in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. A major famine in 1570 affected the town of Nagaur severely, apparently forcing people to resort to eating human flesh for survival. Other terrible famines followed at regular intervals, affecting parts of Rajasthan throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of these, the famine of 1661 was so severe that it affected even relatively water-secure eastern regions of Rajasthan such as Mewar. The famine of 1698, which lasted two years, and the famine of 1742, 1756, and 1793, affected Marwar severely. The nineteenth century saw a spate of famines as well. An 1812-13 famine affected Marwar for five years, and was followed by others in 1848-49, 1868-69, 1877-78, 1891-92, 1896-97, and 1899-1900.²¹² When famines caused shortage of water and food, desperate communities in Marwar deserted their villages and migrated en masse with their cattle, often moving east to Malwa, or southwest to Gujarat in search of water and fodder. Only a fraction of them migrated back when conditions improved.²¹³ The desertion of villages having tremendous consequence for state revenues, administrators undertook relief efforts during periods of scarcity. State efforts at famine relief included food-for-work using schemes providing employment through large construction projects²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert*, 38. Naturally, the popular terminology is not fixed. Komal Kothari offers a slightly different scheme of *akāl* (shortage of grain), *jalkāl* (shortage of water) and *trikāl* (shortage of water, grain and fodder. Rustom Bharucha, *Rajasthan An Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2003), 78–79.

²¹¹ For examples of such *dohas* see Bharucha, *Rajasthan An Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*, 80–82.

²¹² O. P. Kachhawaha, *History of Famines in Rajasthan* (Jodhpur: Hindi Sahitya Mandir, 1997), 20–22.

²¹³ See Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert*, 37–41.

²¹⁴ There are several examples of this from colonial and precolonial Rajasthan. The construction of the Raj Sam and lake in Mewar according to some accounts was necessitated by the famine of 1661 CE to provide relief to people affected by famine. Kachhawaha, *History of Famines in Rajasthan*, 25. The timing of construction of the

as well as the distribution of water and food from reserves. Royals as well as wealthy benefactors such as merchants also sought to remedy water scarcity by improving systems of rainwater harvesting, sponsoring water architecture across their territories. There is a long history in Marwar and surrounding regions of a range of groups who sponsored water architecture of scales and capacities that were beyond the means of local communities. Jodhpur's zenana's engagements with water architecture since the founding of the city can thus be placed within broader efforts made by elite groups to sponsor water architecture across the region in measures that can be understood as both as acts of benevolence and charity, and efforts aimed at retaining productivity.

Water, considered plentiful in some parts of India, takes on a special cultural significance in areas of historic scarcity. Anyone familiar with the desert tracts of Rajasthan would know the tremendous importance attached by locals to making provisions for drinking water available not only for humans but for animals as well. In the outskirts of settlements in Marwar, thirsty travellers are greeted with public water provisions called *pyāū* that provide drinking water and a place to rest in shade. Walking through the streets of Jodhpur in summer, when temperatures can sometimes hit fifty degrees Celsius, you will see small stone bowls filled with drinking water kept outside houses and in gardens for animals. Nearby, locals often leave leftover food such as *rotis* (bread), meant not only for large animals but also for feeding insects such as ants. These local practices, which attach great merit and responsibility to the creation of provisions for water and shelter from the heat as commons, are helpful in understanding the local meanings and cultural underpinnings of zenana women's engagements with the construction of water structures in Jodhpur and around.

A patron's efforts at bringing water to a desert terrain also prompts us to think about the aesthetic and symbolic associations of such acts of construction—what does it mean to bring water forth, to effectively constitute it as know it, as liquid pools—as liquescence²¹⁵—in a semi-desert region? When one considers that well digging often occurred in the dry months, the optics of the excavators of the *beldār* caste hitting water after days of digging

Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur in the early 20th century too is attributed to the need to provide work to people affected by a 1920s famine.

²¹⁵ Sugata Ray and Maddipati Venugopal, eds., *Water Histories of South Asia: The Materiality of Liquescence, Visual and Media Histories* (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020).

are especially stark. In inscriptions from western India, water bodies such as stepwells are equated with the holiest of waters in the Hindu imaginary—the river Ganga. An inscription on the Rūdābai stepwell in Gujarat declares the patron as having “caused this well to be made, which is like the heavenly river Ganges.” In later commentaries from Jodhpur, the completion of large water bodies is equated with the manifestation of Ganga (“*gangājī prakāṣ huā*”²¹⁶). The obvious sacred associations of water within Hinduism are clear in such references. In considering stepwells and tanks built by local patrons as manifestations of the holy Ganga, which is simultaneously a river and a deity depicted in anthropomorphic form in Indian art, these associations consecrate them as *tirthas* where sins could be washed away and sacred lifecycle rituals conducted to full effect.²¹⁷

Recent scholarship on eco art history pioneered by scholars such as Sugata Ray also force us to consider the aesthetics of ‘framing’ water and the affective associations of water as it seeps through and transforms the traditional subjects of art and architectural history—the stone and brick monuments erected by humans to contain the liquescence of this element. Ray traces an affective link between the prevalence of droughts and water scarcity caused by the ‘Little Ice Age’ in sixteenth century North India and the emergence of a particular way of seeing and framing water, as expressed in riparian architecture as well as painting and other visual culture and devotional practices emerging from the Mathura region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it emphasised the beholding of this element.²¹⁸ Viewing water architecture as a frame that facilitated the beholding of water as a sacro-sensual experience adds another dimension to our consideration of this genre of buildings. It broadens our understanding of the place that water bodies occupied in communities. Water bodies were not only sites for ritual immersion, collection, and bodily consumption of water, but also sites for sighting water in its liquid form. A person beholding water might find in it a local incarnation of the river Ganga or the site of Krishna’s water play in Braj (in Vaishnavite contexts) in an arid region starved for such sights.

²¹⁶ Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:590.

²¹⁷ On the river Ganga and its associations with water architecture, see Julia A. B. Hegewald, *Water Architecture in South Asia: A Study of Types, Development and Meanings*, Studies in Asian Art and Archaeology (Leiden ; New York ; Köln: Brill, 2002), 18–23.

²¹⁸ Sugata Ray, “Hydroaesthetics in the Little Ice Age: Theology, Artistic Cultures and Environmental Transformation in Early Modern Braj, c. 1560 –70,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2017): 1–23.

As architectural frames, waterbodies such as stepped wells, ponds, artificial lakes, and tanks mediate their visitors' encounter with water. While lakes and large tanks offer expansive views of water, stepped ponds and wells prompt a descent into the earth to catch sight of the liquid they contain. The aesthetic as well spiritual experience encoded in the experience of encountering water as liquescence can be seen built into the forms of the many water bodies we encounter in Jodhpur. The presence of pavilions built into the steps of stepped ponds and wells are an example. Stepped ponds such as the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā or the Māylābāg Jhālṛā (Fig. 1.8), both commissioned by women patrons in the eighteenth century (the queen Tunwarjī and the concubine Gulāb Rai respectively) feature, in addition to niches which once held religious images, pavilions on their corners from where the view of the water could be enjoyed without descending the steps of the *jhālṛā*. The many lake-facing garden palaces that Jodhpur's royals built on the banks of manmade lakes around the city—such as the Sur Sāgar Palace on the Sur Sāgar lake or the Bālsamand Palace on the banks of Bālsamand lake—also betray a preoccupation with meditating on water as a pleasurable experience, if not necessarily a spiritual one.

Finer Things: Zenana Women as Patrons of Arts beyond Architecture

Though this work mainly focuses on the Jodhpur zenana's involvement in architectural production in the city, it is important to note that zenana women in Jodhpur were patrons, consumers, and arguably connoisseurs of a wide variety of arts. Thus, their personal account books document queens and concubines engaging the services of not only architects, but also gold and silver smiths, textile artisans such as dyers and tailors, lac workers, and painters, among others. Apart from the ruler, the zenana would have been one of the most important consumers of luxury goods in Jodhpur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the patterns of such consumption by the zenana and the role this played in setting court fashions or shaping crafts traditions deserves a separate study, the notes below introduce consumption and patronage of extra-architectural arts by some of the zenana women patrons already introduced in this chapter, starting with their involvement in commissioning painted works on paper.

In general, very little is known about royal women's patronage of so-called 'miniature paintings' in Rajasthan, and even less about such patronage by concubines. The definitive

study on the subject remains an article from 2002 by Molly Emma Aitken, where she argues that Rajput women as patrons, collectors, and disseminators of paintings sought to expend their resources on portraits that reaffirmed the power of their male relatives, rather than leave any visual records of themselves.²¹⁹ Aitken's work refers for the most part to Rajput queens from the states of Jaipur and Mewar, and notes that they overwhelmingly purchased and engaged with portraits of male rulers and stereotypical depictions of idealised feminine subjects. In Jodhpur too, there is no evidence that zenana women, whether Rajput or non-Rajput, commissioned portraits of themselves—patriarchy and the regulations of purdah seem to have presented an insurmountable obstacle to wealthy women leaving visual records of themselves, at least until the advent of photography²²⁰ Unlike Jaipur, where Atkins refers to queens purchasing paintings through the royal painting store, evidence from Jodhpur points to zenana women commissioning works directly from individual artists and paying them directly. Moreover, unlike Jaipur and Mewar, none of the references I found to women commissioning paintings in Jodhpur refers to portraits of male rulers. Rather, zenana women in Jodhpur, from the little evidence I have examined, seem to have engaged with themes of personal interest to them, which seem to have included both religious and romantic subjects. In the year 1832-33, a concubine from Maharaja Mān Singh's court, Pan Rai, is recorded purchasing two paintings of iconic lovers—one depicting Dholā and Māru, the couple at the centre of a Rajasthani folk tale, and another of Laila and Majnu, lovers from the popular Arabian romance—both from the artist (*citārā*) Mādho who was paid two *Bijaishahi*²²¹ silver coins for them.²²² The tale of Dholā and Māru, star-crossed lovers who are typically depicted riding a camel against a desert backdrop, was a popular subject in Jodhpur in the nineteenth century. The royal painting store includes both single-leaf depictions of Dholā-Māru from this period as well as a set of more than one hundred paintings illustrating the entire story. The tale appears to have been a favourite subject for Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh, who had scenes from it painted in his chambers in the fort, where the male hero can be seen resembling Takhat Singh himself. Pan Rai's choice of subjects—both tales of adventure and romance—can perhaps be taken as a fleeting glimpse into the kind of inner

²¹⁹ Molly Emma Aitken, "Pardah and Portrayal: Rajput Women as Subjects, Patrons, and Collectors," *Artibus Asiae* 62, no. 2 (2002): 247–80.

²²⁰ Photographs of zenana women from Jodhpur, including women identified to be queens, begin to appear towards the turn of the 20th century.

²²¹ Coins first introduced by Maharaja Bijai Singh of Marwar (r. 1752-1793).

²²² MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/ 1832 CE, f.11.

lives that zenana women led, and realm of popular literature that they engaged with. The *citārā* Mādho also made a portrait of Jallandharnāth, the central deity of the cult Nāth Sampradāya that enjoyed royal patronage under Mān Singh, for Pan Rai in the same year. For this, he was paid a relatively high sum of three silver rupees. Around the same period, a high profile artist from Maharaja Mān Singh's atelier named Danā (known for his portraits of Mān Singh) was employed by the concubine to refurbish a portrait of Jallandharnāth.²²³

Most of the paintings we find reference to zenana women purchasing or commissioning are religious images. In 1840, the concubine Kān Rai from Mān Singh's court acquired a portrait of the Vaishnavite deity Sītārām from the artist Chaturbhuj.²²⁴ In addition, in October-November 1829, Mān Singh's queen Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī is recorded paying the artist Vanā one rupee for a portrait of the goddess Mahalakshmi.²²⁵ The purchase of this image of a Vaishnavite goddess might be an indication of the queen's primary religious allegiance to a chosen god (*iṣṭa devata*), even as she participated in the worship of a host of other deities during this period, and acted as the patron of a temple dedicated to the Nāth Sampradāya. Vanā is an artist known for several works by him still present in Jodhpur's royal painting store.

Artists working in Jodhpur in the nineteenth century, from whom royal women purchased works, appear to have had relationships of longstanding patronage with the zenana. This is indicated by the fact that some of their names appear, alongside that of other long-serving craftsmen and service providers such as tailors, weavers, goldsmiths, tailors, thread workers (*paṭwa*, who stringed together jewelry, among other things), gardeners, sweepers and so on, in lists of zenana servants.²²⁶ Artists, perhaps of a lower profile than Danā or Vanā, were also enlisted to work on materials other than paper. The *citārā* Mehmūd for instance, was hired by Pan Rai to paint bangles (*cūḍhā*) as well as some chairs or stools (*muḍḍā*).²²⁷

²²³ MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/ 1832 CE, f.46

²²⁴ MMPP Bahī 11 VS 1889/ 1832 CE, f. 93

²²⁵ MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/1830 CE, f. 43. The entry reads: "*citārā vanā ne mahālakṣmījī rā panā ro*"—" (to) the painter Vanā for a painting of Mahalakshmi"

²²⁶ MMPP Bahī 327 (date unknown, nineteenth century) f.48-49.

²²⁷ MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/ 1832 CE, fs.8, 46

Clothes and jewellery were among luxurious objects that zenana women acquired regularly. Clothes of various types were purchased from the market, then dyed to specific needs by dyers (*raṃgrej*), and stitched by tailors in royal employ. The type and variety of clothes that zenana women purchased are too numerous to be listed and beyond my skills at present.²²⁸

A sampling of the variety of jewelled objects zenana women commissioned regularly can be illustrated by a single entry from the queenly patron Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāñī's accounts from 1832 CE. The entry lists jewelled silver and gold objects worth more than a thousand rupees she acquired or commissioned from the goldsmith Abu. The objects included fifty gold coins (*mohur*), silver jewellery such as bangles, earrings, and necklaces of various types (*mālā*, *timmāñiyya*); rosewater sprinklers, boxes (*ḍabbiyān*, to hold jewellery or make up), fan handles, and a turban ornament for males (*sirpec*) with dangling pearls. The queen also purchased horse jewellery.²²⁹ In other entries from the same period, we find her purchasing clothes as well as various household articles of high value, such as floor coverings (*bichāyats*) for dining and for use in her litter, bottles meant for kohl (*surmādānī*, typically made in silver), as well as a *caupar* game set made of cloth with ivory pawns and die.²³⁰



²²⁸ The entries related to clothes employ technical vocabulary related to types of materials that a textile historian is better equipped to analyse. For an overview of textiles at the Jodhpur court, see Rahul Jain, *Durbar: Royal Textiles of Jodhpur* (Mehrangarh Museum Trust, 2009).

²²⁹ MMPP Bahī 452, VS 1899 f. 23-26

²³⁰ MMPP Bahī 452, VS 1899 f. 47

2. Beyond Dualisms: The Life-World of the Jodhpur Zenana

Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the complex life-world of the Jodhpur zenana, a royal institution established to house the women of the Rathore royal family. Many of the women patrons examined in this study spent a considerable portion of their lives in the zenana. This chapter thus sheds light on an institution and an architectural space that shaped their careers in Jodhpur in significant ways.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Jodhpur's zenana was housed in palaces within Mehrangarh, a hill fort that towers above the walled city. As it survives now, the Mehrangarh zenana is a fragmented, emptied out, and partially museumised space. This chapter introduces the various groups that inhabited the zenana in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the relationships that connected them, and the architecture that housed them. Using *bahīs* of the zenana maintained by the royal chancellery, architectural remains, and painted works of art, the chapter recreates the original extent, internal organisation, and everyday use of zenana spaces, the spatial ordering of which served the needs of the both its primary inhabitants, the women of the royal household, and an administrative system designed not only to shelter and serve them, but also to regulate their interactions with the extra-zenana world. In describing the life-world of the zenana, the chapter pays close attention to the relationships that its women inhabitants cultivated with various influential groups within and outside the zenana. It introduces various artisanal and professional communities whose work brought them into daily contact with royal women. The chapter also explores the relationship between power and mobility in the context of the Jodhpur zenana, illuminating the ways in which zenana women wielded both mobility and immobility as resources in their daily life.

The Jodhpur Zenana

The word zenana (*janānā* in Marwari sources) in both Indic and Persian languages stands for the part of a building set apart for the seclusion of women. It is also used as a collective term to refer to the women inhabitants who live in a state of seclusion in such a space. In Jodhpur's Mehrangarh, the zenana was once made up of a complex of courtyard palaces

that occupied the more elevated (the fortress and its palaces having been built at different elevations of the rocky hill they stand on) and the most highly protected areas of the fort. Much of this was destroyed in the mid-twentieth century. All that survives of the Jodhpur zenana now is a single gated courtyard and buildings that surround it, all protected by battlements to the south. This courtyard and surrounding palaces (Fig. 2.3) are today commonly referred to together as the *janānī d̥yoḍhī*.²³¹ In *bahīs* of the zenana, this term (often shortened to *d̥yoḍhī*) is frequently employed to refer both to the primary courtyard complex of the zenana, and either of its two gates. It is also frequently used to refer to the zenana institution as a whole.²³²

Women of the Veil

The *raison d'être*  the zenana institution was the need to establish gender-segregated spaces to shield the women of the royal household from contact with men other than the ruler or immediate family members. This system of gender segregation achieved through the seclusion of women is known as purdah (literally meaning screen in Persian and Urdu). It is not clear when purdah became well-established in rajput households in Rajasthan. It is commonly understood to have followed the arrival of Muslim dynasties who practised purdah to North India around the twelfth century. Scholars variously attribute purdah taking hold in Rajasthan to either an imitation of the practices of aristocratic Muslims or a reaction to heightened fears for the safety of women in the face of conflicts with Muslim rulers. Some also argue for the existence of the practice long before such contacts with Islam began.²³³ Whatever its origins, all major royal residences in Rajasthan—from fort palaces built between the mid-fifteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries²³⁴ to modern residences such as the early twentieth century art deco palace Umaid Bhawan in Jodhpur—conform to the need for a separate section to house women.

²³¹ The word *d̥yoḍhī* taken literally can be translated into English as gatehouse or porch. Generally, the term *janānī d̥yoḍhī* or *d̥yoḍhī* is taken to refer to an entire palace complex organised around a gated courtyard. I am thankful to Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach for clarifying the meaning of this term. The *mardānā* palaces where male royals lived are referred to in Jodhpur as *mardānī d̥yoḍhī*.

²³² *Bahīs* dealing with the zenana institution often bear titles such as *janānī d̥yoḍhī rā nawo* (the accounts of the zenana) or *janānī d̥yoḍhī rā hājarī* (records of attendance of the zenana)

²³³ Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 87.

²³⁴ Tillotson, *The Rajput Palaces The Development of an Architectural Style 1450-1750*, 4-5.

Contrary to present associations of the practice of purdah and its sartorial expression, the veil, with women's backwardness and oppression, in eighteenth century Marwar, as in many contemporary societies, the practice of purdah was a marker of wealth, prestige, and power, available only to a few women of rank who could avoid the indignities of manual labour.²³⁵ Architecturally, purdah manifested in many ways. Foremost, it meant that royal residences were divided into two zones, the *zenana*, the realm of women (*zan*) and its counterpart, the *mardānā* or the realm of the men (*marad*). As we will see later, the boundaries between the two realms, though policed strictly, remained fluid, and there was constant traffic between the two worlds.

Beyond 'Public-Private' Divisions

For many decades, scholarship on gender segregated spaces in non-western societies had conceptualised the division between male and female realms (the *mardānā* and *zenana* in this case) within a public (coded male) versus private (coded female) paradigm with origins in western liberal thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that sought to trace the limits of the exercise of state power. One of the 'great dichotomies'²³⁶ of western thought, the binary opposition between public and private that equates the public with the commonweal and the male and the private with the female and the space of domestic life has obscured an understanding of the agency that harem women wielded.²³⁷ Viewed through the private-public paradigm, it is easy to equate the *mardānā* (male/public) with the world at large and the exercise of power, agency, and authority in it, and the *zenana* or female spaces with the realm of family and domesticity, and more importantly, with a lack of power, agency, and authority. This common sense understanding of the *zenana-mardānā* divide dominates both scholarly writing and contemporary popular perceptions of the

²³⁵ Scholars of the Middle East, most notably, Lila Abhu-Lughod, have demolished such blanket associations of the veil with a lack of agency. See Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist, New Series* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783–90.

²³⁶ Bobbio, "The Great Dichotomy: Public/Private", quoted in Jeff Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1–43.

²³⁷ Leslie P Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6–12. Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 24–25.

zenana, influencing modern museum narratives in Rajasthan among other things.²³⁸

Countering this, Leslie Peirce in her study on the Ottoman harem argues that vastly different considerations of difference to the public-private paradigm operated in non-western societies, such as the distinction between *hass* (sacred/privileged) and *aam* (profane/common).²³⁹ More significantly, Peirce points out that an entirely different set of dichotomies to the public-private operated in the spatial organisation of power in Ottoman palaces—that between the inner and the outer. In an inversion of the private-public model, the ‘inner’ where the Sultan and his family resided and where access was restricted to most people, was the source of power. She thus reconfigures the *harem* space where only the Sultan and a select set of intermediaries could move freely, as one proximate to power and authority as invested in person of the Sultan, rather than one divested of it. While there are differences between the Ottoman harem and the Jodhpur zenana, this model put forward by Peirce opens the way for a fuller engagement with the zenana institution and the exercise of power and influence by its inhabitants beyond the confines of their living quarters.

‘Women’s World’? The People of the Zenana

The Jodhpur zenana’s population included both its permanent residents, consisting of royal women and children, as well as an army of palace officials, servants, personal aides, and artisanal/professional communities whose livelihoods closely tied them to the zenana.

The zenana’s primary residents were the women of the royal house, consisting of queens (*rāṇī*), concubines (*pardāyat*), princesses (including both Rathore princesses termed *bāī* as well as the wives of Rathore princes, known by the title *kanvarāṇī*), queen mothers (*mājīsā*, *mājī*), as well as esteemed court singers (*gāyaṇ*) and other performers housed in specialised zenana institutions.²⁴⁰ The queens and queen mothers hailed from aristocratic rajput families. Their arrival in Jodhpur was the result of diplomatic exogamic marriage alliances that the Rathores contracted with rajput houses that ruled various kingdoms and

²³⁸ Take for example, the fact that many rajput palace museums in Rajasthan, such as the City Palace in Udaipur, make it a point to display a kitchen and utensils in the zenana area, as if to suggest that royal residents of the zenana were engaged in such ‘domestic’ tasks as cooking and child rearing alone.

²³⁹ This set of distinctions is familiar to those studying Mughal and Rajput India, where such divisions are demarcated in every realm, especially architecture. Audience halls in Mughal palaces are divided into special or privileged *Diwan-e-khas/hass* and less exclusive *Diwan-e-aam*.

²⁴⁰ For a general overview of the composition of zenanas across kingdoms in Rajasthan, see Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 112–38.

fiefs across western and central India. Having married a Rathore ruler or prince, brides migrated long distances from their natal homes in such places as Jaipur, Bundi, or Jaisalmer to take up residence in Jodhpur. As queens or princesses of Jodhpur, they did not overnight shed their natal identity, but maintained strong ties to their natal houses throughout their life. Though they were often given new first names on their arrival in Jodhpur,²⁴¹ they were referred to primarily by their natal clan identities, such as Rāṇī Kachwāhī (of the Kachwāhā clan that ruled Jaipur), Rāṇī Hāḍī (of the Hāḍā clan that ruled Haḍotī), or Rāṇī Bhaṭiyānī (of the Bhāṭī clan that ruled several large and small principalities in and around Jaisalmer). When there were several queens from the same clan, prefixes such as *baḍā* (the elder) or *tījā* (the third) distinguished different individuals.

The natal houses and ancestry of the queens of Jodhpur are documented in dynastic histories as well as a genealogy of queens known as the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*.²⁴² The history of the concubines of the royal house is less clear, since they have been left out of court histories and genealogies except in exceptional cases. Unlike queens, concubines were non-Rajput, non-Brahmin women of ‘low’ (though not ‘untouchable’) castes who were ineligible to be royal wives.²⁴³ Many of them were recruited from the ranks of court performers. Court performers in turn likely entered the royal household as captives, either purchased by the state as young girls and trained in music and dance or acquired as already trained and thus prized performers from other elite families as part of conquests or exchanges.²⁴⁴ As historians of Rajasthan have noted, girls and women in the region were vulnerable to enslavement during times of conflict or famine.²⁴⁵ Another source for captive

²⁴¹ Ziegler, “Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period,” 254.

²⁴² The genealogy has been edited and published. See Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*.

²⁴³ As Varsha Joshi points out in *Polygamy and Purdah*, customs of the royal house disallowed concubinage for high caste Rajput and Brahmin women. ‘Untouchable’ women from the lowest of castes that worked with waste or animal hides, whose very touch was said to pollute the body of higher castes, were also considered ineligible. According to Joshi, concubines were women of low but touchable occupational castes such as *ahir* (pastoralists), *mālī* (gardeners), *darjī* (tailors) etc. or Muslim women. Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 119. For more on concubinage in Marwar, see Priyanka Khanna “Embodying Royal Concubinage,” 337-345.

²⁴⁴ Priyanka Khanna, “Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar,” in *Servants’ Pasts*, vol. 1 (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2019), 197–226; Sreenivasan, “Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850.”

²⁴⁵ On female slavery and servitude in the region, see Sreenivasan, “Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850”; Shashi Arora, “Dancing Girls in 18th Century Rajasthan,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 65 (2004): 324–30; Khanna, “Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar.” For a full account of concubinage in Jodhpur, see Khanna, “Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century).”

women was the progeny of existing servants in the zenana.²⁴⁶ Terms such as *gāyaṇ*, *tālīmvalī*, *pāṭur*, and *bagtan* are used to denote women who served as musicians and dancers. Concubines were also chosen from among servants and female attendants in the zenana known by the terms *dāvaḍi* and *baḍāraṇ* or their children.²⁴⁷

Irrespective of their non-aristocratic origins, on being inducted into the royal family as concubines at the ruler's discretion, former servants and court performers were assigned the honourable title of *pardāyat*, referring to their newly established right to wear the veil (*pardā*), which brought them under the protection of the king as members of his family. A special initiation ceremony was organised to mark the induction of a new concubine, when she was presented with stacked ivory bangles traditionally worn only by married women and bestowed privileges reserved only for royals, such as the right to wear gold ornaments on the feet.²⁴⁸ This ceremony, which marked their transformation to veiled, and in a sense married (if only symbolically) women, elevated concubines into positions of authority almost on par with queens, bringing greater status in the zenana and greater wealth in the form of allowances and land grants.

Institutions within Jodhpur zenana called *tālīmkhānā* and *akhāḍā*²⁴⁹ housed performers, among whom the most prized appear to have been singing women called *gāyaṇ*.²⁵⁰ Experienced singers were housed in the *akhāḍā*. The *tālīmkhānā* housed apprentices called *tālīmvalī* who were trained for induction into the *akhāḍā* by musicians employed by the state.²⁵¹ In the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur, one finds evidence of another institution, called *khās khelī*, which also housed *gāyaṇ*.²⁵² The *gāyaṇ*, like concubines, were known by court names they were given on entering the zenana, all bearing suffix 'rai'. Performers called *pāṭur* and *bagtan* were lower in the hierarchy than the *gāyaṇ* and the *tālīmvalī*. The latter performed for royal audiences within the court, while the

²⁴⁶ Khanna, "Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar."

²⁴⁷ Priyanka Khanna, "Embodying Royal Concubinage: Some Aspects of Concubinage in Royal Rajput Household of Marwar, (Western Rajasthan) C. 16th -18th Centuries," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 72* (2011): 337–45; Khanna, "Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar."

²⁴⁸ Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 120.

²⁴⁹ Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)," 47–52.

²⁵⁰ *Gāyaṇ* as described in nineteenth century Jodhpur zenana records appear to have been women whose status was nearly on par with concubines (*pardāyat*). The two groups are often clubbed together as *gāyaṇiyān-pardāyatīyān* in lists of allowances paid, for instance. MMPP Bahī 173 VS 1874/1817 CE, f. 47-52.

²⁵¹ Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)," 47–57.

²⁵² MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f. 153.

former danced and sang at public gatherings.²⁵³ In Jodhpur, paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depict such dancers and singers performing at public festival celebrations presided on by the Maharaja.²⁵⁴ The *pāṭur* and *bagtan* were drawn from castes that traditionally engaged in the performing arts and were not inducted into the *tālīmkhānā* for training. Zenana records in Jodhpur indicate that they were treated on par with servants or employees (*cākar*) in the zenana as opposed to *gāyaṇ* who were treated as residents of the zenana and often allotted their own apartments and staff.²⁵⁵ Zenana documents indicate that court performers who resided in the zenana were sexually available to the Maharaja. There are examples of the ruler fathering children with *gāyaṇ* in addition to queens and concubines.²⁵⁶

The Zenana *Darbār*: Deconstructing a Rare Zenana Visual

Far from one-dimensional fantasies of the harem that circulated in orientalist writings and visual culture—of a highly promiscuous, decadent space filled with idle women vying for the ruler’s sexual attention—the zenana of Jodhpur was a highly regulated space, an institution where at times more than a hundred women²⁵⁷ lived in relative harmony, and where the rules of custom, and a well-oiled administrative machinery worked to enforce a dynamic system of rights and privileges. While comfort and sensory pleasure, including erotic pleasure, was undoubtedly an aspect of life in the zenana, as was the exercise of agency beyond these realms.

A hierarchical system of rights and privileges ordered life in Jodhpur’s zenana. A circa 1850 painting from Jodhpur (Fig. 2.1) made by the *citārā* or painter Ali depicts an unusual subject in paintings produced in Rajasthani courts—a ‘zenana *darbār*.’ The term *darbār* refers to courtly gatherings marked by ceremony, of which there were various kinds. The Maharaja met with and received tribute from fief chiefs (*ṭhākurs* or *sardārs*) who ruled Marwar’s various provinces at regular *darbārs* organised in the *mardānā*. Celebratory *darbārs* presided by the Maharaja and attended by male nobles marked festivities at the

²⁵³ Khanna, “Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century),” 47–55.

²⁵⁴ For an example, see Fig 4.4.

²⁵⁵ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f. 28 refers to unnamed *pāṭur*, *bagtaniyā* (pl.), as well as a *dhol vāli* or drummer, among zenana servants.

²⁵⁶ MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f. 47-58.

²⁵⁷ MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f. 47-58.

royal court, such as Holi, Diwali, or the ruler's birthday. The zenana too hosted intimate celebratory *darbārs*, where the ruler feasted and indulged in games and merrymaking in the company of royal women. Such *darbārs* in the zenana presided on by the ruler form the theme of a large number of Jodhpur paintings produced in the reign of Takhat Singh. However, this image is that of a gathering in the zenana presided on by senior royal women. It shows members of the zenana seated in a hierarchical arrangement on a roof terrace, enjoying a musical performance. The only painting from Jodhpur to depict a formal zenana scene that puts royal women at its centre rather than the ruler, this image is indicative both of the zenana's composition and of the hierarchies that operated within it. The painting is identified by an inscription on its back as a depiction of Takhat Singh's birthday *darbār* in the zenana. Maharaja Takhat Singh is in fact pictured in the image awkwardly floating above balcony rails on the left corner of the frame. This odd insertion, painted in a distinctly different style, suggests that Takhat Singh's image was added as an afterthought. It is conceivable that the painting was produced under Mān Singh's reign depicting his zenana and that Takhat Singh's image was added at a later stage. The painting likely entered the royal painting store or *ḍholiyān rā kothār* in the early days of Takhat Singh's reign, at which time the inscription was added.²⁵⁸

At the centre of this painting, seated on an opulent *bichāyat* (carpet) are the elderly widowed queen mothers of the zenana (a close look at this painting reveals wrinkles on their faces), who are seated alongside the chief queen (*mahārāṇī, paṭrāṇī*) and infant princes and princesses. Widowhood is marked by the absence of jewellery on the older women's bodies, and their attire, which is considerably plainer than that of the chief queen. Seated towards the left and right of the central group are other members of the zenana, who are arranged according to status, with those with higher ranks placed in a more proximate position to the centre than others. The group to the left appears to consist of three elderly women and seven queens. The seemingly male figures in white, except for the Maharaja who is depicted in the left corner, are the *nājar*,²⁵⁹ who served as administrators and guards in the zenana. It

²⁵⁸ There are marked quality differences between zenana scenes produced under Mān Singh and Takhat Singh. Paintings produced under Takhat Singh are often rather crude compared to those produced under Mān Singh. In this painting, the rather crude depiction of Takhat Singh contrasts with the confident execution of the rest of the image.

²⁵⁹ The *nājar* are officials of ambiguous gender identity who served in zenana administration. See the following section in this chapter for details.

is not possible to conclusively identify others in the gathering. However, one can assume that a row of women on the right wearing block-printed skirts, and sporting religious marks on their foreheads, are elderly female relatives of the Maharaja, including concubines of his predecessors.²⁶⁰ All around them stand other members of the zenana, which would have included at different points in time, the ruler's *pardāyats* and all manners of female relatives such as daughters, daughters-in-law, and widowed or unmarried sisters. In addition, the zenana was home to wet nurses, numerous female personal servants who attended to royal women, as well as female performers.

Maharaja Takhat Singh, who is depicted in one corner of this painting, was crowned on the death of his predecessor Mān Singh (r. 1803-43). Mān Singh had died without an heir, plunging the kingdom into a crisis. His widows, suddenly in charge of deciding the future of the state, resolved the situation by adopting a close relative as their son and thus heir to Marwar's throne. Takhat Singh, a Rathore clansman, was then the ruler of the small principality of Ahmednagar in what is now Gujarat. On being adopted by Mān Singh's queens, he resigned his claim to Ahmednagar's throne and moved to Jodhpur with his two wives, children, and other members of his household. After his coronation, Takhat Singh sought to combat his unpopularity as an outsider on Marwar's throne by contracting a large number of strategic marital alliances with various rajput clans, seeking to bring them into his fold. He married a total of 29 times,²⁶¹ sometimes taking two brides in a day during his reign in Jodhpur through marriage ceremonies known as *khaṇḍā vivāh*, where, in the groom's absence, he was represented at wedding rituals by his battle sword (*khaṇḍā*). In the year 1872, Takhat Singh's chancellery compiled a document on the zenana of the time. The resultant *bahī*²⁶² enumerates the members of Takhat Singh's zenana, listing their names in order of their rank in the zenana. The first names listed are of the queen mothers of Jodhpur—the wives of Mān Singh who adopted Takhat Singh as their son. Their names are followed by that Mān Singh's daughters, who though married and living in other kingdoms, are enumerated as part of the zenana of Jodhpur, indicating that marriage did not entail and severing of connections or loyalty to the natal house. Listed next are the elderly female

²⁶⁰ The *pardāyats* (concubines) and *gāyaṇiyās* (singing women) of the late Maharaja Mān Singh for example were still residing in the zenana under Takhat Singh, as proved by references to them in *bahīs* of the period. MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f. 47-58.

²⁶¹ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*.

²⁶² MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f.47-58.

relatives of the Maharaja: his aunts (*bhuā*), elder sisters-in-law (*bhābhī*), and two of his wet nurses (*dhāī*) who by lieu of having breastfed the ruler, enjoyed the status of matriarchs. Takhat Singh's queens, foremost among them his first wife, Rāṇāwatjī, who was the *mahārāṇī* or chief queen, follow them. The names of the queens are listed in the order of their seniority as the wives of the Maharaja. Other members of the zenana follow them. Such an organisation, with older female relatives of the Maharaja and the chief queen at the top of the hierarchy, followed by other members is consistent with the one reflected in the arrangement of figures in the zenana *darbār* painting. In the *bahī*, the names of the ruler's children follow the names of the queens. The children born to queens enjoyed higher rank and are given precedence here over those born to concubines. Unlike the children of queens, those born of concubines were ineligible to inherit the throne. Listed next are the names of the concubines of the ruler. Unsurprisingly, these women enjoyed lower rank than their children who were blood relations of the sovereign. Next in rank are the women singers (*gāyaṇ*) in the ruler's service, followed by the *nājar* and the concubines of the heir apparent. The *bahī* attests to a hierarchy where customary seniority determined by considering both age and familial relationship to the reigning Maharaja was the main criteria that determined a woman's rank within the zenana. Caste was another important factor. Marriage to the Maharaja was forbidden to non-rajput women, who could only serve as concubines, automatically placing them and their offspring lower in the hierarchy than elite rajput queens.

The customary hierarchy of the zenana as indicated above does not seem to have had a strict or direct co-relation to the amount of wealth and resources members of the zenana had at their disposal. Even though elderly female relatives such as the queen mother seem to have enjoyed high rank in the zenana as its matriarchs, the wives of the Maharaja, especially the chief queen and other favoured queens or concubines, often had greater access to resources such as land revenue. These were allotted based on the discretion of the ruler. For instance, during the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh, his chief queen Bhaṭiyāṇjī was assigned villages worth 56,200 rupees as her *jāgīr*,²⁶³ while one of the queen mothers, Baḍā Mājī Chauhānjī, was assigned a revenue of only 22,000 rupees, and an aunt of the Maharaja,

²⁶³ A *jāgīr*, also known as *paṭṭā*, is a type of land grant where the grantee held the right to govern and collect taxes from a territory.

a mere 1300 rupees. At the same time, the Maharaja's daughter, Sire Kanwar, held a *jāgīr* of 29,500 rupees.²⁶⁴

Serving the Zenana: Administrators and Workers

The zenana institution was administered by trusted servants of the Maharaja who were responsible for ensuring the safety and comfort of royal women, all the while safeguarding the interests of the sovereign. Their salaries were paid by the Maharaja's treasury, keeping them firmly under the ruler's control. Such employees were known as state or *khālsā* servants.

At the top of the administrative hierarchy of the zenana were *khālsā* employees called the *nājar*. They were the so-called 'eunuch'²⁶⁵ officers who policed traffic in and out of the zenana and handled administrative duties such as the dispersal of salaries and allowances. The *nājar* were castrated males who dressed in male court attire and held the privilege of moving freely between the zenana and the *mardānā*. In paintings from Jodhpur, they are depicted wearing standard male courtly attire, but are distinguished from other courtiers by the lack of facial hair. Chosen members of the *nājar* community occupied the post of the *dārogā* or the head of administration of the zenana (with the title *dārogā nājar*).

The *nājar* served as zenana guards and held positions of even greater authority as confidants of kings in the houses of the Mughals, the Ottomans, and the Shahs of Iran. The Mughal zenana in India is believed to have employed such guards from the reign of Babur, the founder of the dynasty.²⁶⁶ Like the custom of *purdah*, the practice of employing *nājar* was adopted by Jodhpur's Rajput rulers from the Mughal court during the reign of Maharaja Sur Singh (r. 1595-1619).²⁶⁷ The *nājar* were crucial to the maintenance of the rules of the

²⁶⁴ MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f. 36.

²⁶⁵ This offensive term is used here only once as a descriptive for a lack of alternatives that can easily communicate the historic position of the *nājar* in Indian royal households. The term transgender with its contemporary connotations of choice does not seem appropriate to this context, especially since the *nājar* of the royal house, though castrated, did not take on female identities or dress. The amount of agency they exercised with regard to taking on the *nājar* identity is also hard to determine. The group are henceforth referred to in this work only as *nājar*.

²⁶⁶ Such officers in the Mughal court were called *nāzir* or *khwājā*. Shadab Bano, "Eunuchs in Mughal Household and Court," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 69 (2008): 417–27.

²⁶⁷ Raibahadur Munshi Hardayal Singh, *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar 1891 (Marwar Census Report)* (Jodhpur: Maharaj Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2010), 385–88; Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:564.

purdah. Their ambiguous gender identity enabled them to access both the *mardānā* and zenana, allowing the *nājar* to act as the guardians of the threshold in between, as well as the chief intermediary between the two realms. The *nājar* remained at the head of zenana administration and security in Jodhpur until the end of the nineteenth century, when references to them cease. In the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh, prominent *nājar* figures who served as *dārogā* included Dārogā Nājar Brindāvandās²⁶⁸, Dārogā Nājar Daulatrām,²⁶⁹ and Dārogā Nājar Imaratrām.²⁷⁰ In the reign of Takhat Singh (r- 1843-73), Nājar Harkaraṇ held the reigns of the zenana. As *dārogā*, he supervised a string of major construction projects carried out in the zenana in this period. Harkaraṇ's influence and authority is said to have extended way beyond the zenana, resulting in the Marwari saying, ““*bāhar nāchen bādariyān, māyen nāchen nājariyān,*” (Dancers dance outside, while the *nājar* dance within).²⁷¹ A twin portrait, perhaps from Mān Singh's reign, depicts two *nājar* officials identified as Himmatrām and Binrāvan (Brindāvan?) who are referred to in an inscription on the reverse as the kin of Sejrām and Karṇodās (Fig. 2.2). The two officials are clothed in finery befitting high-ranked nobles. They enjoy fine perfumes and admire flowers they hold in their hands, such visual cues indicating their refined tastes and manners. Servants offer the two figures wine and grilled meat. Two young *nājars* accompany them on the carpet.

Several *nājar* served under the *dārogā nājar* and managed administrative and security-related tasks. A *bahī* from the 1870s lists the names of all the *nājar* active in the zenana in this period, counting 23 including the Dārogā Nājar Harkaraṇ.²⁷² A variety of other zenana employees in the direct employ of the central administration of the palace worked under the authority of the *dārogā nājar*. *Hājarī bahīs* (attendance records) of the zenana are a crucial source of information on these figures. A *hājarī bahī* from the year 1856 lists the names of 128 such zenana employees.²⁷³ They include eleven male *ḍyoḍhīdār* (gatekeepers), two male *caukīdār* (guards), three male *uvākā-nāvis* (spies or informants), and three male *navīsandā* (record keepers) in addition to scores of female servants (*khālsā dāvāḍī*) who

²⁶⁸ MMPP Bahī 173, VS 1874/1817 CE, f. 1.

²⁶⁹ Naggār, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 66–67.

²⁷⁰ Naggār, 66–67.

²⁷¹ Singh, *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar 1891 (Marwar Census Report)*, 386. Here *māy* or within can be interpreted to mean either the royal court or the zenana, which is frequently referred to in documents simply as *māy* or inside.

²⁷² MMPP Bahī 836, VS 1929/ 1872 CE, f. 47-58.

²⁷³ MMPP Bahī 1999 VS 1913/1856 CE, f. 13-15.

carried out household tasks. Also in the rolls were three women spies (*uvākā-nāvisanīyā*). Other male servants who find mention in the *bahī* are two male *darjī* (tailors), one male *nāī* (haircutters and shavers), one male *rāvat* (ritual genealogist-singer), 18 male *purabiyā* (palanquin bearers), one male *jāmādār* (sweeper) and four male *sevag* (temple servants). Senior female officials known as *baḍāraṅ* worked in the zenana in supervisory roles.²⁷⁴ Due to their proximity to queens, *baḍāraṅs* have been known to rise to positions of political importance during times of regency. A well-known case is that of Rūpā Baḍāraṅ who acted as an advisor to the Bhaṭṭiyānī regent queen of Jaipur in the early nineteenth century.²⁷⁵ Another class of female servants were called *dāvaḍi*. *Dāvaḍis* worked either for the central administration (*khālsā dāvaḍi*) or in the personal service of individual zenana women.

The zenana also employed musicians who served at specialised institutions such as the *tālīmkhānā*, the *akhāḍā*, and the *khās khelī* that housed court performers. Seven musicians who served in zenana institutions that trained female court performers are listed in the *hājarī bahī*. Among them were two elite vocalists called *kalāvānt*,²⁷⁶ in addition to *tabalchīs* (tabla players) and *sārangiyos* (sarangi players).²⁷⁷

Hājarī bahīs indicate that crucial and more or less permanent salaried positions within the zenana, such as that of the *ḍyoḍhīdār* or *navīsandā* were staffed by upper caste men, among them rajputs, merchant castes, and brahmins. Temples housed within the zenana necessitated the employ of temple servants termed *sevag* who too were drawn from upper caste groups. Communities lower in the caste ladder carried out more menial, wage-based labour. A category that often crops up in financial records of the zenana is *kamīṅā*,²⁷⁸ a term that is used to refer to low caste menial workers and artisans, including Muslims. According to nineteenth century British colonial sources, the term meant “base, low, inferior” and was used to refer to servants who were considered minor cultivators in the village economy and who received grain or small allotments of land in return for their

²⁷⁴ On *dāvaḍis* and *baḍāraṅs* in Jodhpur, see Tyagi, “The Invisible Lives of Davris and Badarans: Exploring Affiliations and ‘Friendships’ within the Janani Deorhi in Early Modern Marwar.”

²⁷⁵ Tyagi.

²⁷⁶ On the term *kalāvānt*, see Daniel M. Neuman, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 94–96.

²⁷⁷ MMPP Bahī 1999 VS 1913/1856 CE, f. 13-15.

²⁷⁸ The root word is *kām* meaning work or service, thus one who performs work or service. Oscar Lewis and Victor Barnouw, “Caste and the Jajmani System in a North Indian Village,” *The Scientific Monthly* 83, no. 2 (1956): 66–81.

service.²⁷⁹ In zenana *bahīs*, a range of professional groups who provided services to zenana inhabitants appear under the category *kamīṇā*. These included *sunār* (gold smith), *tāmboli* (betel leaf growers), *raṃgrej* (fabric dyers), *piñjārā* (cotton scutcher), *dhobhī* (washermen), *nāī* (hair cutters and shavers), *lavār/lohār* (metalworker), *cūḍhīgar* (bangle maker), *suthār* (carpenter), *mālī* (gardener), *kasāī* (butcher), *jhāḍūkas* (sweeper) and even *citārā* (painter).^{280 281} Both men and women of these castes, especially those engaged in daily duties at the zenana such as *dhobhī*, *jhāḍūkas*, *darjī*, or *mehriyā* (those who fetched and carried water) were employed by the zenana, sometimes directly under the central administration (*khālsā*) but more commonly in the personal service of various royal women.

While *khālsā* employees worked for the state, zenana women personally employed or were patrons of a large number of people who served their households in the zenana. Among them was a close circle of aides who assisted them in tasks such as the management of the lands granted to them as *jāgīr*. Such aides generally included male employees referred to as *kāmdār* and female employees known as *dāvaḍī*. *Kāmdār* carried out the functions of a business manager, including such tasks as the collection of tax revenue from the *jāgīr* villages of their employers, the management of agricultural lands and gardens, and the supervision of construction projects on their behalf. *Dāvaḍīs* likely performed the role of trusted personal servants within the royal household. However, there are some references to them serving as their mistresses' representatives in business affairs outside the zenana. In 1882, the *dāvaḍī* Mūjī, alongside the *kāmdār* Bholayat Shivchand and the *gajdhar* (architect or head mason) Mālī Ganeś, was entrusted with managing the construction of a *chattrī* (memorial stone umbrella) for Mān Singh's queen Pāñcmā (the fifth) Bhaṭiyāñjī.²⁸² Senior

²⁷⁹ H. H. (Horace Hayman) Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms : And of Useful Words Occurring in Official Documents Relating to the Administration of the Government of British India, from the Arabic, Persian, Hindustānī, Sanskrit, Hindī, Bengālī, Uriya, Marāthī, Guazrāthī, Telugu, Karnāta, Tamil, Malayālam, and Other Languages* (London : W.H. Allen and Co. Booksellers to the Honorable East-India Company, 1855), 253, http://archive.org/details/glossaryofju_wils_1855_00. In contemporary India, *kamīṇā* is used as a grave insult, indicating a deep-set contempt for labouring castes.

²⁸⁰ MMPP Bahī 327, (1803-43) 48-49; 173, 47-52.

²⁸¹ The *citārā* Shivdas is counted among *kamīṇā* in the *bahī*. Shivdas is also the name of a well-known painter from the atelier of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43) whose spectacular paintings illustrating texts of the Nāth Sampradāya are familiar to art historians. For paintings by Shivdas, see Diamond, Glynn, and Jasol, *Garden & Cosmos*, 31–50.

²⁸² MMPP Bahī 434 VS 1937-39/1880-82 CE, f.2.

female servants with the title *baḍāraṇ* can also be seen working in the personal employ of queens.

Among a queen's personal servants, at least some were part of the dowry that she was given by her family. Accounts of royal marriages invariably mention the transfer of people as part of a bride's dowry (*dahej*). During the 1805 wedding of Maharaja Mān Singh to his queen Devaḍijī for example, 15 people arrived in Jodhpur as a part of her *dahej*. They included six *baḍāraṇ*, of whom three are referred to by the prefix *dhāi* indicating their role as wet nurses. Seven male servants were also part of Devaḍijī's dowry.²⁸³

The significant number of men among the zenana workforce outlined above breaks illusory notions of the zenana as a watertight women-only space. In fact, a large number of men traversed the zenana daily, serving both in supervisory positions and as the providers of crucial services. Among these, personal aides and those who performed household duties, both men and women, likely had daily contact with their mistresses, either directly or through the mediation of maidservants.²⁸⁴

The Gates Have Eyes: Surveillance in the Zenana

Access into and out of the Jodhpur zenana was controlled through two major gateways, one acting as the internal boundary separating the zenana from the *mardānā* areas of the palace and another, known as the *sire ḍyoḍhī* or main gate, which opened outdoors. Entry into the zenana was subject to permission for men and women who were not immediate members of the royal family. The security of the zenana was entrusted to the *dārogā nājar* who was assisted by junior *nājar*, gatekeepers (*ḍyoḍhīdār*), and guards (*caukīdār*). Attendance registers of the zenana also make frequent references to men and women with the title *uvākā-nāvis/uvākā-nāvisaṇiyā* who were spies or informants. The overwhelming presence of gatekeepers, guards, and crucially spies in the zenana suggest a wide-ranging system of control and surveillance that monitored traffic into the zenana and kept the ruler abreast of any unusual occurrences within. Record keeping appears to have been an important aspect of this machinery. While most zenana *bahīs* are inventories and financial statements, there is

²⁸³ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, 27.

²⁸⁴ The rules of purdah do not preclude contact with male servants. Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 89.

evidence, even if only from mid and late nineteenth centuries that daily registers were maintained by the office of the *nājar* of traffic in and out of the zenana, recording anything and anyone that passed its gates. An example is a *bahī* from 1874 describes itself as a *hakikat bahī* of the zenana. In general, *hakikat* (literally, fact or truth) *bahīs* are a class of court documents that chronicle the daily life of a ruler, recording major events and activities of each day of his reign. *Hakikat bahīs* for the zenana are largely unheard of in Jodhpur, except for the two *bahīs* referred to in this section. Of these, the first, dating to the year 1874, describes itself as a record of things (*cīj basat*) that entered the *janānī dyoḍhī*. Most of the entries within are records of things being brought out of the zenana by servants, either to be used elsewhere or for repairs or refurbishments. The *bahī* records their departure from and return to the zenana. Objects that are thus tracked range from trays (*thāl*), blankets (*rajāī*) and floor spreads (*bichāyat*) to robes (*jāmā*) and jewellery (*geṇo*).²⁸⁵ Each entry describes the origin of the object concerned (the zenana household of a particular royal woman), the servant tasked with carrying it out of the zenana, and often the name of the person making the entry. Unlike *hakikat bahīs* of the reign of Maharajas, entries in this *bahī* were not made every day. The handwriting changes with every entry, indicating that entries were made real time by whoever was manning the gate when the items were taken out. The *bahī* also records the entry of people into the zenana. One such entry, recorded under the name of Dārogā Nājar Harkaraṇ describes the arrival of one Mir Fayad Ali to meet the queen mother Baḍā Tanwarjī. The entry records that Mir Fayad Ali wanted to enter the zenana to meet Baḍā Tunwarjī and was granted permission to go (“*māy milaṇ jāvaṇarī/ jāvaṇ dījo*”) by Dārogā Nājar Harkaraṇ, who escorted him to Tunwarjī’s residence.²⁸⁶ Similar entries describe the visits of other men to the zenana. A Maharaj Ranjit Singh visited the queen mother Chāwaḍjī at her home while a Maharaj Madho Singh visited the queen mother Lāḍī Rānāwat jī.²⁸⁷ Considering the royal titles (the title ‘maharaj’ was generally used to refer to princes) these men bore, they were likely relatives of queens. In all cases, the visitor was only allowed in escorted by a *nājar* charged with taking him inside and dropping him back to the gate on conclusion of the visit. All the male visitors referred to in the *bahī* were received by queen mothers.

²⁸⁵ MMPP Bahī 2404 VS 1931/1874 CE, f. 1-7.

²⁸⁶ MMPP Bahī 2404 VS 1931/1874 CE, f.12-14.

²⁸⁷ MMPP Bahī 2404 VS 1931/1874 CE, f.12-14.

Another *hakikat bahī* dates from the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh and contains entries roughly for the years 1848 and 1849. Its contents differ significantly from the last document. Instead of in and out entries, the *bahī* describes important events that passed the zenana. Zenana events recorded in this document include the rituals accompanying the birth of a prince²⁸⁸ and the Maharaja's visits to the zenana.²⁸⁹ The document also records a major accident in the zenana, when a *dāvāḍi* from the *tālīmkhānā* fell into a water tank. The *dāvāḍi*, who sustained injuries, was taken out of the zenana to the city below to recuperate.²⁹⁰

The Architecture of the Zenana

The zenana of Jodhpur's Mehrangarh fort, like the rest of the fortress, is a palimpsest; composed of architecture that was built, repaired, and rebuilt from at least the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries (if one were to consider the latest additions). In the nineteenth century, the zenana was a sprawling complex that housed more than a hundred residents, among them many of the patrons covered in this study. As it survives today, it is composed of one grand rectangular courtyard and structures surrounding it (Fig. 2.3). Many more buildings were once part of the complex, but were dismantled in the middle of twentieth century during the reign of Jodhpur's Maharaja Hanwant Singh (r. 1947-52).²⁹¹

The zenana as a whole had two main gated entryways, one of which once formed the hard boundary between the main surviving zenana courtyard, called *janānī dyoḍhī*, and the *mardānā* palaces with which it is contiguous. The other gateway, on the eastern side of the *janānī dyoḍhī*, is referred to in many documents of the zenana as *sire dyoḍhī* or *sire pol* (main gate) and opens outside, onto the path that leads down to the fort gates and further into the city below (see Fig. 2.4). The *sire dyoḍhī* was the zenana's main point of entry and exit. The division between the zenana and the *mardānā* was far from black and white, and appears to have been mediated through a transitional space in between which we will explore in the following paragraphs. The *sire dyoḍhī* as it exists now is secured by a formidable wooden gate with a trapdoor, framed by a carved marble doorway. Stairs lead up

²⁸⁸ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 10.

²⁸⁹ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 43.

²⁹⁰ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 6-8.

²⁹¹ Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 44.

from this gate to the zenana courtyard, which stands at an elevation. The *sire d̥yodhī* in its present form was erected in the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh (c. 1965), replacing an older gate.²⁹² It would have served as the point of departure and return for residents of the zenana as they left on excursions outside on their palanquins. This exit would have allowed them to enter and exit the zenana without having to pass through the *mardānā* palaces. Gatekeepers or *d̥yodhīdār* watched over by the *nājar* would have regulated traffic into and out of the zenana through both gates.

The *sire d̥yodhī* is separated from the *janānī d̥yodhī* courtyard by a winding passage. On either side of this passage was once located the *purabiyon kā sāl* (the hall of the *purabiyās*). In Jodhpur, the *purabiyā*, literally easterners²⁹³ are commonly believed to have served the royal court mainly as palanquin bearers. The narrow halls along the passage leading to the zenana courtyard would have housed these palanquin bearers and royal palanquins as they awaited passengers.

The palaces of Mehrangarh are arranged around interconnected courtyards that acted as gathering spaces where rituals and important celebrations were enacted. Having traversed the seven defensive gates of the fort and gained entry into the *mardānā* through its only gate, the Suraj Pol, a visitor to the court would have had to traverse three palace courtyards, each at a higher level than the other, to reach the point where the transition into the zenana spaces begin. Here, she encounters double doors leading to a courtyard called Holi Cauk or Moti Mahal Cauk. This courtyard, as Giles Tillotson has pointed out in his analysis of the palaces of Mehargarh, is a fluid space that straddles the zenana and the *mardānā*.²⁹⁴ While the double doors signal an exclusive female space ahead with restricted entry, a large hall called the Moti Mahal within this courtyard to the right seems to have been designed as a throne room or *darbār* hall for the Maharaja, where he could receive male courtiers.²⁹⁵ Used this way, it was a distinctly *mardānā* space.

²⁹² The construction of the *sire d̥yodhī*'s new doors is recorded in MMPP Bahī 2070 VS 1922/1865 CE, f. 47.

²⁹³ The term is usually used to refer to migrants from eastern UP or Bihar. Peggy Mohan, "Two Faces of a Language Death," 2021, 13.

²⁹⁴ Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 41-44.

²⁹⁵ Tillotson, 41-44.

Tillotson has dated the Moti Mahal to the reign of Maharaja Ajit Singh (r. 1707-1724).²⁹⁶ Photographs of Maharaja Takhat Singh from the mid-nineteenth century shot by the English officer Eugene Clutterbuck Impey show him in the Moti Mahal courtyard. The courtyard was used by Impey as the setting for a group portrait of the Maharaja with his male attendants and relatives. One image shows them gathered directly in front of the gate leading to the *janānī d̥yoḍhī*, which is obscured in the image by a black backdrop (Fig. 2.5).²⁹⁷

The same courtyard however, could be transformed into a zenana space when the need arose. Paintings from the nineteenth century, from the reigns of both Takhat Singh and his predecessor Mān Singh, repeatedly show the Moti Mahal hall and courtyard being used as the site of intimate gatherings where the Maharaja feasted and celebrated festivals with members of the zenana. A late nineteenth century painting (Fig. 2.6) depicts Maharaja Takhat Singh and his zenana gathered for an intimate evening of music and wine in the courtyard. They are attended by female servants and eight *nājar*. In keeping with zenana rules, there are no men present save the Maharaja. The closed doors of the Moti Mahal hall can be seen behind the gathering. Interestingly, the artist gives us a peek into this room, picturing the arrangement inside as if the doors were transparent. The hall can be seen set up as a royal bedroom, with Takhat Singh's bed, chairs, and a small personal shrine to the goddess Durga inside it.²⁹⁸ Thus, the character of the Moti Mahal courtyard and hall appears to have changed according to occasion. It served as a *mardānā* when the ruler gathered in its space with his male entourage. It could also be converted into a strictly zenana space for gatherings involving royal women. Thus, the zenana and the *mardānā* overlapped in the Moti Mahal courtyard. This is significant, for it shows that the border between these two gendered realms was to some degree a moveable one.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Tillotson, 41–44.

²⁹⁷ This and other images by Impey, including those depicting 'dancing girls' and other members of the royal household are part of the Lawrence Impey Collection. They can be found online at Lawrence Impey's Flickr page. A copy of this photo archive is also available at the Mehrangarh Museum Trust. Lawrence Impey, "ECI_01 The Photographs of Col. Eugene Clutterbuck Impey Rajasthan ('Rajpootana') C1865," Flickr.com, January 1, 1865, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lawrenceimpey/43122575714/>. On Impey's photos from Jodhpur, see Andrew Topsfield, "Eugene Impey in Rajasthan," *History of Photography* 20, no. 1 (October 1, 2013): 94–97.

²⁹⁸ It is a well-accepted fact that rooms in Rajput palaces seldom served a fixed use. They were frequently repurposed through the exchange of furnishings and furniture; the same room often serving at one time as a concert hall, and at another, as a bedroom.

²⁹⁹ Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 43.

Though the ground floor spaces of the Moti Mahal courtyard functioned as a soft transition between the zenana and the *mardānā*, the first and second floor spaces set above the courtyard seem to have been strictly zenana spaces. Here, behind intricate *jālī* screens covering the façade lie apartments, viewing galleries, small courtyards, and terraces designed for the use of royal women. Zenana scenes produced by Jodhpur artists in the nineteenth century depict many of these terraces as sites for gatherings featuring zenana women with the ruler.³⁰⁰

To the southern end of the Moti Mahal courtyard lies the gate leading to the first exclusively zenana courtyard of the palaces—the *janānī dyoḍhī*. The gate is placed at the end of a short passage that separates the *janānī dyoḍhī* and Moti Mahal courtyards. Zenana gatekeepers, such as the *nājar* and the *dyoḍhīdār* would have guarded this passage that formed the firm boundary between the zenana and the *mardānā*.

The *Janānī Dyoḍhī* and the *Janānā Padkotā*

The term *janānī dyoḍhī* refers to the only surviving zenana courtyard complex at the Jodhpur fort. It can be accessed from the *mardānā* side through the Moti Mahal courtyard. The main point of entry into the *janānī dyoḍhī* from outside was the *sire dyoḍhī* to the east of the courtyard. The *janānī dyoḍhī* is the first exclusively zenana space that one encounters from both sides. The two gates leading out of the zenana being accessible only through this courtyard, it formed a single and hence easily surveyed point of entry and exit. The term *janānī dyoḍhī* or simply *dyoḍhī* is variously used in court documents and local parlance to refer to the gates of the zenana complex, the complex itself, its main courtyard, and the zenana institution. However, in the following paragraphs, to avoid confusion, it is used only to refer to architectural space of the main surviving zenana courtyard at Mehrangarh fort, as pictured in Fig. 2.3.

Red sandstone buildings enclose the *janānī dyoḍhī* on all sides, creating a courtyard open to the skies but protected from the gaze of those outside. On three sides, it is bound by multi-storied palace residences. The decorative doorways of these residential spaces, placed at an elevation and accessed by small flights of stairs, open into the enclosed courtyard

³⁰⁰ For an example, see Accession Number RJS 2163, Mehrangarh Museum Trust.

rather than to the world outside, ensuring privacy for residents. On the fourth and southern side of the courtyard, directly opposite the gate leading into the zenana from Moti Mahal courtyard, is a now-disused multi-storied temple building. It is referred to in zenana records as *rājsāl* (the king's hall) and once housed multiple temples. The predominant visual effect of the *janānī dyoḍhī*, framed thus on all four sides, is created both by its inward orientation, achieved through the arrangement of palace buildings with their entrances directed into the courtyard, as well as the copious use of *jālī* or pierced stone screens. The projecting façade of palace rooms that overlook the courtyard is composed of pierced red sandstone screens carved with floral and geometric motifs. Small wooden windows that open into the courtyard from the palaces are set amidst the *jālīs*. Curved 'Bengali' eaves (*chajjā*) accent this delicate assembly. The use of *jālī* screens lends lightness to buildings carved out of heavy blocks of red sandstone. The screens kept interiors cool in summers, filtering harsh sun light and allowing for the easy circulation of air. Equally significantly, they acted as architectural expressions of *purdah*, screening women residents from the gaze of male visitors who might enter the courtyard. Used on specially designed viewing galleries on upper level zenana rooms that overlook *mardānā* courtyards, *jālī* screens allowed the inhabitants of the zenana to witness and in this way participate in events in the *mardānā* courtyards while themselves remaining concealed. The screens allow for panoramic views of the city below.

The upper floor palaces clustered around the zenana courtyard on three sides (exempting the side housing the *rājsāl*) are a maze of interconnected rooms that can disorient a first-time visitor. In them are located the private apartments that once belonged to queens, concubines, princesses, or queen mothers, composed of dimly lit rooms where they lived and slept in as well as kitchens and store rooms. Also located inside the palaces were temples and small personal shrines. A detailed look at the organisation of the inner quarters of the *janānī dyoḍhī* follows.

Reconstructing the *Janānā Padkoṭā*

Behind the *janānī dyoḍhī* courtyard now stands a large yard enclosed at the back by high battlements (*paḍkoṭā*) which protect the zenana. This area is known in archival records as *janānā paḍkoṭā* or *janānā mahalān rā paḍkoṭā* (Fig. 2.7). Now completely emptied of built structures, this site once housed a number of standalone zenana palaces (*janānā mahalān*)

which were occupied by queens, concubines, and court singers. There being no material evidence of these palaces, it is difficult to determine when they were originally built. However, one can assume they were in existence at least from the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43), who constructed the battlements meant to protect these palaces.³⁰¹ The *paḍkoṭā* palaces were demolished c. 1950 on the orders of then Maharaja Hanwant Singh. Hanwant Singh, who took up residence in Mehrangarh in this period, began a series of renovations to adapt its spaces to modern living. His premature death in January 1952 put a stop to his plans to construct new buildings in place of the destroyed zenana palaces.³⁰²

A 1930s model of the Mehrangarh now on display at the fort museum (Fig. 2.8) depicts a rough outline of the palaces of the *janānā paḍkoṭā*. References to these palaces can also be found in several *bahīs* that document construction activities that took place in the zenana in the mid-nineteenth century. Together, these sources allow for a partial reconstruction of the composition and organisation of the *janānā paḍkoṭā* and the use made of its spaces.

The surviving zenana courtyard complex the *janānī dyoḍhī* as well as the palaces that once occupied the *janānā paḍkoṭā* were sites for a major reconstruction and renovation effort of the zenana that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century during the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh—the last of Jodhpur’s Maharajas to use the fortress of his predecessors as his full-time residence. After taking over the reins of the kingdom in 1843, Takhat Singh embarked on an extensive repair and reconstruction of the entire fort, of which a central concern was the renovation and expansion of the zenana. The extensive construction that took place in the zenana under Takhat Singh is documented in a series of *kamṭhā* (construction) *bahīs* of the zenana dating from the 1860s. They indicate that, in the course of this project, both the *janānī dyoḍhī* and the *janānā paḍkoṭā* were extensively refurbished. Many additions were made to the zenana, expanding its capacity. The upgrades made to the zenana in this period were likely necessitated by the considerable expansion of zenana population during Takhat Singh’s reign. This was the result of Takhat Singh’s move, accompanied by his household, from his former seat in Idar to Jodhpur. As Takhat Singh’s zenana in Idar was transplanted to Jodhpur, the widows, concubines and other female

³⁰¹ Tanwar, *Jodhpur Kile Rā Kamṭhā Bahī*, 20.

³⁰² Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 44.

relatives of Maharaja Mān Singh continued to live in the zenana, likely necessitating a reshuffle of its spaces. The *kamṭhā bahīs* of renovations carried out under Takhat Singh contain clues to the kind of built spaces that the *janānā paḍkoṭā* once housed, enabling us to partially recreate the original extent and composition of a part of the Jodhpur zenana that is now lost.

Lost Palaces: The Janānā Paḍkoṭā

The *janānā mahalān rā paḍkoṭā* located to the south west of *janānī dyoḍhī* and bound by battlements (see Fig. 2.8) appears to have housed a large number of zenana residents during Takhat Singh's reign. Accounts of construction in the *janānā paḍkoṭā* refer not only to palaces in this complex, but also an underground water tank, which was located beneath a courtyard amidst the palaces, referred to as *ṭānkon cauk*.³⁰³ There are also references to other courtyard spaces termed *mahalān cauk*³⁰⁴ and *paḍkoṭā rā cauk*³⁰⁵ around which palaces were arranged.

The first major building project undertaken in the zenana under Takhat Singh's patronage was the construction of a new palace for Baḍā Rāṇāwatjī, Takhat Singh's chief queen, between 1848 and 1850.³⁰⁶ This too was likely located in the *janānā paḍkoṭā* space, as the *janānī dyoḍhī* would not have allowed for the construction of an entirely new building without tearing down existing ones.

A majority of the renovations carried out in the zenana during Takhat Singh's reign, which included heavy stone masonry to construct new structures, as well as repairs using stone and *cūnā* (lime cement), appear to have taken place in the years 1861-62 (VS 1918). A *kamṭhā bahī* from the period yields the names of zenana women whose living quarters stood in the *janānā paḍkoṭā*.³⁰⁷ They were:

Mājī (queen mother) Śrī Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī

³⁰³ MMPP Bahī 2026 VS 1918/1861 CE, f. 2.

³⁰⁴ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.131

³⁰⁵ MMPP Bahī 2026 VS 1918/1861 CE, 67-68

³⁰⁶ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-1907/1848-50 CE, f. 19

³⁰⁷ MMPP Bahī 2024 VS 1918/1861 CE, f. 2-180.

Mājī (queen mother) Śrī Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyānī

Rāṇī (queen) Cauhan

Rāṇī (queen) Cāvaḍī

Gāyaṇ (court singer) Mang Rai

Pardāyat (concubine) Jas Rai

Pardāyat (concubine) Sundar Rai

Khāskhelī rī Rūpjyot (court singer)

Khāskhelī rī Tār Rai (court singer)

The list above is by no means a complete list of the residents of the *janānā paḍkoṭā* in this period, as there are references elsewhere that indicate that the palace apartments of various other members of the zenana also stood in this space. Among them was the queen from Jaisalmer, Jaisalmerījī, as well as Takhat Singh’s favourite queen Lāḍī Rāṇāwatjī.³⁰⁸ The *mahal* of Takhat Singh’s *gāyaṇ* (singer) Mang Rai that stood in the *paḍkoṭā* figures prominently in accounts of construction, alluding to the esteem she commanded in Takhat Singh’s court.³⁰⁹ Considering that work on her apartment required the services of a whole spectrum of construction-related workers including the *gajdhar* (architect) Asīn and stonecutters in the mine nearby, one can deduce that this was likely an entirely new construction in the *paḍkoṭā*.

The term *mahal*, used to refer to the homes of individual royal women both in the *janānī dyoḍhī* and the *paḍkoṭā* is an ambiguous term. It could indicate an expansive, independent dwelling, may be even a freestanding palace, but not necessarily so as indicated by its use to refer to a variety of structures including large halls such as ‘Moti Mahal’. Within the zenana, it referred to the apartment each royal women was allotted, with the more high profile residents such as the chief queen qualifying for the largest residences. The term *jagā* (literally, space) is also used in *bahīs* to describe apartments, but most often in relation to the dwellings of young princesses, singers, concubines of deceased rulers, and

³⁰⁸ MMPP Bahī 2070 VS 1922/1865 CE, f. 22, 34.

³⁰⁹ MMPP Bahī 2030 VS 1919/ 1862 CE, f.2, 20, 28.

relatively distant female relatives of the ruler.³¹⁰ Thus, it seems to refer to a much smaller living space than a *mahal*, suited to single/widowed residents of lower profile.

Apart from residences, documents relating to construction work in the *paḍkoṭā* refer repeatedly to two institutions that were housed within this space: the *samādh* or cenotaph of Maharaja Bijai Singh's spiritual preceptor Ātmārām, and the *khāskhelī*, which seems to have been the name given in this period to the zenana institution that housed court singers. Ātmārām's *samādh* was the site of major repair in the 1861-62 phase of construction. Repairs included the reconstruction of its enclosure, which had collapsed two years before.³¹¹ Takhat Singh likely instituted the *khāskhelī*, as there are no references to it in the period before him. It perhaps replaced the *tālīmkhānā* or the *akhāḍā*, both institutions that housed court performers during the reigns of Bijai Singh and Mān Singh respectively. Documents also refer to an institution that was affiliated to the zenana but of which no material evidence now survives—a *gau khānā* or cow shed. Renovations carried out in Takhat Singh's reign included the erection of a *nau gau khānā* or new or renovated cow shed under the supervision of Nājar Harkaraṇ.³¹² It is unclear where this stood.

Bahīs reveal that the *janānī dyoḍhī* palaces including the *rājsāl* temples too were extensively renovated in 1861-62.³¹³ Most of the zenana rooms located in the upper floor interiors of the *dyoḍhī* bear imprints of this period in the form of wooden ceilings. Popular in Takhat Singh's native Gujarat, ceilings made of wood were introduced to Jodhpur during his reign. Even if the façade and cloisters of *janānī dyoḍhī courtyard* were originally erected before the Takhat Singh period (Tillotson dates them to the early seventeenth century³¹⁴), they too seem to have been repaired and refurbished in this period.

The Organisation of Daily Life: Zenana Interiors

The zenana is intrinsically a space defined by its interiors, turning, as it does, away from the gaze of the world outside. *Bahīs* often refer to zenana spaces simply as *māy*, meaning

³¹⁰ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.133, 163.

³¹¹ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.126.

³¹² MMPP Bahī 2047 VS 1920/1863 CE, f. 2.

³¹³ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.3.

³¹⁴ Tillotson, *The Rajput Palaces The Development of an Architectural Style 1450-1750*, 136–37.

inside.³¹⁵ Yet, very little is known about the internal architectural organisation of South Asian zenanas. This section uses *bahīs* as well as existing architectural remains to describe the spatial organisation of Jodhpur's royal zenana, which fundamentally shaped the daily life of its residents. The *janānā paḍkoṭā* palaces being now lost, most of this analysis is based on surviving spaces in and around the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* complex.

While the administration of the zenana seems to have been highly centralised under the leadership of the *dārogā nājar*, the living arrangements were not, with most residents of rank maintaining separate households housed in their own palace apartment. These included queens, queen mothers, concubines, as well as court singers. *Bahīs* indicate that at least high ranked residents such as queens maintained their own kitchens.³¹⁶ They also refer to wet areas within individual apartments (referred to by the term *casmo*) but it is unclear if they refer to toilets or general washing up areas.³¹⁷ In addition to the main temples of the zenana housed in the *rājsāl*, each zenana apartment also housed personal shrines for the women. Individual apartments, generally referred to as *nohrā*, were distributed throughout buildings clustered around large and small courtyards in both the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* and the *janānā paḍkoṭā*. They also occupied upper level spaces situated around the Moti Mahal courtyard.

At centre of life in the zenana were its enclosed courtyards, especially the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* courtyard. One can imagine the courtyards as spaces fertile with activity, where zenana inhabitants, both temporary and permanent, interacted with each other, and where servants and supervisory staff under the control of the *dārogā nājar* went about the business of the day. Central to the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* courtyard were the zenana temples housed in a building atop a raised area known *rājsāl* to the south. Now disused, a multi-storied temple complex in *rājsāl* once housed some of the most important temples of the royal household. Its ground level once housed a temple to the Hindu god Vishnu as *Sītārām*.³¹⁸ Though its origins are not clear, it is possible that Maharaja Bakhat Singh, an ardent

³¹⁵ MMPP Bahī 272, VS 1889-93/ 1832-36 CE, f. 40, 114, 191.

³¹⁶ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861 CE, 60, for example, refers to the construction of kitchen for the chief queen Baḍā Rāṇāwatjī.

³¹⁷ MMPP Bahī 2070 VS 1922/1865 CE, 34 refers to the construction of *casmo*, translated as toilet or wet area, for the *mahal* of the queen Lāḍī Rāṇāwatjī.

³¹⁸ MMPP Bahī 2021 VS 1918/ 1861, f. 123.

Vaishnavite, established this temple in the mid-eighteenth century.³¹⁹ Many of Jodhpur's rulers began to engage visibly with Vaishnavism in the eighteenth century, starting with Maharaja Ajit Singh (r. 1707-1724) who built several temples to Vaishnava deities in the city. Murals depicting Vaishnava themes decorate the pillared *maṇḍap* (hall) in front of the now-empty Sītārām shrine where worshippers once gathered. A Tulsi plant worshipped by zenana residents, presumably associated with this temple, was also located in the zenana,³²⁰ likely close to the *rājsāl*. The upper levels of the *rājsāl* once housed a temple dedicated to Nāthjī, the primary deity of the Nāth Sampradāya.³²¹ The Nāth temple was undoubtedly established in the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh, an initiate and foremost patron of the Nāth Sampradāya. Within the divine mythology of the Nāths, the general Hindu pantheon of gods including its supreme deities such as Vishnu were subservient to Nāthjī, a hierarchy that seems to be reflected in Mān Singh's placing the Nāth shrine directly above the Vaishnavite shrine. Documents of the zenana also refer to a Mahādev (Shiva) temple located in the *rājsāl*, which one assumes was housed in one of the rooms on the upper floor.³²² These temples in the *rājsāl* once formed the heart of the zenana and were worshipped in by the ruler as well as royal women.³²³

Though repaired and maintained until the reign of Maharaja Takhat Singh,³²⁴ the temples of *rājsāl* appear to have fallen into disuse sometime after his reign and were emptied of their idols. This might have happened either due to structural problems that left the temple unsuitable for worship³²⁵ or due to the zenana itself being slowly deserted by the royal family as rulers of the time, starting with Takhat Singh's son Jaswant Singh, shifted their residences to more modern, European-style palaces built in the plains below the fort.

³¹⁹ I am basing this on a reference to a Vaishnavite zenana temple established by Bakhat Singh in Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:570.

³²⁰ MMPP Bahī 452 VS 1889/ 1832 CE, f. 5. Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) has an important place in Vaishnavism, and is sometimes referred to as Vishnu's beloved.

³²¹ MMP Bahī 2026, VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f.2.

³²² *Ibid*

³²³ *Bahīs* refer to Mān Singh's visits to the Nāth temple in the zenana. Mān Singh's *pardāyat* Kān Rai is also recorded worshipping there. MMPP Bahī 272 VS 1889-90/1832-33 CE, f. 191; MMPP Bahī 127 VS 1905/ 1848 CE, f.5.

³²⁴ According to *kamṭhā bahīs* of the zenana, the temple was renovated in 1861 as part of a project of extensive repairs and reconstruction of the zenana under Takhat Singh. MMPP Bahī 2026, VS 1918/ 1861 CE, f. 2.

³²⁵ According to Hindu beliefs, a temple that has suffered structural defects is no longer a consecrated space. Being in a *khanḍit* or cut state, it is to be abandoned.

The Nāth idol seems to have been discarded, as the Sampradāya had fallen out of royal favour by the second half of the nineteenth century. The idol of Sītārām seems to have found a new home in a complex of temples that were established in the nineteenth century just outside the *janānī d̥yoḍhī* courtyard complex but within the zenana gates.³²⁶ It is located to the left as one comes up the stairs leading from the *sire d̥yoḍhī to the purabiyon kā sāl*. The temple complex now contains a Vaishnava shrine as well as a temple to the Rathore clan goddess Nāgaṇichyā. Near this area once stood a zenana building that is now lost, called *bāḍī rā mahal*. References to this palace in *bahīs* indicates that *bāḍī rā mahal* was primarily used by the Maharaja as a space for ritual celebrations.³²⁷

Bahīs indicate that the zenana's security staff and members of the administration used some of the rooms around the *janānī d̥yoḍhī* courtyard. In this space was housed a *rasovaḍā* (kitchen) especially for the use of gatekeepers (*d̥yoḍhīdārs*), as well as storerooms (*kothār*).³²⁸ The storerooms were likely centralised facilities where textiles or foodstuffs for distribution in the zenana were stored. They were likely located in the lower levels rooms of the *janānī d̥yoḍhī* courtyard. The doors of these rooms, which open directly into the courtyard do not offer the privacy afforded by upper level rooms or those located further inside. It is plausible that many of them were used by the zenana administration, leaving the upper floors to royal women.³²⁹

The lower levels of the *janānī d̥yoḍhī* are connected to the *sire d̥yoḍhī* gate that leads outdoors from the zenana by a winding passage lined on the sides by narrow halls. In this passageway was once housed the *purabiyon kā sāl* or the hall of the palanquin bearers. Male palanquin bearers as well as the palanquins they carried were stationed here awaiting royal women passengers. *Bahīs* show that several other groups of zenana employees too staffed this passageway, which formed the transition into the zenana from the world outside. The *d̥yoḍhīdār* or gatekeepers, the *navīsandas* (*scribes*), and the *uvākā-nāvis* (*spies/informers*) were also stationed in this area.³³⁰ One can also presume that the *dārogā nājar* who

³²⁶ Tillotson, *Mehrangarh*, 47.

³²⁷ *Bahīs* refers to Takhat Singh using the *Bāḍī rā Mahal* for a Sarad Purnima celebration. MMPP Bahī 1964, VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 48-49

³²⁸ MMPP Bahī 2070 VS 1922/1865 CE, 40-41

³²⁹ Giles Tillotson in his study of the Jodhpur fort also concludes that much of this space was used as stores. See Tillotson, *The Rajput Palaces The Development of an Architectural Style 1450-1750*, 137.

³³⁰ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, VS 1906, f. 10.

supervised the other staff and who authorised the entry of people and things into the zenana, was also stationed in the same area. This suggests that the space between the *janānī dyoḍhī* and the *sire dyoḍhī* was heavily policed by the administration. The courtyard space would also have been under close observation from *dyoḍhīdār* and the *nājar* who policed entry into the *janānī dyoḍhī* from the *mardānā* spaces on the Moti Mahal side. Security staff and administrators operating both entryways thus traversed the courtyard of the *janānī dyoḍhī* frequently. The enclosed courtyard would have provided an ideal location from which officials such as the *nājar* could survey life in the adjoining palaces above and monitor traffic within and out of the zenana.

The above evidence suggests that the *janānī dyoḍhī* courtyard and its ground level spaces were largely under the direct control of the zenana administration. However, as one moves to the upper levels of the complex, the residential use of spaces becomes more apparent. The buildings clustered around the courtyard have undergone significant modifications in the last century. In many rooms, additions made in cement indicate that they have been inhabited by people at various points in the twentieth century. Since the establishment of the fort museum, many rooms, especially on the ground level, have been repurposed for use as offices and modern storage. Most of the zenana rooms located on the western side, and on the lowest level of the eastern side of the courtyard have been heavily altered for present use,³³¹ and are only partially useful for tracing the shape of the apartments that were once housed in the *janānī dyoḍhī* complex. However, the upper levels on the eastern side largely retain their nineteenth century organisation. Their architectural characteristics are consistent with renovations of spaces carried out in the reign of Takhat Singh, with the use of features such as wooden ceilings. Many also preserve wall paintings and decorations dominated by blue hues, which are typical of royal structures built in Jodhpur in the middle of the nineteenth century.³³²

On the second floor level to the eastern side of the courtyard (when levels are counted starting from the *janānī dyoḍhī* courtyard, discounting its relation to other levels of

³³¹ The western buildings now house residential spaces for guests, while the lower eastern floors house a museum shop and a conservation lab.

³³² Examples of this type of wall paintings in Mehrangarh can be found in the Phūl Mahal palace, which was restored in Takhat Singh's reign. The Takhat Vilās palace, named after its patron, as well as the Jhānkī Mahal, also feature similar murals. This type of painting can also be found in various nineteenth century buildings in the city commissioned under royal patronage, such as the Tīja Mājī temple in the city.

the fort), can be found the remnants of a zenana apartment which can help us conjure up the general organisation of interior domestic spaces that royal women inhabited. Here, accessed by stairs from lower levels is a hall lined with *jālīs*, which is connected to adjacent living spaces. The hall (Fig. 2.9), like several such elongated spaces located on the eastern palaces of the zenana, acts as a viewing gallery, giving a clear view of the surrounding areas of the fort as well as the city below. This gallery is now empty except for traces of a washing up area in one corner of the floor. It seems to have been part of an adjoining living quarter. A trapdoor on the floor of this gallery leads to an underground storage chamber. Wooden doors lead out of the gallery into an adjacent hall (Fig. 2.10), lined with pillars featuring rectangular mirrors inserted into them at shoulder height. To the right side here is located a space that can be assumed to have been a room for personal effects, and perhaps a bed in winter months (Fig. 2.11).³³³ Its walls are lined with shelves built into niches. A rectangular space next to this room houses a toilet of uncertain age in a corner, made up of two red sandstone slabs with a drain in between.³³⁴ Adjacent to the mirrored-hall, an enclosed balcony space includes a small room with a raised stone counter. The counter is designed to hold water pots, indicating that this too was used a wet surface, perhaps as a bathing area, or even a kitchen. On exiting the mirrored hall, one finds a kitchen on the left, identified by the thick soot still covering its ceilings as well as shelves and spaces to hold water pots. Stairs leading down provide access to a store (Fig. 2.12) on the first floor, and more kitchens on the ground floor. Admittedly, the location of kitchens and wet spaces reflect the use these spaces were put to by their most recent inhabitants, perhaps in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, it can be argued the location of these facilities is in some ways pre-figured by existing architecture, such as the presence of storage spaces, drains and ventilation, and thus possess a certain degree of continuity at least from the middle of the nineteenth century.

As one passes through the interiors of the *janānī d̥yodhī*, it is clear that several kitchens were distributed throughout the zenana as *bahīs* indicate, serving different

³³³ In the case of pre-modern palace interiors in Rajasthan, one must shy away from terms such as bedroom. Furniture and furnishings were rearranged as the occasion or season called for and no neat separations existed between 'bed rooms' and other living spaces.

³³⁴ Sanitation arrangements in the zenana are not very clear. One assumes that dry latrines were employed which were emptied by members of 'untouchable' castes who were burdened with this task. Their locations are not clear. Many of the small latrines that are now found throughout zenana apartments are made of cement. They are likely from periods of inhabitation in the twentieth century.

households headed by individual royal women. Such kitchens, located within clusters of living spaces likely served the dependants of a household including children as well as elderly female relatives or servants. Kitchens run by the zenana administration catered to staff such as the *ḍyoḍhīdār*. It is not clear what kind of goods were deposited in the storerooms located throughout the zenana amidst residential spaces. Considering their proximity to kitchens and residences, they likely held foodstuff and other relatively inexpensive items of daily use.³³⁵

Zenana Shrines and Sovereignty

On the first floor of the eastern side of the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* complex, directly below the zenana apartment described above, is a small temple to Krishna (Fig. 2.13), currently in a disused state, but with its idol, carved in high relief on a stone slab, still intact. Tucked away at the end of a long pillared hall lined on all sides by *jālī* screens, this temple was likely the personal shrine of a high-ranked zenana resident. The deity depicted is Krishna as Śrīnāthjī, who lifts the mountain Govardhan with his left arm flanked by two attendant figures. Behind the enclosure housing the deities is a small shrine within a niche, dedicated to Bhairav, a popular Shaivite deity worshipped in Rajasthan. Murals decorate walls surrounding the temple on the left and depict Shiva and his wife Parvati, as well as Maharaja Mān Singh worshipping Nāthjī (Fig. 2.14). The murals seem to date from the mid-nineteenth century, and were likely executed in the reign of Takhat Singh. The depiction of Mān Singh indicates that the shrine was established or at least maintained in the nineteenth century by one of Mān Singh's wives who enjoyed a high rank in the zenana as a queen mother. Only two queens of Mān Singh lived on in the zenana after his death: Mājī Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāñī and Mājī Pāñcmā Bhaṭṭiyāñī. This shrine could have belonged to either of them.

While only one zenana shrine within the palaces has survived in its entirety, zenana *bahīs* indicate that most royal women maintained small or large household temples or shrines within their living quarters dedicated to their preferred deities. Such personal shrines

³³⁵ A range of specialised central stores or *kothār* were tasked with supplying all branches of the royal house with various goods such as textiles (*kapaḍon rā kothār*), food (*anna rā kothār*), jewellery (*jawāharkhānā*), furniture (*kilikhānā*) furnishings (*farāṣkhānā*), arms (*silekhhānā*), and even oil or betel leaves. This is clear from *bahīs* in the collection of the Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash in Jodhpur, which include the inventories and accounts of individual stores. It is not clear where each of these stores were located.

are generally termed *sevā*³³⁶ in documents, though at times the word *mindar* (temple) is also used. Though they were housed in the apartments of zenana women, rulers too paid their respects at these shrines. In 1805, Maharaja Mān Singh entered the zenana palace to offer prayers at various zenana temples as part of the rituals associated with one of his weddings. He then made offerings of two rupees each at the *sevās* of the queen mother Cauhanjī, his aunt Soḍijī, the queens Derāwarjī, Bhaṭiyāñijī, and Tunwarjī, an unnamed concubine, and a foster mother (*dhāī*).³³⁷

Household shrines in the zenana were at the centre of a culture of reciprocal giving practised by royal women residents. The personal *bahīs* of both queens and concubines are replete with accounts of them regularly sending donative offerings to each other's personal shrines. Similar reciprocal donative activity can also be observed with regard to full-fledged temples that members of the zenana commissioned in the city. The personal *bahīs* of the concubine Pān Rai, for example, contains frequent references to the many zenana shrines associated with fellow royal women to which she sent offerings. On religious recitals being held in the zenana in the year 1832, Pān Rai is recorded sending offerings to the *sevās* of the queens Tunwarjī and Bhaṭiyāñijī, the concubine Rangrūp Rai, and a queen mother. Pan Rai also donated money in the same period to the zenana shrines of the queen Devaḍijī and the concubine Canaṇ Rai.³³⁸

Household zenana shrines took many shapes and sizes. While the Krishna temple on the eastern side of the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* complex has a small walled enclosure, more modest examples too to survive in the zenana. On the second level on the western side of the *janānī ḍyoḍhī* a room contains a shrine built into a projecting balcony. It is framed by a Bengali arch and is now emptied of the idol it once housed. Niches large and small built into walls are common in zenana rooms, and some of them would have once held small personal shrines. Portable shrines, examples of which survive in the Mehrangarh museum could also have served as *sevās*. An example is a large portable silver shrine (Accession No: DCA 309, Mehrangarh Museum Trust) from the collection. The museum also holds instruments once

³³⁶ *Sevā* is a term with close associations to the Puṣṭimārg cult centred on Krishna. The worship of Puṣṭimārg deity Śrīnāthjī is termed *sevā* or service (to the lord).

³³⁷ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE. See the account of Mān Singh's wedding to a Devaḍijī queen in 1805 CE. Folio numbers are unclear in this bahī.

³³⁸ MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/1832 CE, f. 12; MMPP Bahī 90, VS 1899/ 1842 CE, f. 27.

employed in rituals of daily personal worship (*pūjā*) by zenana women. Among such *pūjā* implements is a nineteenth century handheld silver lamp (Accession No: DCA 500, Mehrangarh Museum Trust) inscribed with the name of a queen identified only as Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī, whose personal possession it was. It is not clear which Bhaṭiyāṇī queen it refers to (both Mān Singh and Takhat Singh had several wives from the Bhāṭī clan).

Household shrines scattered across its interiors, the many large temples and a memorial (Guru Atmārām's *samādh*) occupying its paces, as well as the daily practices of royal women mark out the zenana as a space dominated by religiosity. The overwhelming presence of religion and religious architecture in the zenana must be viewed alongside zenana women's prolific patronage of religious institutions in general. This is evident in the regular donations they made to temples of various Hindu denominations both within the zenana and outside, their personal religious practice (which included arduous pilgrimages in addition to daily worship), and their patronage of religious architecture which is discussed throughout this thesis. The central role expressions of devotion played in the everyday life of the zenana residents as evident in nineteenth century zenana *bahīs* reflects a larger turn within the court of Jodhpur, especially in the eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries, to religion as a source of sovereignty and legitimation for the ruler. This turn to religion saw rulers such as Bijai Singh and Mān Singh model themselves as ideal devotees who derived legitimacy from the deities they worshipped.³³⁹ The zenana, which housed major temples dedicated both to various Vaishnava cults that dominated the kingdom under Maharaja Bijai Singh and the Nāth Sampradāya that held sway over Jodhpur under Maharaja Mān Singh, was at the centre of such processes of legitimation as they played out in the royal court. As a result, it was one of the primary sites for the performance of piety by Jodhpur rulers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Moreover, as described throughout this dissertation, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, members of the zenana who were active patrons of architecture played a crucial role alongside the ruler in reshaping Jodhpur's urban landscape in deference to the religious factions that propped up royal authority. The zenana and its residents were thus integral to the strategies through which Rathore sovereigns in this period maintained their claim on the

³³⁹ On Bijai Singh and the Vaishnava cult Vallabha Sampradāya, see Chapter 4. On Maharaja Mān Singh and the Nāth Sampradāya, see Chapter 3.

throne. Hence, in Jodhpur, the zenana was not merely proximate to the source of royal power and authority as embodied in the ruler, as Peirce argues for the Ottoman harem, but was arguably central to the very construction and maintenance of that power.

At Home and In the World: Mobility and Networking in the Zenana

This section explores the ways in which the zenana, an institution generally perceived as remote or secluded, was woven into the fabric of life in Jodhpur and the region in general. Two interrelated themes dominate the paragraphs that follow: 1. zenana residents' experience of spaces outside the zenana through their personal mobility; 2. their interaction with the extra-zenana world and the exercise of power and influence in it through multiple networks that they were embedded in, whether of kinship or of patronage.

Mobility and Power

Any exploration of mobility through a gendered lens is inevitably interested in what a gendered group's access to spaces outside their immediate surroundings through the exercise of mobility (or lack thereof), indicates about its access to power. A great deal of existing research on 'gendered mobilities' examines the ways males and females exercise mobility differently. The binary opposition between the public (coded male) and the private (coded female) has heavily influenced much of this research.³⁴⁰ For many decades, the most commonly held view among geographers as well as feminists was that more mobility for women, and consequently more access to space outside the private/domestic (that is, the public/male space of power), meant greater empowerment. Geographic research on urban and suburban communities in America and elsewhere starting in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that women's mobility for purposes of employment was often restricted to far smaller areas than that of men, giving rise to and reinforcing theories about the 'spatial entrapment'³⁴¹ and consequent disempowerment of women. The spatial entrapment thesis was brought into question by the work of Melissa Gilbert, who pointed out that such a generalisation flattened differences among women. Gilbert's studies had shown that Black

³⁴⁰ For a summary of recent literature on gender and mobility, see Susan Hanson, "Gender and Mobility: New Approaches for Informing Sustainability," *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 5–23.

³⁴¹ Kim V.L. England coined the term. See Kim V.L. England, "Suburban Pink Collar Ghettos: The Spatial Entrapment of Women?," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 2 (June 1993): 225–42.

American women had significantly longer commutes in certain areas than white American women. Yet, the former were significantly disadvantaged, rather than empowered by their greater mobility.³⁴² In *“Race, Space, and Power: The Survival Strategies of Working Poor Women”*, Gilbert radically reframes the mobility (power) versus immobility (disempowerment) binary inherent in the spatial entrapment thesis. Through her research, which examined the role ‘place-based personal networks’ played in the survival strategies of working class women in Worcester, Massachusetts, Gilbert argued against the simplistic equation of mobility with power, stating that “no spatiality is inherently with or without power.” Gilbert instead argues that “power should be conceptualized in terms of a multiplicity of interconnected, mutually transformative, and spatially constituted social relations” and that studies on the relationship of mobility with empowerment must examine how mobility or immobility is related to multiple social relations that various groups of women draw on for their survival. Depending on the kinds of power relations that exist in specific contexts, Gilbert argues, a woman’s mobility or boundedness can be either a resource or a constraint.³⁴³

Gilbert’s framework, though it has its origins in what she observed among American working class women in 1990s, is extremely relevant to the way mobility is viewed in relation to veiled women, whether in contemporary societies or in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur. It helps complicate the general assumption that for women who lived in purdah, their lack of mobility necessarily meant lives of cruel subjugation, or that instances of mobility among these women, however rare, meant greater empowerment.³⁴⁴ The following paragraphs attempt instead to view zenana women’s mobility or lack thereof in the context of the networks within which they were embedded.

³⁴² England; Melissa R. Gilbert, *“‘Race,’ Space, and Power: The Survival Strategies of Working Poor Women,”* *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 4 (1998): 595–621.

³⁴³ Gilbert, *“‘Race,’ Space, and Power.”* 595-621

³⁴⁴ I am of course not the first one assert that veiled rajput women wielded power. See for example, Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 85–108. What I am attempting to do is to demonstrate this fact systematically and within a theoretical framework using a microhistory of interactions at the Jodhpur zenana.

Women on the Move: Mobility in the Zenana

Did the inhabitants of the Jodhpur zenana ever travel out of its confines? The answer is yes. *Bahīs* and court chronicles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries describe veiled zenana women moving in and out of the gates of the zenana regularly, often seemingly of their own volition, even if an entourage of attendants and guards accompanied them in all their travels. The forms of travel documented range from short excursions by groups of women within Jodhpur or visits to natal homes (in the case of queens), to long and arduous pilgrimages to distant cities. Court chronicles also refer to the entire zenana accompanying rulers on excursions out of the city. In the period of Mughal suzerainty over Marwar, when the kingdom's rulers spent much of their reign fighting on the frontiers of the Mughal Empire, members of the zenana moved with them, relocating for a period to such distant cities as Jamrud or Burhanpur.³⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century, accounts from the Takhat Singh period abound with descriptions of the zenana accompanying the Maharaja as he travelled to various royal retreats in and around the town of Jodhpur or to the nearby town of Nagaur.³⁴⁶

Women also travelled often at the head of their own entourages. They are described in *bahīs* making short excursions within or around the city of Jodhpur, or leaving the zenana to visit sites within the fort walls. Many of these excursions involved visits to temples and shrines, such as a visit that Mān Singh's chief queen Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī and her daughters paid in the year 1808 to a shrine the queen herself had commissioned just outside Mehrangarh, on the banks of a tank called Padamsar.³⁴⁷ In 1809, the queen Cāwaḍījī too visited a temple she had commissioned in the village of Salawas near Jodhpur.³⁴⁸

During excursions out of the zenana, royal women travelled in covered palanquins or *ḍol*. The *pardāyat* Kān Rai's *bahīs* record Kān Rai and two other concubines Baḍā Cen Rai and Sukhvel travelling together to the city in a *ḍol*. While the concubines were moving through

³⁴⁵ The *rāṇīs* of Gaj Singh I (r. 1739-1638) accompanied him to Burhanpur in the Deccan, where his successor Jaswant Singh was born. Similarly, Jaswant Singh (r. 1638-78) was accompanied by his *rāṇīs* while he served in Jamrud. Vishweshwar Nath Reu, *Marwar Ka Itihas*, vol. 1 (Jodhpur: Maharaj Mansingh Pustak Prakash, 2009), 197; Reu, 1:227.

³⁴⁶ Bhati, *Mahārājā Takhatasimh Rī Khyāt*, 111; Bhati, 117; Bhati, 150; Bhati, 193.

³⁴⁷ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f.241.

³⁴⁸ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f.241.

the streets, the handles of the palanquin they were travelling in suddenly broke, leaving them stranded. A *ḍol* belonging to the queen Kachwāhījī was then dispatched from the zenana to rescue them.³⁴⁹

Queens travelled out of Jodhpur frequently to visit their natal homes (*pīhar*). In the year 1860 for instance, court chronicles record the queen Jadečījī's *asvārī* (procession) leaving the city on its way to her *pīhar* Jamnagar. The queen travelled in a *mahāḍol*, a palanquin of special grandeur and status. The name is generally used in Jodhpur sources to refer to palanquins that were received by queens as gifts from their natal houses.³⁵⁰ Princesses born in Jodhpur and married to other Rajput houses too similarly visited their natal homes. In 1802, Abhai Kanwar, who was married to a member of the Jaipur royal family, arrived in Jodhpur and stayed in the zenana.³⁵¹ As did the princess Sire Kanwar, also married to a Jaipur prince, in 1879. In the case of Sire Kanwar, the *nājar* Īmaratrām was dispatched to Jaipur from Jodhpur to escort the princess home.³⁵²

Pilgrimage was another form of mobility exercised by zenana women, particularly widows. The *bahīs* of several nineteenth century zenana residents refer to them undertaking pilgrimages primarily to bathe and worship in the holy waters of the river Ganga. One such account is that of Mān Singh's *pardāyat* Pan Rai, who, as an elderly widow in the zenana of Mān Singh's descendant Takhat Singh, set out on a pilgrimage to Prayag, near Allahabad. The concubine travelled to Prayag in the winter of 1864-65 (VS 1921) to worship at the confluence (also known as the Triveni Sangam) of the holy rivers Yamuna, Ganga, and the mythical Saraswati.³⁵³ Pan Rai financed the journey herself for the most part, meeting expenses of about 1730 rupees primarily from agricultural revenues of her *paṭṭā* villages.³⁵⁴ She also loaned small amounts from the *Pardāyat* Ejan Rai (50 rupees) and the queen Cāwaḍījī (100 rupees).³⁵⁵ Having set out from Jodhpur in a bullock carts with her entourage early in the month of Posh (January 1865), she appears to have arrived in Prayag in the

³⁴⁹ MMPP Bahī 11 VS 1896/1839 CE, f.3

³⁵⁰ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f. 375 contains a reference to such a palanquins being received by queens as gifts.

³⁵¹ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f.277.

³⁵² MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f. 278.

³⁵³ Accounts of this pilgrimage can be found in MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE.

³⁵⁴ MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE, f.22

³⁵⁵ MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE, f. 2-3.

month of Māgh (January-February, 1865) and returned to Jodhpur in the month of Chaitra (March-April). At Prayag, she sponsored *pūjās* and other offerings to the river, feasts for Brahmins, as well as the feeding of crocodiles (*magarmac*). In preparation for her return, she collected sacred water from the Ganga (*gangājal*) in utensils specially bought for the purpose. In the course of the journey back, stops were made in both Jaipur and Agra, where more utensils were purchased, apparently to be filled with Ganga water and then given away as *ināyat* (gift).³⁵⁶ Pan Rai then purchased textiles at stops made in Kishangarh, Merta, and Bisalpur.³⁵⁷ She and her entourage also stopped in Pushkar, where they worshipped at a temple to Shiva commissioned on the banks of the sacred Lake Pushkar by a Jodhpur princess who is described only as *baḍā bāijī sā* (the elder princess). On her return to Jodhpur, the containers of water from the Ganga were opened with ceremony. A feast for brahmins was held and the sacred water was distributed to temples in the city. Such acts indicate that Pan Rai's pilgrimage was widely publicised in Jodhpur. Her procession would inevitably have also attracted the notice of the city's populace as it passed through the streets to and from Prayag.

Though Pan Rai's journey seems to have been financed largely on her personal initiative and wealth, the Maharaja himself met one crucial item of expense. In an entry that sharply brings to focus Jodhpur's encounter with modernity in the period and the transformational effect travel might have had on the pilgrims, the *bahī* records that Pan Rai and her entourage of four male servants and two female *dāvaḍis* travelled for a portion of their journey to and from Prayag by *rail gāḍī* (train). The costs of the train ticket were paid to the *angrej lok* (the English) by the Maharaja's treasury.³⁵⁸ The *bahī* does not elaborate on the stretch of the journey that the *pardāyat* travelled by train. Since construction on the Jodhpur-Bikaner railway that connected Jodhpur to the grid began only in 1880s, a likely possibility is that she travelled on the Kanpur-Allahabad railroad, which had become operational by 1860.³⁵⁹ Pan Rai was likely the first member of the zenana to travel thus by mechanised transport.

³⁵⁶ MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE, f. 14-15.

³⁵⁷ MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE, f. 19.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 19

³⁵⁹ Alex Johnson, "The 1846 Plan for India's First Railway Line," *Google Arts and Culture* (blog), accessed April 23, 2019, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/IgLy5tnx026fKw>.

In 1854, then Maharaja Takhat Singh made a pilgrimage to Ganga, and was accompanied by members of the zenana, including the queen Lāḍī Rāḥāwatī.³⁶⁰ In the same year, the accounts of the queen mother and patron of architecture Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī describe her trip to Ganga and Mathura, accompanied by male (*kāmdār*) and female servants (*dāvāḍī*), and significantly, the bard-genealogist of Jodhpur's queens.³⁶¹ The bard was the *raṇī mangā bhāṭ*, who hereditarily held the right to maintain a genealogical account (known as the *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon kī Bahī*) of Jodhpur's queens. Apart from genealogical information, the *bahī* also recorded significant charitable acts that queens undertook. The bard Bherūdān duly entered Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī's journey into the *bahī*, listing it among the feats of her reign alongside the commissioning of temples.³⁶² The *raṇī mangā bhāṭ* formed a part of the entourage of their queenly patrons as they travelled out of the zenana in procession. As the procession passed through city streets, the *bhāṭ* would recite the queen's illustrious genealogy aloud, identifying the royal to the crowds that gathered.³⁶³ Such processions (*asvārī*) were public spectacles, announcing a queen's prestige and power to the public through pageantry, even as her person remained hidden within a covered palanquin.

Networks of Influence

Unlike popular perceptions of the zenana life, royal women in Jodhpur appear to have exercised a substantial amount of mobility—even if limited in range—and consequent visibility in the public sphere. Such instances of mobility can certainly be interpreted as articulations of the power that zenana women wielded. However, when seen against the context of everyday life in the zenana, it is evident that mobility was not the prism through which we can assess the ways in which royal women exercised power and authority outside walls of the zenana. We know that, as members of the royal household, zenana women held land grants giving them the right to administer and collect revenues from villages scattered across Marwar. As women of means, they have left their mark on urban landscape and community life by commissioning monumental architecture discussed throughout this work. Zenana women were also among the most prolific consumers of fine goods in Jodhpur, both

³⁶⁰ Bhati, *Mahārājā Takhatasīḥ Rī Khyāt*, 201. MMPP Bahī 609 VS 1911/ 1854 CE, 5-8.

³⁶¹ MMPP Bahī 420 VS 1911/1854 CE

³⁶² Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 75–76.

³⁶³ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, xi.

for personal use and for the purpose of religious celebrations and festivals (*tyohār*) that were a regular part of life in the royal household. As patrons and consumers, they routinely mobilised skilled labour and fine materials in the service of the ruling family, demonstrating their refinement and likely influencing court fashions in the process.³⁶⁴ However, as illustrated in the last section, the everyday management of territorial holdings, the supervision of architectural sites, or the procurement of labour and resources in the local economy were not within the scope of the kinds of mobility that zenana women seem to have routinely exercised or had access to. In these matters, zenana women relied instead on a constellation of personal relationships that they diligently cultivated through acts of patronage and gifting.

Many of the networks that zenana women were embedded in were composed of relationships of life-long patronage and dependence that bound them to various influential groups in their immediate surroundings. One such local group that they cultivated was members of the zenana administration. Zenana women, both queens and concubines, had much to gain by maintaining cordial relationships with all manners of administrative staff who ran the zenana. Prime among them was the community of *nājars*, including the *dārogā nājar* who stood at the zenana's helm. The *nājar* were the main conduits of information between the zenana and the *mardānā*. They were tasked with administering the zenana while upholding the interests of the sovereign and keeping him abreast of developments in the household. *Nājar* officers of the zenana controlled the traffic of people, things, and information in and out of the zenana. They were also in charge of dispersing staff salaries and the personal allowances of royal women. As one of the primary intermediaries between the zenana women and the world outside, the *nājar*, along with other trusted staff, executed crucial tasks on behalf of royal women, such as dispatching money and other resources to temples that zenana women sponsored.³⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, when a newlywed queen entered Mehrangarh's zenana, one of her first acts was the presentation of gifts (*inām/ināyat*), as tokens of esteem and appreciation, to the *nājar*, as well as subsidiary staff such as the *dyoḍhīdārs*.³⁶⁶ When major events such as death or marriage occurred in the families of

³⁶⁴ Royal women's prolific consumption of expensive goods, among them food, jewels, utensils, and textiles, is demonstrated by their personal accounts books. See Chapter 1.

³⁶⁵ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 7.

³⁶⁶ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE. Folio numbers are unclear in this *bahī*. See entries for VS 1889, Ashad Sud 9.

zenana staff, whether the *nājar* or female servants the *dāvaḍis*, queens and *pardāyats* promptly dispatched customary sums of money to cover costs. Such customary gifts were also extended to other employees in the royal household. An 1854 *bahī* of Takhat Singh's queen Rāṇāwatī records her making contributions to the wedding of an employee of the royal food store as well as the funeral expenses of Nājar Sejrām and the wife of another zenana staff member, Solankī Sūrā (likely a gatekeeper or guard). She also presented *inām* in the form of shawls (*oḍḥī*) to the *dāvaḍis* Rāsu and Rambha.³⁶⁷ The giving of such gifts and customary payments were common enough occurrences in the life of various zenana women to merit specific labels for such expenses in their account books. While expenses incurred on gift giving is usually filed in *bahīs* under the category *ināyat kharac*, customary offerings made at weddings, funerals etc., is usually recorded as *kiryāvar kharac*,³⁶⁸ although there is sometimes overlap between the two.

Apart from zenana staff employed by the crown, zenana women relied on trusted staff in their personal employ to oversee their personal affairs outside the zenana. They were generally referred to by terms such as *cākar* (servant) or *mahīndār* (those paid monthly salaries) and were put in charge of a variety of affairs, such as the collection of harvest and tax revenues from *jāgīr* villages outside Jodhpur, the management of properties such as gardens and stepwells, or the supervision of major construction projects. *Mahīndār* included both male *kāmdār* and female *dāvaḍi*,³⁶⁹ among others. As referred to earlier, *kāmdār* were male employees mainly in charge of business affairs outside the zenana, while female *dāvaḍis* undertook a variety of household tasks and errands on behalf of queens and concubines. For example, the concubine Kān Rai relied on her male servants Devkaraṅ, Pano, and Hīru to collect revenue from her *jāgīr* villages.³⁷⁰ In 1829, Mān Singh's queen Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī relied on her *cākar* Pandit Māṇakcand to collect revenues from the winter harvest in her *jāgīr* village.³⁷¹ In addition to their salaries, such staff members were regularly presented with *inām* representing the generosity and esteem of their patrons. Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī relied on the mediation of men such Purohit Sawāīrām, Pandit Sāhibcand, Hajārī Sālagrām,

³⁶⁷ MMPP Bahī 609 VS 1911/ 1854 CE, f. 16.

³⁶⁸ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1889/1842 CE, f. 22.

³⁶⁹ There were two kinds of *dāvaḍis*: those in the personal employ of zenana women and those who were paid for by the treasury. The latter were termed *khālsā dāvaḍis*.

³⁷⁰ MMPP Bahī 127 VS 1905/ 1848 CE, f. 7-8.

³⁷¹ MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/ 1830 CE, f.2.

Triwārī Motīrām and Cannānī Gangārām to supervise the construction of a Nāth temple she commissioned c.1830. Among them, Pandit Sāhibcand was responsible for visiting the site daily to record the attendance of the workers. In the winter of 1831, *bahīs* record that the queen spent two rupees and eight anna to gift Sāhibcand a long robe (*siyālā ro angārko*) to wear to work.³⁷²

Individual zenana women cultivated such relationships marked by generous patronage not only with key members of zenana administration and their personal staff, but also with a large number of occupational groups that inhabited Jodhpur, including many artisanal castes that contributed a bulk of the productive labour that sustained the royal household. As patrons and consumers, zenana women came into daily contact with a number of such specialised communities that provided a variety of services. Artisanal castes that make an appearance throughout zenana *bahīs* include tailors (*darjī*), barbers (*nāī*), potters (*kumbhār*), water carriers (*mehariyā*), dyers (*raṃgrej*), textile printers (*chippā*), bangle makers (*cūḍhīgar*), lac workers (*lakhārā*), thread workers (*paṭwā*, who string jewels and clothing), painters (*citārā*), sweet makers (*kandhoī*), goldsmiths (*sunār*), makers of metal utensils (*kansāra*) and so on. Members of these communities that zenana associated with included those inhabiting their revenue villages (*jāgīr*) outside Jodhpur. Zenana women also drew on the services of a variety of merchants operating in the city, as well as architects/head masons (*gajdhar*) and an array of communities that worked in construction.³⁷³

Royal women maintained their links with various professional communities not only by making payments for their services, but through customary gifts of money, clothes, or jewellery made to them at major life cycle events. They could also be relied on to bestow loans in times of need. Marriages and funerals were occasions when zenana women as patrons were obliged to make presents to their clients. *Bahīs* record various dependants formally informing their patrons of weddings in their family by sending a tray of molasses (*guḍ*) to the zenana. A *bahī* of Pan Rai's from 1832 records her receiving *guḍ* announcing weddings in the families of a brahmin *kāmdār* (though not her own), a *mahājan* (merchant), and a *kumbhār*. While the former was rewarded with two rupees, the latter two received

³⁷² MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/ 1830 CE, f. 55

³⁷³ See Chapter 3.

one rupee each.³⁷⁴ In a similar instance, the queen mother Tījā Bhatiyāṇi is recorded sending gifts of clothing through her agent in her *jāgīr* village, the *havāldār* Baḍā Gujar, to the *chippā* (textile printer) Uraj, the *sunār* Bakhat, and a weaver from the meghwāl caste named Opā, on their daughters' weddings.³⁷⁵ The completion of big projects were occasions that merited gifts expressing the patron's esteem. Milestones in construction projects for example were marked by the bestowal of gifts on the workers involved, especially the *gajdhar*. For example, when the roof of a temple she had commissioned was raised into place, the queen mother Tījā Bhatiyāṇi in 1846 rewarded artisans who worked on the site with clothes. The *gajdhar* Asīn and his wife were also presented clothes.³⁷⁶ Zenana women sometimes acted as creditors to those in their network, lending them small sums. Pan Rai's accounts show that she lent money to people such as the tailor Kīn, the goldsmith Poto, a *jāṭ* woman named Kalūr, as well the barber Mūliyā.³⁷⁷

As women living in close proximity in the zenana, both *pardāyats* and queens also found it essential to cultivate and maintain cordial relationships with fellow royal women. One of the most common ways in which they did this was by regularly making customary offerings at the temples and personal shrines (*sevā*) built or maintained by fellow members of the zenana. Such offerings were often made on occasions of religious significance. The concubine Pan Rai's *bahīs* for example are replete with accounts of her making offerings both at temples commissioned by the widowed queens of Mān Singh as well as the *sevās* of reigning queens.³⁷⁸

Major life events such as funerals, births, or weddings, whether of each other or of children and dependants, were also occasions for sending presents to the households of fellow queens and concubines. An 1848 account book of the concubine Kān Rai from Mān Singh's court records that when the son of a queen died, Kān Rai sent her respects in the form of offerings of two rupees meant for female singers and genealogists of the *rāvat* caste who came to join the mourning in the zenana.³⁷⁹ Such overtures were also extended to the

³⁷⁴ MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/1832 CE, f. 3.

³⁷⁵ MMPP Bahī 355 VS 1942/1885 CE, f. 32.

³⁷⁶ MMPP Bahī 152 VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, f. 42. Rewards made to construction workers are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

³⁷⁷ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1899/1842 CE, f. 16.

³⁷⁸ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1899/1842 CE, f. 27.

³⁷⁹ MMPP Bahī 127 VS 1905/ 1848 CE, f. 8-9.

servants of fellow queens. For example, when Pemo, the servant of a queen mother expired, Kān Rai send offerings of clothes to the ceremonies.³⁸⁰ Similarly, when Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī's *dāvaḍi* Gumnī's daughter got married in 1842, the concubine Pan Rai presented Gumnī with two rupees.³⁸¹ Such offerings would have made a favourable impression on the families of Pemo and Gumnī, their employers the queens, as well as the multitude of servants and staff who served in the zenana. Offerings of cash and gifts, albeit dictated to a certain degree by custom, would have served as markers of the generosity and status of a queen or concubine, assuring her of respect and support within and outside the zenana. Moreover, friendships thus cultivated meant that zenana women could rely on each other for support. Pan Rai's pilgrimage to Ganga, after all, was made possible in part by loans from the Pardāyat Ejan Rai and the Queen Cāwaḍījī.³⁸² Rarely, *bahīs* provide glimpses of what appear to be friendly relations between members of the zenana, such as the time Pan Rai left the zenana in a procession to visit with the Queen Jādecījī in Chokelao garden of Jodhpur fort.³⁸³ Zenana women also looked out for deceased relatives from the zenana, indicating genuine bonds of affection between them. Pan Rai is recorded buying clothes to offer at the resting place of fellow pardāyat "*mahāsati*"³⁸⁴ Rīdh Rai who had self-immolated on Maharaja Mān Singh's pyre.³⁸⁵

While local networks rooted in Jodhpur were crucial to the survival strategies of all royal women in the zenana, Rajput queens and queen mothers could rely on another powerful source of support—networks of kinship. The queens of Jodhpur were rajput princesses from other clans who had married Rathore rulers in diplomatic marriage alliances. They maintained their natal identities throughout their life and retained a place in their natal clans where relatives continued to refer to them as *bāī* (sister) or *beṭī* (daughter). Their sons in turn were referred to as *bhānej* (nephew) or *dohītro* (daughter's son). Male offspring of

³⁸⁰ MMPP Bahī 127 VS 1905/1848 CE, f. 8-9.

³⁸¹ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1899/1842 CE, f. 22.

³⁸² MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE, f. 22.

³⁸³ MMPP Bahī 17 VS 1936/1879 CE, f.23

³⁸⁴ The description in this *bahī* of Rīdh Rai as a *mahāsati* is at odds with the argument put forth by scholars of the zenana such as Varsha Joshi that concubines who self-immolated on a ruler's pyre were not given the honoured title of *sati* and were rather referred to simply as *bali* or sacrifice. Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 150. Rīdh Rai was one of four concubines who became *sati* on Mān Singh's death. The queen Devaḍījī and her *baḍāraṇ* Radha also self-immolated on Mān Singh's pyre. Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 226.

³⁸⁵ MMPP Bahī 17 VS 1936/1879 CE, f.23.

queens could rely on the assistance of their mother's clan to secure their own fortunes in Jodhpur.³⁸⁶ Jodhpur's queens visited their natal homes often and dispatched gifts or offerings in cash to their relatives on special occasions.³⁸⁷ Relationships to their natal houses would have been important for the women, as the relative prestige and power of their natal families determined to an extent their ability to bargain for influence in their marital home. It was also important for natal families, especially small fiefdoms, who could use their daughter's relationship with the Maharaja of Jodhpur to lobby for favours from the Jodhpur court. The amount of contact that natal families maintained with their married daughters is evident in a series of letters exchanged between the courts of Bundi and Jodhpur in the year 1830. The letters which were exchanged through the British agent in Rājputānā refer to Bundi's Rathore queen's express request that midwives be dispatched from Jodhpur to attend to her pregnancy. The exchange shows that Jodhpur state was eager to comply with this request, though the Bundi ruler ultimately denied it.³⁸⁸ As mothers and elders, zenana women in Jodhpur took a proactive role in maintaining links to Jodhpur princesses living in other kingdoms. For instance, when the Rathore princess and queen of Bundi, Sarūp Kanwar, finally gave birth to a son (and thus possible heir), Jodhpur's queens dispatched customary gifts to her of jewellery, clothes, and dry fruits.³⁸⁹

In the case of *pardāyats*, kinship relations (other than the children they had with the king) are harder to trace than queens. As members of non-Rajput castes, *pardāyats* embraced entirely new identities on their induction into the Jodhpur zenana, shedding the names they were given by their birth families for court names with the suffix *rai*. Devoid of the backing of powerful natal families, concubines seem to have relied more heavily on local networks to safeguard their interests than queens. Nevertheless, occasionally, one finds instances of *pardāyats* sending and receiving gifts on the festival of *rākhī* (when brothers and

³⁸⁶ Ziegler, "Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period," 254; Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan," 58. There are many instances of uncles (*māmā*) coming to the aid of their nephews as they fought succession battles. An example is the famed war waged between the kingdoms of Jaipur and Mewar in the eighteenth century as Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar sought to place his nephew Madho Singh on the throne of Jaipur. See Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 676–77.

³⁸⁷ Takhat Singh's queen Jādecījī visited her *pīhar* Jāmnaṅgar in 1860, and was fetched from Jodhpur by people dispatched from Jāmnaṅgar to escort her. Bhati, *Mahārājā Takhatasiṅh Rī Khyāt*, 316. Takhat Singh's queen Rāṅāwatījī's accounts show her spending 516 rupees towards her *pīhar* Damodar. MMPP Bahī 609 VS 1911/1854 CE, f.18.

³⁸⁸ National Archives of India, Department: Foreign, Branch: Political, 24 September 1830 (Proceeding number 21).

³⁸⁹ MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/1830 CE, f. 49.

sisters present each other with gifts reaffirming their bond).³⁹⁰ They are also recorded participating in the funeral rituals of their kin.³⁹¹ There are also some evidence of blood relatives from among their progeny caring for the legacy of a concubine by erecting a *chattri* on the site of their cremation.³⁹² In exceptional cases, where no kin networks of political consequence existed, one finds powerful and ambitious concubines attempting to create one. Such was the case of Maharaja Bijai Singh's concubine Gulāb Rai, who used her influence at court to bypass prohibitions on cross-caste adoptions and adopt the Maharaja's son with a queen as her own.³⁹³

The preceding paragraphs demonstrate that the relative immobility that zenana life imposed on its residents was not necessarily an impediment to their exercise of power and authority. Royal women in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur, much like the women interviewed by Melissa Gilbert in the 1990s, were able to use their 'rootedness' as a resource, using it to build a constellation of networks through which they exerted their influence and secured their interests both within and outside the zenana. These networks included a close circle of personal servants/intermediaries who acted as their eyes, ears, and hands in territories they governed and projects they executed in the city, as well as members of various highly specialised occupational groups that inhabited Jodhpur and whose services they relied on. In addition, royal women sought to secure their place within the zenana through gestures aimed at securing the allegiance of key members of the zenana administration. Reciprocal transactions governed by the customary hierarchy of the zenana also helped establish relationships of mutual respect and friendship with fellow queens and concubines. In the case of queens, the links they maintained with their natal houses too played a crucial role in protecting their interests in Jodhpur. Together, these reciprocal relationships secured for zenana women a web of loyalties that they could rely on in times of need.

³⁹⁰ MMPP Bahī 11 VS 1896/1839 CE90, f. 2; MMPP Bahī 127 VS 1905/ 1848 CE; MMPP Bahī 152 VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, f. 6.

³⁹¹ MMPP Bahī 272, VS 1889-93/ 1832-36 CE, f. 40, 114, 191.

³⁹² Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)," 143–45.

³⁹³ Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 8. Gulāb Rai adopted Prince Sher Singh as her own. See Chapter 4 for more.

3. A Concubine's Stepwell, a Queen's Temple: Architecture and Agency in Nineteenth Century Jodhpur

Introduction

This chapter examines patrons and construction sites that were active in Jodhpur in the first half of the nineteenth century. Along with the last decades of the eighteenth century, this period is a particularly fertile phase in the history of women's patronage of architecture, especially temple architecture, in Jodhpur. Within a span of fifty years from 1800 to 1850, we encounter at least fifteen zenana women who sponsored major construction projects in the city, with some commissioning more than one structure.³⁹⁴ Many of these structures, especially those raised by queens, have survived into the present in various stages of neglect. The abundance of archival sources on zenana women in this period throws up the names of women patrons who might otherwise go unrecorded. For instance, zenana *bahīs* of the time record the courtly careers and architectural patronage of several nineteenth century concubines, a group that seldom makes an appearance in court histories³⁹⁵ and whose buildings, for the most part, have not survived into the present. The abundance of archival sources thus enables us in this period to put together a more comprehensive picture of Jodhpur zenana's collective engagement with architecture than is possible for earlier periods.

The impression that more women than before participated in architectural production in this period can be attributed to an extent to the relative abundance of zenana *bahīs* from this period that record the names of concubine patrons and their buildings. However, even accounting for this bias in the archive, the years between 1800 and 1850 seem to have been a particularly prolific period for architectural patronage by the zenana. This is evident if one compares the relatively higher number of queens who commissioned architectural structures in this fifty-year period to other periods in Jodhpur's history.³⁹⁶ What is also remarkable is the dominance of temples in zenana women's commissions between 1800 and 1850, which stands in contrast to a preponderance of water architecture in earlier

³⁹⁴ See Appendix 1.

³⁹⁵ An exception here is the powerful 18th century concubine Gulāb Rai.

³⁹⁶ See Appendix 1.

periods. The heightened activity among zenana women patrons in early nineteenth century Jodhpur roughly overlaps with the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh (1803-43). Mān Singh's reign is examined in this chapter as the context against which the zenana's prolific engagement with temple architecture unfolded in this period.

This chapter is organised in two sections. The first half examines Mān Singh's reign, and the ways in which Jodhpur's urban landscape was reshaped in this period because of his and his zenana's encounter with a religious order known as the Nāth Sampradāya. Buildings, many of them Nāth temples, sponsored by Mān Singh's zenana both during and immediately after his reign are presented here, as well as the possible reasons for zenana women's widespread engagement with temple architecture in this period. Taking advantage of the abundance of zenana records from the nineteenth century, this section describes in detail the long careers of two prominent patrons from Mān Singh's zenana—the concubine Pan Rai and the queen Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī.

The second half of this chapter is dedicated to the various actors involved in executing construction projects from this period sponsored by zenana women. Using personal accounts books of patrons, especially accounts of construction known as *kamṭhā bahī*, this section seeks to retrieve the multitude of individuals and groups who were brought together at construction sites in early modern Jodhpur, the processes they were involved in, and the networks and relationships that connected them. A close reading of sources from the period demonstrates that wealthy patrons from the zenana were able to erect monumental architecture only with the hard-won cooperation of a large array of agents within and outside Jodhpur. In retrieving the agency of the various actors whose participation was integral to the creation of monuments examined in this study, the latter half of the chapter argues for a reframing of heroic narratives centred on the figures of the artist or patron through which we traditionally view agency in art production. It seeks to demonstrate that agency, especially in architectural production, is better understood as a diffused or distributed phenomenon—as 'distributed agencies.' Multiple actors operating within dynamic networks (rather than certain subject positions that art history has historically privileged) wielded agency simultaneously, if not in equal measure.

The approach used in the second half this chapter, of looking at architectural production through connections between various actors in order to create a rhizome-like microhistory, draws directly from the Actor-Network-Theory or ANT, first propounded by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law in the early 1980s. An approach to sociological research that Latour in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005) prefers to call “a sociology of associations³⁹⁷”, the Actor-Network-Theory has its origins in the research Latour, Callon, and Law conducted in the field of science and technological studies.³⁹⁸ As Latour explains, the Actor-Network-Theory views the society or social not as an already existing fixed aggregate or context against which phenomena unfold but as something that has to be assembled by tracing connections between various actors. The social is not a given, he argues, but has to be painstakingly assembled and collected from the *traces* (emphasis mine) it leaves in associations produced between elements that by themselves are not social.³⁹⁹ Within the networks it describes, the Actor-Network-Theory controversially assigns agency to both human and non-human actors, which are described either as ‘mediators’ or as ‘intermediaries’. While the ANT has its critics⁴⁰⁰, it offers a productive framework for examining the type of data that is contained in archival sources examined in this chapter—composed of relentless records of reciprocal transactions between people, in both money and things (in other words, ‘traces’), that occurred in the context of executing building projects in nineteenth century Jodhpur. While this study does not claim to be an ‘ANT masterpiece’,⁴⁰¹ in its use of the theory as an analytical device, it heeds Latour’s call to “follow the actors”. In doing so, it seeks, in a small way, to “reassemble” the social world in which the art production we examine arose, and demonstrate the workings of agency within it as a distributed phenomenon. The concept of ‘distributed agency’ as used here is also borrowed from the field of science and technology

³⁹⁷ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9.

³⁹⁸ For a full reading list on the Actor-Network-Theory, see John Law, “The Actor Network Resource: Alphabetical List,” 2000, <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/sciencestudies/actor-network-resource-alphabetical-list/>.

³⁹⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 1–20.

⁴⁰⁰ Among the criticisms is the alleged ‘amorality’ of the ANT, and its neglect of power structures. See Tom Mills, “What Has Become of Critique? Reassembling Sociology after Latour,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 2 (2018): 286–305; Andrea Whittle and André Spicer, “Is Actor Network Theory Critique?,” *Organization Studies* 29, no. 4 (April 2008): 611–29.

⁴⁰¹ For what makes a true ANT masterpiece, see Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 10–11. For a good example of a study on the sociology of art that Latour espouses as representative of an ANT study, see Antoine Hennion, “Music and Mediation: Towards a New Sociology of Music,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003), 80–91.

studies, notably the work of scholars who have built on the Actor-Network-Theory, such as **Werner Rammert**. As Rammert defines it, a distributed concept of agency presupposes “many loci of agency, rather than a single actor.”⁴⁰² He also argues for a graduated model of agency, stating that there are varying degrees to which agency is exercised, from ‘passive’ to ‘pro-active’ to ‘co-operative.’⁴⁰³ While Rammert defined the idea solely in the context of ‘hybrid constellations’ composed of humans, machines, and advanced technologies, it has lent itself to a variety of contexts.⁴⁰⁴ Using ‘distributed agency’ as a heuristic lens will allow us in this chapter to move towards a vision of collective co-production of architecture, rather than a model hinged on the patron alone.

Maharaja Mān Singh and the Nāth Sampradāya

The reign of Maharaja Mān Singh in Jodhpur appears to have inspired a marked increase in the scale of zenana women’s participation in architectural patronage. Evidence suggests that at least fifteen women from the zenana were active as patrons of architecture between 1800 and 1850. A majority of these patrons—12 women—were queens, concubines, and princesses from Mān Singh’s zenana. The others came from the zenana of Bhīm Singh, Mān Singh’s short-lived successor (r.1793-1803). The structures they built included temples, stepwells, and gardens. Many of the buildings commissioned by zenana women from Mān Singh’s reign were temples to the Nāth Yogi Sampradāya or the Nāth Sampradāya, a militant monastic community that received the Maharaja’s patronage. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, unmoored from the legitimising authority of the Mughal Emperor in Delhi, Jodhpur’s rulers, like Mān Singh and his predecessor Bijai Singh (r.1752-93), had increasingly turned to religious cults (the Vallabha Sampradāya in the case of Bijai Singh) to bolster their legitimacy as Hindu kings ruling with divine sanction. Overtures to certain religious factions were also motivated by successive Maharajas’ attempts to bring into their fold powerful non-rajput citizenry to neutralize the threat posed by rival rajput

⁴⁰² Werner Rammert, “Where the Action Is: Distributed Agency between Humans, Machines, and Programs,” in *Paradoxes of Interactivity*, ed. Uwe Seifert, Jin Hyun Kim, and Anthony Moore (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008), 63–91.

⁴⁰³ Rammert.

⁴⁰⁴ For an example, see Olaf Zenker’s study of the Irish language revival where the author uses the framework of distributed agencies to show to highlight the ways in which the revival was ‘co-produced’ by diverse agents, even as they sometimes worked in competition with each other. Olaf Zenker, “On Prophets, Godfathers, Rebels, and Prostitutes: Distributed Agency in the Irish Language Revival of Northern Ireland,” *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 137, no. 1 (2012): 23–45.

clan chiefs. The Krishna cult Vallabha Sampradāya was patronised chiefly by wealthy merchants and other upper caste communities in Rajasthan. Having joined the Sampradaya, Bijai Singh, Mān Singh’s grandfather, had declared his kingdom an offering to Krishna and banned the consumption of meat and alcohol in line with the beliefs of both the Vallabha Sampradāya, and the considerable number of Jains who formed Jodhpur’s merchant elite.⁴⁰⁵ He thus aligned himself with mercantile communities who bankrolled Jodhpur state in this period and who controlled much of its bureaucracy, having displaced rajput nobles from all key administrative positions.⁴⁰⁶ In the same way that Bijai Singh sought to order life in Jodhpur around the Vallabha cult, for the forty years that Mān Singh reigned in Jodhpur, he sought to reshape his capital city as an offering to the Nāth Sampradāya, styling himself an ascetic-king who drew legitimacy from a monastic ideal that has a long tradition within Indic ideals of kingship.⁴⁰⁷ Mān Singh would use the arts, including architecture, as a means to express his devotion to Nāth Sampradāya and prove his legitimacy as a divinely sanctioned ruler. As we will see, the zenana became crucial partners in the processes of legitimation that Mān Singh pursued, all of which would radically alter Jodhpur’s urban landscape.

Ascetics of the Nāth Sampradāya venerated immortal perfected beings known as *mahāsiddhās*, who were believed to possess infinite wisdom and super-human powers. The Nāth yogis considered themselves part of an ancient tradition founded by Ādināth, the first of the *mahāsiddhās*—sometimes equated with Shiva—and a long line of his disciples, prime among whom were Matsyendranāth and Gorakshanāth.⁴⁰⁸ Their spiritual practice was centred on breath control and yogic transformation of the body, which was supposed to endow ascetics with magical powers and immortality. The order was composed of both householders and ascetics and is known to have accepted recruits from all castes and

⁴⁰⁵ For more on Bijai Singh and the Vallabha Sampradaya, see Chapter 4.

⁴⁰⁶ In an effort to counter the influence of their rajput kinsmen, Rathore kings had followed a policy of filling the state bureaucracy with literate non-rajput groups as early as the sixteenth century. Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 537–39.

⁴⁰⁷ Daniel Gold, “Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842,” *Estudios de Asia y Africa*, 27, no. No. 1 (87) (April 1992): 9–27.

⁴⁰⁸ Akshay Kumar Banerjea, *The Nāth-Sampradaya and the Gorakshanath Temple* (Gorakhpur: Mahant Digvijai Nath Trust, 1964), 2–3. On the Nāth Sampradāya, apart from Gold and Banerjea, see Veronique Bouillier, *Monastic Wanderers Nāth Yogī Ascetics in Modern South Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Véronique Bouillier, “Religion Compass: A Survey of Current Researches on India’s Nāth Yogīs,” *Religion Compass* 7, no. 5 (2013): 157–68; David N. Lorenzen and Adrián Muñoz, eds., *Yogi Heroes and Poets: Histories and Legends of the Nāths* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011); Adrián Muñoz, *Nātha Sampradāya* (Oxford University Press, 2018); G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānphata Yogīs* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1973).

religions. The magical powers they were believed to possess made Nāth yogis objects of both fear and reverence in the communities where they lived. People went to them for cures to maladies of all kinds. In Mān Singh's time, Nāth Monasteries around Jodhpur were controlled by a line of hereditary gurus who considered themselves born into the order's leadership.⁴⁰⁹ As Daniel Gold has noted, even as it accepted new recruits, the Nāth Sampradāya in nineteenth century Jodhpur possessed aspects of a closed caste at its highest echelons.⁴¹⁰

Mān Singh first encountered the Nāths as a young prince in the town of Jalore, more than 100 kilometres from Jodhpur, where he had taken refuge from his cousin and rival to the throne, Bhīm Singh.⁴¹¹ Having usurped the throne of Jodhpur on the death of his grandfather Bijai Singh, Bhīm Singh had set out on a bloody campaign to exile or murder other claimants to the throne. Having killed or imprisoned other heirs, Bhīm Singh targeted Mān Singh. While he was holed up in Jalore fort fighting Bijai Singh's armies, Nāth Yogis from a Jalandharnāth temple near Jalore fort came to Mān Singh's rescue, organising supplies and providing him with military support.⁴¹² According to Mān Singh's lore, he thus became a devotee and an initiate of the Nāth Sampradāya under the tutelage of the ascetic Dev Nāth. When Mān Singh was close to giving up Jalore fort to Jodhpur forces sent by Bhīm Singh, Dev Nāth counseled him to hold out for a few weeks more, prophesying that the throne of Jodhpur would soon be his. The prophesy came true, for Bhīm Singh soon died mysteriously, leaving Mān Singh the only legitimate claimant to the throne. He was then escorted to Jodhpur by the very armies that had attacked Jalore, and anointed Maharaja in a ceremony at Mehrangarh. Having become the ruler, Mān Singh invited Dev Nāth and his followers to Jodhpur. Dev Nāth was then appointed Mān Singh's *rājguru* (royal spiritual preceptor). Mān Singh, like Bijai Singh, sought to style himself the servant of a divine power from whom he derived his sovereignty and power in return for devotion. He declared his kingdom an offering to his saviour Jalandharnāth and issued orders that all official documents would

⁴⁰⁹ Gold, "Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842."

⁴¹⁰ Gold.

⁴¹¹ Mān Singh, who lost both his parents by the age 10, had been taken under her wing by Gulāb Rai, Bijai Singh's favourite concubine, who held the town of Jalore as her *jāgīr* until her death in 1792. Perceiving the danger posed by Bhīm Singh to her adopted son, it is Gulāb Rai who dispatched Mān Singh to Jalore. Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 2.

⁴¹² The link between militancy and asceticism in medieval and early modern India is explored in Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*. See also: Gold, "Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842."

henceforth begin with an invocation to the deity.⁴¹³ The Nāths, with Dev Nāth at their helm, moved en masse to the capital and overnight became Jodhpur's elite. In them, Mān Singh found loyal allies who could provide military and administrative assistance as well as divine sanction for his rule. Mān Singh built a temple township just outside Jodhpur, called Mahāmandir, for the Nāths to reside in. He allocated villages and other gifts to Dev Nāth, and built a new temple at the sect's headquarters in Jalore.⁴¹⁴

Mān Singh's overtures to the Nāths did not go unquestioned by existing religious elites. It led to an open confrontation with the Vallabha Sampradāya, the Vaishnavite cult that had enjoyed state patronage during the reign of Maharaja Bijai Singh. Bijai Singh, along with his concubine Gulāb Rai, had built major temples to the Vallabha deity Śrīnāthjī, a version of the boy god Krishna, in Jodhpur. Skirmishes with Mān Singh ultimately led to the Vallabha Sampradāya losing some of the state patronage and revenue allocations it had enjoyed under Bijai Singh. A well-known account from Mān Singh's chronicles speaks of a visit the newly anointed ruler made to the Vallabha Madanmohan temple in Jodhpur as he toured the city paying respects at major shrines. Mān Singh arrived at the entryway to the temple on his elephant, dressed splendidly and sporting ash marks on his forehead marking his allegiance to the Nāths. The *gosain* (priest) of the temple took offense at the ruler's open declaration of affiliation to the Nāths and proceeded to chastise Mān Singh for insulting the legacy of his predecessor Bijai Singh. He then blocked the Maharaja from entering the premises with the ash marks. "Our madanmohanjī is a *bālak* (child)", the priest noted, indicating that the ash marks representing funerary fires (not to mention the caste 'impure' composition and heterodox practices of the Nāth Sampradāya) might scare the young god. Angered, Mān Singh turned away from the shrine and promptly withdrew state revenue allocations made to the temple.⁴¹⁵

Mān Singh's reign is generally judged by historians to have been one of constant strife and instability. The new Maharaja's claim to the throne was heavily contested by a faction of Marwar's *ṭhākurs* who had put their support behind an infant son of Bhīm Singh

⁴¹³ This practice can be seen to have outlived Mān Singh. All official documents including accounts book even from the reign of Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh begin with the invocation "*śrī jallandharnāthjī sahāy che*" (with the grace of Jalandharnāth).

⁴¹⁴ Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhājī Rī Khyāt*, 28. Mishra, *Inscriptions of Rajasthan*, 2006, 2:105.

⁴¹⁵ Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhājī Rī Khyāt*, 29.

called Dhonkal Singh. They were led by Sawai Singh, an influential chieftain who ruled the province of Pokhran. Meanwhile, Jodhpur was also embroiled in a bitter dispute with the ruler of Jaipur over the hand of princess Krishna Kumari of Mewar.⁴¹⁶ In 1806, anti-Mān Singh forces joined mercenary armies led by Amir Khan of Tonk and occupied Jodhpur, laying siege to the fort until Mān Singh was able to win Amir Khan's armies over to his side. Though Mān Singh managed to emerge victorious from the battle, his hold over the throne remained insecure and he faced several rebellions from disaffected *ṭhākurs*. The Maharaja's patronage of the Nāths and their rising influence in political matters caused resentment both among the nobility and among sections of the bureaucracy who had lost ground to members of the order. In 1815, a faction of Mān Singh's bureaucracy who resented the Nāth Guru Dev Nāth's position in court got him and Mān Singh's trusted minister Indra Raj Singhvi assassinated.⁴¹⁷ Mān Singh's reaction to this blow was uncharacteristic for a rajput ruler—he withdrew into his room, the Moti Mahal at Mehrangarh, in grief and frustration, and refused to reemerge. Instead, he handed over administrative duties to his only son Chattar Singh, born of the queen Bādan Kanwar Chāvaḍijī. In 1818, Chattar Singh passed away, followed by his wife, and plunged the kingdom into a renewed crisis. It was only on receiving repeated assurances of protection by the East India Company, which had by then become Marwar's paramount power through a treaty signed in January 1818,⁴¹⁸ and the pleading of his zenana⁴¹⁹ that Mān Singh finally agreed to put an end to his seclusion. On reemerging from his room, he took a bath and put on his royal robes once again. Mān Singh then called for a *darbār* formally resuming his role as the Maharaja.⁴²⁰

As a ruler, Mān Singh seems to have styled himself an ascetic prince,⁴²¹ a yogi at heart, who nevertheless reluctantly partook in the material comforts and constant strife that

⁴¹⁶ For a full account of this dispute and related conflicts, see Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 826–30.

⁴¹⁷ Hooja, 826–30.

⁴¹⁸ The treaty, called a 'treaty of perpetual friendship' assured Marwar of the East India Company's support in defending it from external aggression. In return, Marwar agreed to pay a nominal tribute and provide 1500 horses to the English when requested. The state also agreed to not enter into any agreements with third parties without consulting the Company. Hooja, 832. The last decades of Mān Singh's reign saw the East India Company consolidate its hold over Marwar. By the reign of Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh, the Company controlled all aspects of the state administration. For more on Marwar under colonial rule, see Shah, *Raj Marwar During British Paramountcy : A Study in Problems and Policies up to 1923*.

⁴¹⁹ Jain and Bhati, *Maharājā Mān Singh Rī Khyāt*, 125.

⁴²⁰ Ibid

⁴²¹ Daniel Gold terms Mān Singh a 'yogi king'. See Gold, "Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842."

was part of royal life. In times of extreme stress, he withdrew into a hermetic state, renouncing all daily rituals householders abide by, such as bathing or changing clothes.⁴²² Such was also the case during his second phase of withdrawal from the burdens of kingship, provoked by a crackdown by the East India Company on Jodhpur's Nāth elite. On Dev Nāth's death, a succession of his descendants had taken control of Mahāmandir and an affiliated temple complex called Udai Mandir just outside city gates. Emboldened by Mān Singh's support, the Nāth bands functioned as a parallel force in the city, with powers to arrest and even murder people.⁴²³ In addition, repeated conflicts that necessitated paying off mercenaries and Maratha chiefs had left the state coffers dry, prompting the administration to pass the burden on to the populace through heavy taxation. All of this caused significant disaffection amongst Marwar's *ṭhākurs* who approached the British political agent Colonel Sutherland for redress. To the East India Company, Mān Singh's support of a group of yogis who they saw as rude and lawless was an impropriety not to be tolerated.⁴²⁴ After repeated requests to Mān Singh to rein in the Nāths were dismissed, Colonel Sutherland of the East India Company arrived in Jodhpur and took charge of the administration, swiftly cutting down the *jāgīr* allocations made to the Nāths and eventually imprisoning some leaders of the cult. Royal chronicles describe Mān Singh withdrawing into an ascetic state on hearing news of his gurus' arrests.⁴²⁵ Having failed to persuade Sutherland to release the arrested ascetics, Mān Singh proceeded to the banks of Gulāb Sāgar tank where he set up a tent. He then smeared his body with ash, wrapped himself in a shawl, and set off barefoot towards a stepwell (incidentally commissioned by an unnamed concubine) outside the Mertiya city gate and took refuge on its steps. After some days, Mān Singh undertook visits to Nāth temples outside Jodhpur, including Jalore. On Samvat 1899 Baisakh Sud 13 (22 May 1842) he formally assumed asceticism ("*yog dhāraṇa kiyā*") on the banks of a stepwell in the village of Pal.⁴²⁶ After this event, Mān Singh never returned to his royal residence. He instead took up residence in various royal gardens within Jodhpur such as the Rai Kā Bāg, as well as gardens in the nearby town of Mandore. However, his body was unable to withstand the

⁴²² Ibid

⁴²³ Gold, "Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842."

⁴²⁴ Gold.

⁴²⁵ Bhavani Singh Patavat, *Mahārājā Mān Singhjī Rī Tawārīkh* (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan and Maharaja Man Singh Pustak Prakash Shodh Kendra, 2013), 209. Colonial sources on the other hand describe Mān Singh "feigning madness" when he withdrew from royal duties. R. P. Vyas, "Maharaja Man Singh and His Anti-British Feeling," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 30 (1968): 239–46.

⁴²⁶ Patavat, *Mahārājā Mān Singhjī Rī Tawārīkh*, 209.

mortifications that accompanied asceticism very long. Mān Singh took ill with a fever and died in September 1843.⁴²⁷ With his death, the East India Company's hold over Marwar became absolute. The reign of the Nāths came to an end in Jodhpur, and the temples and towns built for them fell into disrepair.

Despite the conflicts and chaos that seem to have been the hallmark of Mān Singh's reign, the first half of the nineteenth century was ironically also a period of cultural renaissance for Jodhpur's court. An aesthete and poet himself, Mān Singh extended generous patronage to poets, scholars, and musicians of his time, attracting many to his court. Poets who arrived in Jodhpur in the period included Bankidas, Shambhu Dutt, and Bhishma Bhatt, among others.⁴²⁸ Mān Singh himself wrote poetry exalting the Nāths,⁴²⁹ composed songs, and established a library at his fort that collected books on Nāth theology.⁴³⁰ Ever devoted to the Nāth Sampradaya, he set his court painters on the ambitious task of interpreting esoteric Nāth texts into visuals for the first time, leading to what is now considered the most significant period in the coming-of-age of courtly painting in Jodhpur.⁴³¹ Mān Singh saw his kingdom both as an offering to and a gift from Jalandarnāth (referred to in Jodhpur simply as Nāthjī). As such, he sought to transform his capital city to reflect his devotion. The same year he was anointed king, a Nāth temple (Fig. 3.1 a-d) was also  mmissioned at the heart of Jodhpur, on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank commissioned by his adoptive mother and Bijai Singh's concubine Gulāb Rai.⁴³² This temple appears in an 1820 painting produced by Mān Singh's atelier depicting the ruler on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar celebrating the festival of Gangaur (Fig. 4.4).⁴³³ He also founded two satellite towns in the outskirts of Jodhpur for the Nāth community to reside in. The largest of these was named after a grand temple at its centre, called Mahāmandir, dedicated to the deity Jalandharnāth (Fig. 3.2). Court documents from Mān Singh's reign describe the ruler leaving Mehrangarh in a procession to pay respects to Jalandarnāth and his guru Dev

⁴²⁷ Patavat, 209.

⁴²⁸ Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 834.

⁴²⁹ Although the poetry he wrote is acknowledged by leading scholars of medieval Rajasthani literature to have been generally terrible. Interview with Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach, Heidelberg, 28-11-2019.

⁴³⁰ Gold, "Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842." This library is now the Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash, Jodhpur fort.

⁴³¹ For more on painting under Mān Singh, see Diamond, Glynn, and Jasol, *Garden & Cosmos*, 229–333.

⁴³² Patavat, *Mahārājā Mān Singhjī Rī Tawarikh*, 20. For Mān Singh's relationship with Gulāb Rai, see note 18 in this chapter.

⁴³³ Diamond, Glynn, and Jasol, *Garden & Cosmos*, 167.

Nāth at Mahāmandir.⁴³⁴ Mān Singh held his guru in high esteem, setting aside his stature as king to express his devotion as a humble disciple. He bowed down and touched the floor with his head when Dev Nāth entered court. In deference to his guru, he avoided loud drumbeats and an armed guard—signs of sovereignty that traditionally accompanied a king’s *asvārī* or procession in Jodhpur—as he approached the Mahāmandir to pay respects at the shrine.⁴³⁵ Mān Singh also embarked on a temple building program across Marwar, raising Nāth temples in all twenty-two *parganās* of the kingdom, including one at the Nāth headquarters in Jalore.⁴³⁶ Architectural activity peaked in Jodhpur as he sought to reorder the urban landscape to reflect his dedication to Nāthjī. The two temple towns that Mān Singh founded for the Nāths on the city’s outskirts—the grand Mahāmandir and the smaller Udai Mandir— began to function as centres of influence paralleling the fort, reorienting the city and inscribing new axes of power on it. More significantly, for this study, the ruler’s devotion to the Nāths and his enthusiasm for temple building seems to have compelled his zenana to embark on a similar mission. By commissioning Nāth shrines in crucial locations within the city, members of the zenana actively joined the sovereign’s efforts to refashion Jodhpur’s urban landscape radically as a sacred geography reflecting the court’s devotion to the Nāth Sampradāya.

An Explosion of Activity: Women Patrons from the Reign of Mān Singh

Mān Singh’s zenana was composed of 13 queens⁴³⁷ and at least 25 concubines and singers⁴³⁸, in addition to members of staff, servants, and other residents.

The queens, in order of seniority, were⁴³⁹:

1. Rai Kanwar Bhaṭṭiyānī of Khariya in Jaisalmer (married VS 1862/AD 1805)
2. Badan Kanwar Cāvaḍī of Manasa, Gujarat (married VS 1862/AD 1805)
3. Bhom Kanwar Tunwar, Lakhasar, Bikaner (married VS 1863/AD 1806)
4. Sūraj Kanwar Devaḍī of Nimbaj (married VS 1883/AD 1826)
5. Gen Kanwar Bhaṭṭiyānī of Gajuri, Jaisalmer (married VS 1883/AD 1826)

⁴³⁴ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE 428-444.

⁴³⁵ Gold, “Ascenso y caída del poder de los yoguis: Jodhpur, 1803-1842.”

⁴³⁶ Bhaṭṭi, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:573–75.

⁴³⁷ Naggār, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 72–76.

⁴³⁸ MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/1872 CE, fs.47-58

⁴³⁹ Naggār, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 72–76.

6. Anand Kanwar Devaḍī of Mandar (date unknown)
7. Sūraj Kanwar Kachwāhī of Jaipur (date unknown)
8. Virāḍ Kanwar Lāḍī Tunwar of Lakhasar (date unknown)
9. Pratāp Kanwar Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī Derāwarī of Jakhan (date unknown)
10. Anop Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī of Saduri, Bikaner (date unknown)
11. Jas Kanwar Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāṇī of Gothda (date unknown)
12. Tilak Kanwar Devaḍī of Mandar (date unknown)
13. Aejan Kanwar Devaḍī of Nimbaj (date unknown)

The many concubines and singers⁴⁴⁰ in Mān Singh's zenana bore the suffix rai. More than one concubine or singer could be assigned the same name, often drawn from a lexicon of pleasing personal attributes. Identically named women were distinguished by prefixes to their name based on seniority, such as *baḍā* (the elder), *choṭā* (the younger) and *bichla* (middle). A zenana census⁴⁴¹ from the reign of Mān Singh's successor Takhat Singh lists their names thus:

1. Canaṇ Rai
2. Caduli Rai
3. Rangrūp Rai
4. Campal Rai
5. Tulach Rai
6. Rīd Rai
7. Sukhvel
8. Hasat Rai
9. Rūpjot *baḍā*
10. Īmarat Rai
11. Campā *choṭā*
12. Rūpjot *choṭā*
13. Rām Rai
14. *Baḍā* Sundar Rai
15. *Baḍā* Phūlvel

⁴⁴⁰ Singers with the title *gāyaṇ* often held positions in the zenana that were on par with concubines (*pardāyat*). Kaviraj Shyamal Das, a 19th century chronicler counts 12 *pardāyats* and 12 *gāyaṇ* in Mān Singh's zenana. Kaviraj Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1986), 874, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.545244>.

⁴⁴¹ MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/1872 CE, fs.47-58. This is not a definitive list of Mān Singh's concubines, though all the names of concubines who can be identified as patrons do appear in it. The names here only partially overlap with another list that Priyanka Khanna offers in her study. See Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)," 55.

16. *Bīchla* Sundar Rai
17. Mehtāb Rai
18. *Choṭā* Sundar Rai
19. *Choṭā* Canaṇ Rai
20. Cutar Rekhā
21. Udai Rai
22. Paramsukh Rai
23. *Choṭā* Phūlvel
24. Kān Rai
25. Pan Rai⁴⁴²

Of Mān Singh's concubines, at least five are known to have commissioned built structures in the city, such as gardens, stepwells and temples. Pan Rai, an illustrious concubine who seems to have commanded respect and status during the reigns of both Mān Singh and his successor Takhat Singh commissioned a stepwell c.1835, as did another concubine Kān Rai c.1839. Three concubines, Canaṇ Rai, Imarat Rai, and Phūlvel commissioned Nāth temples in the city, also in the 1830s.⁴⁴³ None of these buildings, whether stepwells or temples, can now be located. While evidence in textual records only point to five, the actual number of concubines who acted as patrons is likely higher, since their low social status compared to queens meant that their life and activities almost never found their way into court chronicles or genealogies. Perhaps for the same reason, and for the lack of wealthy kin to maintain their upkeep, the monuments they built in Jodhpur have also not survived except in exceptional cases. What little evidence we have of concubines in this period acting as patrons comes from quotidian accounts books of the zenana from the nineteenth century, of which only a small percentage of the original corpus has survived. These nevertheless indicate that many concubines were active as patrons of architecture in the period. We might never know the full extent of their careers as patrons for lack of sources, but it is reasonable to assume that many more engaged in building in this period than we find evidence for in *bahīs*.

Of Mān Singh's 13 queens, at least six commissioned buildings in the city, although the most formidable patron among them, the queen Pratāp Kanwar Tijā Bhaṭiyāṇī did not

⁴⁴² MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/1872 CE, fs. 47-58.

⁴⁴³ See Appendix 1.

earnestly begin her career as a patron until after the Maharaja's death. Pratāp Kanwar is known to have built at least four temples, of which none was dedicated to Nāth deities, revealing that she was a less than enthusiastic supporter of the order. Other queenly patrons as well as princesses from the period funded the construction of temples to the Nāth Sampradāya in various locations within and even outside Jodhpur. The oldest of these (Figs. 3.3, a-b), a small Nāth shrine apparently meant for personal worship, was built c. 1808 under the patronage of Mān Singh's chief queen Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyānī and is located just outside the main entry to the fort of Mehrangarh, on the banks of the Padamsar water tank in the Brahmin quarters. It is referred to as Nij Mandir,⁴⁴⁴ a name also used to refer to a temple Mān Singh himself built on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. Like other Nāth temples, Rai Kanwar's Nij Mandir (Fig. 3.3) fell into disuse after Mān Singh's reign. Access to this structure is now restricted as it is now used as a residence by a family, which denies that it was ever a temple (despite the very prominent temple *śikhara* visible from outside).

Of the other Nāth temples, Macchmandir, completed in 1811, (Fig. 3.4) was commissioned by the queen Bhom Kanwar Tunwar. It is dedicated to the Nāth guru Matsyendranāth and is located in what is still one of the busiest market streets in the city, the historic *Dhān Maṇḍī* or Grain Market, facing as if in a direct challenge, Jodhpur's grandest Vallabha temple, the Gangśyāmjī Mandir commissioned a few of decades earlier by Mān Singh's grandfather Bijai Singh. Macch Mandir is an impressive temple located on the first floor of a building that resembles a *havelī*, with rooms on the lower floors that were likely meant to be used as commercial spaces. Stairs on one side, framed by an ornate *toran*, lead up to the temple. The Macch Mandir too is now maintained very poorly. A family that claims descent from the Nāths now uses it as a residence.

The queens Sūraj Kanwar Devaḍī and Gen Kanwar Bhaṭiyānī too built Nāth temples, named Vijai Mandir (1835) and Abhai Mandir (1831) respectively. Neither of these can now be conclusively traced. Abhai Mandir is described in the genealogy of queens as being located on the banks of a tank named 'Tej Sāgar'. According to Narayan Singh Bhati's addendum to Nainsi's *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, this tank is the present-day Fateh Sāgar tank in Jodhpur, located a stone's throw away from the Gulāb Sāgar.⁴⁴⁵ However, the

⁴⁴⁴ *nij* means private.

⁴⁴⁵ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:585.

queen's own *bahī* from 1830⁴⁴⁶ records that she built the Nāth temple directly on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. It is not clear where on the banks of the tank Abhai Mandir was located. Vijai Mandir is described in the genealogy of queens as being located close to the *taksāl* or the royal mint. It is untraceable. Most of the temples commissioned by queens are recorded in the *rāñī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*.⁴⁴⁷ However, a Krishna temple commissioned by Jas Kanwar Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāñī can only be located based on city lore surrounding it, as the entry in the genealogy about her is partially lost. A princess from Mān Singh's zenana, Amar Kanwar, also commissioned a Nāth temple (c.1820). Her temple, named Jas Mandir, survives and is located very close to the Gulāb Sāgar (Fig. 3.5). Like the Mahāmandir and the Nij Mandir on Gulāb Sāgar, the Nāth temple Jas Mandir now serves as a government school.⁴⁴⁸

As described above, of the Nāth temples that queens and princesses commissioned, only three survive in their entirety. They can all be seen to be of varying styles. While the Nij Mandir on Padamsar and the Macch Mandir in Juni Dhān Maṇḍī resemble *havelī* temples for their outward resemblance to domestic architecture (though both possess visible *śikharas*), the Jas Mandir closely follows the architectural style used in Nāth temples commissioned by Mān Singh, the earliest example of which in Jodhpur is the *other* Nij Mandir, completed on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar in 1803 (Fig. 3.1). Nāth temples commissioned by Mān Singh are placed within enclosed square courtyards protected by defensive gateways and watchtowers, much like the Vallabha temples from the reign of Bijai Singh.⁴⁴⁹ The main shrines, topped by a *śikhara*, however, are very different from Vallabha temples. They are placed in the middle of the enclosed courtyard at the centre of a square grid held up by fluted columns. The most iconic example of this vocabulary is the Mahāmandir. The Mahāmandir is the largest of Nāth shrines that Mān Singh sponsored, and stood at the centre of a township of the same name that he donated to the Nāths. Construction began in 1804 and appears to have continued for many years, with modifications and additions made even after the initial phase of construction was completed.⁴⁵⁰ Mahāmandir has a square plan

⁴⁴⁶ MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/ 1830 CE, f.4.

⁴⁴⁷ Naggar, *Rāñī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 72–76.

⁴⁴⁸ Many disused Nāth temples as well as palaces were handed over to the education and health departments in the early 20th century by rulers such as the Maharaja Umaid Singh (r. 1918-47) as they sought to modernise their kingdom.

⁴⁴⁹ On the architecture of these temples, see Chapter 4.

⁴⁵⁰ Debra Diamond, "The Politics and Aesthetics of Citation: Nath Painting in Jodhpur, 1803-1843" (New York, Columbia University, 2000), 229–33, UMI Dissertation Services.

and is located within a courtyard enclosed on all sides by arcades. An impressive towered gateway leads into the temple yard. Debra Diamond compares the lower levels of the shrine within to a Sufi *dargāh*, as the sanctum stands at the centre of a harmonious grid formed of fluted columns connected by cusped arches.⁴⁵¹ The spire or *śikhara* of the Mahāmandir is distinct—more pyramidal, stouter, and more elaborate than the vertical, bare bones Nagara style spires employed in other temples of the time, including the Jasmandir and Mān Singh’s own Nāth temple, the Nij Mandir on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. Though built of sandstone, the entire structure was once gleaming white, being covered in smooth white plaster resembling marble that can also be found in buildings within Mehrangarh fort.

Jas Mandir, the Nāth temple commissioned by the princess Amar Kanwar, follows the architectural style employed in Mān Singh’s Nāth temples, as visible in the more modest Nij Mandir on Gulāb Sāgar rather than the grandiose Mahāmandir. This indicates that its patron or architect in the 1820s adopted a vocabulary that by then had come to be associated with royal Nāth temples. The only other Nāth temples by women patrons that have survived do not follow this vocabulary. This is perhaps explained by their having been built much earlier in Mān Singh’s reign, before a dominant vocabulary was established. Construction on Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyānī’s temple seems to have begun and ended in 1803, parallel to the temple Mān Singh completed on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. The Macch Mandir too was completed early in Mān Singh’s reign, in 1811. However, the lack of other surviving structures precludes any sweeping conclusions based on stylistic similarities or dissimilarities between Nāth temples sponsored directly by the crown and those sponsored by royal women. However, there is evidence at least from a later period of the same head mason/architect (*gajdhar*) working on projects directly sponsored by the ruler as well as those sponsored by a queenly patron. An example is the *gajdhar* Asīn, whose name comes up in the 1840s in reference to both repairs in the zenana apartments in the Jodhpur fort sponsored by Maharaja Takhat Singh, as well as temples in the city sponsored by the then queen mother Tījā Bhaṭiyānī.⁴⁵²

The scale of the building activity that zenana members sponsored during Mān Singh’s reign is significantly higher than earlier (or later) periods in Jodhpur’s history. What might

⁴⁵¹ Diamond, 229–33.

⁴⁵² MMPP Bahī 2030 VS 1919/ 1862 CE, f.2, 20, 28; MMPP Bahī 152 VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f. 42.

have prompted heightened participation by the zenana in city building in this period? A simple reason that motivated concubines and queens to join Mān Singh in his temple building program and extend patronage to the Nāths would have been the opportunity it offered to gain favour with the ruler even as they bolstered his divinely conceived sovereignty on which their own power and wealth depended. Contemporary records reveal that women from the zenana were active participants in Mān Singh's Nāth devotional practice. Court documents record queens and concubines participating in public displays of devotion to Nāthji, most conspicuously by joining the Maharaja in royal processions (*asvārī*) as he moved through city streets with his entourage to visit Nāth shrines. Daily chronicles (*hakikat bahī*) of Mān Singh's reign document many such processions where royal women accompanied the king.⁴⁵³ In one instance from 1809, Mān Singh and his son the crown prince are recorded proceeding in procession to visit a Nāth shrine in Mandore near Jodhpur. They were accompanied, in their order of seniority, by the queens Bhatiyañjī (the chief queen Rai Kanwar Bhatiyañī, patron of the Nāth temple Nij Mandir on Padamsar), Chāwaḍjī, Tunwarjī (Bhom Kanwar Tunwar, patron of the Nāth temple Macch Mandir), Devaḍjī (Suraj Kanwar Devaḍī, patron of the Nāth temple Bijai Mandir) and Lāḍī Devaḍjī (Anand Kanwar Devaḍī) travelling in palanquins. Also part of the procession were two of Mān Singh's daughters, and the *pardāyat* Canaṇ Rai (who is also recorded to have commissioned a Nāth temple) and zenana officials.⁴⁵⁴ Paintings from the period act as visual expressions of the zenana's devotion to the sect. Mān Singh's atelier produced a remarkable number of portraits that depict the Maharaja with members of his family, especially his sons. Zenana women themselves likely commissioned at least a few of these, especially those depicting members of the zenana.⁴⁵⁵ One such painting by the *chitāra* Udairam commemorates the visit of two princesses to a Nāth temple. It shows a young Mān Singh with his daughters, Īdar Kanwar (the adopted daughter of the queen Pratāp Kanwar Tījā Bhatiyāñī⁴⁵⁶) and Ānand Kanwar praying to Jalandarnāth at a shrine. As per convention, the princesses are depicted only as types, with no real portraiture. Inscriptions on the painting's margins (Fig. 3.6) identify them.

⁴⁵³ MMPP Bahī 841, VS 1860-76/ 1803-19 CE, f. 428-444.

⁴⁵⁴ MMPP Bahī 841, VS 1860-76/ 1803-19 CE, f. 428-444.

⁴⁵⁵ One such image, which can be attributed to the Mān Singh's queen Pāncmā Bhatiyāñī's patronage, is enshrined at the temple she commissioned. See Fig. 3.7

⁴⁵⁶ Naggar, *Rāñī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahī*, 75.

Mān Singh seems to have actively encouraged royal women in their temple-building endeavours. He is recorded visiting the Nāth shrines that members of the zenana commissioned, endowing these structures with the highest level of royal sanction. He partook in the *pratiṣṭhā* or consecration of the Nāth temples that zenana women commissioned. In 1808 for instance, Mān Singh visited the temple his chief queen Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī built on the banks of the Padamsar tank, and duly named the temple ‘Nij Mandir.’⁴⁵⁷ Similarly, in 1811, he was present at the *pratiṣṭhā* of the Nāth temple that the queen Bhom Kanwar Tuṃvar commissioned in the grain market (*dhān mandi*). He named the temple ‘Macch Mandir’ a dedication to the Mahāsiddhā Matsyendranāth.⁴⁵⁸ Though it is not clear if any members of the zenana were ever officially initiated into the Nāth ascetic order as the ruler was, we do know that they engaged in worship of Nāth deities as householders. Zenana women are known to have commissioned paintings of Nāthji, presumably for personal worship in their household shrines. In 1832, the concubine Pan Rai commissioned a painting of Nāthji from the artist Madho.⁴⁵⁹ Zenana women were also generous patrons of Nāth temples located in the city, regularly sending donations and offerings to various temples including those commissioned by fellow members of the zenana.⁴⁶⁰ Even in instances when they commissioned temples to other cults, some zenana women paid deference to Mān Singh’s patronage of the Nāths. A painted portrait of Mān Singh worshipping Jalandharnāth is installed at a temple to Krishna that the queen Jas Kanwar Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāṇī commissioned near the Chand Pol city gate (known today as the *Pāñcmā Mājīsā Mandir*). The portrait, similar to innumerable paintings that the royal atelier produced in this period depicting the ruler bowing to Jalandharnāth, appears on a wall right outside the sanctum.⁴⁶¹ The image, which was undoubtedly commissioned for the temple by the queen herself, includes a prominent female figure who stands behind the ruler with joined hands. She can be none other than the patron Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāṇī. This assumption is

⁴⁵⁷ Naggar, 72–76.

⁴⁵⁸ Naggar, 72–76.

⁴⁵⁹ MMPP Bahī 161, VS 1889/AD 1832, f.20. The performance of worship on a two dimensional painted image, known as *citrsevā* was made legitimate and popular in Jodhpur by the Vallabha Sampradāya. Nāth devotees, including Mān Singh, appear to have adopted this practice, based on references to Nāthi’s *chitraseva* in *bahīs*. MMPP Bahī 72, VS 1911/1854 CE, f.1. Among various rooms in the palaces of Mehrangarh fort, one is referred to as *Citrsevā rā Mahal*.

⁴⁶⁰ MMPP Bahī 161, VS 1889/AD 1832, f.2.

⁴⁶¹ For more on portraiture depicting Mān Singh with Nāth figures, see Debra Diamond, “Painting, Politics, and Devotion Under Maharaja Man Singh, 1803-43,” in *Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 31–41.

strengthened by the depiction of a young prince beside Mān Singh. Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāñī had one son with Mān Singh, the prince Shivadān Singh.⁴⁶² The painting is embedded in the temple wall and framed by an arch, forming a small shrine in full view of worshippers (Fig. 3.7).

Royal women in early nineteenth century Jodhpur did not exclusively build and patronise Nāth institutions. Many of Mān Singh's concubines, who were active both during and right after his reign, chose to build water bodies instead. Other members of the zenana commissioned temples to other deities. Apart from zenana's engagements with the Nāth Sampradāya, other factors also likely propelled royal women to engage in architectural patronage in this period. It is notable that no significant administrative changes appear to have occurred in the period that would have endowed the queens and *pardāyats* with additional income and thus more resources to spend on construction. One possible factor appears to have been precedence, especially the trail-blazing career of Mān Singh's predecessor Maharaja Bijai Singh's concubine and Mān Singh's adopted mother, Gulāb Rai. Gulāb Rai was assassinated in 1792. During her lifetime, she had commissioned several monumental structures in Jodhpur, among them a towering temple to the Vallabha Sampradāya, a mammoth tank named after her lled Gulāb Sāgar, a private enclosed garden with palaces called Māylabāg, and a stepwell. Gulāb Rai's activities appear to have created openings for other zenana women to follow suit. It is significant that many of the structures commissioned in this period by zenana members and Mān Singh himself,⁴⁶³ were placed directly around the Gulāb Sāgar. In the nineteenth century, the tanks and its environs became sites in the city invested with special significance as a setting for architectural expressions of power and authority by zenana women.⁴⁶⁴ It can also be argued that the upheaval that the kingdom experienced on Mān Singh's ascension to the throne also worked in favour of royal women. Mān Singh's induction of the Nāths into the polity as influential power brokers and landholders unleashed a significant redistribution of power within the royal court and the city itself. As with all periods of social conflict and radical changes to the

⁴⁶² Naggar, *Rāñī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 76.

⁴⁶³ The first of the Nāth temples Mān Singh commissioned is Nij Mandir on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar, completed in 1803, the year of his coronation. Temples built by the queens Pratāp Kanwar Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī, Gen Kanwar Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāñī and Jas Kanwar Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāñī were all placed on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar, as was a temple commissioned by a Dārogā Nājar in the mid-19th century.

⁴⁶⁴ See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of Gulāb Rai's architectural legacy and its enduring impact on the city.

social fabric, women seem to have found amidst this chaos openings where they could assert their presence.

Pan Rai and Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī: The Long and Parallel Careers of a Concubine and a Queen

To piece together women's involvement in architectural patronage in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur, this study mainly relies on archival records of the Jodhpur zenana, supplemented by a parallel archive of surviving monuments, sites and local lore surrounding them. Most of the textual evidence for zenana women acting as patrons of architecture is gleaned from genealogies of Jodhpur's queens or references in zenana *bahīs* (the latter is especially important in the case for concubines and other non-rajput women patrons). In the case of a majority of the patrons examined in this study, we know little of their life except the name of the buildings they commissioned and their approximate location. However, in some cases, personal accounts books have survived that provide a more detailed account of a patron's biography. Such is the case of two women of very different backgrounds from Mān Singh's zenana: the concubine Pan Rai and the queen Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī. A number of their personal accounts books have survived into the present. They provide a rare glimpse into the parallel careers of these two women as patrons and members of the zenana. Both Pan Rai and Tījā Bhaṭṭiyānī entered the zenana in Mān Singh's reign but outlived him, remaining active presences in the reigns of his successors, the Maharajas Takhat Singh and Jaswant Singh. An outline of their lives can be constructed from their accounts books, allowing us a rare glimpse into the lives and careers of early modern women patrons.

Pan Rai's *Bāvadi*

It is not clear when the *pardāyat* Pan Rai entered the zenana. The earliest surviving account books bearing her name appear around 1832, and record her personal finances as a *pardāyat*. She had probably entered the zenana sometime in the previous decade. By 1832, her activities show that she was already well-established in the royal household. As demonstrated by accounts books from this period, she was commissioning paintings, actively partaking in devotional activities including worship of the Nāths, and regularly sending

offerings to temples both within the zenana and in the city.⁴⁶⁵ By 1835, construction was in full swing on a stepwell (*bāvaḍi*) that Pan Rai had commissioned within an already thriving garden that she owned close to the Sojhatiyā city gate in Jodhpur.⁴⁶⁶ In 1845-46, by when the throne had passed to Mān Singh's successor, Takhat Singh, this stepwell was renovated extensively; its walls were strengthened, the well was cleaned and deepened, and a new *aṛhaṭ* (water wheel) was put in place.⁴⁶⁷ Mān Singh's death in 1843 does not seem to have affected Pan Rai's status within the zenana. Neither she, nor Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī were among the zenana women who committed *sati* on the deceased Maharaja's pyre.⁴⁶⁸ Pan Rai continued to be active during the reign of Takhat Singh (r. 1843-73). We know from her *bahīs* that she came down with an illness serious enough to warrant elaborate religious offerings in her name in 1844. However, she soon recovered.⁴⁶⁹ In both 1854 and 1864, Pan Rai, by then one of the matriarchs of the zenana, undertook pilgrimages to bathe in the river Ganga. These pilgrimages were widely publicized. On her return, the concubine distributed sacred water from the river to temples in the city.⁴⁷⁰ Pan Rai survived Takhat Singh as well, as a *bahī* from 1879, from the reign of Takhat Singh's son Jaswant Singh (r. 1873-1895) proves. Pan Rai, then one of the most senior members of the zenana, is referred to in the document with the exalted description "*śrī 108 śrī Pānraiji sayibā...*". By then she had had a career of nearly 50 years in the zenana and continued to be active. The *bahī* describes her sponsoring worship at various temples including Nāth shrines, and leaving the zenana in a procession for a rendezvous with one of the queens at a garden in the fort.⁴⁷¹ This account of her life contradicts some widely held preconceptions about the loss of status of concubines after a Maharaja's death. In nineteenth century Jodhpur, many concubines retained their position in the zenana even after a ruler's death. A zenana census from the Takhat Singh period attests that at least six of Mān Singh's concubines continued to live in the zenana after Mān

⁴⁶⁵ MMPP Bahī 161 VS 1889/1832 CE, f. 2, 20.

⁴⁶⁶ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1832 CE.

⁴⁶⁷ MMPP Bahī 226 VS 1903/1846 AD, f. 3-15; MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1889-1902/1842-45 AD, f. 66.

⁴⁶⁸ Mān Singh's zenana members were the last of Jodhpur's royal zenana to commit sati on the ruler's pyre as the British campaigned to stop the practice. Six zenana women committed sati on Mān Singh's pyre: the queen Ejan Kanwar Devadī, her maid servant (*baḍāraṇ*) Radha, and the *pardāyats* Phūlvel, Cananrai, and Sukhvel. Radha led the procession of satis as they left the citadel, riding ahead of them on horseback. Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 226.

⁴⁶⁹ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1889-1902/1842-45 CE, f. 60

⁴⁷⁰ MMPP Bahī 72 VS 1911/1854 CE; MMPP Bahī 431 VS 1921/1864 CE. See Chapter 2 for details.

⁴⁷¹ MMPP Bahī 17, VS 1936/1879 CE, f. 28, 38, 23.

Singh's passing.⁴⁷² As a senior zenana woman, Pan Rai seems to have thrived in the reigns of Mān Singh's successors.

Pan Rai's career as a patron of architecture is documented in a handful of income-expense *bahīs* from the zenana. Of these, two *bahīs* of note refer almost exclusively to accounts of construction. The first, from 1835⁴⁷³ records financial transactions related to the construction of a stepwell (*bāvaḍi*) that the concubine commissioned. This *bahī* does not specify the location of the concubine's stepwell, but a similar account from 1857, this time relating major repairs made to a stepwell belonging the concubine, the inner walls of which has collapsed in part, specifies the location as "*sojhatiyā darwājā bāre sunārān rī beri kane*" (outside the Sojhatiya city gate, near a well in the goldsmith's quarters).⁴⁷⁴ Presumably, both accounts refer to the same *bāvaḍi*, since the twenty-year divide between the two accounts is a plausible gap after which a structure would have required repairs.

A *bāvaḍi* is commonly a rectangular sheltered stepped well with steps descending from one side. The steps lead down into a series of interconnected tanks arranged like courtyards which catch the overflow from a deep well located at the other end. As evident from surviving *bāvaḍis* in Jodhpur, such wells invariably included an *arhaṭh* or waterwheel placed on the deep end to bring water up to be poured into water channels for irrigation or stored in small stone tanks for draught animals to drink from. Pan Rai's *bāvaḍi* was built within an already established garden or *bāg*, the need to irrigate which likely prompted the concubine to embark on its construction. Entries in *bahīs* paint a picture of a thriving garden spread around the site of the stepwell. The garden was planted with vegetables and flowering plants. A number of *mālī* or gardeners in the concubine's employ managed the procurement and upkeep of crops at the site. If the garden invokes a space designed for pleasure and merriment, which it undoubtedly was, the *bahīs* reveal it to have also been a commercial undertaking for the concubine, who earned a small but regular income from the sale of garden produce in the market, conducted through her gardeners.⁴⁷⁵ Some of this

⁴⁷² MMPP Bahī 836 VS 1929/1872 CE, fs. 47-58

⁴⁷³ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE.

⁴⁷⁴ MMPP Bahī 226 VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f.3.

⁴⁷⁵ Multiple references found through the MMPP Bahī 10 (VS 1892/ 1835 CE) refer to small sums deposited into the account maintained for the garden and stepwell from the garden's yield (*āvdānī*). In the Hindu calendar month of Jeth, VS 1892 (May-June, 1835) for instance, the yield from the garden was six rupees ten annas. In Kartik the *bahī* notes that the sale of *mūli* (radish) earned fourteen annas, while in Migsar (November-

income was deposited into the funds allocated for constructing the stepwell, supplementing existing sources.⁴⁷⁶ It is not immediately clear if the stepwell served the community around it, or was meant for private use alone. Its location near the Sojhatiya city gate suggests that it might have supplied water to incoming travellers. However, the well's location within what must have been an enclosed garden seems to preclude widespread public use of the stepwell.

Tijā Bhatiyānī's Temples

Pratāp Kanwar Tijā Bhatiyānī of Jakhan married Mān Singh in 1832,⁴⁷⁷ becoming his third (*tijā*) bride from a Bhāṭī rajput family. Like Pan Rai, Tijā Bhatiyānī continued to live in the zenana during the reigns of both Takhat Singh and Jaswant Singh, until around 1885. Pratāp Kanwar was the daughter of the *thākur* (chieftain) of Jakhan, a principality in Marwar ruled by the Bhāṭī clan. Though she would go on to commission several temples, the bulk of her career as a patron unfolded after Mān Singh's death. The queen, a devotee of Vishnu as well as Shiva, appears to have resisted the pressures that impelled other zenana women to commission temples to the Nāth Sampradāya in Jodhpur. Her largest surviving architectural commission in Jodhpur city is a temple to Ram as Raghunāth, enshrined with his consort Sita and brother Lakshman. This temple is still extant and is known locally as the 'Tijā Majīsā Mandir.' It was completed in 1856 and is located on a busy market street adjoining the *Ghās Maṇḍī* or grass market, not far from the concubine Gulāb Rai's temple to the Vallabha Sampradāya. Tijā Bhatiyānī also commissioned two temples on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar, one to Shiva as Someshvar, and yet another temple to Raghunāth.⁴⁷⁸ In addition, she commissioned a temple to Shiva as Mahādev and an adjoining ghat in a parcel of land owned by the Jodhpur state on the banks of the holy lake Pushkar. This temple stood adjacent to a temple and monastery commissioned in Pushkar by her husband Maharaja Mān Singh.⁴⁷⁹ The

December) radishes and other produce from the garden (*mūliyā bagerā bāg rā tarkari*) brought in two rupees, 11 annas and one taka. Other produce that are listed bringing in an income are sweet potatoes (*sakarkaddā*) and Indian jujube (*ber*). MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, f.57, 161.

⁴⁷⁶ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, f.57, 161.

⁴⁷⁷ MMPP Bahī 841, VS 1860-76/ 1803-19 CE, (folio number missing). See entry for VS 1889 Ashad Sud 9.

⁴⁷⁸ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 75–76. MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f.5.

⁴⁷⁹ A site plan of the two structures exists from 1928. See PWD-503-C/29-1, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

queen is reputed to have been a learned woman. She composed several literary works in praise of Vaishnava deities in Rajasthani and Braj Bhasha.⁴⁸⁰

In 1854, Tījā Bhatiyāṇī, by then a widow and queen mother, made a pilgrimage to the river Ganga in Haridwar. She also visited the city of Mathura, a Vaishnavite pilgrimage center on the banks of the river Yamuna considered to be the birth place of the deity Krishna. On her way back to Jodhpur, the queen mother made a stop in Pushkar, where she worshipped at the Nāth temple Mān Singh had commissioned on the banks of the sacred lake, and presumably also visited the temple that she herself had commissioned.⁴⁸¹ Tījā Bhatiyāṇī, continued to be active till at least 1885, by when she held the title of *rājdādīsa* or royal grand mother to then king Jaswant Singh II.

Tījā Bhatiyāṇī commissioned several temples in her lifetime. Of the two temples she placed on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank, a now-lost temple to Ram as Raghunāth that she commissioned on the northern bank of the Gulāb Sāgar is documented in a number of *bahīs* dedicated to its construction.⁴⁸² The construction of a second temple to Raghunāth that still stands in Ghās Maṇḍī area of Jodhpur is documented in another *bahī* of the queen.⁴⁸³ Construction on the former temple began in 1846, soon after Tījā Bhatiyāṇī became a widow and queen mother (*mājī*), known by the name Tījā Mājīsā. The temple was dedicated to the Vaishnavite trinity of Ram, Lakshman, and Janaki (Sita). *Bahīs* pinpoint the location of this temple thus: “*gulāb sāgar ūpar taraf uttarā dakānī rā paṭhā māthe nehar najīk*⁴⁸⁴” — “above Gulāb Sāgar tank, on the bank to the north, next to the canal”. This temple has not survived into the present. At the approximate location specified in the *bahī*, to the left of a canal leading to the Gulāb Sāgar now stands a square-shaped temple made in concrete some decades ago. Residents of the area claim that an older temple once stood at the site, but had become unusable or *khanḍit* (cut, broken) many years ago.⁴⁸⁵ This claim is confirmed by other sources that record that the second temple to Raghunāth that the queen

⁴⁸⁰ Other members of the Mān Singh zenana, including the queen Ejan Kanwar and the concubine Tulach Rai also composed poetry. See Sharma, *Mān Padāvali Sangīt*, 199-120; Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 834.

⁴⁸¹ MMPP Bahī 420 VS 1911/1854 AD, f. 1-20.

⁴⁸² MMPP Bahīs 152, 256, 266, 300, etc.

⁴⁸³ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/1856 CE.

⁴⁸⁴ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f.5.

⁴⁸⁵ As reported in December 2018.

commissioned in Ghās Maṇḍī was a replacement for a lost temple she had commissioned on the banks of Gulāb Sāgar.⁴⁸⁶

The second Raghunāth temple that the queen commissioned in Ghās Maṇḍī was completed in 1856. It still survives and is locally known as Tījā Mājīsā Mandir after its patron. The structure has now fallen into private hands and is partially used as a hotel. The temple is protected by a towered gateway and enclosure that houses the main shrine. In its fortifications, this temple, though more modest, resembles the Gangśyāmjī temple commissioned by Maharaja Bijai Singh, and the Kunjbihārījī temple commissioned by his concubine Gulāb Rai, both from the late eighteenth century. Like the latter, Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's temple is located within a thriving and now extremely congested market. Steps leading up to this temple from the road are framed by an ornate gateway the carvings on which match the kind executed in gateways of many buildings from nineteenth century Jodhpur, including a Mān Singh period gateway at the Mehrangarh fort that separates the Daulat Khana and Shringar Cauk courtyards. The gate features an arch or *torāṇ* with sculpted parakeets. Inside, the *garbha griha* or the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is still intact. The walls and the inner side of a dome in front of the *garbha griha* are covered in exquisite murals that reflect Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's career as a patron and a devotee.⁴⁸⁷ In their style, they match the murals found in royal residences at the Mehrangarh fort, especially the ones executed for Maharaja Takhat Singh in the Phūl Mahal hall of the fort. This temple too is dedicated to the Ram-Sita-Lakshman trinity. Worship is still held in the temple on a small scale in the evenings.

Construction Sites and Networks of Patronage in Nineteenth Century Jodhpur

The careers of both Pan Rai and Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī, as well as a handful of other royal women as patrons are documented in several books of accounts (*bahī*) that they have left behind, dating from 1830s to the 1880s. These documents, though subject to scrutiny by the Maharaja's accountants, appear to have been maintained by officials in the employ of royal women (as opposed to documents maintained for the direct use of the centralised royal

⁴⁸⁶ Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:585.

⁴⁸⁷ For more on these murals, see concluding paragraphs in this chapter.

chancellery).⁴⁸⁸ The largest corpus of records on individual zenana members that survive are books that record their general personal expenses, met from the revenue they collected from their *paṭṭā* villages, among other sources, and from allowances they received from the royal treasury. Though more general in nature, some of these deal in detail with construction projects. In some cases, accounts books specifically dedicated to construction (*kamṭhā*) have survived. These can be referred to as *kamṭhā bahīs*. *Kamṭhā bahīs* detail all expenses related to a construction site, including money spent on materials, labour, and the even *pūjās* and other offerings to gods that marked significant milestones in construction such as the consecration of a newly built structure. They often contain detailed salary lists recording the names of all labourers working at a site, as well as the names of construction supervisors and the architect or head mason. The latter was referred to by the title *gajdhar*, literally denoting a person who holds the measuring thread (*gaj*).

Kamṭhā bahīs are relatively rare among the corpus of zenana records still preserved at the royal library in Jodhpur. Among the many construction projects that royal women from Mān Singh's zenana financed both within and outside the limits of Jodhpur, *kamṭhā bahīs* have survived for a stepwell commissioned by the concubine Pan Rai and two of the temples commissioned by the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī. *Kamṭhā bahīs*, like other financial records from Jodhpur, follow a standardised format. Below are some sample entries from one of the *kamṭhā bahīs* maintained for a temple commissioned by Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī. They illustrate the general tone and format of these records.

1. Introductory entry describing the contents of a *bahī* (Fig. 3.8)

“mājī śrī tījā bhaṭiyāṇījī sāybā tālāb gulāb sāgar upar tar utrādakānī mīndar karāyo tīṅ rā kamṭhā rī nāvo samvat 1903 rā baras lā 1904 rā baras su dhā baras 3 ra nāva”

Translation: Records of the temple that queen mother Śrī Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī built above Gulāb Sāgar to the north. Dated Vikram Samvat 1903-1904 (1846-1847 AD), a period of three years.

⁴⁸⁸ Account books of zenana women record scribes being employed by them on a monthly salary. For example, among the *mahīndār* (salaried employees) of the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī was the scribe (*nāvisanda*) Pandit Kusal Raj. MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, f.10.

2. Standard entry recording wages paid (Fig. 3.9)

Line 1: “*tālke majūrā ne rojgār ra dīyā*”

Translation: Towards the daily wages of workers, (paid a total of 1828 rupees, 10 annas, three taka)

Line 2: “*kārīgar*”

Translation: (to all the) skilled craftspeople (paid a total of 1118 rupees, 15 annas)

Line 3: “*asīn kāyam ro*”

Translation: Asīn, son of Kāyam (paid 48 rupees, 13 annas)

Line 4: “*dīn*”

Translation: days (number of days worked)

Line 5 and translation: “*29 chaith mein*” (29 days, month of Chaith) “*29 baisākh mein*” (29 days, month of Baisakh) “*30 pratham jeth mein*” (29 days, first month of Jeth⁴⁸⁹)

Line 6 and translation: “*28 dūsra jeth mein*” (29 days, second month of Jeth) “*29 ashāḍh mein*” (29 days, month of Ashāḍh)

A few construction projects are extensively documented in general accounts books (i.e., not specifically related to construction) of zenana women. The progress of a Nāth temple that the queen Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāñī commissioned on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank in the year 1830 is documented in one of her *jamā kharac* (general income-expense) *bahīs*. The following paragraphs take a close look at some of these sources with the aim of retrieving various actors who were drawn together in the processes of architectural production in early to mid-nineteenth century Jodhpur.

⁴⁸⁹ In a lunar year with two Jeth months

The zenana records detailed above, supplemented by court chronicles and other contemporaneous sources, enable one to reconstruct the unfolding of patronage in early modern Jodhpur via a set of relationships that connected the patron to the court, local and itinerant craftspeople and labourers, traders, architects, various intermediaries, and communities within and outside the city, among others. Mundane transactions related to monuments that zenana women commissioned also provide clues to the way they were used on completion, and the motives that underlie their construction. Bulk of the pages in the accounts books examined in this section, especially the *kamṭhā bahīs*, are composed of salary and wage lists, documenting the amounts paid out every couple of months to supervisory employees, craftspeople, and other workers at a site. The rest is composed of transactions related to the procurement of raw materials, and records of miscellaneous daily expenses related to construction. By skimming through such transaction records that often run into hundreds of pages in each *bahī*, it is possible to roughly sketch out the main groups of players involved in and the kind of activities that constituted mammoth undertakings such as the erection of a temple or a subterranean water structure. In the course of this examination, a detailed image of the construction site emerges, as a place that drew in individuals and communities from across the region who provided the raw materials and labour required for projects sponsored by zenana members. Much of the information presented below likely has relevance for architectural sites in the region that lie well beyond Jodhpur or the specific period examined in this work.

Right Hand Men: the *Mahīndār*

Kamṭhā bahīs from nineteenth century Jodhpur show that two broad classes of workers were involved in every construction project: the *mahīndār* or monthly salary earners who occupied supervisory roles and the *denagiyā majūr* or daily wage earners that included craftspeople and labourers.⁴⁹⁰ In both cases, the accounts books show that remuneration was disbursed at irregular intervals. The *mahīndār* included supervisory employees called *kāmdār* from a patron's personal staff, as well as the *gajdhar*. The

⁴⁹⁰ This broad classification based on remuneration holds true for all construction projects examined in this chapter.

denagiyā majūr included a large number of occupational groups, from sculptors to water carriers, who worked at the construction site.

The *kāmdār* acted as intermediaries and transmitted money and information between the zenana and the construction site. They were made up of largely upper caste men, especially brahmins. The *kāmdār* were the main conduits through whom the patron could track and remotely supervise the progress of a project. They were responsible for tasks such as the recording of attendance, supervision of workers, the procurement of raw materials (both for construction and for use at various religious rituals held at the site), the disbursement of salaries, maintenance of accounts and so on. In the case of a *bāvaḍi* that the *pardāyat* Pan Rai built near Sojhatiya city gate, the *kāmdār*, including Mūhta Rīdhmal, Pawār Sukhrām, Pandit Choṭmal, and Bediya Dayārām were entrusted with the funds meant for construction.⁴⁹¹ Most of them are confirmed by their name to have been upper caste men. They transported large sums regularly from the fort to the site where the stepwell was being built. Clerks or scribes known as *nāvisandas* were also among the *mahīndār* associated with a construction site.⁴⁹²

A similar group of male *mahīndār* supervised affairs of Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī's temple in *Ghās Maṇḍī* or grain market area of the city: the Pandit Kusalrāj, Gehtlot Rīdh Singh, Sād Mobatrām, Joshī Hīrākaraṇ as well as the *Dhābhāī* (foster brother) Tulchīrām.⁴⁹³ *Dhābhāīs* were the sons of royal wet nurses. Due to their kinship to the royal family through the ties of milk, they were often among the trusted servants of the Maharaja. In Mān Singh's reign, the name of *Dhābhāī* Rāmkiśan as well as another figure identified as the grandnephew of the royal wet nurse Rūpa appear among the list of the ruler's entourage at the fort.⁴⁹⁴

Though they rarely make an appearance in *kamṭhā bahīs*, we know from other sources that zenana administrators the *nājar* were crucial to the execution of projects initiated by zenana women. They acted as chief intermediaries between the Maharaja, the central administration and the zenana in all matters. As the officials in charge of disbursing treasury allowances to royal women, the *Nājar* were often responsible for making financial

⁴⁹¹ MMPP Bahī 226 VS 1914/1857 CE, f.4.

⁴⁹² MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-05/1846-48 C, f.44.

⁴⁹³ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/1856 CE, fs. 2, 3, 5.

⁴⁹⁴ Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 61.

resources available for construction projects.⁴⁹⁵ When major celebrations or rituals were held at the temples that zenana women commissioned, the *nājar* took the lead in organising resources and labour for the event.⁴⁹⁶

The *Gajdhar*: Architects/Head masons

The list of *mahīndār* for a construction project also included the *gajdhar*, the head masons or architects. The *gajdhar* were one of the few men from artisanal castes who worked in senior capacities as *mahīndār* at construction sites. The term *gajdhar* (the one who holds the *gaj* or measure) is generally translated as architect. However, it is perhaps better translated in this context as head mason rather than architect, as the latter carries with it many contemporary connotations of authorship attributed to a single person.

The type of data that construction records from Jodhpur contain give no clear indication of the level of individual involvement that the *gajdhar* (or for that matter the patron) had in determining the form of the projects they supervised. The processes through which the architectural vocabulary of a structure was arrived at is also unclear. The fact that many of the structures examined in this work and the names of their *gajdhar* have not survived, prevents a comparison based on the leadership of two sites by the same *gajdhar*. Structures sponsored by royal women, such as the Nāth temples discussed earlier in this chapter, do tend to share the same motifs and design vocabularies as similar structures built under the patronage of the Maharaja. It is noteworthy that the name of the same *gajdhar* appears in association with nineteenth century projects directly sponsored by the Maharaja and those sponsored in the same period by individual queens.⁴⁹⁷ However, based on available evidence, it is difficult to attribute architectural language shared by multiple monuments from the same period to the hand of a specific *gajdhar* or groups of artisans at the site. At the same time, it is undeniable that the *gajdhar* led the artisans at a construction site. This is evident from the prominent position they enjoyed in the hierarchy of a

⁴⁹⁵ MMPP Bahī 272, VS 1889-93/ 1832-36 CE, f. 191. The *bahī* records that 500 rupees were passed on to the concubine Pan Rai by the zenana administration for the construction of her stepwell. The Dārogā Nājar would have been instrumental in such transactions.

⁴⁹⁶ MMPP Bahī 1964 VS 1905-06/1848-49 CE, f. 7.

⁴⁹⁷ MMPP Bahī 2030 VS 1919/ 1862 CE, f.2, 20, 28; MMPP Bahī 152 VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f. 42.

construction site, and the esteem with which their employers, the zenana women patrons, held them.

The *gajdhar* occupied an exalted position in the organisational structure of a construction site. They were acknowledged as its leader in major ceremonies related to construction, such as the rituals that marked the commencement of work at a site. On the occasion of a *pūjā* in 1859 marking the beginning of repair work to Pan Rai's *bāvaḍi*, for instance, Gajdhar Ilai Bagas was presented with one rupee as a customary offering in acknowledgement of his services.⁴⁹⁸ Apart from supervising work at a site, a *gajdhar*'s tasks included the procurement of raw materials for construction. Ilai Bagas is thus referred to as one of the *kharīd-dārs* (buyers) for Pan Rai's project, responsible for the procurement of stones and other building materials.⁴⁹⁹ Other supervisory employees from Pan Rai's personal staff also performed the function of *kharīd-dār*.

While Gajdhar Ilai Bagas supervised the extensive repairs and reconstruction done to Pan Rai's stepwell in 1859, the original construction in 1835 was supervised by Gajdhar Fājal.⁵⁰⁰ In one of the *kamṭhā bahīs* for Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī's now-lost temple to Raghunāth that she commissioned on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank, the names of three *gajdhars* can be found: Gajdhar Rahman, Gajdhar Asīn and Gajdhar Ilai Bagas, indicating that more than one head mason or architect worked on the same project.⁵⁰¹ Of the three, Gajdhar Rahman appears to have held greater authority, as he is the one who is acknowledged with gifts of money and coconuts at ceremonies marking the initiation of construction as well as the *pratiṣṭhā* or consecration of the finished temple.⁵⁰² Gajdhar Ilai Bagas's name appears most often in entries recording the acquisition of materials such as carved blocks of stone.⁵⁰³ He is perhaps the same Ilai Bagas who is recorded as the *gajdhar* for Pan Rai's *bāvaḍi* repairs in 1859.

⁴⁹⁸ MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f.4.

⁴⁹⁹ MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f.4.

⁵⁰⁰ MMPP Bahī 10 VS 1892/ 1835 CE, f.54.

⁵⁰¹ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE.

⁵⁰² MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, f.7.

⁵⁰³ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, f.47.

There were two *gajdhars* overseeing work at the site of Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāñī's temple in *Ghās Maṇḍī*: Mano and Khoju.⁵⁰⁴ Along with Sād Mobatrām, Pandit Kusalrāj, and Gehlot Rīdh Singh, and Mālī Manorām, Mano is also described as one of the *kharīd-dār*, or buyers for the project.⁵⁰⁵ The *kharīd-dār* procured a variety of goods used at the site, which in addition to stones and metal, on occasion included materials used in rituals, such as incense. Of the *kharīd-dār* at this site, Manorām was a member of the *mālī* caste of gardeners, which, as we will see in the next section, played a significant role in construction sites in Jodhpur in this period.

The prefix *kārīgar*, meaning artisan or craftsman, is sometimes appended to the names of *gajdhar* as well as other specialised workers in *bahīs*, indicating their status as skilled workers who stood apart from ordinary labourers, the *majūr*. A majority of the *gajdhar* whose names are found in nineteenth century construction accounts from Jodhpur can be seen from their names to have been Muslims, who formed a considerable portion of urban artisanal classes in Rajasthan in this period. The *gajdhar* were not a caste group, but were rather highly skilled construction workers who rose through the ranks. As we will see later, many *gajdhar* began their career as sculptors and stonemasons.

Denagiyā Majūr: Daily Wage Artisans and Labourers

A majority of workers involved in construction were wage labourers or *denagiyā majūr*, who were drawn from a range of artisanal castes who populated Marwar. Their names, meticulously recorded in wage lists, make up a bulk of all *kamṭhā bahīs*. The wage lists categorise these workers by the kind of specialised tasks they executed. A list of wages paid in the course of the construction of Pan Rai's stepwell, for example, lists several specialised groups of workers who were involved.⁵⁰⁶

Pan Rai's *bahī* reveals that construction on the *bāvaḍī* began in March-April 1835 (VS 1892, month of Caitra). This is when specialised workers called *beldār* arrived on site and began to excavate the earth for the well. The *beldār*, specialised excavators whose presence is also recorded in other construction sites in this period, were itinerant artisans who dug

⁵⁰⁴ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, fs.10, 20.

⁵⁰⁵ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1903-05/1846-48 CE, f.20.

⁵⁰⁶ Salary list, MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, fs.60-90.

earth for wells and tanks.⁵⁰⁷ Their presence is also recorded at temple construction projects commissioned by zenana women, as it is they who excavated the ground for the foundation.⁵⁰⁸ The *beldār* were paid for their labour by the volume of the earth they excavated.⁵⁰⁹ In October–November of the same year (VS 1892, month of Kartik) the *beldār* working on Pan Rai’s well finally hit water.⁵¹⁰ They exited the scene soon after, as other workers took charge of the masonry work for the *bāvaḍi*. A majority of this workforce (see brackets below for numbers) was composed of sculptors, stonemasons, and stonecutters. The *bahī* lists the following categories of workers at the site:

silāvaṭ (sculptors and stonemasons, numbering 40)

cejāra (brick layers, numbering 5)

cavāliyā (workers specialised in the transportation of stone blocks, numbering 15, sometimes referred to in records as *khaṇḍwāliyā*)

dhalāyīdhār (stone cutters, numbering 40)

pesgār (minor workers who carried and dumped stone and sand, numbering 11)

suthār (carpenters, numbering 6)

mehriyā (lime grinders, water carriers, and petty labourers, numbering 14)

fuṭkar majūr (casual or ad-hoc labour, numbering 30)⁵¹¹

The names of workers at a construction site are organized in Pan Rai’s 1835 *bahī* according to occupational groupings, following a rough hierarchy that puts highly valued artisans such as sculptors ahead of less skilled workers such as the *fuṭkar majūr* at the site. Within a category such as *silāvaṭ* or *mehriyā*, individual workers are identified by the name of fathers or husbands (latter in the case of women). For example, “*rām khoju ro*” (Rām, son of Khoju) or “*rūpā sekhā ro*” (Rūpa, wife/daughter of Sekha). While men make up a majority

⁵⁰⁷ They also dug graves Singh, *Report Mardumshumārī Rāj Mārwar 1891 (Marwar Census Report)*, 502-4.

⁵⁰⁸ MMPP Bahī 266 VS 1903/1846 CE, f. 23.

⁵⁰⁹ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/1835 AD, f.29.

⁵¹⁰ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/1835 AD, f.35.

⁵¹¹ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/1835 AD, fs. 60-90.

of workers, many women too were present at the site. Names indicate that many of the *fuṭkar majūr* at the site of Pan Rai's stepwell were women. The *mehriyā* at the site too seem to have been composed largely of women.⁵¹²

The occupational categories listed above are found across different *kamṭhā bahīs* with minor variations. A sampling of the amounts workers were paid for about a month's work (29 days to be precise)⁵¹³ as recorded in Pan Rai's *bahī* reveals that, of all the skilled workers the site, the *silāvaṭ*, the *cavāliyā*, and the *cejārā* were paid the highest wages (approximately seven rupees four annas for 29 days). Together, these groups executed much of the masonry work. As sculptors and masons, *silāvaṭs* were one of the most highly valued groups of craftspeople employed in construction. As a result, they are described in the *bahī* with the prefix *kārīgar* (craftsman or artisan, implying a skilled and trained worker). The *Mardumshumari Raj Marwar* a census of Marwar from 1891, notes that *silāvaṭs* also performed the work of *sūtradhār* or *gajdhar*, being in charge of measurements and assigning work to other labourers.⁵¹⁴ Many of the *gajdhar* we encounter in nineteenth century sites in Jodhpur can thus be understood to have been drawn from the ranks of the *kārīgar silāvaṭ*.

The lowest paid workers at a construction site were the less skilled workers, the *fuṭkar majūr* as well as the *pesgār*, both of whom earned on average approximately two rupees for 29 days of work. Women who worked as *mehriyā* earned a little more than the *pesgār* and *fuṭkar majūr*, at approximately 3 rupees four annas for the same number of days.

Contrary to common assumptions, occupational categories found in *bahīs*, such as *mehriyā* or *silāvaṭ* do not seem to have been overarching caste identities indicating a community with similar rules regarding marriage rites and other rituals. Many of the occupational groups listed appear to have been made up of a number of different castes or groups with differences in religious persuasion and claims to ritual status. An example are the workers categorized in *bahīs* as *silāvaṭ* and valued as highly skilled stonemasons. According to the 1891 census of Marwar, the term *silāvaṭ*, among Hindus in Marwar, did not constitute a caste group, but was rather composed of different communities such as

⁵¹² MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/1835 AD, fs. 60-90.

⁵¹³ Based on a salary list for Pan Rai's stepwell. MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, fs.60-90.

⁵¹⁴ Singh, *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar 1891 (Marwar Census Report)*, 505.

kumbhār, *mālī*, and *mehriyā* who retained independent caste identities.⁵¹⁵ A majority of the *silāvaṭ* in Marwar at the time practised Islam. Census officials further note that the ‘Muslim *silāvaṭs*’ were divided into two groups based on geographical origins, forming the Nagauri and Mertia *silāvaṭs* who hailed from the towns of Nagaur and Merta respectively. Though artisans are usually placed low in the caste hierarchy, a category of Hindu *silāvaṭs* active in Marwar called *sompuras* who engaged exclusively in temple building apparently claimed brahmin status.⁵¹⁶ A 1911 census of Rajputana similarly refers to *silāvaṭs* in Jaipur claiming the status of brahmins.⁵¹⁷ Some of the internal diversity of *silāvaṭs* is reflected in wage lists for Pan Rai’s stepwell, the names contained in which include those of Hindu and Muslim *silāvaṭs*.⁵¹⁸ Certain names under the category *silāvaṭ* are also marked in the *bahī* by prefixes setting individuals apart as rajput, *sipāhī*, *khatri*, *rāvat* and so on, further indicating that several different castes and sub-castes worked as masons and sculptors. Other prefixes added to names, such as *mewāri*, (Mewāri Jasso, Mewāri Akho and so on) or *pardesi* note the migratory history of certain communities not indigenous to Marwar.⁵¹⁹ The *bahī* however, puts no emphasis on these sub-identities and privileges the occupational category over others. The ways these different identities—*silāvaṭ*, Hindu/Muslim, Nagauri/Mertia and so on—functioned in nineteenth century Jodhpur is unclear. In her work on architecture and community formation in Gujarat between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, Alka Patel has remarked on the coexistence of seemingly divergent religious identities within artisanal groups. Patel notes that individuals in this period took on multiple identities that seem contradictory within colonial and post-colonial frameworks. The same vocational groups included members of different religions because of conversion. While conversion aligned an individual with a new community, Patel argues that it did not necessarily distance them from their caste-vocational group. Thus even amongst communities engaged in divergent religious practices, there existed common “axes of belonging” rooted in other facets of life.⁵²⁰ In Marwar of the nineteenth century, many vocational categories one might think of as a caste

⁵¹⁵ Munshi Hardayal Singh, *Report on the Census of 1891, Volume II, The Castes of Marwar* (Marwar Durbar, 1894), 187, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.35496>.

⁵¹⁶ Singh, 187.

⁵¹⁷ E. H. Kealy, *Census of India 1911 Rajputana Ajmer-Merwara Part 1- Report* (Ajmer: Scottish Mission Industries Company Ltd, 1913), 249. Such claims to upper caste status by artisanal castes is not uncommon. The same report cites other castes such as *darjīs* making similar claims.

⁵¹⁸ This is based on an analysis of names in the list. MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, fs. 60-90.

⁵¹⁹ MMPP Bahī 10 VS 1892/1835 CE, fs. 164, 181-183.

⁵²⁰ Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarāt: Architecture and Society during the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 17–24.

group—such as *silāvaṭ*-- seem to have thus not been caste identities at all. Various census reports compiled by colonial and precolonial regimes have attempted to make sense of complex pre- and early modern community formations and overlapping identities in different ways. As Norbert Peabody points out in “Cents, Sense, Census,” in Muhnot Nainsi’s seventeenth century census of Marwar, Muslims are enumerated as a separate caste (*jāt*).⁵²¹ However, later census reports such as Boileau’s from 1837 (which served as a model to the compilers of the 1891 *Mardhumshumari Raj Marwar*) enumerate Muslims mainly as subgroups within overarching occupational groups or castes.⁵²²

Several castes we encounter in construction sites also practiced other occupations. The *mehriyā*  a group found at every construction site. They worked not only as water carriers, but also as *pālki* bearers (this work was performed by males) and cooks specializing in meat dishes. The women of this caste, whom we find working on Pan Rai’s stepwell, specialized in grinding lime for construction work.⁵²³ A caste group whose presence can be found under most categories of specialised occupational groups enumerated in Pan Rai’s *bahī* are the *mālī*. Members of the *mālī* caste are traditionally known as gardeners and horticulturists. Many *mālīs* were employed by zenana women patrons to tend and manage agricultural production at the gardens they established. At construction sites, they are recorded working under occupational categories such as *cavāliyā* or *silāvaṭ*. One also finds the *mālaṇ*, the women of the *mālī* caste, working alongside the *mehriyā* women in grinding lime cement.⁵²⁴ In 1882, a *mālī* named *Ganesh* is also recorded as the *gajdhar* in charge of building a memorial umbrella or *chattrī* for Mān Singh’s widow Pāncmā Bhaṭṭiyāṇī.⁵²⁵

As construction records from early nineteenth century Jodhpur show, the link between a specific occupation and a caste identity was not as clear-cut or rigid as is usually assumed. The presence of a great diversity of groups working in different roles at construction sites perhaps also indicates that, as architectural activity boomed in Jodhpur’s

⁵²¹ Norbert Peabody, “Cents, Sense, Census: Human Inventories in Late Precolonial and Early Colonial India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 43, no. No. 4 (October 2001): 819–50.

⁵²² A. H. E. Boileau, *Personal Narrative Of A Tour Through The Western States Of Rajwara In 1835 Comprising Beekaner, Jesulmer, And Jodhpooor* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1837), 240, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.103993>.

⁵²³ Singh, *Report on the Census of 1891, Volume II, The Castes of Marwar*, 166.

⁵²⁴ MMPP Bahī434, VS 1937-38/ 1880-82 CE, fs. 7-19, 36

⁵²⁵ MMPP Bahī434, VS 1937-38/ 1880-82 CE, f. 3.

urban center in the nineteenth century, surplus labour from surrounding areas, including members of castes that are customarily linked to other occupations also found employment in construction. The *Mardhumshumari Raj Marwar* notes that in the period the census was commissioned, the plenitude of construction work attracted castes such as *piñjārā* (weavers) and *telī* (oil pressers) who began to be employed for lifting stone, an occupation traditionally associated in Marwar with the *cavāliyā/khandwāliyā* caste.⁵²⁶

Ghazals composed by poets in early modern Marwar describe the prosperity of a town in terms of the number of artisanal communities settled there, describing commercial centers bustling with diverse groups of artisans plying their trade.⁵²⁷ The construction workers that congregated at various sites in nineteenth century Jodhpur likely came from all over the surrounding region, attracted by the building boom unleashed in the capital city by Mān Singh's and his zenana's temple construction spree. Construction workers and other artisanal communities were (and continue to be) one of the most mobile sections of Rajasthani society. The portability of the tools of their trade, and ever-present demand for their services meant that artisanal families in early modern Marwar migrated frequently. In the eighteenth century, migrations of artisanal communities, especially in rural areas of Marwar, were also driven by unfavourable circumstances such as famines or harassment by groups including state officials.⁵²⁸ Many of the artisans that congregated in Jodhpur in the early nineteenth century would have reached the city from villages and towns across west and central India. Well-entrenched kin networks facilitated their arrival in a new environment. Pre and early modern Indian cities being organised on caste lines, urban artisans, whether resident or recently arrived, would have lived in *mohallas* (neighbourhoods) in Jodhpur where similar vocational groups resided.⁵²⁹ The seventeenth century Marwari bureaucrat Munhot Nainsi's statistical account of the various administrative units (*parganās*) of Marwar contains descriptions of the city of Jodhpur. It refers to settlements or streets within the city that were named after artisanal groups that resided there, such as *silāvaṭān rī galī* (stonemasons' street).⁵³⁰ An 1877 map of Jodhpur

⁵²⁶ Singh, *Report Mardumshumari Raj Marwar 1891 (Marwar Census Report)*, 513.

⁵²⁷ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 179; Vikram Singh Rathore, ed., "Rajasthani Ghajal Sangrah," *Paramapara*, no. 108–109 (1995).

⁵²⁸ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 23; Sahai, 229.

⁵²⁹ See Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 184–85.

⁵³⁰ Nainsi also refers to a shop (*hāt*) near the Nagori city gate operated by a *silāvaṭ*. Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:186–88.

locates both the *suthāron kā bās* (the settlement of carpenters) and the *benāvaṭon kā bās* (literally settlement of makers, suggesting an area settled in by artisans), outside the walls of the city in its outskirts. The settlements of other artisanal castes such as goldsmiths (*sunār*), dyers (*caḍwā*, a sub caste among dyers), and tailors (*darjī*) however can be seen located within the walled city.⁵³¹

Construction records from nineteenth century Jodhpur do not give any indication of the social status or ritual position of artisanal castes in early nineteenth century under Mān Singh. However, what we know of eighteenth century Jodhpur from the work of scholars such as Nandita Sahai or Divya Cherian, suggests that artisanal castes were among the most marginalised social groups in Marwar.⁵³² Under Maharaja Bijai Singh in the late eighteenth century, artisanal communities including Muslims were branded *acchep* or ‘untouchable’ by the state. Many of the rights these groups enjoyed, especially with respect to sacred spaces such as temples or water bodies were radically restricted in Marwar in this period citing concerns of pollution.⁵³³ As discussed in Chapter 4 of this work, these forms of marginalisation, especially centered on Vaishnava temples of the Vallabha Sampradāya, endured well beyond Bijai Singh’s reign. However, the ways in which the ritual status of artisans as ‘untouchables’ played out at construction sites in nineteenth century Jodhpur is unclear. Artisanal castes were indispensable to the building of ritual spaces. Lead artisans such as the *gajdhar* were prominently acknowledged in the rituals that accompanied major milestones in construction, as we will see in the sections that follow. Such occasions included the laying of the foundation stone or the consecration of a completed temple or water body. Of course, this does not preclude the chance that, the practices built around such spaces after their completion served to marginalise the very people who raised them.

It Takes a Village: Communities and Regional Networks Supplying Construction Sites

The supervisory *mahīndārs* and the daily wage-earning artisans at the site (*denagiyā majūr*) were not the only groups directly involved in a construction project. A much larger range of individuals and groups both within and outside Jodhpur were drawn into large construction

⁵³¹ Leach, “Plan of the City and Environs of Jodhpur.”

⁵³² See Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*; Cherian, “Ordering Subjects.”

⁵³³ Cherian, “Ordering Subjects.” See Chapter 4 for more on this period.

projects as suppliers of materials. These ranged from raw materials for construction to daily provisions meant for the use of labourers or for religious rituals.

The most essential raw material for construction of course was stone, which records indicate was often purchased and brought to construction sites directly from mines (*khān*) in the region. In addition to mines in and around Jodhpur, a major source of stone that repeatedly appears in *kamṭhā bahīs* is the city of Nagaur, about 150 kilometers North West of Jodhpur.⁵³⁴ Stones were bought and transported to Jodhpur from Nagaur under the watch of a team of *kharīd-dār* (procurers/buyers), including the *gajdhar*. Bullock cart caravans were necessary to transport these large quantities of stone to Jodhpur. Carts were thus leased from villages around Nagaur. For example, when stones were to be brought from Nagaur to build the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's temple in *Ghās Maṇḍī* in Jodhpur, bullock carts were leased from the villages of Gacchipura and Karnal.⁵³⁵ Such carts carrying stone were often driven by men of the *jāt*, *sipāhī*, and rajput castes who dominated the agriculture and livestock-based economy of rural Marwar.⁵³⁶ Elsewhere, records show that stones were also bought from individual suppliers identified in *bahīs* as belonging to groups such as the *cavāliyā*, *sipāhī*, and *mālī*.⁵³⁷

Paṭṭā (revenue) villages administered by zenana women were an integral part of the networks supplying raw materials to the construction site. The revenue collected as tax from these villages funded many construction projects sponsored by zenana women. They were also directly linked to construction sites through the supply of raw materials. In the case of repairs to Pan Rai's *bāvaḍī*, for example, supplies are recorded arriving from her *paṭṭā* villages, Mathania and Jajiwal. Oxen pressed into service for construction were procured from the village Mathania, through the revenue official who administered the village of the concubine's behalf, the *havāldār* Mūhta Lālchand.⁵³⁸ In addition to stones, construction necessitated the purchase of materials required to make lime mortar. Apart from lime itself, this included *māṭo* (clay), *methī* (fenugreek) and *guggal* (a type of plant resin, also used as

⁵³⁴ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, fs. 3, 8; MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f.12.

⁵³⁵ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, fs. 3, 8; MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f.12.

⁵³⁶ MMPP Bahī 266, VS 1903/1846 CE, f. 14

⁵³⁷ MMPP Bahī 266, VS 1903/1846 CE, f. 31.

⁵³⁸ MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, fs.5, 7, 8.

incense).⁵³⁹ Of these, lime and clay were bought from communities such as *kumbhār*⁵⁴⁰ (potter) and *mālī*.⁵⁴¹ Members of *mālī*, *silāvaṭ*, *sipāhī* castes can be seen in records acting as suppliers of materials such as stones and rope.⁵⁴² Metal parts and implements used in construction including metal containers (*tāṅkī*) were supplied by the *lohār* (ironsmiths).⁵⁴³ Other specialised communities involved included tailors (*darjī*) who supplied ropes and threads (*dorā*),⁵⁴⁴ and *telīs* (oil pressers) who supplied the oil, which was rubbed on their hands by labourers.⁵⁴⁵ In addition, *kumbhārs* supplied clay pots and pans used by workers at the site.⁵⁴⁶ The purchase of these various raw materials for the construction site, except in the case of some edibles and expensive goods, were made directly from artisanal castes engaged in their production, with merchants rarely involved as intermediaries. This is in line with what has already been suggested by Nandita Sahai for eighteenth century Marwar.⁵⁴⁷

Water, a necessary raw material for constructions appears to have come from sources within the city, such as the Rāñīsar tank, which supplied water to the Jodhpur fort. The transportation of water was managed by members of the *mehriyā* and *mālī* castes. In the course of construction of her temple on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar, Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī bought 337 pots (*khaḍā*) of water from the Rāñīsar and paid men and women of *mālī* caste to transport it to the construction site.⁵⁴⁸

Various ceremonies and religious rituals held at the construction site also required supplies, such as ghee, coconuts, or clothes that were presented as offerings and gifts. They also necessitated priests and other labour to execute the ritual. Merchants in the city's markets supplied the necessary materials. When *pratiṣṭhā* ceremonies were held for the Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's temple above Gulāb Sāgar, supplies (*sāmagrī*) were purchased from Mūhta Bhīglāl in the local bazaar.⁵⁴⁹ The same was true for feasts (*jīman*) held to mark major achievements in construction. For instance, when a feast was held to mark the raising of the

⁵³⁹ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, f. 20.

⁵⁴⁰ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f.20-40.

⁵⁴¹ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, f. 8.

⁵⁴² MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f.20-40.

⁵⁴³ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f.20-40.

⁵⁴⁴ MMPP Bahī 254, VS 1913/ 1856 CE, f. 8.

⁵⁴⁵ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, fs. 35-50.

⁵⁴⁶ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/ 1835 CE, fs. 35-50.

⁵⁴⁷ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 188.

⁵⁴⁸ MMPP Bahī 266, VS 1903/1846 CE, f. 40.

⁵⁴⁹ MMPP Bahī 256, VS 1913/1856 CE, f. 4.

gateway (*pol*) at Pan Rai's *bāvaḍi*, provisions such as ghee and gram flour were bought, likely supplied by vendors in Jodhpur. The feast also meant hiring a cook. Including labour charges, a total of 9 rupees 3 annas was spent on the feast.⁵⁵⁰

As *bahīs* left behind by various patrons show, maintaining minute accounts of construction as well as attendance (*hājarī*) lists of workers was a crucial part of operations during a construction project. As a result, most *kamṭhā bahīs* record expenses incurred in procuring the very *bahīs* the accounts are recorded in. The costs included that of procuring paper (*dastā*) from a merchant and then getting it bound into a *bahī* of the requisite size and shape. To accomplish this, thread was purchased for sewing the pages from another merchant, and leather from a *mocī* (leather worker/shoe maker) to stitch a cover.⁵⁵¹

As a temple was nearing completion, brass as well precious metals such as gold were requisitioned to make the *kalaś* or *amlak* placed atop the temple spire.⁵⁵² The last step was of course the installation of the deities themselves. In the case of Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāṇī's temple to Raghunāth at Gulāb Sāgar, the idols (*sarūp*) of the trinity of Ram, Lakshman, and Janaki were commissioned to be installed in the shrine. In the course of the acquisition, the queen made payments to brahmins in Jaipur, perhaps suggesting that the idols were commissioned from artisans in that city.⁵⁵³

***Inām*: The Gifting Economy at Construction Sites**

Despite occupying some of the lowest rungs of caste-based social hierarchy in Marwar, artisanal castes, who were valued by elites for their skill, constantly negotiated with the state to better their living conditions. Such negotiations, predicated on the concept of the state's customary obligations or *wajābī*, are the subject of Nandita Sahai's *Patronage and Protest*, a work that examines artisanal castes and the state in eighteenth century Marwar. In it, Sahai documents the state's simultaneous use of both coercion and incentives to attract artisanal groups to render their services to the court or to retain them in large urban centres such as Jodhpur, Nagaur, or Merta. Incentives included allowances of money and

⁵⁵⁰ MMPP Bahī 10, VS 1892/1835 CE, f.50.

⁵⁵¹ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f. 42; 256, f. 7.

⁵⁵² MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f.145.

⁵⁵³ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f. 46.

grain, land grants, as well as monetary gifts on occasions such as a wedding in the family of an artisan.⁵⁵⁴ In the last decades of the reign of Maharaja Bijai Singh, when a cash-crunched state defaulted on payments and extracted free labour from construction workers such as *silāvaṭ*, *beldār*, *cavāliyā*, and *cejārā*, Sahai documents them resisting repeated summons from the crown to work on state commissions. Artisans even fled towns in Marwar in haste to avoid retribution for such refusal.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, artisans, though constrained by state power, wielded a certain amount of autonomy in choosing where and for whom they would deploy their skills. This prompted their patrons to make efforts to retain them in their service through special allowances as well as gifts referred to in *kamṭhā bahīs* as *inām* (gift).

Records of construction examined in this chapter demonstrate that the most talented artisans on site, such as the *gajdhar* or the *kārīgar silāvaṭ* were the most frequent recipients of *inām*. In addition, artisans working at a site were also ritually acknowledged and incorporated into the patron's project during important ceremonies held at the construction site. Such ceremonies included such events as *pūjās* that marked the laying of the foundation. Such rituals of incorporation sometimes encompassed all the artisans present at a site. For example, at the *samohrat* (auspicious moment) when earth was first dug to lay the foundation for Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's Raghunāth temple on the banks of Gulāb Sāgar, a token amount of one rupee and a coconut (*nāler*) each were presented to a range of groups present. Apart from brahmin priests and the *gajdhar* Rahman, those acknowledged in this manner included the *beldār* who carried out the excavation. In addition, the queen's *bahī* records that coconuts were ritually offered to all the artisans ("*samastha kārīgarān*"), and everyone else present or associated with the project ("*samastha janā*"). Also honoured thus at the ceremony was the queens' genealogist (*rāñī maṅgā bhāṭ*) Bherūdān. Bherūdān was responsible for recording the queen's architectural commission in the genealogical account of Jodhpur's queens, known as the *Rāñī Maṅgā Bhāṭon kī Bahī*. While the brahmins, the *gajdhar*, and the bard were presented one rupee and a coconut each, the *beldār*, the *kārīgar* and others were acknowledged as collectives with the symbolic offering of one rupee and one coconut for each group.⁵⁵⁶ When the roof of the same temple was raised into a place months later, the queen presented *inām* in the form of clothes to the *gajdhar* Asīn, his wife,

⁵⁵⁴ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 197–99.

⁵⁵⁵ Sahai, 218–220.

⁵⁵⁶ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f. 7.

and other artisans on site. While the *gajdhar* was presented a gilded multi-coloured turban cloth (*moliyo*), and a short jacket (*balabandī*), his wife was presented a red blouse (*kāncali*). Four chosen *kārīgar*—Karīm, Gulāb, Cūtra, and Asīn (not clear if this is the same Asīn who served as *gajdhar*)—were also presented turban cloths. Two of the *cavāliyā* too were presented turban clothes. Later, on the temple’s formal consecration or *pratiṣṭhā*, the *gajdhar* Rahman was presented an *inām* of 200 rupees, a sizeable sum at the time.⁵⁵⁷ A *kamṭhā bahī* from a later period, of the construction of funeral monument or *chattrī* for Mān Singh’s widow Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāñī records that on the occasion of consecration of the *chhatrī* in 1882, many of the craftspeople, among them the *mehriyā*, *pesgār*, *cūngar*, etc were presented *inām*. The *gajdhar* of this project, Mali Gajdhar Ganesh, was presented a *siropāv* (an elaborate gift of honour consisting of a robe and ornaments). His wife too was presented clothes and ivory bangles.⁵⁵⁸

Rituals of gift giving that occurred within courtly settings have been interpreted by scholars working on state formations in India as strategies of incorporation that rulers employed to bring subordinate groups into their fold.⁵⁵⁹ In the case of artisans, those working on Rajasthani history have interpreted them as acts of accommodation and appeasement meant to ensure an uninterrupted supply of services from groups with whom the elites were bound in a mutually dependent relationships.⁵⁶⁰ While such scholarship has hitherto put male elite at the centre, processes of gifting and incorporation at work in construction sites sponsored by female patrons demonstrate that zenana women too were bound in similar relationships to the artisanal groups in their service. In doing so, they not only indirectly participated in strengthening the authority of the Rathore state, but also sought to forge their own name as illustrious queens and influential patrons.

Pleasing the Gods: Considering ‘Non-human Agents’ at the Construction Site

A construction site in nineteenth century Jodhpur witnessed several religious rituals in the course of raising a building. In addition to incorporating human actors such as the *gajdhar*

⁵⁵⁷ MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE f. 145.

⁵⁵⁸ MMPP Bahī434 VS 1937-39/ 1880-82 AD, f. 40-41.

⁵⁵⁹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

⁵⁶⁰ Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*.

and leading craftsmen into the patron's project through customary offerings, these rituals placed tremendous importance on divinities as crucial agents that, when properly appeased, could ease the course of construction. Rituals held at a site included *pūjās*, feasts, and recitals dedicated to orthodox Hindu deities as well as local 'folk' gods. Such rituals were not restricted to temples. Propitiatory ceremonies were also held at regular intervals at sites where water bodies were being excavated. In the course of repairs to Pan Rai's stepwell for example, *pūjās* were dedicated to the goddess (termed simply *Mātājī*), Bherūjī (the deity Bhairav), Ganesh, Hanuman, and to water itself, worshipped as *Jal Devatā* (water goddess).⁵⁶¹ The cattle protector deity called *Bhomiyaājī* was also offered *pūjās* at construction sites.⁵⁶² In allocating resources to these rituals, the patrons ascribed tremendous importance to the gods in determining the smooth progress and completion of their projects. These supernatural agencies are of course tricky to plot on an Actor-Network system, but demand some form of acknowledgement for their perceived powers. Construction records also throw up other kinds of what might be described in the vocabulary of the Actor-Network Theory as 'non-human agencies,' including logistical constraints that set off crucial changes to a planned construction project. One such example is the case of the Vaishnavite temple that the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī commissioned on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar tank in 1846. The construction records of the temple state that the location that the temple was eventually built at was not the one originally selected for it. The queen had intended to have it built right on the banks of the tank, on a ghat close to the Māylā Bāg garden to the east. However, after the ceremonies initiating construction were concluded and building materials began to arrive, it became clear to the crew that the route to the construction site was too narrow for carts to go through. This resulted in the temple being shifted to the North-West corner of the Gulāb Sāgar tank, where a site was found on the banks of the channel (*nahar*) that fed the Gulāb Sāgar. The initiation rituals were then performed again at the new site.⁵⁶³ However, the project seems to have been doomed. As referred to earlier, soon after it was completed, the temple was deemed broken, prompting the queen to rebuild it in *Ghās Maṇḍī* area of the city where it still stands.

⁵⁶¹ MMPP Bahī 226, VS 1914/ 1857 CE, f. 15.

⁵⁶² MMPP Bahī 91 VS 1896/1839 AD, f.19. For more on Bhomiyaās, see Bharucha, *Rajasthan An Oral History: Conversations with Komal Kothari*, 105–8.

⁵⁶³ MMPP Bahī 371, VS 1903/ 1846 CE, f.4.

Conclusion

Construction sites from nineteenth century Jodhpur prove that agency, especially in architectural production, is better understood as a distributed phenomenon, as ‘distributed agencies’ which were held simultaneously by a multiple actors operating within dynamic networks rather than being monopolised by certain subject positions that art historical narratives have historically privileged. As the paragraphs above demonstrate, an astounding number of actors, acting either individually or as members of vocation-based collectives, from within and outside the city, were drawn together in the process of architectural production in nineteenth century Jodhpur. These agents included a diverse range of artisanal communities, *gajdhar*, labourers, supervisors, genealogists, priests, the suppliers of various raw materials, and zenana administrators, among others. A number of court officials and the ruler himself were also indirectly crucial to ensuring a zenana patron’s ability to fund a project. It can be argued that, at various points in time, all of these actors wielded a certain amount of agency in shaping the building project. At different points, different actors would have made crucial decisions regarding a structure, with the architects and other supervisory employees who mediated between the patron and the construction site wielding more agency than those lower in the hierarchy.

We have no direct indications from *kamṭhā bahīs* how buildings were designed or who made crucial decisions regarding design. However, it is reasonable to presume that the *gajdhar* who led the building process, as well as other highly skilled workers who are distinguished in salary records by the prefix *kārīgar* (for instance, ‘*kārīgar silāvaṭ*’) played crucial roles in determining the shape that a temple or a stepwell took. It is these individuals, in addition to a number of other *mahīndār* who relayed information and resources between the zenana and the construction site, who guided a construction project to completion. That such agents as the *gajdhar* or the *kārīgar silāvaṭ* were considered indispensable to the success or failure of a commission is demonstrated by the patron’s interest in enjoining them in the building project through rituals of incorporation. Zenana women also sought to retain them in patron-client relationship through generous gifts or *inām* consisting of food, clothes, and money in addition to wages. Common workers too were thus incorporated and acknowledged by the patron, even if skilled and experienced artisans such as the *silāvaṭ*, *beldār*, and above all the *gajdhar*, were considered far more valuable than other groups.

Perhaps ironically, the agency and the direct role played by zenana women patrons in the course of a construction project (outside their role as financiers) is not easy to reconstruct. It is clear that the patron's will is what drew all the other agents together in the interest of executing a building project. However, it is difficult to pinpoint the ways in which she exercised her agency and personal tastes in determining the shape a building took. The archives hold no clear answers to this question, so we must look for it in the buildings themselves. A useful case is the temple that the queen Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī, one of the central figures in this chapter along with the *pardāyat* Pan Rai, commissioned in *Ghās Maṇḍī* in Jodhpur. This mid-nineteenth century temple is dedicated to the Ram (Raghunāth), Lakshman, and Sita trinity. A remarkable feature of the shrine is a set of spectacular murals executed on the inner surface of the dome (Fig. 3.10 a) in front of its sanctum sanctorum. Due to their relatively 'late' execution, these murals have survived mostly intact into the present, unlike similar murals that once graced temples such as the late eighteenth century Kunjbihārī temple nearby, commissioned by the concubine Gulāb Rai. The mural is divided in four panels, one each covering the four surfaces of the rectangular dome. Each of these is inscribed with freehand text noting the subjects featured. The subject of the murals in Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's temple align with what we know about this queen's life and pursuits from other sources. As referred to earlier, Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's life as widow and queen mother was animated by her eclectic religious interests, expressed through her patronage of religious architecture, her career as a poet composing religious texts, and her widely publicized pilgrimages to religious centres such as Haridwar, Mathura, and Pushkar. She seems to have worshipped both Vaishnavite and Shaivite deities. The temples she commissioned were dedicated either to the Ram-Sita-Lakshman trinity or to Shiva.

A mural panel on the portion of the temple dome closest to the sanctum features the Ram-Sita-Lakshman trinity, reflecting the temple's dedication to these Hindu gods. Three scenes are depicted in this panel, which depicts Ram's coronation day in a three-part composition crowned by images of angels celebrating in the skies. Read from right to left, the first section of the panel depicts Ram and Sita moving in procession towards their palace with a large entourage. The second depicts the couple enthroned in the palace during coronation ceremonies waited on by Lakshmana and other attendants. Pictured prominently in the composition among Ram's attendants is Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's husband Maharaja Mān Singh

(Fig. 3.10 c), who stands with folded hands next to the central group. This coronation visual, which would be the first one to attract notice from a devotee standing below, is showcased as the central motif of this portion of the mural scheme by framing it within flowered margins. Maharaja Mān Singh can also be seen pictured as part of the entourage of Ram and Sita as they travel in procession. The third part of the coronation panel depicts the bustling city of Ayodhya, Ram’s capital. To the right of the panel depicting scenes from Ram’s life is a panel featuring Shiva and Parvati in their mountain abode of Kailasa. Here, too, the figure of Maharaja Mān Singh is inserted into the group of attendants waiting on Shiva and Parvati. To the left of the main Ram panel is a mural depicting the lake town of Pushkar (Fig. 3.10 b) — one of Rajasthan’s most important pilgrimage centers. We know from Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāṇī’s biography (referred to earlier in this chapter) that the town was significant to the queen. Apart from her architectural projects in Jodhpur, she had a temple to Shiva built on the banks of Pushkar Lake. We also know from her *bahīs* that the queen visited Pushkar as part of a great pilgrimage tour that she undertook in 1854.

The last panel, which faces the Ram mural, is dedicated to another Vishnu avatar— Krishna— and his childhood abode of Braj on the banks of the river Yamuna. Using two compositions, Braj is represented through three iconic sites—the city of Mathura, the Mount Govardhan, and the village of Gokul. All three are extremely sacred to devotees of Krishna as sites where the child god is believed to have performed many of his miracles. More importantly for us, these are likely places that Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāṇī paid homage to on her 1854 pilgrimage to Mathura. Both Gokul and Mount Govardhan lie on the outskirts of Mathura in Vrindaban. In addition, if one examines the Shiva panel in the scheme of the mural carefully, the river Ganga, worshipped as goddess in Hinduism, can be seen depicted prominently, as she cascades down to earth from Shiva’s locks. The silver stream crashes down before flowing away in different directions. This depiction appears to be an allusion to Haridwar, a pilgrimage town located not far from the glacial source of the Ganga, and the site where the river is believed to have touched the earth on her fall from the heavens. Haridwar was the first major site that Tījā Bhaṭṭiyāṇī visited on her pilgrimage tour of 1854. She stopped to bathe in the Ganga before she proceeded to Mathura, and later to Pushkar. Thus, In addition to reflecting the queen’s eclectic religious interests, when examined in the light of biographical information, the murals in Tījā Mājīsā temple, though haphazard in their



thematic arrangement, can be read as a commemoration of the queen's well-documented pilgrimage tour from 1854. Though the queen herself is not depicted in these murals, her presence is marked by the depiction of these sacred sites, visits to which were significant events in her career as a queen mother in the zenana. The iconic form of the former Maharaja Mān Singh too can be considered to be standing in for Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī in this context. It is perhaps in these traces of the patron's personal life that we find inscribed on the walls of the temple, that we can locate Tījā Bhaṭiyāñī's hand in the creation of this monument. The mural, which explicitly maps her life as a pilgrim queen mother, leaves little doubt that it is the queen, who, through her agents, directed its content and arrangement.

Using data mined from archival sources, this chapter has attempted to describe and in this way reconstruct construction sites in nineteenth century Jodhpur. It demonstrates that they were populated by a great multitude of individuals and groups embedded in local and regional networks, who collaborated to raise the monuments considered in the study. The chapter has sought to make these various agents, as well as their labour and agency, visible. In doing so, it argues for a reframing of narratives of architectural history to account fully for the agency exercised by all of these actors. This microstudy of the processes of patronage in nineteenth century Jodhpur demands that we understand architectural production, or rather, co-production, not as a one-way process centred on an elite subject, but as a collaborative enterprise that unfolded through relationships that the patron established with and through a range of individuals and groups. At one point or the other, all of these actors exercised agency in the process, shaping the result of their collective endeavour. If one were to visualise the actors and relationships mapped throughout the second half of this chapter as a dynamic rhizome-like network with multiple nodes, agency can perhaps be imagined distributed or floating in the links between the various nodes rather than concentrated at any one point.

4. Inscribing the City: Architecture and Collective Memory in Gulāb Rai's Jodhpur

A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 10-11

Introduction

This chapter locates itself primarily in late eighteenth century Jodhpur and examines the career of the most prominent female figure in the history of architectural patronage in Jodhpur—the *pāsvān* (concubine) Gulāb Rai. Among a handful of Jodhpur zenana women from eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose lives we are able to reconstruct, Gulāb Rai stands out both for her prolific career as a patron of architecture in Jodhpur, as well as the strategic and tremendously ambitious manner in which she used monumental commissions to reorder the urban landscape and inscribe it with her presence. Her legacy as a patron would exert an influence on the building choices of zenana women well into the nineteenth century. Her impact on the city continues to this day.

As we follow Gulāb Rai's career as a patron of architecture through this chapter, we will delve into some aspects of the social history of the monuments she erected in Jodhpur by examining them through the prism of memory; specifically the processes of collective memory at work at these architectural sites. The term collective memory refers to memories held in common by a community, nation, or folk. The term is most often invoked in studies that examine groups of people in the context of shared traumatic events, such as the Holocaust or the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The term also stands for enduring narratives of self-representation that members of a community share across generations.⁵⁶⁴

This chapter is roughly organised in three sections. The first of these introduces Gulāb Rai's career as a patron in Jodhpur and the ways in which her monuments reordered the city

⁵⁶⁴ Monica Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Bulletin of the GHI London - Supplements*, no. 1 (2009): 27.

through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Through an examination of Gulāb Rai's archives, both in architecture and in textual sources, the second part of this chapter argues that architectural patronage offered women patrons of the zenana a way to memorialise themselves on the urban landscape. Monumental architecture lent itself as an effective medium for inscribing zenana women's presences and names on to the fabric of the city and thus in the collective memory of its inhabitants, within a context in which women were largely denied a place in dynastic histories composed by bards and chroniclers working for male patrons.

The last section of this chapter examines architecture's relationship to collective memory in an expansive sense, outside direct associations with the patron. Here, we will look closely at a royal temple idiom that took shape in Jodhpur in the late eighteenth century under the patronage of Gulāb Rai and Maharaja Bijai Singh, and the ways in which it constituted and transmitted multiple layers of narratives held or received in common by various groups that inhabited Jodhpur's urban centers in this period. Useful to this examination is the term architectural memory. Architectural memory represents the idea that architecture of all kinds can constitute and transmit collective memories—whether in its form, function, or in practices of naming, commemoration, or citation. The concept raises several questions that can deepen our understanding of zenana women's architectural patronage across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, what narratives did these structures communicate or constitute and for which groups at what time periods? Whom did these narratives serve and how did they reconstitute urban space and 'produce' Jodhpur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

As we examine the interactions between architecture and collective memory, this chapter will inevitably pay close attention to monuments in the context of their relationships to communities of users, including relationships of exclusion. In the late eighteenth century, Marwar's then Maharaja Bijai Singh (r. 1752-93)'s alliance with an influential Vaishnavite cult, the Vallabha Sampradāya, set in motion an extensive transformation of the social and spatial organization of his kingdom along the lines of caste purity. A spate of new laws introduced by Bijai Singh in this period dictated the exclusion of a variety of low caste and Muslim communities from sacred spaces such as temples. The state also moved to segregate residential spaces and restrict access to common resources such as water based on a

Vaishnavite paradigm of purity and pollution. These new norms and the resultant contested nature of urban spaces in this period are vital context to any examination of architectural patronage in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur.

Proximate to Power: the *Pāsvān* Gulāb Rai

As with all concubines from Jodhpur's zenana, nothing much is known of Gulāb Rai's origins. We do not even know the name she was given at birth, as Gulāb is likely a court name (meaning rose; *rai* is a suffix appended to the names of court performers and concubines in Jodhpur) that was bestowed on her when she entered Maharaja Bijai Singh's zenana in the year 1766. Different sources account for her life prior to this differently. Some claim that she was a *baḍāraṇ* (senior female servant) from the house of a man named Bhurat Aradram who gifted her to Bijai Singh, while others claim that she was a *gāyaṇ* or singer from the household of another singer named Nirat Sundar. Elsewhere, she has been described as a *jāṭ* woman, and as an Oswal Jain.⁵⁶⁵ In general, concubines in Jodhpur entered the zenana either as highly trained slave performers known variously as *gāyaṇ*, *tālīmvalī*, or *olgaṇiyā* housed in royal *akhādās* (gymnasiums) or as female servants of different ranks (from the more menial *dāvaḍi* to the *baḍāraṇ* who performed supervisory roles).⁵⁶⁶ If she was indeed serving as a *baḍāraṇ*, we can presume that Gulāb Rai had already proved her mettle to some extent in a noble household before she entered the royal zenana.⁵⁶⁷ Her status as a lower caste performer or attendant turned concubine played an instrumental role in the course Gulāb Rai carved out for herself in late eighteenth century Jodhpur, as well as the way her story is told in many mainstream histories of Jodhpur that see her as an unworthy interloper in the halls of power.

As a non-aristocratic, non-Rajput woman, Gulāb Rai was ineligible to wed the king, and thus to become a queen. However, she quickly rose through the ranks of the zenana. Having caught the attention of Maharaja Bijai Singh, she was made a *pardāyat*, earning her a

⁵⁶⁵ For a discussion on Gulāb Rai's origins, see Khanna, "Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar."

⁵⁶⁶ Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 119; Khanna, "Half-Wed Wives: The Dynamics of Royal Concubinage in Marwar (16th to 18th Century)," 47–60.

⁵⁶⁷ Women who served as *baḍāraṇ* usually started work as a *dāvaḍi* before being promoted to supervisory roles in a household. Royal *baḍāraṇs* often played a crucial role in court politics in Rajasthan. For more on the *baḍāraṇ*, see Chapter 2.

place among the veiled concubines who held prominent positions in the zenana. Once they were bestowed *pardāyat* status and officially inducted into the elite ranks of the zenana through official ceremonies, former zenana performers and servants enjoyed most of the privileges enjoyed by members of the ruler's family. They were allotted residences in the zenana as well as servants and allowances, including land revenue allocations. In the case of Gulāb Rai, Bijai Singh's preference for her above his wives and other concubines appears to have earned her special privileges. In 1774, the Maharaja elevated Gulāb Rai to the position of *pāsvān*, a title applied in Jodhpur to close confidants of the ruler that served to distinguish Gulāb Rai from other *pardāyats* in the zenana.⁵⁶⁸ The term *pāsvān* was used to refer to both male and female servants who were close (*pās*) to the person of a ruler, indicating their proximity to power in a literal sense. In Jodhpur's history, only a handful of highly influential concubines seem to have been given this title and never more than one in any reign.⁵⁶⁹ In most contemporary sources, Gulāb Rai is referred to simply as *pāsvānjī*. In 1791, Bijai Singh went a step further, bestowing one of the most prized provinces of the kingdom, Jalore, with its mighty fortress and 457 villages, to Gulāb Rai as her *jāgīr* (land revenue grant) to cover her personal expenses.⁵⁷⁰ Gulāb Rai's proximity to the Maharaja thus transformed her into the most powerful and wealthiest woman in the kingdom at the time. As *pāsvān*, her control on administrative matters including succession created fierce opposition from existing powerbrokers such as the *ṭhākurs* of Marwar. Beyond the favour of the king, historians of the period have noted Gulāb Rai's independent administrative prowess and political manoeuvring as she sought to secure her interests.⁵⁷¹

Gulāb Rai and Bijai Singh had a son together called Tej Singh. When Tej Singh passed away in his youth, Gulāb Rai is said to have sunk into depression. Bijai Singh then allowed her to adopt one of his sons with a queen, the prince Sher Singh, as her own. According to

⁵⁶⁸ Some historians consider the title *pāsvān* to have been inferior to that of *pardāyat*. See Sreenivasan, "Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850"; Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 120. However, within the Jodhpur context, the reverse seems to have been true as attested by the work of Priyanka Khanna on concubinage in Jodhpur. Khanna, "Service, Sex and Sentiments Concubinage in the Early Modern Rajput Household of Marwar."

⁵⁶⁹ Priyanka Khanna, "The Female Companion in a World of Men: Friendship and Concubinage in Late Eighteenth-Century Marwar," *Studies in History* 33, no. 1 (2017): 98–116.

⁵⁷⁰ Khanna.

⁵⁷¹ Bijai Singh's *khyāt* remarks on the *pāsvān*'s dealings with the Marathas who were holding Marwar hostage at the time. Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 8. See also Khanna, "The Female Companion in a World of Men: Friendship and Concubinage in Late Eighteenth-Century Marwar," 110.

chronicles of Bijai Singh's reign, Gulāb Rai's advocacy on behalf of Sher Singh led the Maharaja to designate him as heir to the throne (*yuvrāj*) over his eldest son, despite strong objections from his bureaucracy and nobles.⁵⁷² These objections were grounded in prevailing customs that forbade the sons of concubines from inheriting the throne. The resentment harboured by Marwar's nobles over Gulāb Rai's hold over the kingdom finally led to her assassination at the hands of the *ṭhākurs* of Pokhran and Raas in 1792 during a siege of Jodhpur led by Bhīm Singh, Bijai Singh's grandson and rival to Sher Singh.⁵⁷³

It is of course difficult to establish if Gulāb Rai's attachment to Sher Singh was the sole reason that he was designated crown prince. If Sher Singh had become king, it would have made Gulāb Rai the most senior member of the zenana as the de-facto queen mother. Such a status would have secured her a powerful position in court even after Bijai Singh's death, providing a powerful motive. Evidence from Gulāb Rai's architectural projects, discussed later in this chapter, does indicate that she purposely sought to reinforce and legitimate her status as Sher Singh's mother. Historians of kinship relations among rajputs have pointed to the prevalence of such non-biological relationships of nurture between princes and concubine foster-mothers in Marwar, at the same time noting that, within the region's historiography, influential concubines have often been retrospectively credited (or blamed) by some chroniclers for the ascension of a prince against rules of male primogeniture that were only normalized among rajputs in the late nineteenth century under colonial rule.⁵⁷⁴ The ascension of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Marwar to the throne against the claims of his elder brother in the seventeenth century, for example, is held by nineteenth century chroniclers to have been caused by pressure from his father Gaj Singh's concubine Anārā.⁵⁷⁵ In Gulāb Rai's case, however, the accusation seems warranted, for she also adopted another claimant to the throne who eventually did become king—Bijai Singh's grandson and Sher Singh's adopted son, Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-1843).⁵⁷⁶ Mān Singh spent his youth in the fort of Jalore, a town that once fell within Gulāb Rai's *jāgīr*. He took refuge there when he was pursued by the armies of his cousin and Bijai Singh's immediate

⁵⁷² Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 158.

⁵⁷³ Anandkumar and Singh, 162.

⁵⁷⁴ Sreenivasan, "Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850."

⁵⁷⁵ See Sreenivasan.

⁵⁷⁶ Dhirendra Nath Pal, *Annals of Marwar* (Kolkata: Dhirendra Nath Pal, 1905), 964, <http://archive.org/details/dli.bengal.10689.19018>.

successor, Maharaja Bhīm Singh, who had ascended the throne in 1793 by brutally eliminating all other male heirs.⁵⁷⁷

Maharaja Bijai Singh and the Vallabha Sampradāya in Late Eighteenth Century Jodhpur

The reign of Maharaja Bijai Singh and Gulāb Rai in Marwar saw a remarkable rise in the power and influence in the kingdom of the Vallabha Sampradāya, a Vaishnavite *bhakti* cult that originated in the Braj region of north central India in the sixteenth century. Both Bijai Singh and Gulāb Rai, who were initiates of the Sampradāya, made grand and public displays of their devotion through various forms of patronage of the sect.

The Vallabha Sampradāya, also known *Puṣṭimārg* (the path of grace), was established in the sixteenth century in what is known as the Braj region, south of Agra, by Vallabhācārya, a Telugu brahmin born in Benares around 1479. Vallabha propounded a ‘pure non-dualist’ philosophy that rejected asceticism and the separation between the self and the divine. He exhorted his followers to dedicate their life to single-minded devotion to Krishna whose grace (*puṣṭi*) alone would lead to spiritual liberation. Devotees were to continue living their householder lives according to their place in the caste system (*varṇāśramadharmā*) but were to dedicate the fruits of their labour and all their material wealth to the service or *sevā* of Krishna.⁵⁷⁸ The sect’s influence on Rajput kingdoms in what is now Rajasthan intensified in the seventeenth century when Vallabhācārya’s descendants abandoned their base in Braj and moved westwards with the sect’s idols as they fled regional instability and sought new patrons. In 1672, the chief idol of the sect known as Śrīnāthjī, once housed in a temple in Braj, found a new home in Nathdwara in Mewar under the patronage of its rulers. Nathdwara soon grew into a prosperous pilgrimage town.⁵⁷⁹ Shrines housing the most prized nine idols (*navnidhi*) of the Vallabha Sampradāya were established in Mewar (four, including

⁵⁷⁷ According to Mān Singh’s chroniclers, it is Gulāb Rai, who held the town of Jalore as her *jāgīr* until her death in 1792, who perceived the danger posed by Bhīm Singh to Mān Singh, and dispatched the latter to the safety of the fortress in Jalore. Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 2.

⁵⁷⁸ Shandip Saha, “The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis: Tracing the History of the Puṣṭimārg between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, no. 3 (2007): 299–318.

⁵⁷⁹ For a history of the deities as they travelled through Rajput kingdoms, see Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, 66–67. For a concise history of the Vallabha Sampradāya, see Saha, “The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis”; Shandip Saha, “Creating a Community of Grace: A History of the Pushti Marga in Northern and Western India (1493-1905)” (Thesis, University of Ottawa (Canada), 2004), <https://doi.org/10.20381/ruor-19625>.

the primary deity at Nathdwara), Jaipur, (three) and Bundi (one) in Rajasthan and in Surat (one) in Gujarat.⁵⁸⁰ Other major shrines were established throughout the region under the patronage of different rulers, among them the kings of Kishangarh and of Marwar.

The increasing presence and patronage enjoyed by sects such as Vallabha Sampradāya in rajput kingdoms in the eighteenth century have been linked by historians to the declining authority of the Mughal Empire in this period, especially in the provinces.⁵⁸¹ To Rajput kings in western India, the loss of influence of the emperor over their territories meant that the central legitimising force that dynasties such as the Rathores had once relied on to safeguard their claim to the throne disappeared. As referred to in the introduction to this work, at the height of Mughal rule, Rathore Maharajas who were protected by their own contract of service (*cākri*) to the all-powerful Mughal Emperor had succeeded in stripping their clansmen of hereditary rights to land and bringing them within the bounds of a service (*cākri*)-based system of privileges based on the discretion of rulers based in Jodhpur. As the stabilizing authority of the Mughal Emperor retreated, this vertical system with the king as master increasingly faced challenges from clan members. Powerful *ṭhākurs* from within Marwar now sought to reassert their rights under an older system of hereditary rights to territories based on brotherhood (*bhāi-baṃdh*) in which the king was seen as an equal to other Rathore kinsmen. Amidst this insecurity, Rathore royals, like other rulers across Rajasthan, turned to other power brokers to secure their authority. To bolster their positions, they increasingly sought to align themselves with merchant elites, in addition to employing mercenary armies from outside the kingdom to defend the ruler.

As it gained popularity in the region through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Vallabha Sampradāya was patronized mainly by Rajasthan's mercantile elite, composed of members of Hindu *mahājans*, *baniyās* as well as brahmins. Merchants, especially from Gujarat, a region where the founder of the cult, Vallabhācārya had proselytized widely, were the primary constituency for the order from its inception in the sixteenth century.⁵⁸² Among other reasons, merchants and other upper caste elite across

⁵⁸⁰ Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, 66–67.

⁵⁸¹ On kingship in Rajput territories during the breakup of the Mughal empire see Peabody, 74; Horstmann, *Visions of Kingship in the Twilight of Mughal Rule*.

⁵⁸² Saha, "The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis." See also Françoise Mallison, "Early Kṛṣṇa Bhakti in Gujarat: The Evidence of Old Gujarati Texts Recently Brought to Light.," in *Studies in South Asian Devotional*

north and western India were attracted to Vallabha Sampradāya due to the cult's rejection of ascetic ideals of devotion, and its embrace of material wealth accumulation in service (*sevā*) of the cult's principal deity Śrīnāthjī, a form of infant Krishna⁵⁸³. The merchant classes' devotion to the cult in turn prompted Rajput rulers in Rajasthan to compete to host the idols of the sect with tax-free land grants and military protection when the order moved out of Braj, as they vied for merchant settlers and pilgrims the idols might attract to their territories. In the end, the Rāṇā of Mewar, already an initiate to the sect, was able to convince the leaders of the Vallabha Sampradāya to move their preeminent idol permanently to Nathdwara, which soon turned into one of the most prosperous pilgrimage centers in north India.

As rulers of various Rajput states recognized, the presence of a prized Vallabha idol in a city was sure to attract a steady flow of pilgrims, creating a 'pilgrimage economy'⁵⁸⁴ that benefited the state. As Norbert Peabody points out, the temples of the cult, which were placed in proximity to markets, attracted wealthy pilgrims who, in keeping with the practices of the sect, sought to gain the grace of the deity by donating generously to the temple. They thus pumped money into temple coffers. In addition, the *bazār* around thrived on pilgrim visitors. As traders in the area profited from this trade, they were able to donate more and more generously to the temple. The temple priests used this excess to conduct elaborate worship rituals that were thought to increase the potency of the idol. This in turn increased the renown of the temple and attracted more pilgrims, creating a cycle of pilgrim-fueled prosperity. The market and the town prospered, attracting more vendors and even thriving communities of artisans and artists to settle there, as happened in Nathdwara. As merchants in the area thrived, and new mercantile communities moved in to cash in and the temple was able to attract even more riches, creating an enviable amount of economic activity that benefited the kingdom's monarchs through customs duties and other taxes charged on goods traded in the town.⁵⁸⁵

Literature: Research Papers, 1988–1991., ed. Françoise Mallison and Alan W. Entwistle (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1994), 51–64.

⁵⁸³ Saha, "The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis."

⁵⁸⁴ Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India*, 72.

⁵⁸⁵ See Peabody, 72–74.

Bankrupt from paying off mercenaries and Maratha raiders who were wreaking havoc in its territories at the time, the Jodhpur state in the eighteenth century borrowed heavily from its mercantile classes. Moreover, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, members of trading and money-lending castes and brahmins dominated the state's bureaucracy. This was the result of concerted efforts by Jodhpur's rulers stretching back to the sixteenth century to reduce the influence of Rajput clansmen in administration by filling it with other disinterested upper caste groups that would remain loyal to the Maharaja.⁵⁸⁶ Merchants, both Vallabhites and Jains, whose networks stretched all over the subcontinent, were also a significant force in the state's economy in general; they acted as intermediaries in the trade of grains and textiles, and lent money not only to the state, but also to small-scale farmers and artisans in rural areas.⁵⁸⁷ By becoming an initiate of the Vallabha Sampradāya, Bijai Singh sought to solidify his hold on the throne by aligning himself with these powerful groups who were already affiliated to the sect. He was also emulating other eighteenth century rajput rulers in neighbouring kingdoms who had used religion as a powerful force in legitimating their kingship in this period. As the Mughal Empire began to teeter around its edges, many rajput rulers had sought to reshape their images and form regional alliances with other rajput kings, even as they offered partial resistance to the Emperor in Delhi. In the process, they consciously projected themselves as Hindu kings upholding its orthodox principles (*dharma*), influenced, among other things, by the example set by the Maratha ruler Shivaji.⁵⁸⁸ Prime among such figures whose practices might have inspired Bijai Singh was Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur (r. 1700-1743), whose use of a combination of Vedic rituals and Vaishnava devotional practice to legitimate his kingship has been studied extensively by Monika Horstmann.⁵⁸⁹ Entry into regional networks of Vallabhite worship thus had political benefits, as it established a common sectarian identity that connected Marwar's ruler not only with powerful trans regional mercantile communities, but also with rajput rulers across the region, such as the kings of Kota or Mewar, who were also devotees of the sect.

⁵⁸⁶ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects," 51–60.

⁵⁸⁷ For an overview of merchants' place in Marwar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Cherian, 85–88.

⁵⁸⁸ See Horstmann, *Visions of Kingship in the Twilight of Mughal Rule*, 12–15.

⁵⁸⁹ Horstmann, *Visions of Kingship in the Twilight of Mughal Rule*; Horstmann, *Der Zusammenhalt der Welt*.

Bijai Singh was initiated into the Vallabha Sampradāya in 1765, around the same period that Gulāb Rai entered the zenana.⁵⁹⁰ Chronicles of his reign describe him leading the life of dedicated *bhakta* (devotee) in the period after.⁵⁹¹ Bijai Singh undertook pilgrimages to Nathdwara to worship Nāthjī, sometimes accompanied by Gulāb Rai.⁵⁹² He also issued land grants in the form of fifteen villages in his territory to sponsor worship at the Nathdwara shrine.⁵⁹³ Bijai Singh also embarked on a mission to use Marwar's state machinery to enforce the sect's ideology on the population of Marwar. He moved to ban the consumption of meat and alcohol in the kingdom and enacted laws forbidding violence of any kind against living things (*jīv hamsā*), in line with the practices of not only Vallabhites, but also Jains who formed a considerable proportion of merchant elites in Rajasthan at the time. Punishments were imposed on those found consuming meat, or caught harming animals and insects, even accidentally. As it imposed the new laws, the state machinery especially targeted 'low caste' populations including artisanal communities as well as Muslims in Marwar many of whose livelihoods depended on animal husbandry and hunting. These groups were meted out severe penalties for offenses such as meat eating and hunting even as the new laws destroyed their livelihoods.⁵⁹⁴

In her study of Bijai Singh's reign, Divya Cherian has examined the ways in which upper caste mercantile elites and Brahmins across Marwar, united by Vaishnavite devotion, successfully lobbied the state in the late eighteenth century to draw up the boundaries of a sphere of upper caste 'Hindu' identity that was rooted in the exclusion of a majority of the population, among them 'lower caste' artisans, menial workers, and Muslims. In response to their efforts, the state in this period moved to demarcate these latter groups as *acchep* or untouchable, embracing the paradigm of caste purity and pollution put forth by the Vallabha Sampradāya.⁵⁹⁵ This division between 'Hindus' and the *acchep* was enforced, among other

⁵⁹⁰ Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 73.

⁵⁹¹ According to accounts of his daily routine, the Maharaja rose early to bathe and conduct service or *sevā* (described in Marwari by the term *cākri*) to the lord. Then, having dressed, he proceeded to visit shrines in the city, only returning to the fort to deal with state matters by noon. Anandkumar and Singh, 7–8.

⁵⁹² Khanna, "The Female Companion in a World of Men: Friendship and Concubinage in Late Eighteenth-Century Marwar." Some accounts suggest that Gulāb Rai's own devotion to sect was responsible for Bijai Singh's partiality to the Vallabha Sampradāya. See Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 10–11.

⁵⁹³ Saha, "Creating a Community of Grace," 101.

⁵⁹⁴ See Cherian, "Ordering Subjects," 175–83.

⁵⁹⁵ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects."

modes, through the demarcation of exclusively upper caste spaces especially centered on sites of Vaishnavite devotion where rights of access earlier enjoyed by lower caste and Muslim communities were progressively curtailed through punitive laws. The state in this period also aided the upper caste elites' efforts to impose the segregation of urban residential spaces as well as water sources by displacing the *acchep*.

Having become an initiate of the sect, Maharaja Bijai Singh actively promoted and supported the construction of temples to Vallabha deities all over Marwar. This royal temple building program, which saw enthusiastic participation from zenana women, was a crucial part of the processes through which urban spaces in Jodhpur were transformed and reordered at this time on caste lines by ejecting *acchep* populations from key centres of the city. The relationship between Vaishnava ideology and architecture in this context is explored further in the second half of this chapter. As a part of his temple-building program, Bijai Singh constructed several temples to the Vallabha Sampradāya in the capital Jodhpur, among them a shrine in Chaupasni in the outskirts of the city where in the seventeenth century, descendants of Vallabha, having fled Braj, had camped with the chief idol of Śrīnāthjī for four months before settling in Nathdwara.⁵⁹⁶ The grandest Vaishnava temple established by Bijai Singh in the city in this period is the Gangśyāmjī Mandir (distinct from the Gaṅśyāmjī temple nearby, commissioned by Maharaja Ajit Singh), which he established in 1761 at the site of an older temple in the heart of Jodhpur's commercial area, in a grain market known as Juni Dhān Maṇḍī.⁵⁹⁷ Other temples he commissioned were the Balakrishna temple and the Śyāmjī temple that were placed near the Juni Dhān Maṇḍī, close to a royal residence in the city known as Talheṭī Mahal. In addition to raising new temples, Bijai Singh also funded repairs to existing Vaishnava temples in Marwar and mandated administrative officials in all the *parganās* of Marwar to ensure that all Hindu temples in their territories remained in active worship.⁵⁹⁸

The Marwar state in this period also actively supported and encouraged the building of Vaishnavite temples by individuals and communities (merchants, brahmins, as well as middling agricultural communities such as *jāṭs*) all over the kingdom through land grants and

⁵⁹⁶ Saha, "Creating a Community of Grace," 179.

⁵⁹⁷ Cherian, "Fall from Grace?: Caste, Bhakti, and Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century Marwar."

⁵⁹⁸ Cherian, 'Ordering Subjects', 92, 111.

other concessions. Such temples included not only Vallabha temples but also Vaishnava temples of various other sects⁵⁹⁹. In fact, different kinds of Vaishnava worship seems to have coexisted in Jodhpur at time, even if shadowed by overwhelming state patronage to the Vallabha Sampradāya. It must be noted that, though Vaishnavite or rather Krishnaite⁶⁰⁰ devotion as espoused by the Vallabha Sampradāya was raised to the status of almost a state religion in Marwar only under Bijai Singh, his predecessors had also participated in Vaishnava religiosity. In the early eighteenth century Maharaja Ajīt Singh (r. 1702-24), whose primary allegiance seems to have been toward Shakta practices centred on clan goddesses such as Cāmunda and Hinglāj traditionally worshipped by the Rathores, is known to have commissioned Vaishnava temples in Jodhpur,⁶⁰¹ as did as one of his queens, Udot Kanwar Rāṇāwat of Mewar. There are also references to Vaishnava temples that were established in Jodhpur prior to Ajīt Singh, during the reigns of Maharajas Gaj Singh and Jaswant Singh.⁶⁰² Maharaja Gaj Singh raised a Krishna temple within Jodhpur fort, dedicated to an idol called Ānanddhānjī. This temple is no longer extant. Maharaja Abhai Singh, who succeeded Ajīt Singh, is recorded to have acquired an idol from Vallabhācārya’s descendant Vittalrai in Kota and brought it to Jodhpur in 1729. The temple built for this idol, known as Dāūjī Mandir, was refurbished by Bijai Singh.⁶⁰³ In addition, the deity housed in the Gangśyāmjī Mandir, Bijai Singh’s most visible and ambitious temple building project in Jodhpur and a temple that now follows Vallabha devotional practices, is popularly believed in Jodhpur to have been brought to the city in the sixteenth century by a queen of Rao Ganga (r. 1515-32), a princess from Sirohi. The shrine that was built to house the Sirohi idol was rebuilt entirely by Bijai Singh,⁶⁰⁴ thus unifying earlier threads of royal Vaishnavism with the dominant idiom of his time. Bijai Singh’s father Bakhat Singh, who once ruled Nagaur, too was a Vaishnavite. In paintings from his reign created by artists in Nagaur, he is depicted worshipping Krishna and his consort at the Ahicchattragarh fort in Nagaur where Bijai Singh grew up (Fig. 4.1).⁶⁰⁵ As scholars have

⁵⁹⁹ Cherian, “Ordering Subjects,” 108–12.

⁶⁰⁰ Gérard Colas, “History of Vaisnava Traditions: An Esquisse,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2003), 229–70, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998694.ch12>. Colas points out that communities that worshipped Krishna or Ram in premodern India likely identified as Krishnaites or Ramaites rather than any overarching community of Vaishnavas.

⁶⁰¹ Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:564–66.

⁶⁰² Bhati, 1:564–66.

⁶⁰³ Bhati, 1:571.

⁶⁰⁴ Bhati, 1:571.

⁶⁰⁵ Bakhat Singh is recorded having constructed Krishna temples in Nagaur, including one at the Ahicchattragarh fort. Bhati, 1:570.

noted, Vaishnavism in western India, centered on sacred sites such as Dwaraka in Gujarat, has a history that preceded the rise of the Vallabha Sampradāya and other Krishnaite cults in the sixteenth century.⁶⁰⁶ Long existing practices of Vaishnava devotion in the region were not transplanted by the rise of the Vallabha Sampradāya but continued to thrive, even if they were modified under the influence of Vallabha devotional practices.⁶⁰⁷

A Concubine Refuses to be Forgotten: Gulāb Rai's Architectural Program in Jodhpur

As Bijai Singh's temple building campaign unfolded in Jodhpur, members of his zenana joined him in his efforts to reorder the architecture of his capital city to reflect royal allegiance to Vaishnavite ideology. Two of Bijai Singh's queens, Jatan Kanwar Shekhavat and Indar Kanwar Tanwar, commissioned Vaishnava temples in this period in Jodhpur that were finished in 1768 and 1789 respectively.⁶⁰⁸ Of these, Indar Kanwar's temple was dedicated to Ṭhākurjī⁶⁰⁹ Madan Mohanjī. Jatan Kanwar's temple was dedicated to Lakshminarayan. The wives of Bijai Singh's sons, the princesses from the zenana, also participated in temple building during his reign. The princess Daulat Kanwar Bhaṭiyānī of Jakhan, who was married to Bijai Singh's son Fateh Singh, is recorded having commissioned a Ṭhākurjī temple outside Mertiya city gate.⁶¹⁰ In the reign of his immediate successor, Bhīm Singh, the queen Sire Kanwar Tanwar of Khelwa commissioned a temple to Ṭhākurjī Murlī Manoharjī near Ram Bari gate of the city.⁶¹¹ However, the grandest temple to the Vallabha Sampradāya built by a zenana woman in this period was commissioned by the *pāsvān* Gulāb Rai.

Gulāb Rai's temple, dedicated to Krishna as Kunjbihārījī, was completed in 1778. The temple stands in a busy market junction known as Kaṭlā Bazār in the city (Fig. 4.9 b), not far from Bijai Singh's own temples to the Sampradāya. The location, at the heart of a commercial street, is consistent with the association of Vallabha temples with markets and merchants across Rajasthan. The Kunjbihārījī temple remains one of Jodhpur's most

⁶⁰⁶ Saha, "Creating a Community of Grace," 77.

⁶⁰⁷ The embrace of Vallabha ritual practices centred on *sevā* by other cults including non-Vaishnava sects have been noted by scholars working in neighbouring Gujarat. See Françoise Mallison, *Gujarati Socio-Religious Context of Swaminarayan Devotion and Doctrine, Swaminarayan Hinduism* (Oxford University Press), 50–51, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ubproxy.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199463749.001.0001/acprof-9780199463749-chapter-4>.

⁶⁰⁸ See Appendix 1 for a chronological list of all structures commissioned by zenana women.

⁶⁰⁹ Vaishnava deities in Rajasthan are usually referred to by the term *ṭhākurjī*.

⁶¹⁰ See Appendix 1.

⁶¹¹ See Appendix 1.

prominent temples to this day, and seems to have maintained that status throughout its history, considering its appearance both in lists of the most important temples in the city in the twentieth century⁶¹² and among prominent Jodhpur landmarks depicted in paintings of the cityscape produced during the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh in the nineteenth century (See Figs. 5.4-5.6).⁶¹³ The temple is near identical in size and style to the Gangśyāmjī Mandir that Bijai Singh commissioned. According to twentieth century sources, the Kunjbiḥārījī temple was in fact modelled on both the Gangśyāmjī temple in Jodhpur and a Vallabha temple to Murlīdharjī in Nagaur.⁶¹⁴ In its size and prominence, the Kunjbiḥārījī dwarfs extant Vaishnava temples from the period built by Bijai Singh's queens.

To support costs of worship at the Kunjbiḥārījī Mandir, Gulāb Rai got Bijai Singh's approval to endow it with land grants amounting to four villages in the *parganā* of Jodhpur, as well as the revenue from three wells and a field. She also endowed the temple with jewellery and other valuables. The temple was also allowed a portion of the customs revenue from the surrounding market during Bijai Singh's reign, as well as a share of profits from a fair called "chaitiri fair"⁶¹⁵. The hereditary position of *mahant* or head priest of the temple was assigned to a *sādhu* who was allowed privileges such as the *tāzīm*,⁶¹⁶ and the right to be accompanied on processions by retainers carrying royal insignia such as the *chattrī* (*parasol*), *nakkārā* (*drums*), *kiraṇ* (*sun-insignia*), *chaḍhī* (*club*) etc. The *mahant* was also allowed to ride in a palanquin and remain seated in the presence of the Maharaja.⁶¹⁷ These privileges, usually reserved for Rajput elites who attended court, were likely allowed to Vallabha head priests of all prominent temples during Bijai Singh's reign as a sign of respect.

The Gulāb Sāgar Complex and the Reordering of Jodhpur

⁶¹² B D Aggarwal, *Gazeteer of India, Rajasthan, Jodhpur* (Jodhpur: Directorate of District Gazeteers, 1979), 506.

⁶¹³ Accession Number RJS 1994, Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur

⁶¹⁴ File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁶¹⁵ Letter from then Mahant Vallabhdās describing the history of Kunjbiḥārījī temple. File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁶¹⁶ The privilege granted to a courtier in Jodhpur to be acknowledged and greeted by the Maharaja upon entry into the royal *durbār*. Courtiers with *tāzīm* privileges were known as *tāzīmī sardār*.

⁶¹⁷ Letter from then Mahant Vallabhdās describing the history of Kunjbiḥārījī temple, File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

The Kunjbiḥārījī temple was only one of Gulāb Rai's commissions in Jodhpur, though it is among her most well known works. Some years earlier, in 1775, Gulāb Rai had commissioned a large enclosed garden (variously known as Pāsvānjī Bāg and Māylā Bāg⁶¹⁸) on the eastern front of the Jodhpur fort, away from what were then the most thickly populated areas of the city which lay to the south west, and in proximity to the Mertiya and Nagauri city gates. She also commissioned a stepped pond or *jhālra* nearby,⁶¹⁹ referred to as the Māylā Bāg Jhālra, likely as a source of water for the garden. The *jhālra* is still intact today. However, the garden has now disappeared into urban growth and its original extent is difficult to determine. Gulāb Rai soon sponsored more structures around this garden complex, that, taken together, represent the *pāsvān's* attempts to remake the city by focusing royal attention on a part of the city that had recently become her headquarters in Jodhpur.

Approximately two years after she completed the Māyla Bāg, which is often referred to in records simply as *bāg*, in 1777 (VS 1834), Gulāb Rai is recorded to have left her residence in the zenana of the fort after a fight with one of the queens to take up residence in her garden. Her desertion of the fort is recorded in Bijai Singh's chronicles, as the move prompted the Maharaja himself to spend much of his time thereon at the garden. A playful fight between Gulāb Rai's son, Tej Singh, and Bijai Singh's chief queen (*paṭrānī*), Jatan Kanwar Shekhavat's son, the prince Fateh Singh, had caused a quarrel between the two zenana women. The resultant trade of insults seems to have incensed Gulāb Rai, for she summoned her palanquin and stormed out of the zenana, vowing never to return to the fort. She then proceeded to Māylā Bāg and took up residence there. Hearing this, Bijai Singh ordered palaces to be built within the garden to serve as her residence and soon started spending his nights there in Gulāb Rai's company.⁶²⁰ Gulāb Rai's decision to establish her residence in the garden might also have been prompted by concerns of safety, considering the opposition that she likely faced not only from the *thākurs* but also from zenana elite composed of senior queens. It is pertinent to note that nearly fifteen years later, the *pāsvān* was assassinated as she, tricked into doing so by the *thākurs* of Raas and Pokhran with

⁶¹⁸ Meaning enclosed garden.

⁶¹⁹ Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharājā Śrī Vijaisimhji Rī Khyāt*, 93.

⁶²⁰ Anandkumar and Singh, 94–95.

assurances of safety, was travelling to the fort zenana at night in her palanquin during Bhīm Singh’s 1792 siege of Jodhpur.⁶²¹

Having shifted her residence out of the zenana, Gulāb Rai embarked on a campaign to develop the area around her new residence through royal patronage. Next to the garden, she commissioned her most ambitious project—a mammoth water tank named after herself called the Gulāb Sāgar, which was completed in 1788 (Fig. 4.2, 4.3). This water body, which dominates the urban landscape even today, is composed of a large tank—the Gulāb Sāgar—which is separated by a walkway from a smaller one popularly known as the *Bacchā* (child) tank or *Gulāb Sāgar kā Bacchā* (Gulāb Sāgar’s child)⁶²². For convenience, they are together referred to in this chapter as Gulāb Sāgar.

Evidence from painted maps (see Figs. 4.5 and 4.6) as well as surviving buildings that formed the Māyla Bāg show that the garden occupied the area around the twin tanks, mainly on its northern bank where now stands a Nāth temple called Nij Mandir built in the nineteenth century under Maharaja Mān Singh, and towards the east, enveloping the Māyla Bāg Jhālṛā. Enclosed by high walls, the garden was accessed through several gateways, one of which was located towards the east, close to the *jhālṛā*, and still survives partially today. Remnants of the gateway now mark the entry to a hospital that was established in Māyla Bāg palaces in the early twentieth century. All the royal buildings in the garden, including the palaces and Mān Singh’s temple, were handed over by early twentieth century Jodhpur rulers to the state government to be used as schools, hospitals and other public facilities. Many of the palaces within the garden were converted into a district hospital, and royal buildings on the banks of the *Bacchā* tank, including the Nāth temple, Nij Mandir (Fig 4.1), were converted into a girl’s school (the Rājākīya Bālikā Senior Secondary School, also called the Rājmahal School) that still occupies these premises.

Gulāb Rai also commissioned a market square near Gulāb Sāgar, called Girdikoṭ. At the turn of the twentieth century, Girdikoṭ was renamed as Sardār Market after the then reigning king Maharaja Sardār Singh (r. 1595-1911) who renovated and added a clock tower

⁶²¹ Anandkumar and Singh, 162.

⁶²² Some sources also refer to this tank as Tej Sāgar after Gulāb Rai’s son. See Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:572.

to the square.⁶²³ Today, Girdikoṭ is still old Jodhpur's largest market and its town square, where traders selling everything from vegetables and fruits to shoes and kitchen tools congregate from all over the region.

There are also indications that Gulāb Rai started construction on another large tank, now known as the Fateh Sāgar, situated next to the Māylā Bāg. According to some sources, this tank was left incomplete at the time of her death. Construction was completed by another zenana woman during the reign of Maharaja Bijai Singh's successor and a fierce opponent of Gulāb Rai, Bhīm Singh whose ambitions to the throne had once been frustrated by the naming of Gulāb Rai's adopted son Sher Singh as heir. Once complete, the tank was named Fateh Sāgar,⁶²⁴ after the prince Fateh Singh whose quarrel with Gulāb Rai's son Tej Singh can be considered to have set off the chain of events that culminated in the creation of this structure. Gulāb Rai is also said to have commissioned a tank called Krishnakund in the outskirts of the city.⁶²⁵

The creation of a complex of monumental structures that Gulāb Rai laid out in and around her garden—the palaces, stepwell, tanks, and market—created a parallel power centre in the city that rivalled the ancestral fort of the Rathores in this period. This reordering of power in the city was quite literal, considering that the embodiment of royal power and dynastic authority—the Maharaja himself—began to live at the *bāg* in Gulāb Rai's company. The effects of this reordering outlasted Gulāb Rai's and Bijai Singh's reign in Jodhpur, for, starting in 1803, Bijai Singh's grandson Maharaja Mān Singh, an adopted ward of Gulāb Rai's, also established a parallel headquarters in the palaces of Māylā Bāg. Mān Singh was a devotee of the Nāth Sampradāya, a cult of ascetics with their base in Jalore. His ascend saw the Vaishnava elite of Jodhpur who formed a bulk of the bureaucracy of the state, as well as many of Marwar's ṭhākurs who had sided with Bhīm Singh in the succession wars, lose much of their influence to a newly created Nāth elite whom Mān Singh transplanted to Jodhpur from Jalore.⁶²⁶ One of Mān Singh's first acts as king was the construction of a personal Nāth shrine (called Nij Mandir) in the *bāg*, on the banks of the

⁶²³ Reu, *Marwar Ka Itihas*, 1:348.

⁶²⁴ Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:572. According to the *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, Fateh Sāgar was completed during the reign of Maharaja Bijai Singh's successor Bhīm Singh by a princess from Kota married to Bijai Singh's son Fateh Singh. Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 64.

⁶²⁵ Sreenivasan, "Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850."

⁶²⁶ See Chapter 3 for more on Mān Singh's succession.

Gulāb Sāgar. The choice of this site, coming a decade after Gulāb Rai's death, indicates that the garden complex held a special significance for the new king, both due to his personal debt to Gulāb Rai as his adopted mother and protector, and the consecration of this space in Bijai Singh's time as a kingly residence that paralleled the fort. Like Bijai Singh, Mān Singh established a second headquarters and residence in the city in Gulāb Rai's garden. In *bahīs* from his reign, the Maharaja and his entourage, including members of the zenana, are recorded frequently travelling to and from the garden palaces. These descriptions include references to dedicated zenana palaces in the garden (*'bāg rā janānī dyoḍhī'*), indicating a full-fledged royal residence in the city, away from the fort. *Bahīs* also refer to multiple gateways, including ones located close to banks of the *Bacchā* tank through which the royal family accessed these residences.⁶²⁷

Paintings from Mān Singh's reign depict him celebrating the festival of Gangaur, involving the public ritual immersion of royal idols of the Goddess Parvati and her husband Shiva in water, at the Gulāb Sāgar. An 1820 painting by the artist Sati Das (Fig. 4.4) records Mān Singh surrounded by courtiers at Gulāb Sāgar watching the festivities at night from atop a gateway tower leading to Nij Mandir. Below them, the *Bacchā* tank can be seen lit up by attendants holding fire torches. Dancers and musicians perform, and a clump of zenana women accompanied by *nājar* zenana guards watch over the *pūjā* of a silver idol of the goddess. To the left, a procession approaches, carrying pairs of idols of Shiva and Parvati for immersion in the tank. The immersion of the Gangaur idol is one of the main public events in royal calendar in Jodhpur. The festivities would thus have been watched by hundreds of citizens from various ghats on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. Mān Singh's choice of the Gulāb Sāgar as the venue for this public expression of authority and devotion, and the continued patronage of this site by him and members of his zenana,⁶²⁸ is indicative of the success of Gulāb Rai's effort to create a parallel royal abode in the city, thereby shifting the spatial distribution of power in an urban landscape once centred on the citadel Mehrangarh. At the root of this reordering of the city was Gulāb Rai's power and authority as a patron who could manifest buildings of a scale and splendor worthy of the status of the dynasty. The strengthening of this shift under Mān Singh in the early nineteenth century signals the

⁶²⁷ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, f. 428-444.

⁶²⁸ As referred to later in this chapter, Mān Singh's queens commissioned several temples on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar.

contested nature of Jodhpur's urban landscape in this period, where an older elite's imprint on the city was being challenged by a newly consecrated Nāth elite.

A few rare painted depictions of Jodhpur from the reigns of the Maharajas Bijai Singh and Mān Singh feature Gulāb Rai's commissions, primarily the Gulāb Sāgar and the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, prominently. They demonstrate the importance of these sites as key architectural landmarks in the city. Maps and other painted images from the eighteenth and nineteenth century also make evident the ways in which Gulāb Rai's architectural program reordered Jodhpur's urban landscape and the axes of power within it.

A late eighteenth century painted map of Jodhpur in possession of the Jaipur City Palace⁶²⁹ (Fig. 4.5) depicts both the garden, the tanks, and the Kunjbiḥārījī temple. The temple and the garden are identified with Gulāb Rai with the notations "*mandir pāsvānjī ko*" (the *pāsvān*'s temple-Kunjbiḥārījī temple) and "*bāg pāsvānjī ko*" (the *pāsvān*'s garden-Māylā Bāg) respectively (Fig 5.5). It is difficult to determine if this map was produced in Jodhpur or Jaipur. The map's divergence from other maps in the Jaipur collection⁶³⁰ suggests that it was acquired from elsewhere, perhaps from Jodhpur. The map does contain some inaccuracies, in the names of the various fort gates for example, but is overall a faithful depiction of Jodhpur marking landmarks in the form of temples, markets, and water bodies. In addition to the monuments mentioned above, it marks the Vallabha temples that Bijai Singh commissioned—the Gangśyāmjī, Balkrishna and the Śyāmjī temples for instance, as well as the lakes Rāṇīsar and Padamsar, the stepwell Chand Bāvaḍi, and the Talheṭi Mahal palace. As with other painted cartographic documents from eighteenth and early nineteenth century Rajasthan, the map uses both planimetric as well as bird's eye and frontal views.⁶³¹ Key landmarks such as temples are depicted in a flattened frontal view, while the fort as a whole and the outer walls of the city are depicted from a bird's eye perspective. Elements such as streets and the many shops in the *bazār* are shown flat and plan-like. Prevailing conventions of painting that dictated that more important structures or figures be depicted on a bigger scale than surrounding elements, have been employed to indicate the status of

⁶²⁹ Published in Gole, *Indian Maps and Plans From the Earliest Times to the Advent of European Surveys*, 186–87.

⁶³⁰ Gole, 186–87.

⁶³¹ On cartographic paintings, see Debra Diamond, "The Cartography of Power: Mapping Genres in Jodhpur Painting," in *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Andrew Topsfield, and Susan Stronge (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2004), 279–85.

royal temples. Thus, the Gangśyāmjī temple that stands next to the Talheṭi Mahal palace towers above the latter on the map, even though the palace is several stories higher than the temple in reality. What is also unmistakable is that Gulāb Rai's Kunjbihārījī temple is depicted on a larger scale than any other temple or monument on the map. It stands in the centre of the map's foreground, seemingly forming the focal point around which all other elements on the map are arranged. Apart from the Rāñīsar and Padamsar tanks and the Chand Bāvaḍi, Gulāb Rai's garden complex and temple are the only structures by women patrons that appear in the map, attesting to their perceived importance to the artist as iconic landmarks of the city of Jodhpur.

Another painted image of Jodhpur produced in the reign of Mān Singh (Fig. 4.6) also features the twin tanks, the garden, and the Kunjbihārījī temple in the *bazār*. The image in question maps the various centres of Nāth Sampradāya worship in the region with Jodhpur itself featured close to the centre of the Nāth cosmopolis thus laid out. The painting fits into a rich tradition of western Indian pilgrim maps, especially within Jain and *Puṣṭimārg* contexts.⁶³² The depiction of Jodhpur within the Nāth Universe in this map is remarkably exact and detailed. It is conceivable that the artist relied on contemporary maps of the city available in the royal store to create it. No monuments are labelled in this map but many are easily identifiable. In the artist's vision of Jodhpur, seen as if from above, the Gulāb Sāgar (1) appears at the very heart of the cityscape. The Māylā Bāg (2) can be seen to the left of the tanks, marked by flowerbeds and flattened views of pavilions. Miscellaneous temples spires can be seen on the map. The Kunjbihārījī (3) temple is conspicuously depicted in the midst of the Kaṭlā Bazār square within the main market street on the left half of the image. The temple is easily identifiable by its placement in a market square as well as its distinctive gateway tower and surrounding walls. The Gangśyāmjī temple (4) can be seen depicted further down the same street. Also seen is Mān Singh's Nāth temple, the Nij Mandir (5) which appears on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar's Bacchā Tank, and the Nāth township of Mahāmandir (6) that Mān Singh constructed right outside the Nagauri City Gate.

⁶³² On painted maps from the region, see Hawon Ku, "Representations of Ownership: The Nineteenth-Century Painted Maps of Shatrunjaya, Gujarat," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 3–21; Diamond, "The Cartography of Power: Mapping Genres in Jodhpur Painting"; Gole, *Indian Maps and Plans From the Earliest Times to the Advent of European Surveys*.

If one compares the two images, the second map can be seen reflecting a change in the orientation of the Jodhpur fort that was effected in the Mān Singh period, which in effect brought it 'face-to-face' with the Gulāb Sāgar. Rulers of Jodhpur had traditionally used a gate known as Fateh Pol, which lies on the western front of the citadel Mehrangarh, as the main entry and exit from their residences within. Early in the nineteenth century, Mān Singh created a new gate, the Jai Pol, on the eastern front of the fort. It was commissioned ostensibly to commemorate his 1807 victory over Jaipur's armies in a battle over the hand of the Mewari princess Krishna Kumari.⁶³³ Jai Pol was connected to the city via a steep path called Gol rā Ghāṭī that led down to the Girdikoṭ, and beyond it, the Gulāb Sāgar and the Māylā Bāg and its palaces. The vista of the city as seen from Jai Pol offers a clear view (even today) of these structures, all of which lay to the eastern front of the fort. In the nineteenth century, this view would have extended even further, to the city gates and the headquarters of Mān Singh's gurus, the Nāths, at the Mahāmandir. The route leading down from Jai Pol offered a direct path to Māylā Bāg residences and Mān Singh's Nāth temple on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar, as well as the Mahāmandir township, which stood just outside the Nagauri city gate. As a result, procession (*asvārī*) records from Mān Singh's reign record him and the zenana frequently exiting the fort from its eastern front and proceeding via the Gol rā Ghāṭī to enter Māyla Bāg through its right-hand-side (*jīvaṇā hāth*) gate.⁶³⁴ The reorienting of the city in this period from the perspective of the Maharaja's movement through its landscape can be seen reflected in the second map, which offers a view of Jodhpur's built landscape as seen from the eastern front of the fort, with the Gulāb Sāgar and Nij Mandir directly at the centre of the pictured cityscape. The Mahāmandir is depicted right outside the city gate on the same side. Where the first map of the city from the late eighteenth century prominently depicts and centers the Fateh Pol gate of the fort on its western front as well as the thickly populated settlements around it, the Mān Singh period depiction leaves out the older gateway and landmarks around it, choosing to depict only Jai Pol and the vista on the eastern front populated by sites of significance to the then ruler. Clearly, by Mān Singh's

⁶³³ The princess Krishna Kumari had been promised to Mān Singh's predecessor, Bhīm Singh. On his sudden death, the kingdom of Mewar decided to marry her to Jagat Singh, the ruler of Jaipur. Marwar objected, insisting that the princess should rightfully have been wed to Bhīm Singh's successor Mān Singh to honour the engagement contracted between the two kingdoms. The conflict over her hand eventually led Mewar to murder Krishna Kumari by poisoning her in an attempt to achieve a gory but swift resolution to the discord. See Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 797–98.

⁶³⁴ MMPP Bahī 841 VS 1860-1876/1803-19 CE, fs. 428-444.

reign, the city had been reoriented to reflect prevailing axes of power that stretched from the citadel Mehrangarh to Mān Singh's residences and personal Nāth shrine in the *bāg* to the headquarters of his Nāth gurus at Mahāmandir. A painting from his reign depicting Mān Singh at the Mahāmandir (Fig. 4.7) temple also depicts a similar perspective of the city in the backdrop, showing the fort from the eastern front with the Gulāb Sāgar complex laid out in front.

Royal Women in Dynastic Memory

"Kai nānv gītaḍān, kai bhīntaḍān" (One's name can be perpetuated either in ballads or in buildings)

Rajasthani saying⁶³⁵

Built around a crucial event from Gulāb Rai's life and associated evidence in inscriptions and archival sources, this section argues that in her career as a patron, Gulāb Rai, frustrated by her exclusion from bardic histories of the dynasty, used architecture strategically to create a presence for herself in the collective memory of the inhabitants of Jodhpur. In using architecture this way, she also sought to refashion her own identity, claiming for herself a noble status that, as a concubine, she was denied her during her lifetime.

As Norman Ziegler has noted, the main sources for the history of the Rathore dynasty in Marwar up until the mid-eighteenth century are bardic traditions including genealogies as well as other early dynastic and clan histories derived from them.⁶³⁶ This is because conventional written sources such as administrative reports, correspondence, accounts books, regnal diaries, and so on originating in the Rathores' courts or in British colonial sources only appear in large numbers starting from the mid-eighteenth century on. Dynastic histories of the period before are preserved in local traditions, both oral and written, covering genres such as the *vāt* (*bāt*), *khyāt*, *vīgat*, *pīḍhīāvali*, and *vamsāvali*.⁶³⁷

Of these, the *vāt*, *pīḍhīāvali*, and *vamsāvali* are fundamentally oral genres of history keeping that were rooted in Marwar's bardic traditions. They were composed and

⁶³⁵ Bahura Gopal Narayan, *Literary Heritage of the Rulers of Amber and Jaipur: With an Index to the Register of Manuscripts in the Pothikhana of Jaipur (I. Khasmohor Collection)*, 1956, 77–78, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.61815>. Quoted in Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*, 181.

⁶³⁶ Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra."

⁶³⁷ Ziegler.

transmitted by various bardic castes such as *cāraṇ* and *bhāṭ* who maintained hereditary associations with rajput clans such as the Rathores. In return, rajput patrons were obligated to compensate the bards through land grants and other gifts. Non-rajput castes across Marwar too maintained similar transactional relationships of genealogy keeping with other bardic communities.⁶³⁸ The *vāt* were biographical narratives centred on heroic male figures, such as a Rathore chieftain, and recorded significant events in their life, recounting battles or the conquest of new lands. The *pīḍhiāvali* and *vamsāvali* were genealogies that exalted the pedigree of a clan by tracing an exemplary line of male ancestors. These various traditions were committed to memory and recited by the bards at significant occasions, for example, as they accompanied their male patrons into the battlefield or when they visited a patron's home during a festival. They were simultaneously preserved in written form in *bahīs* that were the hereditary possession of bardic families. Such manuscripts kept by bardic families were not coherent texts, but contained the kernel of a narrative that was meant to be embellished during recitation.⁶³⁹

Khyāts and *vigats* emerged in the seventeenth century as major literary genres composed for royal patrons. *Khyāts* are heroic clan histories (similar early genres include *rāso*, *carit* and *vilās*) that exalt the glories of illustrious rajput houses, and often include genealogical narratives. The *vigat* were essentially made up of lists, including genealogical lists, lists of territories, land grants, census data etc. The *khyāt* and *vigat* drew on the data contained in existing *vāt*, *pīḍhiāvali* and *vamsāvali*, as well as other contemporary records. Literate civil servants such as *mutsaddīs* who served Marwar's kings were often responsible for compiling existing sources into *khyāt* and *vigat* forms. The earliest known *khyāt* and *vigat* from Marwar were composed in the seventeenth century by a *mutsaddī* from the court of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar called Munhata Nainsi.⁶⁴⁰ In composing his tomes, Nainsi relied on bardic lore as well as contemporary administrative records. These early sources in their various forms transmitted orally and in the form of manuscripts, as well as later texts derived from them, form the basis for histories of the Rathore dynasty in Marwar until the mid-eighteenth century. Composed by bardic communities and administrators working for male patrons whose fortunes were inextricably linked to the power wielded by patrilineal

⁶³⁸ See Ziegler.

⁶³⁹ Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan."

⁶⁴⁰ On Nainsi, see Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra."

rajput clans, these early histories of the Rathores are almost entirely geared toward confirming the clan's elite status and legitimizing descendants' claims to power by tracing an exemplary male dynastic line.⁶⁴¹ As such, women's histories or personalities in themselves are peripheral to these dynastic narratives. References to women usually occur in the context of events such as marriage, succession battles, or the death of a ruler. Thus, we see women, almost all rajputs, referred to as brides received from other kingdoms as part of conquest or alliance, as the mothers of sons vying to put their offspring on the throne, as regents behind the scenes, or among lists of dutiful brave wives committing *sati* upon their husband's death. No *khyāt* dedicates itself to documenting the reigns of illustrious zenana women, even an all-powerful figure like Gulāb Rai.⁶⁴² As a result, for the period before zenana accounts books became available in significant numbers starting in the early nineteenth century, we know next to nothing about the women of the Jodhpur zenana, except for their names, dates of their wedding to a Rathore, and whether they committed *sati*. In the case of concubines, we know even less. When they do appear in narratives such as the *khyāts* of a male sovereign, their names can usually be found, along with that of prominent court dancers and singers, at the tail end of lists of zenana women (*rājlok*), including queens, belonging to a Rathore chief,⁶⁴³ or among the lists of women who self-immolated on his pyre.

A Genealogy of Queens: the *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*

Among early primary sources from Marwar, a rare genre where some information on the women of the dynasty can be found are bardic genealogies that document the names of rajput brides from other clans who married Rathore chiefs. A specialised hereditary line of male bards (*bhāṭ*) called the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭ* were responsible for maintaining a genealogy

⁶⁴¹ See both Ziegler and Sreenivasan. Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan"; Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārāvāra."

⁶⁴² I must acknowledge that Gulāb Rai makes several appearances in Bijai Singh's *khyāt* because of the significant role she played in administrative matters including succession. Her prominence in this text can also be attributed to the fact that this *khyāt* was composed during the reign of Maharaja Mān Singh. Anandkumar and Singh, *Maharaja Vijai Siṃhji Rī Khyāt*. Most modern historians of the Rathore dynasty also find it difficult to exclude Gulāb Rai (this is not for lack of trying). They thus often resort to dismissing her as an upstart concubine or confine her to footnotes. See, for instance, Reu, *Marwar Ka Itihas*, 1:344. Reu describes Gulāb Rai as a "jāṭ woman" who exerted excess influence on matters of state.

⁶⁴³ Names of a ruler's concubines and female slave performers from the zenana often appear together in genealogical lists appended to *khyāts* and follow the names of queens. For an example, see Raghuveer Singh, *Jodhpur Rājya kī Khyāt*, 1988, 427, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.446006>.

of queens and princesses who married into the ruling family and arrived in the Jodhpur zenana. The account produced by the bards records the many marriages that polygamous Rathore kings or princes contracted, organised according to regnal periods. The *rāṇī mangā bhāṭ* recorded the names of various royal wives by visiting the zenana at regular intervals to take note of new arrivals, and entering them in a *bahī* known as the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*. They also composed poems (*dohā*) exalting their patrons in the zenana which became part of the genealogical narrative. *Bhāṭs* arriving in the zenana to make entries would have begun by reciting the genealogies aloud to establish their authenticity.⁶⁴⁴ On adding the name of a new queen or princess into the *bahī*, accompanied by the names of their male ancestors and date of their wedding to a Rathore, the bard earned gifts and customary payments from the zenana women concerned. Same was the case when they had a chance to enter new information—such as the name of a child recently born to a queen—into the *bahī*. Gifts presented to the bards included cash, ceremonial robes and jewelry (*siropāv*) and tax-free (*sāsaṇ*) land grants.⁶⁴⁵ The genealogical narratives of various queens and princesses that the bards composed were recited at special occasions in the zenana. Bards reciting genealogies were also a part of the entourage of zenana women as they proceeded in procession on trips out of the zenana.⁶⁴⁶

The *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*, the written version of the genealogical account of Jodhpur's queens,⁶⁴⁷ contains the names of the wives of various Rathore kings and princes along with a summary of their natal lineage, the date of their wedding, and the names of their offspring. Among the various genres of genealogical literature from Marwar, the *bahī* can be categorized as a *pīḍhiāvali*, which were genealogical records whose ownership lay with the bard.⁶⁴⁸ Along with the names of a queen's ancestors and children, the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī* frequently records their architectural commissions. The bards note the type and names of architectural structures commissioned, the date of their consecration, and the

⁶⁴⁴ Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra," 130.

⁶⁴⁵ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 72–75.

⁶⁴⁶ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, xi.

⁶⁴⁷ I have relied on an edited version of the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī* published in 2002. This version is based on a copy of the original *bahī* made by a member of the bardic line in 1918. See the Introduction to this book for a full discussion of this document and possible existence of other manuscripts within the same family. Naggar. 2002

⁶⁴⁸ *Pīḍhiāvali* records in the forms of *bahīs* were considered the property of the bards that maintained them whereas the patron's family retained *vamsāvali* records. Ziegler, "The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Mārvāra."

rewards they received from zenana patrons for committing these buildings into the narrative of the genealogy.⁶⁴⁹ Moreover, zenana *bahīs* attest that *rāṇī mangā bhāṭ* were present as honoured witnesses at the consecration ceremonies of monuments that queens commissioned.⁶⁵⁰ That the queens thought it important to have their genealogists bear witness to and subsequently enter their architectural commissions into the genealogical record alongside the names of their ancestors and offspring demonstrates that they recognized these commissions as legacy projects, meant to glorify and preserve their name and memory for generations to come.

The *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī* is an exceptional and rare document in being dedicated to royal wives. However, though they held positions of esteem and enjoyed many of the privileges reserved for royal women, the *pardāyats* or concubines in the zenana were considered unworthy of a place in this genealogy. This exclusion was strictly upheld by the bards by the eighteenth century, as demonstrated by an incident from Gulāb Rai's life that is important to recount here. Sometime in the 1780s, Gulāb Rai, by then already a *pāsvān* to Maharaja Bijai Singh, summoned Āyi Dān, the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭ* then responsible for maintaining the genealogy of the queens and princesses of Jodhpur. She then ordered Āyi Dān to include her name and that of her ancestors into the genealogical record (*bahī*), as he and his ancestors had done for queens and princesses for generations. Despite Gulāb Rai's insistence, the bard refused, pointing out that, as per the traditions of the royal house, concubines, unlike queens, have no place in genealogical records of the zenana. His refusal incensed Gulāb Rai such that she had Āyi Dān expelled from the kingdom of Marwar. It was only after Gulāb Rai's and Bijai Singh's reign in Jodhpur ended that the bard was allowed to return to the zenana.⁶⁵¹ Gulāb Rai's attempts to circumvent custom with regard to royal genealogy keeping were considered so unusual by Āyi Dān that he recorded it in his *bahī* in the form of a lament (ironically inserting Gulāb Rai's name into the text).⁶⁵² Gulāb Rai's actions indicate the value attached to genealogical records and dynastic memories of themselves by zenana women at the time. It also shows that the *pāsvān* was not only aware

⁶⁴⁹ Rewards included money and ceremonial robes. For instance, the Bhāṭ Bherudān records that he was awarded a *sirōpāv* (robe of honour) on recording the completion in 1808 of a Nāth temple known as Nij Mandir by Mān Singh's queen Rāṇī Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī. See Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 72.

⁶⁵⁰ MMPP Bahī 152, f. 7

⁶⁵¹ Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 69.

⁶⁵² Naggar, 69.

of herself as deserving a place in dynastic histories but also the risk that her name would be erased from it. Through her attempts to find a place in the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*, Gulāb Rai also seems to have sought an acknowledgement of her conjugal relationship to Bijai Singh, which she perceived to be equal or even superior to what the queens could stake claim. Her highly unusual campaign to add herself to the genealogy of queens, announces to us her intention to resist fiercely efforts by the existing establishment to write her out of dynastic memories as a mere upstart concubine.

Considering the kind of power Gulāb Rai wielded in Jodhpur at the time, Āyi Dān's refusal of her demands is as striking as Gulāb Rai's attempts to circumvent reigning customs. Āyi Dān appears to have taken a pragmatic approach, cloaked as it was in claims of defending tradition. Since acquiescing to Gulāb Rai would likely have meant loss of patronage from the rajput queens and princesses of the zenana, the bard, having weighed his risks in the long term, stuck his neck out on a 'principled' resistance of the concubine's efforts to supersede prevalent customs of the royal house that made a clear distinction in status between queens and concubines.

Concubinage and the Formation of the Elite Rajput Family

According to customs prevalent in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur, concubines or *pardāyats* drawn from various low but 'touchable' castes held positions that were lower within the internal hierarchy of the zenana than rajput queens and princesses contracted in marriage by Rathores. Even though they held land grants and had the right to wear gold jewellery on their feet like the queens, *pardāyats* were denied certain other privileges. Their inferior status meant that the children they had with various Maharajas were barred from inheriting the throne. These royal offspring were also not considered eligible for marriage alliances with rajput princes and princesses from other kingdoms. Instead, marriages were arranged for them with sons and daughters of concubines from other kingdoms. For example, Gulāb Rai's son Tej Singh was married to the daughter of a concubine from Jaipur.⁶⁵³ While queens who immolated themselves on a ruler's pyre were venerated as *satis* and worshipped, concubines were not afforded this posthumous honour. Their act of self-immolation was not usually described by the revered term *sati*, but rather merely as a *beli* or

⁶⁵³ Joshi, *Polygamy and Purdah: Women and Society among Rajputs*, 121–22.

sacrifice.⁶⁵⁴ These hierarchies were reinforced at events such as zenana *darbārs* where queens and queen mothers took centre-stage while concubines and court performers were placed away from the centre to reflect their station.⁶⁵⁵ Moreover, as exemplified by Gulāb Rai's dispute with Āyi Dān, the names of concubines rarely found a place in dynastic documents such as genealogies.

The sidelining of concubines and their off spring within the history of rajput dynasties is usually attributed to a desire on the part of rajput kings to keep their family line 'pure' or unadulterated by non-rajput bloodlines. However, this assumes that there always already existed a stable rajput caste identity based on pure bloodlines that needed protection from other, inferior, bloodlines. In fact, the boundaries of rajput caste were remarkably porous as recent as the fifteenth century and remained elastic well into the eighteenth century.⁶⁵⁶ Elite rajput men widely engaged in exogamous sexual relations with women from a range of castes all through their history. Though wedding daughters to clans of inferior standing seem to have been prohibited, rajput families also routinely wed their daughters to more powerful chiefs, including Muslim rulers, as part of political alliances or after a defeat in battle. As Ramya Sreenivasan writes citing examples from clan histories composed in the fifteenth century, the children of cross-caste unions between rajput men and non-rajput women of castes seen as inferior were once accepted as rajputs by the father's clan upon their providing military service. However, around the seventeenth century, sources such as *khyāts* begin to register a deepening disapproval of such unions and the claims to rajput status and thus the inheritance of power by children resulting from them.⁶⁵⁷ As Sreenivasan argues, disparaging remarks on such relationships by authors of seventeenth century dynastic chronicles denote the formation in this period of a narrower definition of rajput that sought to demarcate it as an elite caste identity by excluding other groups. It is in this period that concepts of 'purity' began to gain currency and 'shame' and 'loss of honour' caused by marital relationships with non-rajputs begin to be articulated in texts. Norms emerging at this time withdrew the legitimacy earlier afforded to relationships with other occupational

⁶⁵⁴ Joshi, 150. While Joshi is speaking for rajput kingdoms in general, I must note that it is not unheard of in Jodhpur to refer to a concubine as a *sati*. An example is Rīdh Rai, a concubine of Mān Singh's, who is referred to in a *bahī* as a "*mahāsati*." MMPP Bahī 17 VS 1936/1879 CE, f.23.

⁶⁵⁵ See Chapter 2 for a zenana *darbār*.

⁶⁵⁶ Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan."

⁶⁵⁷ Sreenivasan.

groups and the kinship relations thus created. By the early eighteenth century, these newly emerged codes of purity also served to create an opposition, prompted by the fear of dishonor, among rajputs to giving their women away in marriage to the Mughals⁶⁵⁸—despite powerful rajput clans having done so aggressively in earlier periods as a way to increase their political influence.

It was by rendering illegitimate the conjugal relationships that rajputs pursued with ‘non-rajputs’, and the kin resulting from them, that an elite rajput caste identity was first demarcated. This process involved the creation of a hierarchy in the conjugal relationships contracted by Rajput males (*rāṇī*, *pāsvān*, *pardāyat*, *gāyaṇ* etc., in Jodhpur, in that order) and the strict control of the sexuality of elite rajput women who were confined to strictly monogamous marriages (albeit within polygynous households) and celibate widowhood. The royal zenana, an institution that emerged in Marwar in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, reflected and reified these emerging norms. They were institutionalized in the zenana through the practice of concubinage and various forms of servitude—whether as singers, performers, or maidservants—by which non-rajput women were incorporated into the domestic world of Rathore chiefs while preserving caste ‘purity’. The zenana also effected control on its elite rajput occupants through a security and surveillance apparatus that supervised and limited their contact with men outside their immediate family.⁶⁵⁹

Early historians of rajput houses, whether bards or bureaucrats, had a vested interest in demonstrating their patrons’ elite status and thus the legitimacy of their right to rule. This foregrounds the crucial role they played starting around the seventeenth century in demarcating of the boundaries of rajput caste identity through compositions that repeatedly invoked the elite rajput family as a site of honour.⁶⁶⁰ The bards’ censure of ‘impure’ lineages can be read not only as a reflection of evolving norms but as prescriptions that, by frowning upon certain kinds of kinship relationships then prevalent, served to create and encourage newer codes of behavior that would reinforce the elite status of their patrons on which their own status depended.⁶⁶¹ It is against the this history of investment by bards and chroniclers

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid. Sreenivasan.

⁶⁵⁹ On surveillance in the zenana, see Chapter 2.

⁶⁶⁰ Sreenivasan, “Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan.”

⁶⁶¹ Sreenivasan.

of Marwar in the creation of the elite rajput family, that we can situate Āyi Dān's refusal to add Gulāb Rai's name to the *rāṇī mangā bhāṭon kī bahī*.

The Concubine-Queen: Gulāb Rai's Self-fashioning in Architecture

Āyi Dān's expulsion from Marwar by Gulāb Rai is recorded to have lasted about eight years before he was allowed to return to the kingdom during the reign of Maharaja Bhīm Singh who succeeded Bijai Singh in 1793.⁶⁶² His encounter with Gulāb Rai can this be assumed to have taken place circa 1784-85. Some years after, in 1788, Gulāb Rai completed what can be judged her most ambitious project of architectural patronage in Jodhpur—the twin tanks Gulāb Sāgar and Bacchā Sāgar. She erected a marble commemorative pillar (*kīrtistambh*) on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar to mark the founding of the monument. The pillar, which still stands at the site, carries an inscription (Fig. 4.8) in simple Sanskrit recording Gulāb Rai's name for posterity as the patron of the tank. It notes the date and time of the tank's consecration, and goes on to say (kindly translated to English by Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach):

"...after the lawful wife (lit. 'his wife according to her dharma'), the Mahārāṇī Śrī 108 concubine (*pāsvānī*), Śrī (4x) Gulābrāyājī, of Rāja-Rājeśvara Maharājādhirāja Māhārājājī, Śrī 108 Śrī (5x) Vijayasinghājī, who is the unconquered crown on top of all neighbouring rulers, protector of cows and brahmans, and pursuing the *ksatriya-dharma*, had commissioned out of kindness the building (of this lake), her son Mahārājakumāra (10) Śrī 108 Sersinghājī (gave) the lake (*sāgara*) the name Gulābasāgara.⁶⁶³"

Surprisingly, the inscription describes Gulāb Rai as Maharaja Bijai Singh's *mahārāṇī* or chief queen in addition to *pāsvān*, claiming for her an in-between identity as a queen-concubine.⁶⁶⁴ Through the inscription, Gulāb Rai also claims the status of lawful wife (*dharam patnī*) on her own terms, thus defying customs of the time that denied her this position. The text also refers to her status as mother to the heir to Jodhpur's throne—emphasizing her relationship to the crown prince (*Mahārājakumāra*) Sher Singh. Seen against Āyi Dān's

⁶⁶² Naggar, *Rāṇī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī*, 69.

⁶⁶³ My thanks to Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach for kindly translating this inscription. For the full inscription, see Appendix 2.

⁶⁶⁴ There is admittedly a tension inherent in this description, which makes a highly radical claim that elevates Gulāb Rai to the status of a rajput queen while also describing her as a *pāsvān* with its associations of concubinage and lower-caste status. However, during Gulāb Rai's own lifetime the term *pāsvān* had arguably been appropriated by her and transformed into one connoting unparalleled power, influence and proximity to the sovereign, perhaps altering some of these associations at least in popular perception.

steadfast refusal to consider her on par with the queens of the zenana, Gulāb Rai's declaration of herself as a queen and wife to Bijai Singh, and mother to Sher Singh (and thus a future queen mother) on the *kīrtistambh* can be interpreted as a defiant gesture in stone. Through it, one of the most powerful and influential female figures in Jodhpur's history and Bijai Singh's favourite companion claimed for herself a status that she felt she was entitled to.

As a woman and a concubine, Gulāb Rai's elision from dynastic histories in eighteenth century Jodhpur was two-fold. Fittingly, in her response, she too doubled down on those who wanted her to disappear from histories of the city and dynasty without leaving much of a trace. The mammoth edifices that she commissioned around her garden were placed strategically to create a bustling new urban center in Jodhpur that would forever bear her imprint. Her architectural program, in addition to altering the distribution of resources in the city and creating parallel centres of power within it, forever inscribed her name in the collective memory of Jodhpur's inhabitants, thus circumventing her erasure from dynastic histories. As we will see in following sections, the concubine's efforts, including her attempts to fashion a noble identity for herself as a *mahārāṇī* through Gulāb Sāgar's inscriptional pillar, had a lasting impact on the collective memory of Jodhpur's inhabitants that would become apparent centuries after her death.

Memory versus History

Before we delve further into the Gulāb Rai's strategic use of architecture to earn a place in collective memory, it seems pertinent to add a side note here on the term collective memory and its relationship to history. This is perhaps helpful as a context to one of the arguments of this chapter that frames architecture as an alternate site of *memory*, which, women patrons appear to have mobilized as a way to counter their exclusion from dynastic *histories*. This opposition between history and memory has a long history in scholarship. However, neither entity nor the relationship between the two is as stable as it seems and the assumed opposition between them deserves attention.

In its everyday usage, the term memory stands for residues of the past that we carry with us. It refers to parts of our past that we choose, consciously or unconsciously, to remember. This remembering holds with in it its corollary, the process of forgetting, for one

is only possible with the other. The term collective memory, which has earned wide currency in the last decades, refers to the memories of a community, a nation, or a folk as well as narratives of self-representation that members of a community share across generations.⁶⁶⁵ In the work of many scholars who have examined processes of collective memory, not least the historian Pierre Nora and the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, as well as in common sense understandings of the two terms, collective memory is defined in opposition to history. History is understood as a rational collection of facts about the past, often stored in textual form. Memory is largely understood as oral, ritualistic or gestural. It is a community's account what happened or who they are based on experiences handed down from the past but relived every day. Where history is distant and indifferent, memory is considered lived and embodied. As Pierre Nora describes it, "true memory" lives in "in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories."⁶⁶⁶ Where history is considered secular and intellectual, memory is considered sacred. Where history is deliberately constructed and transmitted, memory is considered organic. According to Nora, it "wells up from the groups that it welds together."⁶⁶⁷ In addition, where history is written by victors, memory is often considered by many as standing firmly on the side of resistances to hegemony.

According to Pierre Nora, the split between history and memory is the result of cultural changes ushered in by modernity. In his work, Nora makes an impassioned argument that memory is under attack from history, which seeks to destroy it, and has in fact already destroyed it. According to Nora, in place of the memory of the past—pure, embodied and lived—we are now left only with 'sites of memory' or '*Les Lieux de Memoire*.'⁶⁶⁸

An effective critique of the stark euro centrality of Pierre Nora's pronouncements on the oppositional relationship between history and memory can be found in the writings of

⁶⁶⁵ Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Memoire*."

⁶⁶⁶ In 'between history and memory', Pierre Nora speaks of the split between history and memory, caused by the cultural changes ushered in by modernity, and passionately argues that memory is under attack from history, which seeks to destroy it. For a critique of Nora's '*Les Lieux de Memoir*' which considers histories of Indian architecture, see Juneja.

⁶⁶⁷ Pierre Nora, '*Les Lieux de Memoir*' quoted in Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 16–17.

⁶⁶⁸ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7–24.

the historian Gyanendra Pandey, who has pointed to the shadow in Nora's theory of long-dispelled oppositions between the continent of history—Europe—and the continents and peoples outside, who are deemed to have no history,⁶⁶⁹ and whose history is termed memory by Nora and others. As Pandey explains, the opposition constructed between memory and history is based on a very narrow, purely academic definition of history that does not take into account the democratisation of print culture that has led to a multiplicity of histories produced by various communities, groups and institutions that “flood streets and stalls the world over.” “Are all these now to be classified memory?” he asks. As Pandey notes, Nora's lament about the loss of memory is not recognisable to most of the world's population outside of the West, where communities connected by shared memories continue to exist even in the most advanced capitalist societies.⁶⁷⁰

“The problem with memory in contemporary usage is that it has become not so much a term of analysis as a mark of approval,” Mark Crinson writes in his introduction to *Urban Memory*.⁶⁷¹ On a similar note, Ramya Sreenivasan has noted the ways in which the presumed innocence of memory has been invoked in the Indian context by historians working on traditions of ‘subaltern memory’⁶⁷² who examine the resistance offered by ‘memories’, mainly seen as inhabiting oral traditions and rituals, to nationalist and imperialist ‘histories’. Such studies frame memory as offering a more organic and therefore more authentic connection to the past than history. However, such easy oppositions between memory and history have been challenged and our ideas of memory complicated by recent scholarship which has argued that memory offers no more of an unfiltered or authentic connection to the past than history. As Sreenivasan writes, “memory too is forged and transmitted deliberately, and forgotten because it is no longer reiterated or no longer relevant to the perceived needs of a community. In this sense, memory is no more organic than history—neither in its construction, nor in its circulation, nor indeed in the work that it performs within and for a community. Memory is not history's Other but is itself a deeply historical practice.”⁶⁷³ In addition, as scholars have demonstrated, memory was not restricted to the

⁶⁶⁹ Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶⁷⁰ Pandey, 1–15.

⁶⁷¹ Mark Crinson, ed., *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁶⁷² Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 16–17.

⁶⁷³ Sreenivasan, 16–17. See also the introduction to Crinson, *Urban Memory*.

popular and oral, but inhabited both oral and literal traditions. As we have seen, in Jodhpur, dynastic memories/histories were transmitted simultaneously in written and oral performative traditions. Neither is memory solely 'subaltern,' as it was invoked and pasts re-imagined in eminently aristocratic contexts, and by upper and middle class landowning or professional groups.⁶⁷⁴ This demystification of memory is valuable to explorations of memory in the context we operate, where we are examining the legacies of aristocratic women, however marginalised by their gender or caste, who commissioned structures using a labour force consisting of mostly lower caste artisans to be used on completion (especially in the case of the temples) by largely middle to upper caste populations.

As scholars such as Pandey and Sreenivasan have argued, the relationship between memory and history has always been an unstable one, with many overlaps and no clear or impenetrable boundaries between the two. This then begs the question—what do we mean when we invoke the ubiquitous term memory or collective memory? In light of Pandey's writings, it seems that we use the term memory and by extension collective memory, to denote histories that are *yet to be written* (emphasis mine)⁶⁷⁵—or rather are unwritten, or remain unacknowledged in academic discourse. I use the term collective memory in this chapter then without any blanket notions of authenticity, sub-alternity or resistance attached to it. It is used rather to point to an *alternate*, and in that respect, *unwritten* history of the city of Jodhpur—among many such competing histories—as remembered and kept alive through the interaction between architecture and communities at architectural sites in the city sponsored by zenana patrons in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I use it equally to refer to alternate modes of remembrance outside the narratives of dynastic historians—in architectural monuments, and in the pulse of life in and around those monuments—that zenana women, especially Gulāb Rai, seem to have recognised and accessed widely.

Gulāb Rai Returns: Monuments and Collective Memory

Aldo Rossi in his book *Architecture of the City* considers the city as a whole (seen by him as architecture) to be the collective memory of its inhabitants, where the past and future are in

⁶⁷⁴ Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen*, 17–18.

⁶⁷⁵ Talal Asad, "Are There Histories of Peoples without Europe? A Review Article," ed. Eric Wolf, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 3 (1987): 594–607.

union. Rossi's interpretation of the city attaches special significance to monuments as sites where a city makes sense of its past and propels itself in the flow of time. He conceives of monuments as "permanences" or "persistent urban artefacts" which are not tied to a single period in history, but whose influences on the city persist across time.⁶⁷⁶ In them are summarized "all the questions posed by the city."⁶⁷⁷ Examining Gulāb Rai's architectural program in Jodhpur, it is difficult not to notice in her strategies an awareness of the lasting impact of monumental architecture—their permanence, their ability to persist—which aligns with Rossi's ideas on monumental architecture's ability to withstand time, to infiltrate the present, and to form a bridge in memory between the past and the present. Despite multiple attempts to silence or erase her (including her assassination), memories of Gulāb Rai the concubine-queen are continuously renewed even today around the architectural sites she sponsored.

In the monuments she commissioned, Gulāb Rai took charge of public perceptions of herself in ways that were unprecedented, dramatic, and seemingly prescient of the processes of collective memory. As referred to earlier, despite her status as a concubine, a commemorative inscription on a marble pillar she had erected at the Gulāb Sāgar describes Gulāb Rai as the kingdom's chief queen (*mahārāṇī*) and Bijai Singh's wife (*dharam patni*). It is easy to dismiss this text as wishful boasting. However, accounts from Jodhpur in the centuries that followed prove that Gulāb Rai's attempts to forge a noble identity for herself had a lasting impact on public imagination. Her claims to a noble status morphed over the years into myths that crystallised around the monuments she erected in the city. One such narrative, which circulated around the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, is given shape in a document from 1929 that is part of official state correspondence regarding the termination of a Mahant or chief priest of the temple. Defending his position before the state, by then fully under the control of the British Government in India, a former Mahant, Vallabhadās, narrates his version of the temple's origins, including the story of its patron. In the history Vallabhadās relates, Gulāb Rai is mystically transformed into a royal rajput woman of high birth. According to his account, Bijai Singh met Gulāb Rai while on a pilgrimage to Haridwar

⁶⁷⁶ "...to think of a persistent urban artefact as something tied to a single period of history constitutes the greatest fallacy or urban sciences", declares Rossi. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Masschussets, and London: The MIT Press, 1982), 59–60.

⁶⁷⁷ Rossi, 92.

where she, a rajput princess, was staying with her widowed mother, a queen. Enamoured by the princess (*kanvarāṇī*) Gulāb Rai, Bijai Singh convinced the pair to follow him to Jodhpur where he married the young princess in a “*svayamber vivāh*” ceremony according to Vedic rites. In time, she became the king’s chief consort and de facto chief queen. According to Vallabhadās, Gulāb Rai then used the wealth bestowed on her by her mother the queen to sponsor charitable acts such as the feeding of brahmins and the poor, as well as the construction of several edifices in the city including the temple.⁶⁷⁸ This account shows the lasting impact of Gulāb Rai’s self-fashioning at the architectural sites she sponsored. The respect that the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, one of the most prominent royal temples in the city, commanded at the time and the Mahant’s desire to exalt and preserve its status, likely contributed to the propagation of this origin story that endowed its patron with respectability that she was denied in her own lifetime. By claiming a noble wifely status for Gulāb Rai, the story also recuperated Bijai Singh in tune with norms of lineage purity that had further strengthened under colonial rule.⁶⁷⁹

Such ‘post-mortem elevation’ of a concubine is not without parallels in the region. A noteworthy case is that of the eighteenth century Meo princess turned slave-concubine Mūsi from Alwar, who self-immolated on the pyre of the rajput Bakhtavar Singh (r. 1791-1815).⁶⁸⁰ Locals worshipping at Bakhtavar Singh’s funerary monument referred to her as ‘Mūsi Mahārāṇī’ (the monument itself is now known as Mūsi Mahārāṇī kī Chattrī). Her recuperation in popular memory as a result of her *sati* subsequently led to her being given a backstory as an orphaned rajput girl raised by a prostitute in some later bardic accounts even as she was dismissed a whore (*raṇḍī*) in others.⁶⁸¹

Attribution of queenly status to Gulāb Rai persists at other sites she sponsored as well. When probed about the patron of the Gulāb Sāgar tank in 2018, locals lounging on its

⁶⁷⁸ File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁶⁷⁹ On the evolution of these norms across time, see Sreenivasan, “Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850”; Sreenivasan, “Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-Colonial Rajasthan.”

⁶⁸⁰ Sreenivasan, “Drudges, Dancing-Girls, Concubines: Female Slaves in Rajput Polity, 1500- 1850.”

⁶⁸¹ Sreenivasan.

banks described Gulāb Rai as Maharaja Bijai Singh's *rāṇī* or queen, attesting to the lasting impact of her architectural program on the collective memory of the city's inhabitants.⁶⁸²

The Gulāb Sāgar and Environs in the Nineteenth Century

Gulāb Rai's architectural program not only radically reconfigured the city, cementing her own legacy, but also appears to have encouraged her successors in the zenana to follow suit, leading to a dramatic rise in the number of architectural commissions funded by zenana women, many of them concubines, in the period immediately following her death.⁶⁸³ A significant portion of this activity would come to be concentrated around one iconic landmark—the Gulāb Sāgar.

During the reign of Bijai Singh's grandson, Maharaja Mān Singh (1803-1843), who was crowned after the short-lived reign of his rival Bhīm Singh (r.1793-1803), members of the zenana, composed of thirteen queens and around twenty-five concubines and singers, financed an unprecedented number of monuments in the city, among them many shrines dedicated to the Nāth Sampradāya which enjoyed state patronage under Mān Singh. As referred to in Chapter 3, by commissioning Nāth temples in crucial locations in the city, members of the zenana actively joined the Mān Singh's radical efforts to refashion Jodhpur's urban sprawl as a sacred landscape reflecting the court's devotion to the sect. Amidst this heightened architectural activity sponsored by Mān Singh's zenana, the Gulāb Sāgar, arguably the largest structure commissioned by a woman in Jodhpur and a central feature of its urban landscape at the time, became a place invested with special significance. This is perhaps unsurprising, since the environs around Gulāb Sāgar had by then been stamped repeatedly with royal authority—having become the part-time residence of both Bijai Singh and Mān Singh, and the site chosen for the first royal Nāth temple commissioned by Mān Singh in 1803. By 1846, zenana women from Mān Singh's court had constructed four temples on or around the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar. These included two temples to the Nāth Sampradāya commissioned by the queen Lāḍī Bhaṭiyāṇī and the princess Amar Kanwar respectively, as well as a temple to Krishna, and another to Shiva, both commissioned by the queen Tīja Bhaṭiyāṇī. Together, these constructions created a cluster of monuments that

⁶⁸² Interviews, Jodhpur, November 2018

⁶⁸³ See Chapter 3 for more.

dotted the areas around the tank. Thus, in the years after her death, the Gulāb Rai's largest architectural commission became a consecrated site for claims to power and public memory made by a new generation of royal women, forming a dialogue in architecture amongst zenana women patrons of different reigns. The guard-administrator of the zenana under Mān Singh, Nājar Harkaraṇ, too commissioned a temple to Krishna on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar.⁶⁸⁴

Architectural Memory, Community, and Exclusion at the Kunjbiḥārījī temple

Scholars such as Monica Juneja⁶⁸⁵ have recently employed the term architectural memory in their analyses of the relationship between architecture and collective memory. Architectural memory refers to processes of collective memory and narrative-formation at work at the intersection between an architectural monument and the communities that enter into relationships with it. It is memory as it is encoded in, and transmitted or evoked by an architectural structure. As they address diverse groups of users, the functional, spatial, and symbolic language of a built space can transmit memories of overlapping and even contradictory nature. Architectural memory at a site is reciprocally shaped by the building's encounter with communities, morphing across time as users enter into new relationships with structures, adding newer layers of meaning. Analysing any monument through the prism of architectural memory thus necessitates an examination of its relationship to communities that have encountered it across time.⁶⁸⁶

Being continually reformulated through use, architectural memory is both multivalent and processual. According to Monica Juneja, an analysis of architectural memory at a site "involves asking what kinds of memories the place and space evoked, and for whom, and whether a single built structure could lend itself to a synchronic proliferation of multiple remembering shaped by the social heterogeneity of its users."⁶⁸⁷ In her study, she analyses architectural memory at the site of the first public mosque built by conquering Mamluk forces in Delhi's Mehrauli, examining the building "as a space of social

⁶⁸⁴ MMPP Bahī 90 VS 1889/1842 CE, f.59.

⁶⁸⁵ Juneja, "Architectural Memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire*."

⁶⁸⁶ Juneja.

⁶⁸⁷ Juneja.

experience.”⁶⁸⁸ Throughout its history, the monument’s architectural language evoked and transmitted vastly different memories to different groups of congregants it addressed. In turn, various groups that inhabited it through time have attached their own unique and shifting meanings to the site. Such communities included the conquering forces that built the mosque and inscribed it with texts declaring victory addressed to the conquered, the first communities of illiterate ‘lower caste’ Indian converts to Islam who prayed within the mosque in the twelfth and thirteen centuries for whom its architecture, salvaged from destroyed temples, posed a reminder of former Hindu sacred spaces they were excluded from, and the inhabitants of modern Delhi.⁶⁸⁹

Following the framework set by Juneja, this section uses architectural memory as an analytical tool to tease out aspects of the social history of one of Gulāb Rai’s key architectural commissions—the Kunjbiḥārījī temple dedicated to the Vallabha Sampradāya.

Nāthjī’s *Havelī*: Temples in the Vallabha Imaginary

Vaishnava cults such as the Vallabha Sampradāya established by the saint Vallabha, and its contemporary the Gauḍiya Vaishnava cult initiated by the Bengali saint Chaitanya, originated in the sixteenth century in what came to be known as the region of Braj in north central India, around fifty kilometres west of Agra. Both Vallabha and Chaitanya undertook journeys to the region during their lifetimes with the aim of revitalising what they considered to be a landscape where lay hidden the sacred sites where Krishna had spent his life and where iconic events of his youth as recounted in the epic *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* took place. According to them, the sacred landscape of Braj, once worshipped by Krishna’s descendants, had fallen into disuse and needed to be brought back to prominence.⁶⁹⁰ Through the efforts of Vallabha, Chaitanya, and their followers, the topography of Braj, crossed by the Yamuna and shadowed by hills, was inscribed with the landscape of Krishna’s youth as described in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, where the young cowherd frolicked with his companions on the banks of the river Yamuna and performed miracles. In this way, the very real landscape of sixteenth

⁶⁸⁸ Juneja.

⁶⁸⁹ Juneja.

⁶⁹⁰ Evidence suggest however that no popular Vaishnavite cult of worship existed in the Braj region before the arrival of Vallabha and Chaitanya. The region was rather home to many local cults centred on the worship of Shakta, Shaiva and Naga deities. See Charlotte Vaudeville, “Braj, Lost and Found,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 18, no. 3–4 (1976): 195–213.

century Braj was overlaid with the mythic, celestial landscape of Krishna's divine childhood where he remained eternally at play (*līlā*). Braj or *Brajbhūmi* as it was 'rediscovered' by these sects in the sixteenth century encompassed, among other sites, the ancient city of Mathura, the river Yamuna, the gardens of Vrindaban, the Govardhan hill, and the village of Gokul. Both the Vallabha and Chaitanya cults identified innumerable sites in Braj that they connected to every incident in Krishna's life. They then began to initiate worship at these places, establishing temples that soon attracted lavish patronage from Mughal emperors in nearby Agra and as well as their Hindu Rajput generals.⁶⁹¹

One of the key events in Vallabhācārya's rediscovery of the divine landscape of Braj occurred when the saint was intimated of an idol of Krishna that had been discovered by a cowherd emerging by itself on Govardhan hill. The idol, made in black stone, had one arm raised upwards, emerging out of the earth. The image was named Śrīnāthjī by Vallabha, who believed that it was a living manifestation of Krishna performing one of his most well-known miracles, when he lifted up Mount Govardhan with one hand and allowed his clan to shelter underneath in a torrential rain storm unleashed by the God Indra. Śrīnāthjī soon become the preeminent idol of the Vallabha Sampradāya, having once been worshipped by the founder of the cult. The idol, first housed in a temple in Braj, was relocated to Nathdwara in Rajasthan in the eighteenth century.

On discovering Śrīnāthjī, Vallabhācārya established a small shrine on Govardhan hill to initiate his worship. The shrine soon grew in renown. According to legends of the Sampradāya, a merchant offered to build a grand temple at the site. Vallabhācārya agreed and an architect was engaged for the purpose. Vallabha then instructed the architect that temple was not to be an imposing structure dominated by a tall *śikhara* in the fashion of most temples, but rather one that recreated the home of Vaishnavite's foster father Nandagopa, where Krishna grew up in Vrindaban.⁶⁹² Nandagopa was the leader of the Gopa

⁶⁹¹ For histories of the Vallabha Sampradāya and Braj, see, among others Vaudeville; Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850*, Global South Asia (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019); Saha, "The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis." On patronage of the region under Mughals, see Irfan Habib, "Braj Bhūm in Mughal Times," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 70, no. 2009–2010 (2021): 266–84; Margaret H. Case, ed., *Govindadeva: A Dialogue in Stone*, Vraja-Nāthadvārā Prakalpa (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996).

⁶⁹² Peter John Bennet, "Temple Organisation and Worship among the Puṣṭimārgīya-Vaiṣṇavas of Ujjain" (London, SOAS University of London, 1983), 152.

tribe of cowherds. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, one of the central texts of the Vallabhasampradāya and other Krishna bhakti cults, Nanda is described as a cousin of Krishna's birth father, the prince Vasudeva. Vasudeva was married to Devaki, the princess of Mathura and Krishna's birth mother. On Krishna's birth, Vasudeva, fearing threats to his son's life from Devaki's brother Kamsa, gave the child to Nandagopa and his wife Yashoda to be raised in the safety of Gokul, the village of the Gopas.

According to the Vallabha Sampradāya's lore, the architect engaged by the merchant made several drawings of the new temple for Vallabha. However, all of them included a *śikhara*—then considered an inalienable part of North Indian temple architecture. After repeated redrawing, Vallabhācārya is said to have acquiesced to the temple having a *śikhara*, considering it Krishna's will that it be so. This story is recounted in the *Śrī Nāthjī kī Prākāṣya Vārtā*, among the most prominent histories of the sect.⁶⁹³ Later temples of the Vallabha Sampradāya however, discarded the spire, building the kind of temple that Vallabhācārya is said to have deemed appropriate to house the child form of Krishna venerated by the sect. By the time Śrīnāthjī was removed from Braj and installed at Nathdwara in the eighteenth century, his temple took on the shape of a *havelī*, designed to resemble an opulent private mansion with multiple courtyards, and conspicuously missing a spire, in what is commonly known in architectural history as the '*havelī* temple'. The temple thus imagined as Nandagopa's home—and thus referred to by devotees as a *havelī* in stated opposition to the traditional *mandir*⁶⁹⁴—is central to the devotional practices of the sect. According to this imaginary, at each Vallabha temple, an initiate privy to the mysteries of the sect is able to perceive and gain access to *nandālaya* (the abode of Nanda), and thus the presence of child Krishna.⁶⁹⁵

The archetypal description of a Vallabha temple as Krishna's childhood *havelī*, the home of Nandagopa, the king of the cowherds, as laid down by Vallabhācārya himself in the sect's literature, heralded the formation of a new type of temple building—the '*havelī* temple'—which was replicated all over Rajasthan in the eighteenth century. *Havelī* is a term that within Rajasthan and Gujarat refers to large private courtyard residences, such as those

⁶⁹³ Bennet, 152–54.

⁶⁹⁴ Bennet, 156.

⁶⁹⁵ Bennet, 156.

built by wealthy merchants or the landed elite. Whatever the stated reasons for adopting it, the *havelī* temple is consistent with the Vallabha Sampradāya's adoption of the trappings of landed royalty; an important aspect of the cult's self-fashioning since its rise in Braj under Mughal imperial and sub-imperial rajput patronage. Within the structures of royal patronage in Rajasthan, the deity Śrīnāthjī was in fact a landholder or *ṭhākur*, the lord and ruler of his realm. The idol, which lived in Nathdwara in Mewar, held territories not only in the surrounding region, but had estates all over Rajasthan, including Marwar, gifted by various Rajput kings. Across Rajasthan, idols of child Krishna across Vaishnava denominations are referred to affectionately as "Ṭhākurjī", transferring to a divinity who is seen as alive and intimate, the reverence usually shown toward to local ruling elites.

Within Vallabha devotional practice, the designation of the temple as Krishna's private dwelling or *havelī* is consistent with worship practices. Where temples of other cults in Rajasthan are usually open all day for worshippers, Vallabha temples only open during specified times during the day when Krishna is readied for visits. The temple being the private residence of an idol that is considered to be alive, it is not held appropriate for visitors to wander in at the times of the day when Krishna is at rest or disturb his privacy as he spends time with Radha. The doors of the sanctum are thus opened for *darśan* only for short intervals several times a day when devotees gather.

The Vallabha idol, referred to as a *svarūp* (as opposed to the conventional Hindu idol, the *mūrti*, which Vallabhites consider a lifeless form⁶⁹⁶), is considered a living manifestation of child Krishna who requires constant loving care. He resides in a sanctum in one of the courtyards of a *havelī* temple.⁶⁹⁷ Congregational worship and *darśan* of the deity marked by the singing of hymns (*satsang*) being an important part of practices at a Vallabha temple, a hall in front of the sanctum is set apart for this purpose. The head priest's living quarters is also located in the temple building. Nanda clan being cowherds, cow protection was enshrined as one of the central tenets of the Vallabha Sampradāya since its inception. Many Vallabha temples, including the shrine at Nathdwara, maintain *Gauśālās* (stables for cows).

⁶⁹⁶ Bennet, 175.

⁶⁹⁷ Bennet, 159–62.

In his examination of the spatial organization of Vallabha *havelīs*, Peter Bennet has pointed out that within the sect's beliefs, the temple is believed to represent both the domestic residence of Nanda in Braj, with special rooms set apart for the preparation and storage of different types of foodstuff, for bathing, or for sleep, as in a residence, as well as the celestial landscape of Braj. Braj is represented in the building by parts of the *havelī* layout that are equated with features of its landscape, such as the holy river Yamuna which is considered to traverse the *cauk* (courtyard) that lies in front of the sanctum. Similarly, the garden (*nikunj*) where Krishna sported at night with *gopis* is considered to be manifest in one of the rooms in the *havelī*.⁶⁹⁸ Multiple, if overlapping, elements of the Vallabha cosmos were thus architecturally telescoped on to the *havelī* temple. Overlaid with associations of Krishna's childhood home and the enchanted landscape of Braj, the *havelī* was imagined as a performative space, a *mise en scene* where devotees could become participants in Krishna's eternal divine play or *līlā*, themselves taking on the role of the denizens of Gokul and Vrindaban—the *gopis* and the *gopas*.⁶⁹⁹ As they purified their bodies and minds and entered the temple space, initiates of the sect were to assume the *vātsalya bhāv*, an emotional state defined by paternal love and devotion for Krishna that Vallabhācārya has prescribed as the ideal inner state with which to conduct the worship or service (*sevā*) of Śrīnāthjī.⁷⁰⁰ In doing so, they took on the role of Krishna's doting parents, Nandagopa and his wife, the *gopi* Yashoda.

Even as the *havelī* shape of Vallabha temples is rationalized in the origin story of the Śrīnāthjī icon which states Vallabha's preference for a temple resembling the home of Nandagopa, elsewhere in the lore of the sect, and in most mainstream discourse, the absence of a spire is attributed to the necessity in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of rendering Vallabha temples inconspicuous and thus protected them from attacks by Mughal armies led by Aurangzeb. Historians of the Vallabha Sampradāya now heavily dispute the argument that persecution by Mughal emperors, under whose continued patronage the Vallabha Sampradāya had thrived in Braj, forced the sect to flee Braj in the late seventeenth century, considering the more likely reason to have been political

⁶⁹⁸ Bennet, 159–62.

⁶⁹⁹ Bennet, 150.

⁷⁰⁰ Shobhana Sinha, "Vaisnav Devotion and Conflict: Doctrinal Differences Between The Gaudiyas And The Vallabhites And Its Implications," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3, no. 6 (June 2014): 1–6.

instability of the period that encouraged its pragmatic leaders to seek new sources of patronage in rajput states.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, the literature of the sect itself elsewhere accounts for the move away from Braj by attributing it to a choice made by Śrīnāthjī himself to move closer to his devotees in Mewar.⁷⁰² However, many mainstream Vallabha narratives heavily emphasize the danger posed by their former Mughal patrons to the sect, leading to the claim that the threat of Emperor Aurangzeb’s aggression played a determinant role in the inconspicuous shape that the temples took.⁷⁰³ Imagined thus, in addition to the sacred topography of Braj, temple architecture also transmitted a crucial part of the enduring mythology of the sect—the years of persecution, whether real or retrospectively imagined, through which its leaders covertly led Śrīnāthjī from Braj to the safety of Hindu kingdoms in the west.

Gardens in the *Bazār*: the Kunjbiḥārījī temple

Within Braj in the sixteenth century, Vallabhites and their rivals the Chaitanyaites had competed to control newly discovered sacred sites, shrines, and attendant land grants received from Mughal emperors. Eventually the Vallabhites established their base in Govardhan hill, where the shrine of Śrīnāthjī was located and Gokul—the purported village of the Gopas. Even after the sect shifted its base westwards to Rajasthan, the centre of the Vallabha-Krishna cosmology remained Braj. Every temple harks back to its mythic landscape, immortalized in Vallabha devotional practices, poetry, and visual culture. Three distinct topographical elements of Braj—the sacred river Yamuna, the Govardhan hill which Krishna lifted with one hand to shelter Braj-dwellers from a storm unleashed by Indra, and the forests of Vrindaban, typified by verdant bowers (*kunj/kunja*) that hid Krishna and Radha during their amorous encounters—were codified within Vaishnava literature as the key

⁷⁰¹ Saha, “The Movement of Bhakti along a North-West Axis.”

⁷⁰² Contradictory rationalisations are not uncommon within the sect. Scholars have pointed to narratives in the Vallabha Sampradāya’s literature that freely switch between accounts that emphasize the primary idol’s flight from Braj propelled by Aurangzeb’s iconoclastic violence, and others that speak of Śrīnāthjī’s agentive choice to move out of Braj to please his devotees. Heidi Pauwels and Emilia Bachrach, “Aurangzeb as Iconoclast? Vaishnava Accounts of the Krishna Images’ Exodus from Braj,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 3 (2018): 485–508.

⁷⁰³ Shikha Jain, “Vaishnava Havelis in Rajasthan: Origin and Continuity of a Temple Typology,” in *The Temple in South Asia*, ed. Adam Hardy (London: The British Association for South Asian Studies, 2007), 180–91. See also accounts retold by mainstream purveyors of Hindu mythology such as Devdutt Patnaik. Devdutt Patnaik, “Nathdwara God in the Haveli,” *Devdutt* (blog), May 28, 2016, <https://devdutt.com/articles/nathdwara-god-in-the-haveli/>.

divine topographies associated with Krishna's life.⁷⁰⁴ Of these, the term *kunj*, which both domesticates and in ifies the affect of the forests around Krishna's imagined childhood abode in Braj, gained prominence in Vaishnava poetry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Soon, the entire landscape of Brajbhūmi came to be equated with a *kunj*.⁷⁰⁵

In addressing the local Vallabha community, Gulāb Rai's temple, where Krishna was installed as the bower-dwelling (*kunj-bihārī*) god, sought to summon the sacred bowers of Vrindaban where Krishna dwelt and where Vaishnava literature describes him sporting with *gopis*.⁷⁰⁶ By extension, the temple evoked the enchanted landscape of Braj itself, where Krishna is believed to play eternally, locating the temple within the Vaishnava cosmos. As with any Vallabha temple, multiple layers of significance were overlaid on the temple body: the shrine represented the topography of Braj, both real and celestial, and was simultaneously Nandālaya, the home of Nanda located in Braj. The temple also referred indirectly to the chief temple of the Sampradāya which was located in nearby Mewar—the Śrīnāthjī *havelī* in Nathdwara, where the original Vallabha icon was in worship. At Nathdwara, the descendants of Vallabhācārya had replicated not only Nanda's *havelī* but also the sacred topography of Braj. They did this assigning new meanings to the Mewari landscape to which they had been transplanted to, for instance, by mapping the Yamuna on to a local river, assigning a nearby mountain the role of Govardhan and identifying a local garden with the gardens of Vrindaban.⁷⁰⁷ All of these associations that were mapped in overlapping layers on to the Kunjbihārī temple were only perceptible to initiates—outsiders perceiving in the temple a mere building.⁷⁰⁸ It is around the common sharing of these

⁷⁰⁴ For more on the ecological clusters through which Braj was represented in Vaishnavite liturgy, especially the *kunj*, see Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geo-aesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850*, Global South Asia (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).

⁷⁰⁵ Ray, 99.

⁷⁰⁶ Writing about the architecture of the temples of Braj, Sugata Ray connects the prominence of the *kunj* in Vaishnava imagery to a new type of temple and new kind of 'vegetal aesthetics' that emerged under royal patronage in the region. He cites the Gangamohan Kunj, a temple commissioned in the 1750s in Vrindaban, on the banks of the Yamuna, by Ganga Rani, the wife of Suraj Mal, the ruler of Bharatpur. The temple is framed by a monumental gateway. Having passed through the gateway, visitors once found themselves in an overgrown bower behind which lay the hall containing the temple sanctum. The architectural detailing on the surface of the Mughal-inspired sanctum too evoked the garden through vegetal motifs, reimagining a stone building as Krishna's bower. Ray, 102–5.

⁷⁰⁷ Bennet, "Temple Organisation and Worship among the Puṣṭimārgīya-Vaiṣṇavas of Ujjain," 157.

⁷⁰⁸ See Bennet, 158.

sectarian memories and the collective perception of Krishna's garden bower and by extension the sacred topography of Braj, amidst a bustling market in an arid city, that a nascent Vaishnavite community of mercantile and brahmin elite coalesced in late eighteenth century Jodhpur.

'Hybrid' Havelī Temples in Late Eighteenth Century Jodhpur

A prototype that seems to have come into prominence within the Vallabha Sampradāya, the 'havelī temple' became popular all over Rajasthan in the eighteenth century. Vallabha temples in Nathdwara as well as other prominent seats of the Sampradaya such as Kankroli follow the *havelī* form, consisting of a sprawling multi-courtyard domestic residence laid out according to the prescriptions of the Sampradāya to represent Nanda's home and protected by modest gateways usually flanked by images of elephants. *Havelī* temples were also embraced as the predominant urban temple form for the city of Jaipur when it was founded in the eighteenth century as the new capital of the Kachwāhā rulers of Amber.⁷⁰⁹ In Jodhpur too, the two Puṣṭimārg temples that Maharaja Bijai Singh founded—the Balkrishna temple and the Śyāmjī temple—follow the *havelī* form. However, curiously enough, the Kunjbihārījī and its prototype in Jodhpur, the Gangśyāmjī temple, deviate outwardly from the *havelī* form. Both sport large *śikharas*, albeit partially hidden from the streets in front by enormous gateways and walled enclosures that surround the shrines. Of these, the Gangśyāmjī temple, though it now embraces Vallabha devotional practices, was not founded as a temple to the Sampradāya. As recounted earlier in this chapter, this temple, according to local histories, was built to house an icon of Krishna (of unspecified sectarian affiliation) that arrived in Jodhpur as part of the dowry of the chief queen of Rao Ganga (r. 1515.1532). It was rebuilt once by Maharaja Ajit Singh (r. 1707-24) following his recapture of Jodhpur after a period of Mughal occupation and then rebuilt once again on a grand scale in the late eighteenth century by Bijai Singh, all the while likely preserving the original icon of flute-playing Krishna referred to as Gangśyāmjī.⁷¹⁰ Bijai Singh seems to have chosen the Gangśyāmjī temple as a site for extensive patronage, having found at this long-established Vaishnavite temple, a valuable link between his Vaishnava devotion and that of illustrious Rathore rulers past,

⁷⁰⁹See Catherine B. Asher, "Amber and Jaipur: Temples in a Changing State," in *Stones in the Sand: The Architecture of Rajasthan*, ed. Giles Tillotson (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2001), 68–78.

⁷¹⁰ See Bhati, *Marvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:571.

especially his grandfather Ajīt Singh, whose death at the hands of Bijai Singh’s father Bakhat Singh had forever stained his lineage.⁷¹¹ Compared to the unassuming *havelī* temples Bijai Singh commissioned in the city, the Gangśyāmjī is built on a massive scale, with extensive use of precious white marble mined at Makrana. In addition to the spire, it features extensive fortifications framed by an imposing gateway with podiums above. The lavish patronage of Gangśyāmjī Mandir by Bijai Singh established it as the preeminent royal temple in the city during his reign. The architectural language of the temple was consequently established as the preeminent royal temple idiom of the period—over and above the humbler sectarian idiom employed at *Puṣṭimārg* temples in the city. When Gulāb Rai chose to build a new temple to the Vallabha Sampradāya, she seems to have consciously replicated the more impressive, monumental architecture of the Gangśyāmjī rather than the modest and rather inconspicuous sectarian architectural style embraced by the Vallabha Sampradāya. In replicating the architectural idiom of the largest and most prominent royal temple of the time at her construction site, Gulāb Rai showcased her legitimacy as Bijai Singh’s chosen consort who had kingly sanction, not to mention access to enormous wealth and resources, required to build a monument that not only replicated, but in some ways also upstaged the Maharaja’s own temple in the capital.

Like the Gangśyāmjī temple (Fig. 4.9 a), the outer appearance of the main shrine of the Kunjbihārījī (Fig. 4.9 b, 4.10) temple, with its tall *śikhara* crowned by a gold *amlaka*, distinguishes it from a conventional flat *havelī* temple. The entry to the temple is framed by a towered gateway with podiums above that stands some meters above the street. The gateway, flanked by towers on either side, leads to the outer courtyard of the temple where the main shrine stands. Around the shrine is a second walled enclosure, guarded by a second gateway, this time, mirroring the humble entryways that characterize *havelī* temples, flanked by images of elephants, albeit with the addition of a marble *toran* before it (see Fig. 4.10). From this point, if one ignores the *śikhara*, the arrangement of spaces within the flattened rectangular layout of the main shrine is not far from that of a *havelī* temple. The humble *havelī*-style gateway leads into the inner courtyard where the congregation gathers for worship. Arched halls and rooms beyond them surround the main courtyard. It is across

⁷¹¹ Ajīt Singh was murdered by his son Bakhat Singh on the instigation of his brother Abhai Singh. See Hooja, *A History of Rajasthan*, 708.

this courtyard that an initiate would perceive the river Yamuna in his mind's eye, flowing as it bisects the verdant gardens of Braj. Around the courtyard are arranged rooms that once housed areas for cooking, storage, as well as the residences of the priests. The complex once included a *gauśālā* housing Krishna's herd of cows. The sanctum, obstructed by a curtain outside of *darśan* periods, stands in a raised hall facing the inner courtyard. The chief idol of the temple is conspicuously a Vallabha icon with drooping eyelids, short stature, and the left arm lifted upwards holding up Govardhan (Fig. 4.12). In keeping with the garden imagery evoked by the temple, the inner spaces of the main shrine, covered in painted and sculpted floral motifs, are now painted green. A domed *maṇḍap*⁷¹²-like space between the main courtyard and the sanctum merges into the flattened square layout of the ceiling. It is underneath this space, kept apart from the sanctum by barriers, that devotees throng for *darśan* when the curtains in front of the sanctum part and the doors opens. A rectangular circumambulatory path encircles the sanctum. Early twentieth century murals that were painted on the temple's dome by artists from Nathdwara⁷¹³ depict Vallabhācārya, Śrīnāthjī, as well as the anthropomorphized form of Yamuna worshipped by Vallabhites as 'Yamunājī' (Fig. 4.13). On the walls of the sanctum, similar murals depict scenes from Braj, including Śrīnāthjī lifting Govardhan. Gulāb Rai and Bijai Singh are also depicted here as the patron couple (Fig. 4.11) conspicuously inhabiting their role as worshippers and protectors of cows, a crucial aspect of Vallabha ethics. This temple, like the Gangśyāmjī, follows a hybrid architectural language that combines the Vallabha idiom of a *havelī* temple overlaid with references to Braj, with the trappings of a conventional spired north Indian style Hindu temple.

By the time the Kunjbiḥārījī temple was completed in 1775, the Vallabha Sampradāya had attained a status akin to that of a state religion in Jodhpur. Despite its towering *śikhara* and hybrid architectural vocabulary, the temple was built to house a distinctly Vallabha icon, and follows an iconographic program and arrangement of spaces within that is aligned to the devotional practices of the sect. Many of the worshippers that passed through the temple's gateway and the primary congregation it addressed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were likely initiates of the Sampradāya. Why then did the state use its resources to

⁷¹² The *maṇḍap* is a pillared hall placed directly in front of the main shrine in Hindu temples.

⁷¹³ Letter from then Mahant Vallabhdās describing the history of Kunjbiḥārījī temple. File no. DD 127 C 6/1A-1 (1930) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

bring a Vallabha congregation in one of the busiest and most prosperous market areas of the city together in a temple that is outwardly incongruent with established architectural idiom of the sect? A possible explanation is that the architecture that Bijai Singh and Gulāb Rai employed in the largest of the temples they commissioned reflects the eclectic Vaishnavism that characterized Jodhpur under Bijai Singh, despite the Maharaja's stated affiliation to Vallabha Sampradāya. This Vaishnavism included not only the Vallabha Sampradāya but also other Vaishnava deities and shrines that had been worshipped and popularized in earlier periods and by preceding rulers, most notably Bijai Singh's grandfather Ajit Singh, and father, Bakhat Singh. As noted earlier in this chapter, Vaishnavite worship has a history in western India that long preceded the rise of the Vallabha Sampradāya. One can thus postulate that despite its primary affiliation to the Vallabha Sampradāya, the Kunjbiḥārījī temple sought to follow a hybrid model already established by Bijai Singh in an attempt to bring together a broad array of upper caste Vaishnava publics present in Jodhpur at the time under the umbrella of a temple architectural idiom conspicuously stamped with kingly sanction and authority.⁷¹⁴ The temple's hybrid form was perhaps also meant to attract and reassure newer, largely upper caste entrants into the Vallabha Sampradāya in Jodhpur by interspersing the Vallabha idiom and ideology with the familiarity of a *śikhara* temple resembling existing royal temples to Krishna. If one examines Jodhpur under Bijai Singh, such a broad orientation is consistent with historical processes underway in the kingdom at the time by which upper caste Vaishnavas all over Marwar were uniting under a 'Hindu' identity that stressed caste purity and adherence to a broad array of Vaishnava norms such as vegetarianism and cow worship. While evocations of Braj built into the temple through the

⁷¹⁴ What is even more surprising is that the Kunjbiḥārījī temple complex houses an underground Shiva temple dedicated to Patāleswar in its outer courtyard which, though it does not appear in any histories of the period, is considered by locals to have been commissioned by Gulāb Rai. The architecture of the temple's pillars mirrors that of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple and its location, within the outer courtyard enclosure of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple and beyond its main gateway, suggests that it was built simultaneously. If the temple is indeed Gulāb Rai's commission, it suggests that the concubine is addressing an even broader array of upper caste population in the city, beyond the pales of Vaishnavism. Due to my inability at this time to examine this structure in detail, I am leaving it out of the present analysis. The presence of Shaivite icons within Vaishnava settings is however, not uncommon. Other examples, kindly pointed out to me by Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach: 1) the Jamdoli Hanuman temple on the way to Galta, which has an idol of Hanuman on the first floor and a Shiva linga on the second floor 2) The nineteenth century Ramchandra temple in Jaipur (built by Chandravati, the mother of Ramsingh II) which has Madanmohanji as the main idol but houses a Shiva temple in one of the courtyards. 3) The Radhakantji temple of Bairat built in 1783, which is combined with a Panchamukhi-Gyararudriya-Sadashiva sanctuary. Email correspondence with Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach, February 2021. Bijai Singh's temple Gangśyāmījī also seems to have contained temples to Shiva and Suraj. See Bhati, *Marvād Rā Parganān Rī Vigat*, 1:571. At present, both temples contain a variety of icons and framed photographs in addition to Krishna, among them Ram, Shiva, and Hanuman.

arrangement of spaces, iconography, and practices enshrined within the Kunjbiḥārījī temple undoubtedly held meaning for initiates of the Sampradāya who were among the most powerful constituents of the temple in the area, equally significant were the ways in which the temple's architecture spoke to a broader coalition of upper caste 'Hindus' that assembled itself in Marwar under Bijai Singh. As we will see below, the temple's architecture also signaled to the city's lower caste and Muslim population that frequented the market streets below it, and whom Bijai Singh's regime sought to increasingly exclude from public life and newly demarcated 'Hindu' spaces starting in this period.

Keeping the *Acchep* Out: Architectural Memories of Exclusion

The eclectic form of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, which combines Vallabha iconography and devotional practices within a monumental royal temple idiom, reveals hidden layers of meaning when examined against a bevy of new laws ushered in by the state in Marwar in this period that sought to radically reshape social organization and access to public spaces. This larger historical context is key to understanding the architectural program of the temple in its entirety, as seen from the *bazār* streets below it.

As referred to earlier in this chapter, the state under Bijai Singh embraced an ideology of caste purity put forth by Vaishnavites, especially ascendant populations of Vallabhites, in the late eighteenth century in Marwar, by which a 'Hindu' identity explicitly coded as upper caste was forged at the expense of lower caste artisanal communities and Muslims in Marwar who were together labelled *acchep* or untouchable. The boundaries of this new Hindu identity were drawn up, among other modes, through the demarcation of exclusively upper caste spaces of Vaishnavite devotion where rights of access earlier enjoyed by lower caste and Muslim communities were curtailed through punitive laws.⁷¹⁵ In addition, the state also moved to segregate residential spaces as well as access to water resources by displacing lower caste groups in response to persistent lobbying from the upper caste elite. The regime also enforced a host of new regulations that especially targeted Muslims as well as the many pastoral and hunting communities that lived in rural areas who were considered a threat to the Vaishnavite social order based on the *varṇāśramadharmā*.⁷¹⁶ Such laws

⁷¹⁵ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects."

⁷¹⁶ The *varṇāśramadharmā*, also known as the caste system, is a hierarchical system based on the fourfold division of caste society into four *varṇās*, each subservient to all others above it, further subdivided into

included a blanket ban on hunting, butchery, or otherwise harming living creatures as well as a ban on the consumption of meat and alcohol. Together, the Marwar state's policies in this period served to concentrate power and state resources in the hands of the mercantile elite as well as brahmins, and eroded the customary rights and access to resources of 'low caste' artisanal groups and Muslims.⁷¹⁷

In the following section, I rely heavily on Divya Cherian's path-breaking studies of Vaishnavism and the state under Bijai Singh.⁷¹⁸ As she writes, before the orthodox Vallabha takeover of its devotional spaces and practices in eighteenth century, Vaishnavite Bhakti in the region had encompassed a wider range of communities, including artisanal castes such shoemakers (*mocī*), textile printers (*chippā*), and potters (*kumbhār*). However, by late eighteenth century, these communities had been pushed out of Vaishnava spaces in Marwar and labelled 'impure'. Cherian cites several examples of communities in this period being told by the state that their customary rights to worship in Vaishnava temples were no longer valid. In 1786, the *mocī* community that worshipped at a temple in Merta was ordered by the state to no longer take *darśan* of the deity from close quarters as they had traditionally done.⁷¹⁹ The *mocīs* were henceforth to stand in the outer courtyard of the temple and refrain from dipping their hand in the temple's saffron vessel. Despite the *mocīs* protesting vehemently citing long-established and ordinarily unassailable customary rights (*wajābī*) of access to the shrine,⁷²⁰ the state refused to acquiesce, decreeing that members of artisanal and low service castes (together termed the *pūñ jāt*, also known as *pavan jāt*⁷²¹) were no longer allowed to offer prayers inside the temple. Meanwhile, upper caste communities in the locality were pushing for even greater exclusion of the shoemakers, lobbying to bar them from entering temples entirely. In another example that Cherian cites from the period, two Muslim men were punished when they were found sitting on the parapet of a Vaishnavite temple in Nagaur. The crown also punished local officials for allowing this

numerous *jātis* within each *varṇā*. The *varṇas* in order of hierarchy are Brahmin, Kshatriya (including rajputs), Vaishya and Shudra. The untouchable castes, rejected from caste society, remain outside all of these categories.

⁷¹⁷ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects."

⁷¹⁸ Cherian.

⁷¹⁹ Cherian, 117–20.

⁷²⁰ For more on *wajābī* and how artisanal communities in Marwar used the language of custom to extract concessions from the state in the eighteenth century, see Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest*.

⁷²¹ For a description of the *pavan jāt*, see Sahai, 12.

‘misdemeanor’ to occur.⁷²² Traditional rights associated with sacred spaces, such as the rights to recite tales from Krishna’s life at a temple, were also handed over in this period exclusively to brahmins, likely pushing out other groups, including Muslims, who traditionally performed these roles.⁷²³ Similar policies enforced all over Marwar restricted access to Vaishnava spaces for all but the upper caste elite as well as some middling communities such as landowning *jāṭs* by systematically curtailing rights of access to temples for the *acchep* in line with orthodox Hindu caste hierarchy that put Brahmins at the top and artisanal and service communities at the bottom. The state in this period used its network of spies all over the kingdom to police these new codes of purity and to keep a tab on those breaking them and exact punishment.⁷²⁴

Newly built Vaishnava temples such as the Kunjbiḥārījī Mandir or the Gangśyāmjī Mandir were sites where recently formulated codes of ritual purity advanced by upper caste Vaishnavas in late eighteenth century Marwar in collusion with the state were not only strictly enforced, but were built into the architectural program. The state’s attempts to exclude large sections of the populace from religious spaces in this period were central to the shape that these monuments took. I must add that this was not a unique feature of temples commissioned under Bijai Singh, for the Vallabha Sampradāya’s beliefs, practices, and architecture since its inception were closely linked to the preservation of caste hierarchy and purity⁷²⁵ which in turn inspired the regressive social norms that Bijai Singh implemented in this period under intense lobbying from Vaishnavites. Many aspects of the Kunjbiḥārījī and Gangśyāmjī that are explored below, hinged on the separation between the upper caste elite spaces within the temple gates and the spaces of the *acchep* outside hold true for the conventional, enclosed *havelī* temples of the Sampradāya. However, at the Kunjbiḥārījī and

⁷²² Cherian, “Ordering Subjects,” 124.

⁷²³ Cherian, 113–14. Muslims and other lower caste groups traditionally dominate performing arts in Marwar.

⁷²⁴ Cherian, 25–27.

⁷²⁵ On the Vallabha Sampradāya and caste, see essays by Pauwels, Saha, and Dalmia in Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqi, eds., *Religious Interactions in Mughal India, Religious Interactions in Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also Patton Burchett, “Bhakti Rhetoric in the Hagiography of ‘Untouchable’ Saints: Discerning Bhakti’s Ambivalence on Caste and Brahminhood,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 115–41; Shandip Saha, “A Community of Grace: The Social and Theological World of the Puṣṭi Mārḡa Vārtā Literature,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 69, no. 2 (2006): 225–42.

Gangśyāmjī temples, this separation is doubly apparent and more emphatically expressed in an architectural idiom stamped with all the might of the state.

A dominant feature of these two major Vaishnava temples built under state patronage in this period that distinguish them from Vaishnava temples built in earlier periods is the presence of an impregnable gateway, flanked on either side by towers crowned by *chattrīs* (umbrellas). Such gateways, akin to city gates, are not new in themselves, but their use in the context of temple spaces occurs in Jodhpur for the first time under Bijai Singh. This difference between earlier Vaishnavite temples and Bijai Singh period temples in this regard can be illustrated by comparing the current structure of the Gangśyāmjī temple sponsored by Bijai Singh in the late eighteenth century with that of an older Vaishnava temple that stands opposite it in the Dhān Maṇḍī or grain market in Jodhpur. The older of these, which bears a near-identical name—Gaṇśyāmjī Mandir (Fig. 4.14)—was commissioned by Maharaja Ajīt Singh (r. 1707-1724).⁷²⁶ It is a conventional north Indian Hindu temple, with no gateway or towers. The shrine is approached directly by a small flight of steps framed by *toran* that lead directly into the *maṇḍap* of the temple. By comparison, at both Kunjbihārījī and its prototype Gangśyāmjī, the space between the *toran* facing the street and the main shrine is separated by multiple barriers. The first of these is the double-walled external enclosure of the temple that is protected by an enormous towered gateway. At both Kunjbihārījī and Gangśyāmjī, this gateway, which has podiums above that facilitate a view of the streets, when closed, obstructs a view of the temple and its *śikhara* from the street. At the Kunjbihārījī temple, the gateway, placed a few meters above the street, is crowned by a podium with nine arches. It is flanked on either sides by towers crowned by *chattrīs*, which mirror the observational towers usually placed on either sides of defensive city gates. Similar gateway architecture can be found at the defensive gates of forts and cities in Rajasthan. What was this defensive gateway protecting the temple from in the middle of a busy street at the heart of Marwar's capital? Was it meant to protect the temple's wealth, accrued through state grants and donations from wealthy merchants? A more convincing argument is that the intimidating gateway of the Kunjbihārījī temple was meant to solidify in stone state policies of the time that sought to restrict or deny the 'acchep' access to Vaishnava religious spaces. The gateway and enclosure erected

⁷²⁶ A modern archway has been added above the *toran* of this temple in recent years.

around the shrine demarcated and protected the upper caste 'purity' of the temple space, separating it from the space of the *bazār* frequented by lower caste communities as well as Muslims who traded their wares there. Art historians in the past have uncritically echoed claims by Vaishnavas that such gateways mark the necessary separation between the 'sacred' and the 'profane', and form threshold spaces meant for devotees to pause and purify their mind in preparation *for darsān*.⁷²⁷ Such a separation however, is not a benign one, being built on the systematic and violent dispossession of a range of communities deemed unworthy of the 'sacred'; their bodies themselves deemed profane. The actions of the state under Bijai Singh as it sought to deny lower caste communities and Muslims their traditional rights of access and association with temple spaces amply prove this. The boundary represented by the Kunjbiḥārījī temple's towered gateway was enforced and strengthened through state violence and intimidation of the '*acchep*' or the '*ahindu*' in a context where Hindu identity was made available only to upper caste communities. Historians' uncritical acceptance of one-sided boundaries between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' in such contexts is made especially abhorrent in light of pervasive and documented instances of upper caste violence at such thresholds. As recently as 1987, upper caste communities at the Vallabha shrine in Nathdwara brutally assaulted campaigners working to gain entry for lower caste groups into the shrine, upholding an unofficial ban on the entry of Dalits and non-Hindus into the shrine.⁷²⁸ Seen in this light, the defensive architecture separating the Kunjbiḥārījī temple shrine from the street marks not the benign separation between the 'sacred' and the 'everyday', but the boundary between those who could attain ritual purity by taking a bath and those whose very bodies symbolized pollution.

To those communities labelled *acchep* by Marwar state under Bijai Singh, the intimidating gateway of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, flanked by statues of two soldiers atop elephants, signaled that their customary rights of access to Vaishnava spaces were now restricted or withdrawn and subject to the express permission from the state. Guards posted

⁷²⁷ See Sugata Ray echoing a local community's interpretations of a massive gateway at a Vallabha temple commissioned by the Bharatpur queen Ganga Devi in Vrindaban. Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion*, 2019, 102–4.

⁷²⁸ The incident resulted in police firing at upper caste rioters who attacked politicians working to secure entry for lower castes into Nathdwara. Tavleen Singh, "Historic Nathdwara Temple in Rajasthan Turns into a Hotbed of Caste-Related Tension," *India Today*, July 31, 1987, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/religion/story/19870731-historic-nathdwara-temple-in-rajasthan-turns-into-a-hotbed-of-caste-related-tension-799111-1987-07-31>; Debashis Debnath, "Hierarchies within Hierarchy : Some Observations on Caste System in Rajasthan," *Indian Anthropologist* 25, no. 1 (June 1995): 23–30.

at the gate who regulated entry into the structure reinforced this fact.⁷²⁹ The imposing architecture also signaled the might of the state, ready to defend these newly created upper caste Vaishnava spaces against the touch of the *acchep*. To the upper caste constituents this architecture addressed, the temple reinforced Bijai Singh's legitimacy and authority as a *dhārmik* Hindu king—the protector of brahmins and cows and the upholder of the caste system—, which was also transferred by association to Gulāb Rai, the patron of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple.

Multiple layers of barriers separate the deities Kunjbiḥārījī and Gangśyāmjī from the *bazār* spaces around them. Once within the thick outer gateway, a visitor is deposited in the temple's outer courtyard. If non-elite castes artisanal classes in Jodhpur managed to hold down provisional access to the temple premises as the *mocīs* of Merta did through prolonged protest,⁷³⁰ this is as close to the deity as they would have gotten. From here, they would have a view of the temple spire but no view of the idol. Any *darśan* of the deity would have had to take place in their mind's eye. This is so because the architecture of the temple is arranged as if to expressly prevent *darśan* of the deity from this outer courtyard. Even if the gate of the second enclosure was open, a sort of 'purdah wall' that creates an L-shaped path into the temple obstructs view into the sanctum. The wall obstructs the locking of eyes between the icon and a devotee standing in the outer courtyard—a necessary part of *darśan*—and seems designed to prevent excluded groups from even gazing directly at the idol from the outer courtyard, since even the sight of the untouchable could be considered polluting. In a similar fashion to the purdah wall, the massive gateway and the placement of the main shrine many meters away from the street precludes a view of the temple spire from the streets for those passing through the *bazār* in front.

Marwar under Bijai Singh witnessed the rise of an elite hindu identity conceived of in caste terms⁷³¹ that defined itself against the *acchep* or the 'untouchables', a label that was applied to a range of 'low caste' groups as well as Muslims. The boundaries of this upper caste Hindu identity were drawn up across all facets of life, but most notably in the

⁷²⁹ Guards were posted at the entrance of royal Vaishnava temples well into the twentieth century. This is confirmed by records related to the Gangśyāmjī temple from 1938. File no. DD 136 C 6/1C (15-11-1938) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁷³⁰ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects," 117–20.

⁷³¹ Cherian, "Ordering Subjects."

segregation of public spaces. The state in this period put its strength behind Jodhpur's mercantile elite, who held an oversized influence in the administration in this period, as it sought to strip long-held access to Vaishnava devotional spaces for those deemed *acchep* or untouchable. Spaces dominated by the Vallabha Sampradāya, the sectarian ideologies of which embraced vegetarianism, the hierarchical classification of society into *varṇās*, and a paradigm of sectarian exclusivity and purity that emphasized shunning of the 'other',⁷³² were central to the battle waged by elite Hindus in this period to segregate themselves from the *acchep*.

A distinct polarization of society  to upper caste 'Hindus' and the *acchep* which first took place in Jodhpur under Bijai Singh continued to dictate access to religious spaces for the latter well after the eighteenth century. Records from the twentieth century for example reveal incidents where concerns of pollution led the upper caste population of Jodhpur to rise up in protest and petition the state for redress, just as they did in the eighteenth century, though employing slightly different terminology. In one incident from 1938, a group of upper caste petitioners who called themselves the "sanatanists of Jodhpur" wrote to the government for redressal claiming that a European man had entered the Gangśyāmjī temple by accident, thus 'defiling' the temple and causing the deity to lose his powers. The petitioners drew attention to the fact that the temple does not allow non-Hindus and those of the "depressed classes"—the new *acchep*— to enter its premises. They then appealed for disciplinary action against the temple guards who allowed the man's entry and requested a complete *shuddhi* (purification) ceremony to be performed in order to repair the damage to the deity that had occurred because of the defilement.⁷³³ Though unimpressed by the demand, the government acquiesced to it. It also allocated funds for constructing special 'harijan'⁷³⁴ temples in Jodhpur in this period, thus preserving existing temples for elite

⁷³² On Vallabha Sampradāya's conformist approach to the *varṇāśramadharmā*, see Saha, "A Community of Grace." On the Vallabha Sampradāya's attitudes towards the 'other' including other Hindu sects, lower caste communities, and Muslims, see essays by Pauwels, Saha, and Dalmia in Dalmia and Faruqui, *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*. See also Burchett, "Bhakti Rhetoric in the Hagiography of 'Untouchable' Saints."

⁷³³ File no. DD 136 C 6/1C (15-11-1938) Major Head: Devasthan Dharampura, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁷³⁴ 'Harijan,' meaning people of god, is a pejorative term that began to be applied to Dalits in India starting in the twentieth century, having been popularized first through the writings of M. K. Gandhi in the 1930s.

castes.⁷³⁵ Even today, temples such as the Gangśyāmjī and the Kunjbihārījī remain upper caste spaces, with no entry allowed to non-Hindus and Dalits.

It is against the context of exclusionary social norms and practices outlined above, much of which continue into the present, that we can fully appreciate the architectural idiom of the Vaishnava temple as it was articulated in late eighteenth century Jodhpur in a milieu dominated by the ideology of the Vallabha Sampradāya. This idiom, with its emphasis on the separation between the world of upper caste *bhaktas* and the *acchep*, evolved in Jodhpur under royal patronage, resulting in a monumental hybrid temple stamped with royal authority. As expressed in two monumental royal temples, the Gangśyāmjī and the Kunjbihārījī, this architecture was able to evoke and crystallize the memories held in common by a newly established community of Vallabha devotees in Jodhpur under the patronage and protective embrace of state, while at the same time welcoming a new generation of potential elite entrants to the sect. Simultaneously, these temples and mechanisms of surveillance, security, and punitive action established around them reconstituted urban space, creating a heterogeneous community of newly declared ‘untouchables’ for whom the same buildings represented feelings of loss—of status, of livelihood, of access—and state-sanctioned marginalization in the city. The focus these two structures place on ‘protecting’ a minority upper caste elite and their spaces from contact with the majority *acchep* through multiple layers of barriers is crucial to a reading of architectural memory at these sites, and the ways in which this form of temple architecture that developed under royal patronage in late eighteenth century Jodhpur transmitted and continues to transmit radically different meanings to different social groups that frequent the *bazār* spaces in which they stand.

The influential Vaishnava mercantile elite’s efforts to corner resources in late eighteenth century Jodhpur was not restricted to temple spaces. Elite communities in this period also successfully lobbied the state citing concerns of purity and pollution to enforce the segregation of residential spaces in the city. Brahmans and merchants repeatedly lobbied the state in this period to eject communities labelled *acchep* from their neighbourhoods, seeking to create exclusively upper caste urban spaces and effectively

⁷³⁵ File no. 28 C /2/4-1 No.4724 (20.04.1949) Major Head: PWD, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

reorganizing formerly mixed residential patterns in Marwar's towns.⁷³⁶ The campaign for segregation also extended to access to sources of water. Restricted access to water was not a new phenomenon that emerged in Jodhpur under Bijai Singh. The 'lowliest' of castes within Rajasthan such as those who swept the streets, worked with carcasses, or collected human waste, were already heavily marginalized as 'untouchables' and cut off from communal resources. The abject state of these communities in Marwar is indicated by the fact that they appear to have been even beyond the sight of Bijai Singh's all-seeing bureaucratic network of spies and scribes who transmitted information to the king from all over the kingdom. They are thus conspicuously absent among ordinary men and women who often petitioned the Maharaja on various matters, a group that prominently included artisanal classes.⁷³⁷ Under Bijai Singh, this sphere of untouchability that once applied to the most marginalised groups was widened to include all but the upper caste elite, and weaponized to strip resources from a large spectrum of artisanal workers as well as those who professed Islam.⁷³⁸ Divya Cherian cites numerous instances where mercantile castes and Brahmans banded together in late eighteenth century under Bijai Singh to call on the state to enforce segregated access to water either by creating separate facilities for elites and the amorphous group of non-elite *acchep* castes and Muslims or by segregating the banks of large water bodies.⁷³⁹ Such efforts were often led by merchants, as was the case in Pali, where they asked the state to provide separate facilities for the *mahājans* (merchants), brahmins and other high caste groups to draw water without contact with the *acchep*. The state then decreed that the two groups were to use separate banks when using the town's tanks and wells, thus withdrawing rights of the equal access that artisanal classes in the city had until then enjoyed at public waterbodies.⁷⁴⁰ Such efforts by mercantile elites took place throughout Marwar in this period. In a majority of cases, the state supported upper caste demands for exclusivity. In some cases, separation was enforced on religious grounds, with the crown decreeing that Hindus and Muslims were to fill water at different wells.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁶ See Cherian, "Ordering Subjects," 130–45.

⁷³⁷ Cherian, 140. My experience with nineteenth century records from Jodhpur also supports Cherian's observation of this absence.

⁷³⁸ Cherian, 134–35.

⁷³⁹ Cherian, 130–45.

⁷⁴⁰ Cherian, 135.

⁷⁴¹ Cherian, 143.

The history of state-sponsored segregation and dispossession water resources from non-elites is vital context against which we can interpret the place that water bodies—a prominent genre among the building types traditionally sponsored by women patrons—occupied in the city of Jodhpur in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One level of exclusion in terms of access played out in the location of water resources. Most of them were placed close to the center of settlements where elites lived, while the most marginalised occupational castes are traditionally forced to occupy the edges of rural and urban settlements in Rajasthan. Given that patrons of water bodies were largely elite, these groups inevitably determined the location of water structures such as stepwells and tanks, with allowances for geographical determinants. The presence of water sources in turn determined residential patterns of different communities, as more powerful groups staked claim to localities where resources were abundant. Differential access to water is considered commonsense in Rajasthani villages even today, with upper castes using their social and economic capital to corner scarce water resources against resistance from marginalised groups.⁷⁴²

Tensions over elite refusal to allow common access to water resources crop up in official records related to water bodies in the city of Jodhpur in the early twentieth century. By the 1930s, public water tap connections had begun to be established in Jodhpur. However, most residents depended on large reservoirs in the city such as the Gulāb Sāgar and nearby Fateh Sāgar. Under colonial rule, equal access to water had been nominally established as a right, but caste-based conflicts over access to water bodies appear frequently in records of Public Works Department. For example, in 1936, the residents of the *kumbhāron kā mohalla* (potters colony) complained that the potters were preventing other castes living in the area from drawing water from their well.⁷⁴³ Records of the Public Works Department from the period also document campaigns by NGOs fighting to gain ‘harijans’ access to public water sources from which they had been kept out. In 1942, the Delhi chapter of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, an organization founded by Gandhi to advocate against untouchability and t entry of untouchables into spaces such as temples, wrote to the

⁷⁴² This phenomenon continues to this day. See Kathleen O’Reilly and Richa Dhanju, “Public Taps and Private Connections: The Production of Caste Distinction and Common Sense in a Rajasthan Drinking Water Supply Project,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39, no. 3 (July 2014): 373–86.

⁷⁴³ File no. 256/5934 (28-05-1936) Major Head: PWD, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

administration in Jodhpur, timidly stating: “In principle all wells and tanks built by the state should be open to Harijans also. But, as there is some opposition to the same at present, it seems advisable to construct Special Wells (sic) for the use of Harijans by the state at state expense in places where there is a large population of Harijans and there is scarcity of water.”⁷⁴⁴ The ministry endorsed this idea, keeping the status quo in place. Against this context, we can perhaps look anew at some of the architectural features of water bodies. One such feature is the *arhaṭ* or the water wheel that is placed on stepwells within the city to draw water from without having to descend into a well. Often, shallow rectangular stone water containers filled to the brim can be found next to where water wheels once stood. According to local accounts, these were meant for animals. While waterwheels were a necessary convenience, they would also have formed the basis for differential rights to the water contained in a structure whereby certain sections could be barred from entering the structure itself and asked instead to wait outside to be served water near the wheel. One can also postulate that at large tanks such as the Gulāb Sāgar, multiple entry points were used by different communities under rules of segregation that came to be normalized under Bijai Singh.

Orthodox concerns are prominently expressed in many petitions related to water bodies in early twentieth century, in the tradition of upper caste Hindu activism around water resources that mirror those expressed in the eighteenth century under Bijai Singh. Upper caste residents who lived around Gulāb Sāgar, for example, complained to the city in this period about “miscreants” who caught fish at the Gulāb Sāgar were hurting the sentiments of the religious people who feed the tank’s fish population as a holy act.⁷⁴⁵ When colonial administrators moved to prevent people from stepping within water sources citing concerns of hygiene, this was met with protest by upper caste populations who considered water brought up by pumps unfit for ritual use.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ File no. 254 (16.03.1942) Major Head: PWD, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁷⁴⁵ File no. 256 C/19/1-II (13.04.1934) Major Head: PWD, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

⁷⁴⁶ File no. 256/6400 (letter dated 01-05-1939) Major Head: PWD, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present Gulāb Rai's career as a patron in late eighteenth century Jodhpur from different perspectives centred on architecture's relationship to the city, community, and collective memory. In the process, it has sought to highlight her agency as a patron as well as her determined resistance, through the strategic use of architecture, of multiple attempts to erase her legacy, culminating in her assassination. What emerges through these explorations is not only a complex image of the patron Gulāb Rai and her monuments but also an image of a city, the urban landscape of which remained a highly contested space in the extended period covered here. The claims of different groups, all wielding varying amounts of power—the Vaishnava elites that rose to prominence with state patronage under Bijai Singh, Gulāb Rai and her entourage in Māylā Bāg, her opponents among the established courtly elite including the women of the zenana and Marwar's nobles the *thākurs*, the newly 'untouchable' inhabitants of the city, and a Nāth elite that assembled itself around Maharaja Mān Singh—overlapped and collided on Jodhpur's urban landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, producing the city.



Conclusion

This dissertation began with the story of an eighteenth century queen, Jai Kanwar Tunwar of Patan, and her first (and last) encounter with a stepwell she had commissioned in Jodhpur as she moved through city streets in a palanquin on her way to become *sati*. Enshrined in folklore, this encounter and the queen's alleged expression of dismay at finding out that the stepwell had not been built according to her strict specifications, is striking in their contradictions. Jai Kanwar, a powerful queen and patron, could bring a mammoth subterranean structure into existence at the heart of her capital city, but appears to have had neither access to nor complete control over the form it took. The questions that arose from this arresting tale inspired many of the thematic explorations that make up the four main chapters of this dissertation. In each of them, we have examined architectural patronage by zenana women in eighteenth and nineteenth century Jodhpur from different perspectives, illuminating a rich history of social encounters that took place around the creation and use of architectural edifices in an early modern Indian city. The dissertation describes the prevalence and significance of architectural patronage by women patrons in Jodhpur, the motives underlying this activity, and the people and processes that constituted it. It also examines the organization of life in Jodhpur's zenana, as well as issues of agency, memory, and the afterlives in the city of the monuments that zenana women commissioned.

Each of the four preceding chapters has examined a related set of questions around a theme, tapping into both archival and material sources to find answers. In the process, the architectural patronage of the Jodhpur zenana has been contextualized against wide-ranging evidence of women's involvement in architectural patronage in Jodhpur as well as surrounding regions, demonstrating that the sponsorship of monuments was common practice among elite women in western India throughout its history. This activity was shaped, among other factors, by the particularities of the region's desert geography and cultural ideals emerging from it. The assessment that elite women in the region engaged widely with architectural patronage should pave the way for more studies centered on the women and patronage examining Rajasthan and surrounding regions.

By sifting through archival records of the zenana, this dissertation has demonstrated that architectural production in early nineteenth century Jodhpur was only made possible by

the concerted efforts of an astonishing array of groups who were brought together at construction sites across the city through the corralling of resources that zenana patrons set in motion. This fact challenges dominant art historical narratives surrounding agency in architectural production in pre and early modern India, which place undue importance on certain hegemonic *jāti* identities (rajput in this case) and privileged subject positions (patron, architect, artist). In unearthing the ways in which zenana women, who occupied marginal positions in mainstream dynastic narratives, used architecture to claim a place for themselves in the collective memory of Jodhpur's inhabitants, this work has drawn attention to a hitherto unknown aspect of women's architectural patronage in the region. The dissertation has also demonstrated that, in addition to reifying the presence, influence, and memories of zenana women on the urban fabric, the architecture sponsored by them was embedded in contestations over urban space that unfolded in Jodhpur in the early modern period, especially a state-driven campaign in the late eighteenth century to enforce caste-segregation in cities across Marwar.

The patrons we have examined throughout this study, whether belonging to royal rajput lineages or otherwise proximate to power as concubines or foster mothers, used architecture to establish visibility, claim exemplary status as devout, generous, and loyal queens and consorts, and stake control of urban space towards multiple ends; from the creation of commercial real estate to carving out a place for themselves in collective memory. Much of their architectural output in Jodhpur and surrounding regions took the form of water bodies and associated gardens, or temples to various Hindu deities. They were able to act as patrons both because of the independent financial resources that they had access to as members of the royal family, as well as their ability to marshal people and material resources using a network of employees who acted as intermediaries between zenana women and the world at large. Considering the desert and semi-desert geography of the Western India, extensive patronage of water architecture by zenana woman is worthy of attention. As scholars of urbanization in Rajasthan have shown, water architecture was fundamental to human settlements in the region. Seen in this light, the earliest example of women's patronage in Jodhpur, a fifteenth century water tank known as the Rāṅṅīsar, assumes significance as one of the foundational monuments of this urban settlement.

The Jodhpur zenana, where the patrons examined in this study lived much of their lives, was a space tightly regulated by administrators and servants tasked with upholding the rules of *purdah*. However, as Chapter 2 has demonstrated, it was also a porous space, traversed daily by myriad artisanal and service communities that inhabited the city as well as the personal servants and agents of zenana women. Information flowed freely through the networks that connected zenana women to the world outside, keeping them abreast of developments at construction sites or in their revenue villages. Various artisanal communities and intermediaries, whether based in Jodhpur or in revenue villages of individual zenana women were bound to royal women and the zenana institution through enduring relationships of patronage and clientship. Such bonds were sustained across generations by zenana women through generous gifts (*inām*) in acknowledgment of services as well as various customary payments made at life cycle rituals such as weddings and births in a dependent's family.

As we have seen, zenana women were able to engage in architectural production both because of their access to an independent income from land revenue allocations and their ability to command the service of skilled artisans, supervisory staff, labourers, and other groups who could execute a construction project on their behalf. The cooperation of artisanal communities involved in construction were won not only through salaries and wages but also through the presentation of *inām* and their symbolic incorporation into a patron's project through ritual presentation of offerings that marked major milestones in construction. Women patrons were also able to leverage their networks in the city and across the region, especially those linking them to their *paṭṭā* villages around Jodhpur, to direct building supplies to construction sites in Jodhpur, all the while maintaining lives of relative seclusion in the royal zenana.

As chapter after chapter in this dissertation has mined different sources, ideas of authorship and agency with respect to an architectural structure have progressively widened. We have thus moved from paying concentrated attention to the life and careers of zenana women patrons in the first chapters to an expanded field consisting of innumerable other actors—architects, artisans, labourers, intermediaries, traders, genealogists, users of urban space—all of whom exercised claims on the monuments discussed. By using construction *bahīs* as a major source, Chapter 3 has demonstrated that an astonishing array

of agents were directly or indirectly involved in the execution of an architectural project. Each of them exercised agency in the process of architectural creation. This suggests that we need alternatives to dominant models that conceptualize agency as held by the patron or the architect alone. A useful way to conceptualise agency in architectural production as it unfolded in nineteenth century Jodhpur is to view it as a distributed phenomenon—as *distributed agencies*—that circulated within the networks that a patron set in motion.

The decisions that zenana women made as patrons of architecture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were intimately connected to the political contexts that shaped their lives. As the Maharajas Bijai Singh and Mān Singh cultivated proximity to sects such as the Vallabha Sampradāya and Nāth Sampradāya respectively, in no small part to shore up their hold on the throne, zenana women directed their investments in architecture in service of public expressions of royal devotion to these groups. In so doing, they became active participants and drivers of temple-building programs that radically reshaped Jodhpur's commercial centers. The large number of Nāth temples that zenana women commissioned across Jodhpur in the nineteenth century, as well as the monumental temple to the Vallabha Sampradāya commissioned in the late eighteenth century by the *pāsvān* Gulāb Rai are testaments to this.

Gulāb Rai's monuments in Jodhpur, the  form the focus of Chapter 4, are remarkable examples of the transformative nature of zenana women's architectural interventions in the city. When analysed through the prism of memory, they point us to the ways in which patrons used architecture to inscribe their presences onto the fabric of the city and the collective memory of inhabitants. Collective memories of zenana women patrons that circulated around their monuments did not remain static. They were constantly renewed and reconstituted by those who inhabited their monuments and the spaces around them long after the patrons had left the scene. Architectural forms encapsulated multiple, sometimes contradictory memories for communities that lived in and around them, and who used or were excluded from built spaces. A distinct form of the Vallabhite Vaishnava temple, employing many elements of defensive and exclusionary architecture, was established as the royal idiom under Gulāb Rai and Bijai Singh's patronage. An analysis of this architectural form using the framework of architectural memory gives us access to the contestations underway in Jodhpur in this period over access to urban spaces, especially sacred spaces

such as temples and water bodies. Upper caste solidarities built around Vaishnava spaces and beliefs and bolstered by the might of the state sought in this period to reorder the spatial organization of the city to push lower caste groups such as artisans to the margins. As demonstrated by the case of Gulāb Rai's Kunjbiḥārījī temple, the architecture of zenana women, however marginalised their patrons themselves were by their own caste locations, was shaped by and was instrumental to strategies pursued by the state in this period to carve out exclusively upper caste urban spaces by expelling groups it designated as 'untouchables'.

When considered together, the various interdisciplinary explorations that make up this dissertation form both a social history of architectural production in early modern India, as well as an alternative history of the city of Jodhpur that examines its historic architecture—what might today be characterized as the city's architectural 'heritage'— from marginalised perspectives, such as that of women, or of lower caste laboring communities including artisans, who are rarely acknowledged as builders of the city. I believe there is much to be gained from such an examination, both in terms of academic explorations that can illuminate hitherto unexplored aspects of the history of architecture in South Asia, as well as in terms of knowledge creation that, when disseminated, can transform the experience of urban spaces for locals and visitors alike and aid movements that seek to create a more equitable city.

Whose Heritage? Architecture and Community in a 'Royal City'

Anyone who has lived in Jodhpur know it to be a tangled, disorienting web of sensations. Vastly different periods coexist on the city's fabric. On every street in the thickly populated walled city stand eighteenth and nineteenth century gateways and multi-storied sandstone buildings with protruding facades that hang heavy with centuries of inhabitation. Below them, the streets are raucous with traffic. Centuries-old structures jostle for space with newer buildings all over the old city. Markets, temples, mosques, and water bodies dot the teeming urban sprawl. At street corners circled by narrow drains, plastic waste accumulates next to old stone vessels that locals dutifully fill with water and sometimes food for animals and birds—keeping up a strong Marwari ethic of making provisions of life available to wanderers of all kinds. Soot from vehicles and the fine red dust that blows in from the

desert coat every surface here. Narrow alleys of the old city market districts that encircle the Jodhpur fort to the southeast are crowned by a mess of wires that hang precariously over the heads of pedestrians. Two wheelers and rickshaws whiz and wobble through these ways, leaving a trail of black smoke, dust, and noise. In many of these streets, all it takes is for a wandering cow and rickshaw to come face to face to create a jam that halts all traffic and brings the honking of motorcyclists to a crescendo.

The population of the walled city⁷⁴⁷ lives across various *mohallas* that largely preserve their caste-based segregated organization dating back to the late eighteenth century or earlier. Upper caste groups live in neighborhoods that historically lay closest to the main entrance of the citadel, Mehrangarh. Around the mouth of the old gateway into Mehrangarh fort, called Fateh Pol, lies Brahmpuri, a quarter inhabited exclusively by Brahmins and other upper caste groups such as Hindu and Jain merchants. These communities once dominated the state's erstwhile royal bureaucracy. Aspects of life in this part of the walled city seem to continue unchanged from centuries past. If you walk around Brahmpuri at mid-day, as the families get busy with washing and cleaning, sewage will cover your feet as it overflows the small drains that line the streets. Meanwhile, the upper floor inhabitants of old *havelīs* can be seen throwing bags of garbage from their windows aiming for the drains. Donkeys pass through carrying sacks of sand or other goods. Municipality workers—often members of the lowest of castes inhabiting the city who are tasked with removing its waste with neither protective equipment nor any acknowledgment of their labour—pass through with their carts and brooms within sight of upper caste shop owners who survey the streets from their ground floor establishments. As you move out of Brahmpuri into the more commercial districts of the city, the neighborhoods begin to change. The city's significant Muslim population (about 17 percent of the total) is settled in areas to the south and southeast, away from the Brahmin quarters. The iconic tower of the historic Ek Minārī Masjid stands amidst commercial streets that lie towards the south of the fort. The main commercial streets within the walled city are laid out to the south and southeast of the hill on which Mehrangarh, the citadel of the Rathores, stands, encompassing such areas as Dhān Maṇḍī, Āḍā Bazār, Sarāfa Bazār, Kaṭlā Bazār, Ghās Maṇḍī,

⁷⁴⁷ Jodhpur city as a whole has now burst out of the walls. Around 10 million people inhabit it, according to the most recent census reports. "Jodhpur City Population Census 2011-2021," accessed May 12, 2021, <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/80-jodhpur.html#literacy>.

and Tripolia Bazār. Lined with shops selling everything from brooms to wedding attire, these market areas are one of the busiest in the walled city. The old commercial districts of the city that spread outwards from the main street leading to Fateh Pol gate of the fort culminate at the Clock Tower Market square (Fig. 5.1). On a normal day, this large stone paved square teems with both Jodhpuris and rural communities from around the city who gather here to buy goods ranging from grains and vegetables to second hand sarees and shawls. A greater number and diversity of people from around surrounding the region frequent this area than markets lying closer to Brahmपुरi, with tourists thrown into the mix. Just outside the Clock Tower square, horse carts, buses, and *jugāḍ*⁷⁴⁸ vehicles that ply between Jodhpur's commercial centres and settlements located in surrounding rural areas wait for passengers.

Within this maze of neighbourhoods and markets in the walled city, tourism, one of largest economic activities in Jodhpur as well as many other cities in Rajasthan, is concentrated in a handful of enclaves. The main focal point for tourists coming to the city is the Jodhpur fort, Mehrangarh, as well as a number of other monuments—such as the opulent twentieth century palace and hotel the Umaid Bhawan palace, the Jaswant Thāḍā cenotaph, Mandore Garden, and the Rao Jodha Desert Park. The erstwhile royal family directly controls all but one of these sites. The first, and usually the only historical figure that most tourists encounter is the city's avowed founder—the chieftain Rao Jodha, whose triumphant statue crowns a hillock next to the fort. The more well heeled tourists that arrive in Jodhpur stay in a handful of luxury hotels of which only one is located inside the walled city.⁷⁴⁹ They largely move across the aforementioned sights in packaged hospitality 'bubbles'⁷⁵⁰ arranged by these hotels, with little contact with the city at large. International backpackers, middle class domestic travellers, and other adventurous itinerants congregate in mid- to low-priced accommodations in two main areas of the walled city. One is the so-called 'blue city' or Brahmपुरi, so named for the blue paint used on the walls of houses in this part of the city. Here, several dominant caste families with ancestral residences have converted them into small-scale hotels or 'homestays' for tourists. The other is the area

⁷⁴⁸ These are three-wheeled rickshaw-like vehicles attached to motorcycle engines. They are not permitted by law but are commonly used by privately run services in rural north central and western India where state run transportation system are either unreliable or non-existent. *Jugāḍ* refers to a culture of 'make-do' involving creative and often unpredictable use of scarce resources to achieve an end.

⁷⁴⁹ The hotel located inside the walled city is the Raas Haveli, located right above Tunwarjī kā Jhālā.

⁷⁵⁰ See Introduction, Carol E. Henderson, ed., *Raj Rhapsodies: Tourism, Heritage and the Seduction of History*, New Directions in Tourism Analysis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

surrounding the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā, commissioned by the queen Jai Kanwar Tunwar, which has recently become the focus of a wave of privately funded, tourism centric real estate development centered on a Havelī-turned luxury hotel owned by a member of the erstwhile rajput aristocracy on the banks of the stepwell. Many cheap backpacker hotels and hostels are also located around the *jhālṛā*. The quarter around the stepwell is connected to major attractions in and around Mehrangarh by a steep path that leads uphill to the fort. Apart from visiting the fort and allied attractions owned by the erstwhile royal family, visitors to the city who stay in and around these two areas build their experience of Jodhpur around a handful of local sights. These include the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā, the nearby Gulāb Sāgar (which can be viewed from the terraces of cafes run by the luxury Havelī hotel on the banks of the *jhālṛā*), the Clock Tower Square, and adjoining market districts. All of these can be approached easily on foot from both Brahmpuri and the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā quarter. In some cases, the tourist checklist for an ‘authentic’ or ‘out of the way’ experience of the city sometimes include a few eateries and major temples that occupy the market districts, such as Gulāb Rai’s Kunjbihārījī Mandir located in Kaṭlā Bazār. Conspicuously absent from tourist brochures and walks are sites such as the eighteenth century tower of the Ek Minārī Masjid, or the cremation grounds and cenotaphs of Jodhpur’s concubines in Kaaga, the impoverished area surrounding which is largely inhabited by lower caste groups.

Since the 1990s, the state of Rajasthan has emerged as one of the most prominent destinations in India for both international and domestic tourists. The state’s tourism and hospitality economy and infrastructure is mainly built around what are known as ‘heritage properties’—historic buildings repurposed as hotels, museums, and parks to attract travellers. In Jodhpur, as in other erstwhile royal capital cities in Rajasthan, a historically privileged, landed rajput aristocracy has appropriated an oversized share of the income that started to pour in to the state as the tourist economy began to expand in the 1990s. This is because elite rajputs control most of Rajasthan’s ‘tourist assets’, such as its fabled forts, palaces, and other ‘heritage architecture’ on which the tourism economy, as it is now, rests. Various kinds of monuments owned and controlled by erstwhile rajput royals are projected as the essence of Rajasthan’s history and culture in many publicly funded tourism campaigns produced by the state government. As Carol E Henderson has remarked, texts and visuals related to tourism marketing portray Rajasthan as a place where visitors both foreign and

domestic can experience a 'royal past.'⁷⁵¹ In this discourse, the state's heritage is equated with a royal and hence rajput past. The 'other pasts' of the region, such as the history of peasant struggles against rajput lords and the zamindari system or the nationalist independence movement that achieved the state's incorporation into India are completely absent in this narrative that is transmitted through clichéd phrases and images that invite the tourist to temporarily experience life as a royal rajput.⁷⁵² Lower caste groups such as artisans, nomadic tribespeople and performers, or other landless laboring groups are only invoked in tourism campaigns as peripheral presences, figures who are romanticized as timeless, colourful, and rural. To travellers, their poverty and struggles to survive in a rapidly changing and hostile economy act as a foil that often perversely enhances their experience of the opulent modernity and ease offered by 'heritage' hotels.

In his study of the impacts of tourism on the urban topography of the city of Udaipur, one of Rajasthan's top tourism destinations alongside Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Jaisalmer, Nicolas Bautès notes that almost all of the city's tourism assets as well as the narratives within which they are couched are controlled by one royal rajput family and its dependents. He points to the ways in which these 'dominant social actors' use their control over monuments and the apathetic attitude of the democratically elected but cash-strapped city administration to reinforce their (hegemonic) positions in the city's social system. Moreover, the royal family, the Sisodiyās, are seeking to create a 'city within the city' project, by proposing to carve out a distinct, privately controlled tourism zone within Udaipur. When accomplished, the 'city within a city' will solidify existing divisions between the city at large and parts of it where tourism is now concentrated, in addition to consolidating the royal family's control over the latter.⁷⁵³

If one examines how the tourism economy operates in Jodhpur, a similar dynamic as in Udaipur can be seen at play. Much of the lucrative, high-end heritage-based tourism in Jodhpur is directly under the control of the Rathore royal family descended from erstwhile kings. The rest is controlled by various branches of aristocratic rajputs related to the royal family who own several palatial residences cum heritage hotels in the city. A similar program

⁷⁵¹ Henderson, 61–81.

⁷⁵² Henderson, 61–81.

⁷⁵³ Nicolas Bautès, "Exclusion and Election in Udaipur Urban Space: Implications of Tourism," in *Raj Rhapsodies: Tourism, Heritage and the Seduction of History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 89–106.

of tourism real estate development as Udaipur's 'city within a city', owned and led by private rajput stakeholders, is also in the works in Jodhpur, called the JDH Program.⁷⁵⁴ When it comes to gaining access even to the trickle-down dollars from tourist arrivals to Jodhpur, dispossessed lower caste groups such as artisans, performers, and others who control neither land nor capital are dependent on the generosity of elite rajputs who control the spaces where the city's 'heritage', and thus tourism is concentrated. Elite rajput hotel owners might employ lower caste groups as servants or as entertainers in their restaurants or festivals. They might also allow them to sing or sell their wares next to royal monuments to add 'local colour' to these spaces. They might also act as promoters of 'folk' traditions and art in the global economy. However, as I have witnessed, many of these relationships follow age-old hierarchies that govern transactions between lower caste populations and local rajput lords in Rajasthan, locking vulnerable communities into new forms of servitude and humiliation in the tourism economy.

The alienation of majority populations, especially landless lower caste communities, from the fruits of tourism-related economic development in Rajasthan's cities and villages is directly linked to the ability of the landed elite of the region, comprising of rajput landholders as well as allied upper caste groups such as brahmins and *mahājans*, to hold on to grossly disproportionate amounts of productive land and other lucrative real estate even after the feudal zamindari system of land ownership was abolished upon the state's incorporation into the Indian union. By using aliases among other means, elite rajputs illegally subverted post-independence land reforms in the state that were meant to redistribute zamindari holdings and achieve egalitarian access to land resources.⁷⁵⁵ As a result, even after decades of rule by democratically elected governments, they were able to hold on to much of their monopoly on arable land and other ancestral holdings. Royal rajputs and other landed groups also entered electoral politics in large numbers after the state's independence, using their entrenched power to dominate local and national politics and set priorities in their favour. All of these factors are tied to the emphasis placed on

⁷⁵⁴ Those involved in this project include the Mehrangarh Museum Trust run by the royal family as well as the developers of the Raas Haveli luxury hotel on Tunwarji kā Jhārā. Abhilasha Ojha, "The Evolution of Jodhpur's Walled City," *Architectural Digest India*, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/the-evolution-of-jodhpurs-walled-city>.

⁷⁵⁵ Michael Levien, *Dispossession without Development: Land Grabs in Neoliberal India* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 91–109.

‘rajput cultural heritage’ and ‘rajput history’ in narratives about Rajasthan and its history that are churned out for the consumption of tourists and locals alike. As a result, the history of Rajasthani cities such as Jodhpur, which were built up and sustained over the centuries by mostly lower caste labour, is often recounted as the history of rajputs alone. As I realised during my years in the Jodhpur, the urban landscape here is experienced by both tourists and many locals through narratives that put rajputs, especially a male line of kings starting with Rao Jodha, at the center, unmindful of the histories of the laboring castes or of generations of powerful zenana women, especially non-rajput concubines. Even monuments in Jodhpur that are now technically under state control, such as Tunwarjī kā jhālṛā, are interpreted only through a royalist lens, with no references to the histories of local artisanal castes or other communities whose labour and expertise built this impressive monument, or whose histories are entwined with the site. On the terrace of this *jhālṛā* stands an Islamic shrine dedicated to the saint Jeevan Shah Baba. This shrine, which represents the local Muslim community’s entanglements with the site, is nowhere acknowledged in the tourism discourse surrounding the monument.

The monopoly exercised by rajputs and other allied dominant castes over both tourism narratives as well as ‘heritage’ real estate assets has created in Jodhpur what Bautès in the case of Udaipur has termed the division of the urban landscape into ‘tourist sector’ and a ‘non-tourist sector’. As he argues, the strategies adopted by ‘dominant actors’ who control tourism assets to preserve their monopoly over the ‘tourist sector’, has transformed it into a zone of social exclusion.⁷⁵⁶ The division of the urban landscape into tourism and non-tourism sectors that Bautès notes is not only a topographic effect, but also a division of urban communities. In Jodhpur, it separates a minority population—largely upper caste and exercising ownership or control over ‘heritage buildings’ and other tourism assets and profiting disproportionately from visitors arriving to consume this ‘heritage’ at these sites—from historically dispossessed castes who lack the capital, whether in terms of land, monuments, or social connections that give them proximity or access to the kinds of ‘heritage’ that is deemed worthy of consumption. Exclusionary rajput centric narratives on Jodhpur’s history and heritage are repeatedly reinforced in narratives of the city that both tourists and local encounter, whether in tourism ads, museum tours, or in academic

⁷⁵⁶ Bautès, “Exclusion and Election in Udaipur Urban Space: Implications of Tourism.”

discourse. As tourism-related economic activity has boomed in Rajasthan, even castes lower in the social hierarchy, especially ascendant landed middle castes who operate small hotels and tourist establishments in urban centers, have embraced this version of history and propagate it as way to legitimize their place in the tourism economy.⁷⁵⁷ However, those lower in the social system, especially many landless artisanal castes, or the formerly ‘untouchable’⁷⁵⁸ Dalit inhabitants of the city who are still locked into menial, often humiliating work such as sanitation and waste collection in Jodhpur and other Rajasthani cities, have neither access to this economy nor a place in its narratives.

The centering of rajputs in discourses that are used to interpret and elevate historic monuments that lie scattered all over Jodhpur city have resulted in the alienation of a majority of the city’s population from the architecture that surrounds them, all of which are now deemed (rajput) ‘heritage’ within a heritage tourism economy that benefits a few. The alienation of majority populations from their collective architectural heritage has had consequences that are rarely remarked on. A constant theme among those who control the tourist sector in Jodhpur is the need for ‘heritage conservation.’ Jodhpur teems with monuments that are 200 or 300 years old but have no protected status; these include scores of water bodies crumbling under trash all over the city or temples that have been ‘encroached upon’ for various reasons. Those with heavy stakes in the tourism sector have resorted to various methods to ‘protect’ these monuments. Some of these projects have been remarkable successes from the point of view of architectural conservation. An example is the Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā, which was recently cleaned and restored on the initiative of a rajput-run luxury ‘havelī hotel’ on the banks of the stepwell. While the restoration of the structure brought innumerable benefits to the hotel, which uses its location on the banks of the structure to great advantage, it has also made the stepwell available as a common space to locals who swim in its now-clean waters (Fig. 5.2). However, the restoration of this quarter has also meant the gradual takeover of many nearby properties by developers, including the owners of the luxury hotel nearby, as part of a private ‘redevelopment’ plan that seeks to gentrify the area to create a high-end tourism enclave centered on the *jhālṛā*.

⁷⁵⁷ Nicolas Bautès notes this form of identification with rajput history, driven by economic imperatives, in Udaipur. See Bautès. This likely also holds true for Jodhpur where some mid-level ‘heritage sites’ such as the Tijā Mājīsa temple are now controlled by wealthy individuals from landed middle castes such as *jāṭṣ*.

⁷⁵⁸ I must note from personal experience that untouchability is practiced widely in Jodhpur even today.

The long-term consequences of this are not hard to imagine—the expulsion of small property holders and the intensification of the hold over this area and its economy of an already powerful aristocratic business interests.

‘Dominant actors’ in Jodhpur’s tourism sector often organize cleaning drives to draw attention to the current sorry state of stepwells, tanks, cenotaphs and other monuments that lie scattered across the city. During my years in the city working for the Mehrangarh Museum Trust that runs the fort museum, I too participated in some of these drives, where groups of professionals broadly related to the ‘tourist sector’ of the city were bussed in to clean stepwells or tanks in various localities in the city as a way to spread awareness. On one such visit, we cleaned the cenotaphs of Jodhpur’s concubines, which lie buried under mountains of trash in one of the poorest areas of the city, inhabited largely by Dalits and other impoverished communities. On another occasion, we cleaned a stepwell in Mahāmandir, the erstwhile township of the Nāths just outside the city. As could be expected, these cleaning drives achieved next to nothing. Whatever trash we managed to remove returned within days of our leaving, as underlying problems such as the lack of effective waste management and the low value attached to sanitation work in the city remained unaddressed. When these attempts failed, campaigners and conservationists from the tourism industry that I encountered often proposed fencing off monuments to prevent vandalism, or deputing security guards to guard against trash throwers. It struck me, as it would have many others, that the people who lived in communities surrounding monuments were the ones who could sustainably safeguard these structures. However, in most cases, especially outside main tourist zones mentioned earlier, most local communities neither had any sense of ownership of the monuments in their localities (even if, arguably some of their ancestors had toiled to build or maintain them in the last centuries) nor had they ever benefited from the tourist economy built around architectural heritage in Jodhpur. This was especially true in areas of the city where poorer, lower caste populations of the city lived. When groups organised by rajput and other dominant-caste purveyors of tourism, or individuals associated with them landed up at ‘abandoned’ heritage sites on cleaning drives and visits, local communities resident in the area often reacted with suspicion, fearing that these spaces would soon be brought under the control of these elites and fenced off to locals. To many local groups, the heritage and conservation discourse introduced by

powerful groups that were intent on developing the tourism potential of sites in their community represented a threat, as their own claims on the site were sure to be erased in the process of recreating and commodifying a local ruin as a ‘heritage monument’. These fears were well founded. In recent years in Jodhpur, the royal family has lobbied the government to retake control through long-term leases of former royal estates that had been converted into public utilities in the twentieth century. Many monuments in the city, such as the Nāth temples built in the nineteenth century by Man Singh and his zenana, as well as the Sur Sāgar lake palace, were handed over to the colonial government to be used as schools and other public amenities in the early twentieth century by erstwhile Maharajas such as Jodhpur’s Umaid Singh (r. 1918-47) who sought to repurpose these spaces for public good. In recent years, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, run by the royal family, has lobbied for their return citing conservation needs and the potential for redevelopment. The trust has succeeded, for instance, in taking back control over Sur Sāgar Palace by ejecting a government school that had been running within the palace.⁷⁵⁹ It has since initiated an ambitious conservation program to restore this palace and its grounds to what they were before the colonial-era takeover, which saw parts of the palace used a residence for English officials before being turned into a school. However well-intentioned and grounded in legitimate concerns of architectural conservation the recent takeover of Sur Sāgar palace might be, it does mean that the local community that once freely roamed its premises and the children from poor families⁷⁶⁰ who attended school there have now lost access to its spaces which, upon conservation, await monetization as a new attraction in Jodhpur’s royal ‘heritage’ topography. It can be reliably predicted that none of the revenues from this redevelopment will reach the communities residing around the palace whose claims on the structure remain unacknowledged.

⁷⁵⁹ The school was presumably relocated to a new building in the area.

⁷⁶⁰ Government schools in Rajasthan are universally considered of such poor quality that only the poorest families enrol their children in them. This state of things is the result of years of determined government divestment from public education meant to benefit a thriving private sector dominated by dubious institutions that have capitalized on the educational aspirations of rural and urban communities. “Rajasthan Govt’s Move to Privatise School Education Draws Flak,” Hindustan Times, September 7, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/education/rajasthan-govt-s-move-to-privatise-school-education-draws-flak/story-XgnOkcAElbfH9eefJ8U8IK.html>; Shreya Roy Chowdhury, “In Rajasthan, Villagers Protest as Government Plans Private Management for Schools It Did Not Build,” Text, Scroll.in (<https://scroll.in>), accessed May 24, 2021, <https://scroll.in/article/863718/dozens-of-rajasthan-villages-oppose-private-management-for-their-government-schools>.

Largely upper caste campaigners and business interests from the tourism sector working to conserve architectural monuments in Jodhpur, often towards commercial ends, concentrate their attention on architectural monuments, but have no interest in communities inhabiting these areas or the unequal distribution of tourism income in the city that has widened existing inequalities of caste. Nor do they acknowledge the purging of the history of laboring productive castes from narratives built around the city's architectural heritage, and the denial to them of the economic benefits of architectural preservation. Both of these factors have resulted in the alienation of the city's majority populations from the built heritage that surrounds them and of which they are rightful custodians and protectors. On the contrary, many conservationists in the city push narratives that criminalize the poor, especially poor and lower caste male youth who use historic sites lying outside official heritage circuits as hangouts. This criminalization is masked as conservation concerns that necessitate security guards, fences, pad locks and so on, leading to tightening elite control over formerly open spaces and a complete lack of acknowledgment of the discontent brewing underneath sanitized, apolitical, and caste-free discourses on heritage.

Correcting the exclusionary nature of the tourism economy in Jodhpur would involve a radical redistribution of the economic benefits of tourism through investments in the most impoverished communities in the city with the aim of providing pathways out of unending cycles of precarious, subsistence levels of existence. A democratically elected government must necessarily lead such a process. A redistribution of economic benefits must be accompanied by a challenge to narratives of the city that claim its architectural heritage, on which the tourist economy rests, as the exclusive heritage of elite dominant caste communities alone. This can only be done by recuperating the claims of the city's many laboring castes on its architectural heritage both as builders and as users. Writing the histories of these marginalized urban groups back into the narratives surrounding the city's historic architecture will strengthen their claims to a just share of the income now arising from such sites.

As a historian with ties to Jodhpur and an understanding of the repeated privileging of an ethnically defined masculine 'rajput culture' in the way the city is framed for both its inhabitants and visitors, I see this book as a partial attempt at writing the histories of traditionally marginalised groups back into the discourses surrounding the city's

architectural history, thus widening the claims that can be made its built 'heritage'. This has meant writing a history of Jodhpur's urban architecture that views built spaces from the perspectives of women, including and especially women of non-dominant castes who are rarely acknowledged as builders of urban spaces, as well as various low caste communities who physically erected and have for centuries sustained what we call the city through their labour. While no one book can do justice to this task, I hope this modest study centred on the architecture sponsored by the Jodhpur zenana and co-produced by a range of communities, is a step in that direction.

Landscapes of Memory: The Cities of 'Others'

In her book on the urban sociology of Bangalore, Smriti Srinivas uses the term 'landscapes of urban memory' to refer to the ways in which a city is recollected and experienced differently by various groups inhabiting it.⁷⁶¹ Each of these various, often divergent landscapes of memory refer to particular histories, sites, bodies, and ritual practices shared by a community. Different landscapes of memory exist side by side, though some take predominance. In the case of Jodhpur, the most dominant landscapes of memory inscribed on the city are those that term it a "royal city", "rajput city", "blue city" and so on. However, underlying these hegemonic narratives of memory put forth by powerful groups are 'other' landscapes of memory that represent the city as recollected by non-dominant communities. Some of these can be understood to be lying dormant, needing interventions to activate them and bring them back into the collective conscience. To me, the monuments covered in this study and the collective memories and practices surrounding them represent the potential for alternate recollections and experiences of Jodhpur, which see the city from the perspectives of marginalised groups of inhabitants. Such dormant landscapes of memory or dormant geographies of the city can include "the city of zenana women", "the city of the stone masons", "the city of women lime workers," or the "the city of Gulāb Rai", among others. In addition to being an academic work on the intersections of art history, architectural history, and urban studies, this work is an incomplete effort to activate some of

⁷⁶¹ Smriti Srinivas, *Landscapes of Urban Memory: The Sacred and the Civic in India's High-Tech City* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). I must note that Srinivas completely sidesteps caste oppression and the role of upper castes as perpetrators in the processes she claims to describe through which the lower caste communities she examines (who are often referred to in the book as 'backward classes') were dispossessed of their landholdings in the city.

these dormant landscapes. When recovered and put into conversation with more dominant landscapes of memory, dormant, marginalised landscapes have the potential to resist and complicate narratives that claim Jodhpur for a line of kings, for the rajput elite, or for vague, exclusionary, notions of heritage. By examining and speaking of the city from marginalised perspectives, this dissertation seeks to highlight the agentive roles played by a variety of groups other than the male rajput elite in producing Jodhpur's architectural heritage, thus widening and defending their long-ignored and increasingly threatened claims on these spaces and the city as a whole.

This project started as a desire on my part to excavate women's agentive roles in building the city of Jodhpur, challenging oft-repeated histories that reinforce the myth that the city was "founded" and built by a procession of elite rajput men alone. In the process of investigating zenana women's roles as builders of the city, I realised that a focus on gender alone was not sufficient. Missing, alongside women, from the narratives of Jodhpur are the stories of the myriad labouring castes that raised, in every sense of that word, the buildings that we know as the historic city, and whose legacies had been erased by historians' devotion to male rajput elites. Thus, as the project developed, its focus has widened to consider the agencies of artisans, male and female labourers, and a variety of different communities who toiled at construction sites across the city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to build the monuments that women patrons commissioned. Towards the last chapter, we have also considered the way spaces built by these collective energies were shaped both during and after their construction by their relationships to communities in the city—especially those who were excluded from these spaces. By stringing together these various threads in an interdisciplinary study on women's patronage of architecture in an early modern Indian city, what I hope to have created is an alternative history of Jodhpur that renders the city visible from peripheral or marginalised vantage points, in the process remaking our collective experience of the urban fabric today. Jodhpur is the city of its zenana women, the city of *silāvats*, the city of the *mālī* and the *mālaṇ*, the city of the *nājar*, and of all those who have lived and perished here.

Illustrations

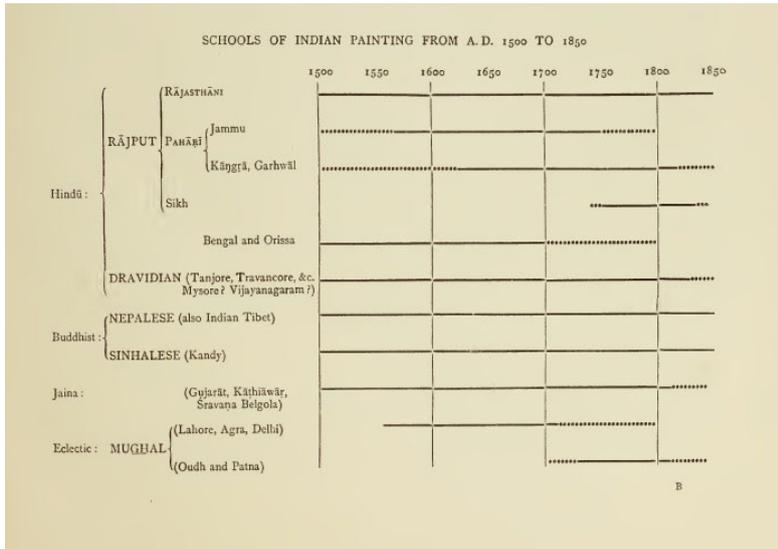


Figure 0.1 Schools of Indian Painting from A.D. 1500 to 1850, from Coomaraswamy's 'Rajput Painting'.

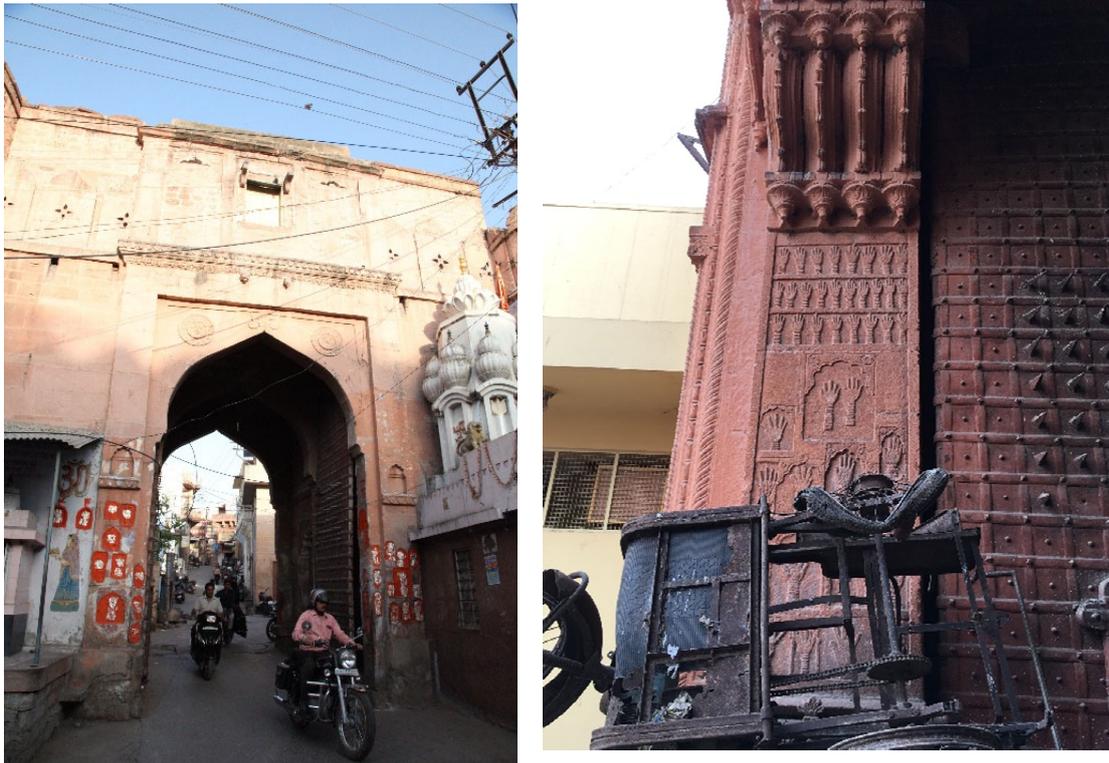


Figure 0.2 'Sati hand prints' at the Chand Pol (left, painted silver against orange) and Nagauri city gates (right) of the walled city.

*Unless credited otherwise, all photographs are by the author.



Figure 1.1 Steps leading down to Rāñjīrī kī Bāvaḍī in Bundi.



Figure 1.2 Tunwarjī kā Jhālā, Jodhpur.



Figure 1.3 Maharaja Mān Singh entertained by musicians and dancers at the Māylā Bāg garden in Jodhpur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 2072).

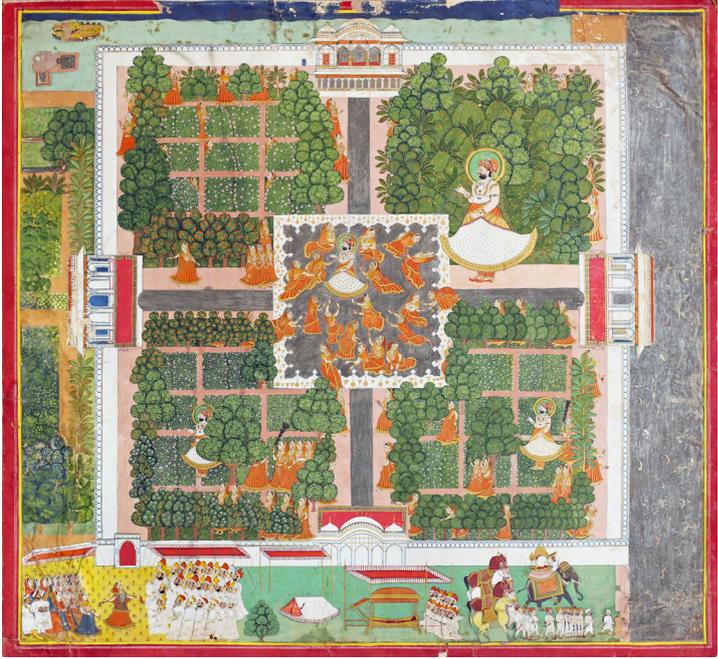


Figure 1.4 Maharaja Mān Singh and zenana women in a garden palace adjoining the lake Sur Sāgar in Jodhpur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 2122).



Figure 1.5 The Rāṇīsar seen from Mehrangarh fort.



Figure 1.6 The facade of the Nāth temple Macch Mandir in Juni Dhān Maṇḍī with the ground-floor shop rooms occupied by a sweet manufacturer.



Figure 1.7 The shop-lined ground floor facade of Kunjbiḥārījī temple in Katlā Bazār.



Figure 1.8 Māylā Bāg Jhālṛā with pavilions in its corners.



Figure 2.1 A Zenana Darbār with Music and Dancing, Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession Number: RJS 2108).



Figure 2.2 Portrait of Nājar Binrāvan and Nājar Himmatrām, Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession Number RJS 4608).



Figure 2.3 The Janānī Dyoḡhī courtyard showing residential palaces on the North, East, and West. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust.

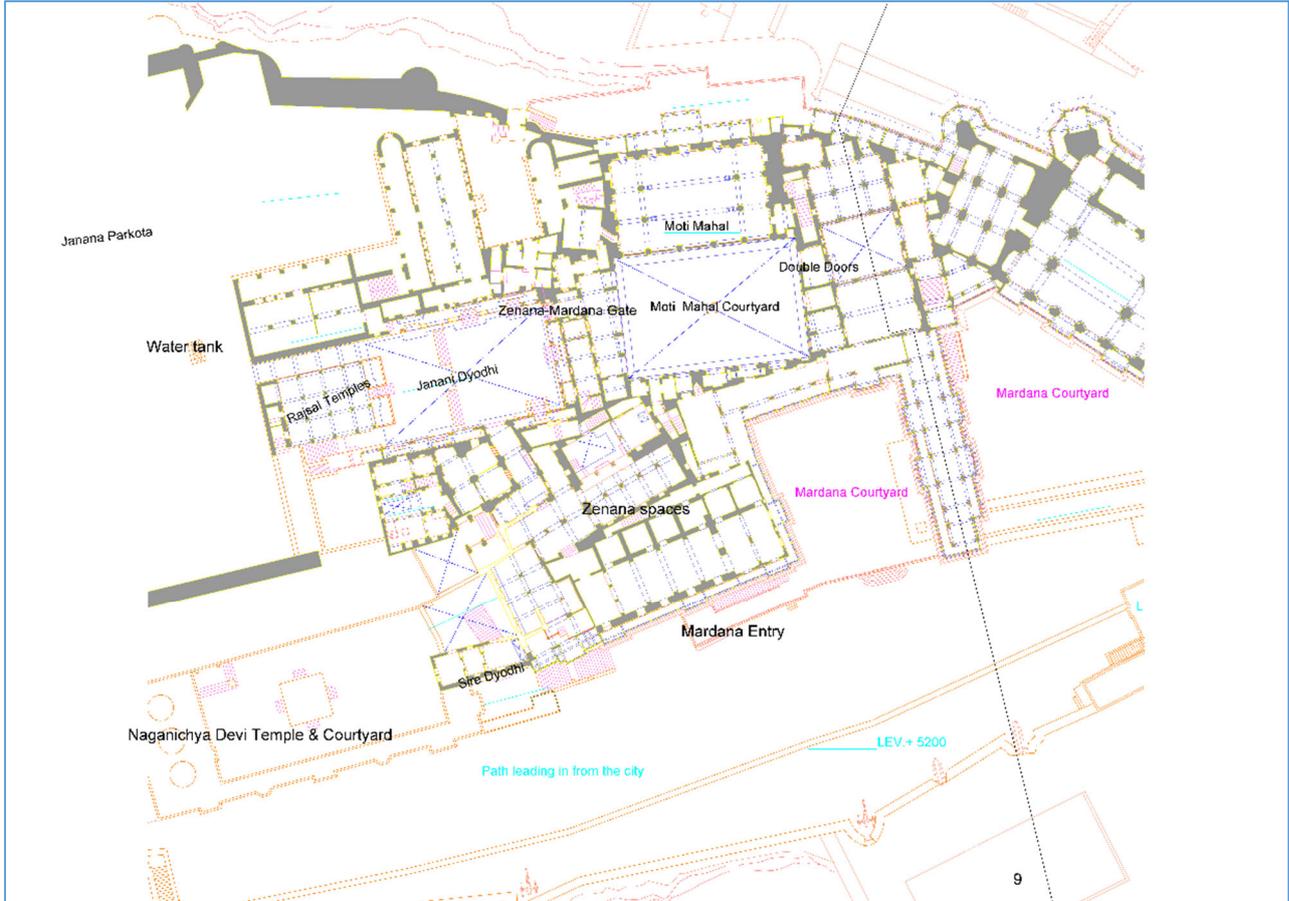


Figure 2.4 Mehrangarh fort ground level plan highlighting parts of the zenana. Original image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust.



Figure 2.5 Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur by Eugene Clutterbuck Impey. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust.

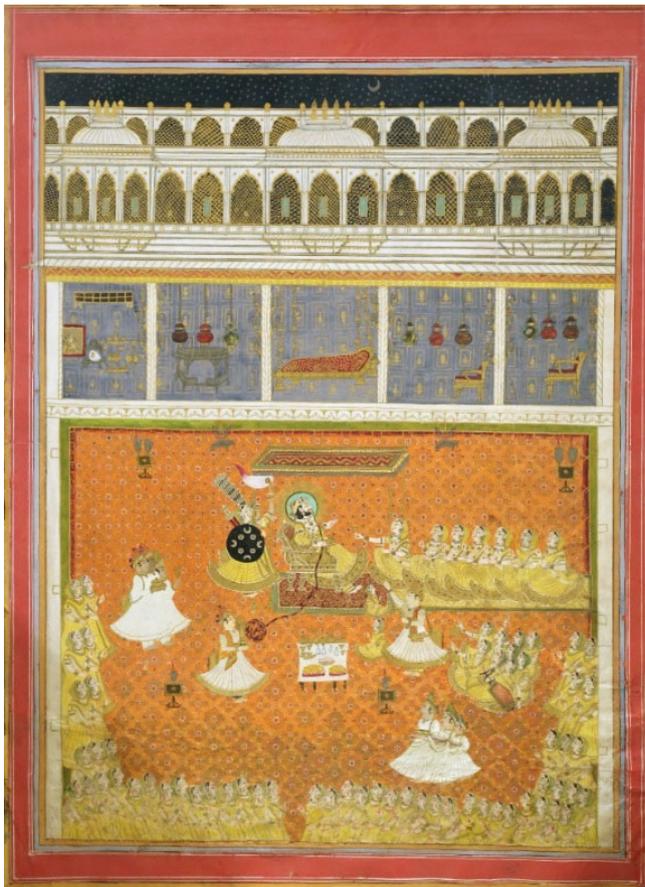


Figure 2.6 Maharaja Takhat Singh and the zenana gathered at the Moti Mahal Courtyard. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession Number 2109)



Figure 2.7 The Janānā Paḍkoṭā, enclosed by battlements protecting the zenana



Figure 2.8 Detail of a model of Mehrangarh fort highlighting the demolished palaces within the janānā paḍkoṭā. Features marked are ṭānkon cauk (1), mahalān rā cauk (2) (?) and janānī dyoḍhī (3).



Figure 2.9 Zenana interior



Figure 2.10 Zenana interior



Figure 2.11 Zenana interior

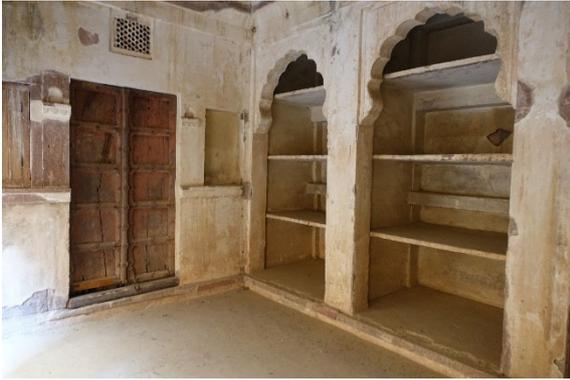


Figure 2.12 Zenana interior



Figure 2.13 Zenana interior: temple to Śrīnāthjī



Figure 2.14 Mān Singh worships Jalandharnāth: Mural near the Śrīnāthjī temple in the zenana.



Figs 3.1 a-d Nij Mandir, commissioned by Mān Singh on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar.



Fig. 3.2 Bulāki, Maharaja Mān Singh of Jodhpur Visits the Mahāmandir, 1815, Image courtesy: Philadelphia Museum of Art (Accession Number 2000-91-1).



Figs. 3.3 a-b Nij Mandir on Padamsar



Figure 3.4 The Macch Mandir spire seen amidst the Juni Dhān Maṇḍī Market

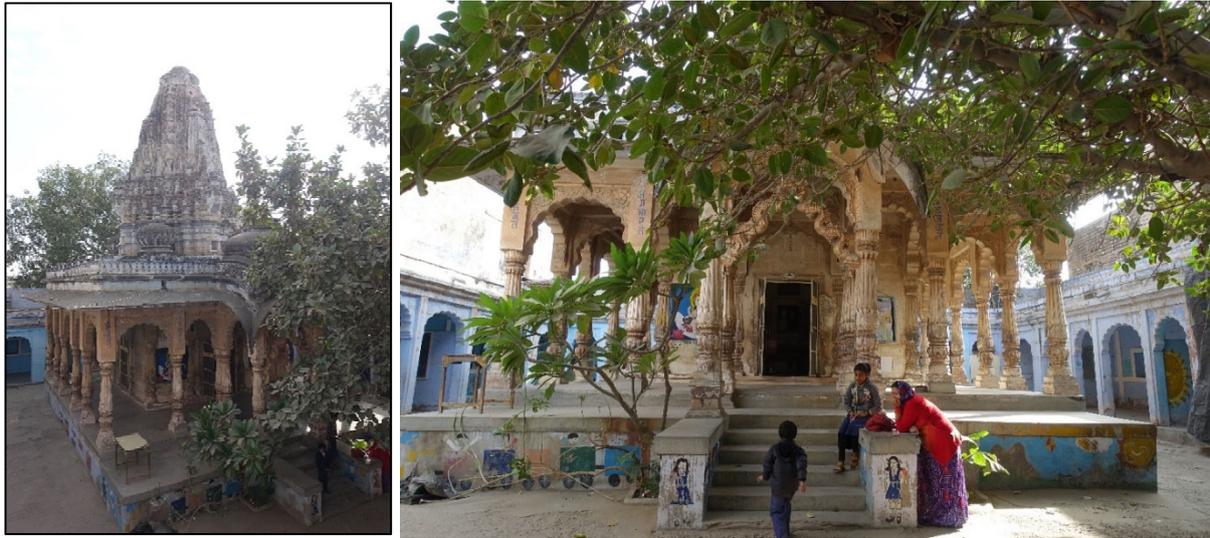


Fig. 3.5 a-b Jas Mandir, which is now used as a school.



Fig. 3.6 Udairam, Maharaja Mān Singh and Princesses at Nij Mandir, c. 1805, Jodhpur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession Number RJS 4026).



Figure 3.7 Painting depicting the queen Pāncmā Bhaṭiyāṇī and her son with Maharaja Mān Singh, enshrined at the Pāncmā Bhaṭiyāṇī temple, Jodhpur.

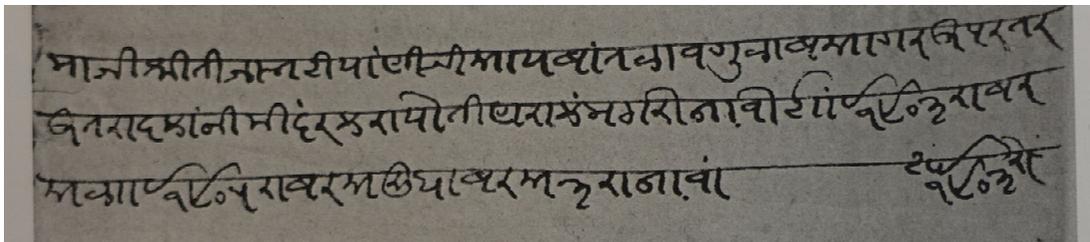


Figure 3.8 Introductory entry describing the contents of a bahī.

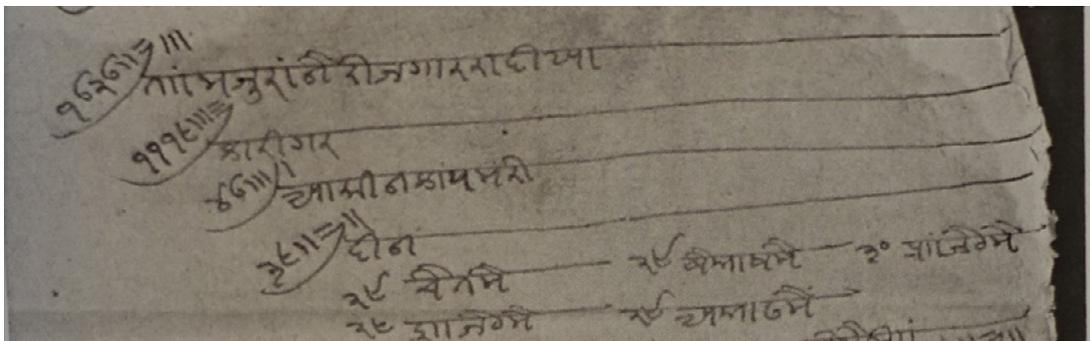


Figure 3.9 Standard bahī entry recording wages paid.



Figure 3.10 a-c Murals at the Tijā Mājīsā temple (top left) with details showing the lake Pushkar (top right) and Ram's coronation with Maharaja Mān Singh in attendance (below).

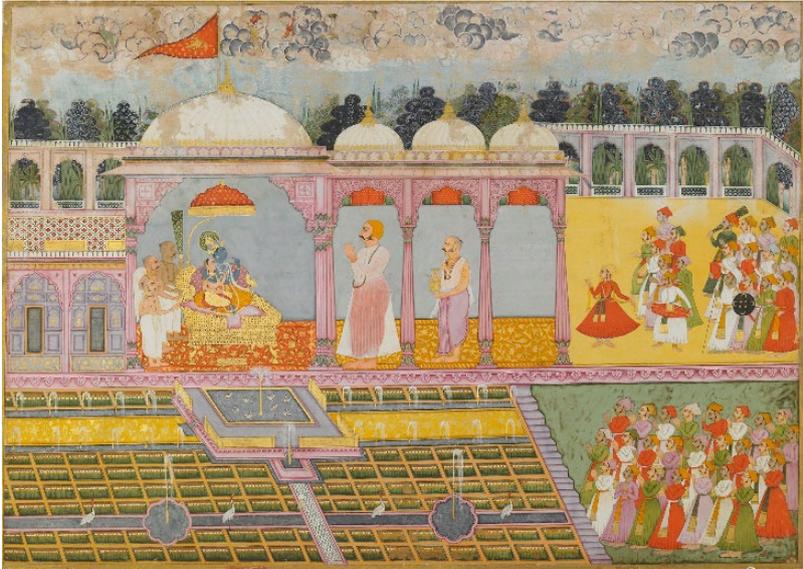


Figure 4.1 Maharaja Bakhat Singh Worshipping Krishna, c. 1750, Nagaur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 1991).



Figure 4.2 The Gulāb Sāgar, seen against the Jodhpur fort.



Figure 4.3 Google Earth image showing Gulāb Sāgar and Jodhpur fort.

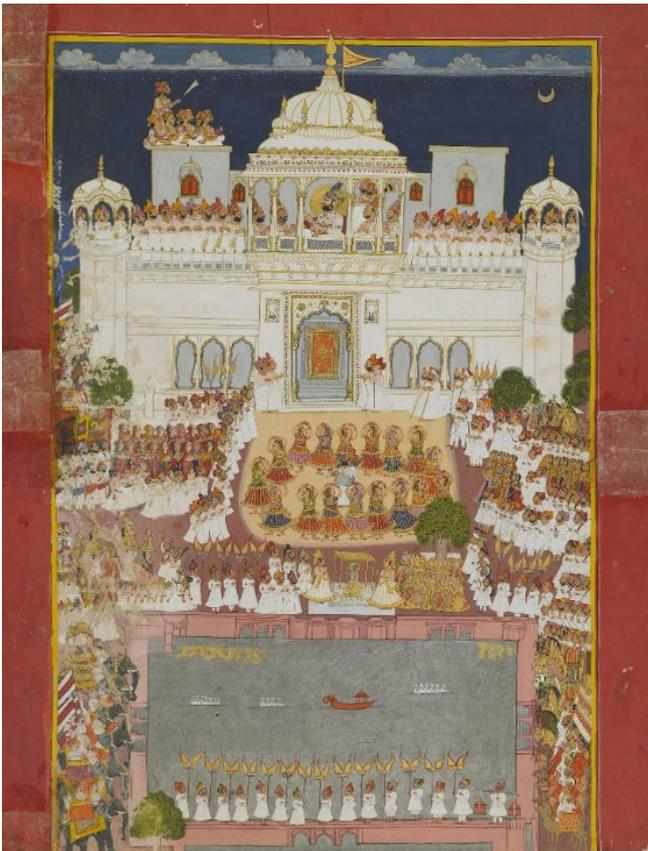


Figure 4.4 Satidas, Maharaja Mān Singh celebrating Gangaur at Gulāb Sāgar, early nineteenth century, Jodhpur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 2007).



Figure 4.5 a-b Late eighteenth century map of Jodhpur with Kunjbiḥārījī temple (detail on the right) in the foreground. Collection: Jaipur City Palace; Image courtesy: Shaikha Mishra.



Figure 4.6 Detail of a map of Nāth centres showing Jodhpur with Gulāb Sāgar at its centre, early nineteenth century, Jodhpur. Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 2129), Photo: Neil Greentree.

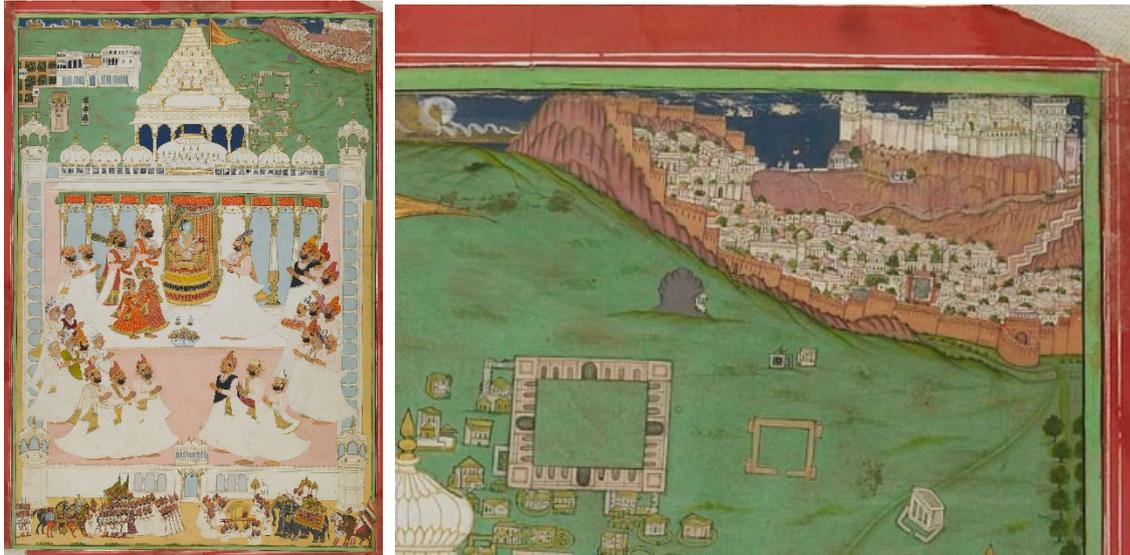


Figure 4.7 a-b Maharaja Mān Singh at Mahāmandir, with the city of Jodhpur in the backdrop (detail on the right) Image courtesy: Mehrangarh Museum Trust (Accession number RJS 2005).



Figure 4.8 a-b Commemorative pillar on the banks of the Gulāb Sāgar and its inscription.



Figure 4.9 a-b the Gangsāmji (left) and Kunjbiহারji temples (right) with their gateway towers, seen from the streets in front.



Figure 4.10 The outer courtyard of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple.



Figure 4. 11 The sanctum of the Kunjbiḥārījī temple, with early 20th century murals on either side depicting Śrīnāthjī as well as Bijai Singh and Gulāb Rai.



Figure 4.12 The svarūp of Kunjbiḥārījī



Figure 4.13 Ceiling murals at the Kunjbiḥārījī temple depicting Vallabha.



Figure 4.14 The Ganşyāmjī temple commissioned by Maharaja Ajit Singh.



Figure 5.1 a-b Clock Tower Market, Jodhpur, May 2018.



Figure 5.2 Boys swimming in Tunwarjī kā Jhālṛā. Jodhpur, May 2018.

Glossary

1. *acchep* – untouchable
2. *akhādā* – gymnasium, royal institution for training court performer
3. *angrej lok* – the English
4. *asvārī* – procession
5. *arhaṭ* – water wheel
6. *āvdāni* – yield
7. *bagtan* – dancer
8. *bahī* – leather bound book used mainly by clerks and accountants
9. *baḍāraṇ* – female zenana supervisor
10. *balabandī* – short jacket
11. *bazār* – market
12. *bāg* – garden
13. *bājjī* – princess < honorary term of address for women
14. *bāvaḍī* – stepwell
15. *berā* – well
16. *ber* – jujube fruit
17. *beṭī* – daughter
18. *bhāṭ* – bard genealogist
19. *bhābhā* – royal issue (male) from non-rajput spouses
20. *bhāi-baṃdh* – brotherhood
21. *bhābhī* – sister in law
22. *bhānej* – nephew
23. *bhuā* – aunt
24. *bichāyat* – floor cover
25. *cahārbāg* – four-part square garden
26. *cavāliyā* – stone splitters and movers
27. *cauk* – courtyard
28. *caukīdār* – watch men
29. *cākar* – servant
30. *cejārā* – brick layer
31. *chajjā* – eave
32. *chippā* – textile printer
33. *citārā* – painter
34. *cīj* – things
35. *cūnā* – lime
36. *cungar* – lime worker
37. *cūdhīgar* – bangle makers and sellers
38. *cūdhā* – bangle
39. *dalāl* – agent
40. *dahej* – dowry
41. *darbār* – royal court
42. *darjī* – tailor
43. *dastā* – paper sheet
44. *darśan* – sighting, audience
45. *dān* – donation
46. *dāvaḍī* – maid servant
47. *dādī* – grand mother
48. *dārogā* – officer
49. *dhalāyīdhār* – stone cutters
50. *dhān maṇḍī* – grain market

51. *dhāī* – wetnurse
52. *dohītro* – daughter's son
53. *dohā* – poem
54. *ḍabbā/ḍabbiyān (pl)* – box
55. *ḍyoḍhīdār* – gate keepers
56. *ḍyoḍhī* – gate, courtyard palace
57. *fuṭkar majūr* – ad-hoc or casual labour
58. *gajdhar* – head mason/ architect
59. *gangājal* – water from the river Ganga
60. *gāyaṇ* – singer
61. *gāḍī* – vehicle
62. *geṇo* – jewelry
63. *ghās maṇḍī* – grass or fodder market
64. *gotra* – clan
65. *hakīkat* – fact, reality
66. *havāldār* – agent
67. *havelī* – courtyard house, town house
68. *hājarī* – attendance
69. *ināyat* – gift or allowance
70. *jamā* – income
71. *janā* – people
72. *jālī* – pierced stone screens
73. *jāmā* – robe
74. *jāti* – caste
75. *janānā* – zenana
76. *jāmādār* – sweeper Mājī – mother, queen mother
77. *jāgīr* – land revenue allocation
78. *jāgīrdār* – one who held *jāgīr*, usually refers to subsidiary rajput chiefs (*ṭhākur*)
79. *jhāḍhūkas* – sweeper
80. *jhālrā* – stepped pond
81. *kalāvant* – senior vocalist
82. *kamīṇā* – worker
83. *kamṭhā* – construction
84. *kandhoī* – sweet makers
85. *kansāra* – brass or copper workers, utensil makers
86. *kanwar* – prince
87. *kanvarāṇī* – princess by marriage
88. *kasāī* – butcher
89. *kākaḍī* – vegetables
90. *kāmdār* – male superviskhaṇḍā – stone
91. *kāncali* – blouse
92. *kārigar* – craftsman
93. *kharac* – expense
94. *khaṇḍwāliyā* – stone splitters and movers
95. *kharīd-dār* – buyer
96. *khavās* – male or female intimate servant
97. *khālsā* – state
98. *khān* – mine
99. *kothār* – store room
100. *koṭ* – enclosure
101. *kuām* – well
102. *lakhārā* – lac workers

103. *lohār/lavār* – iron smith
104. *magarmac* – crocodile
105. *mahal* – palace, residence
106. *mahīndār* – salaried employees
107. *majūr* – labourers
108. *maṇḍap* – pillared hall
109. *mardānā* – the part of a gender-segregated palace or residence where men lived
110. *mālā* – necklace
111. *mālī* – gardener
112. *māy* – inside
113. *mehriyā* – water carriers, construction workers
114. *methī* – fenugreek
115. *mindar/mandir* – temple
116. *moṭī* – cobbler
117. *mohur* – gold coin
118. *mohalla* – residential quarter
119. *muḍḍā* – stool
120. *mutsaddī* – clerk, scribe
121. *mūlī/mūlā* – radishes
122. *nakkārā* – drums
123. *nahar* – stream, channel
124. *nāī* – barber
125. *nājar* – ‘eunuch’ zenana administrators
126. *nāler* – coconut
127. *nāvisanda/nāvisaddha* – scribe, writer
128. *nij* – personal
129. *nohrā* – residence
130. *oḍḍī* – shawl
131. *paḍkoṭā* – courtyard enclosed by battlements
132. *pardāyat* – concubine
133. *parganā* – administrative unit
134. *paṭṭā* – land deed
135. *paṭrāṇī* – chief queen
136. *paṭwā* – thread workers
137. *pālkī* – litter, palanquin
138. *pāsvān* – intimate, title used to refer close companions of the king
139. *pāṭur* – singer
140. *pesgār* – labourers who carried stone and sand
141. *piñjārā* – cotton scutcher
142. *pīhar* – a married woman’s natal home
143. *pol* – gate
144. *purabiyā* – easterner, palanquin bearer
145. *pūjā* – worship ritual
146. *pratiṣṭhā* – consecration of an idol or building
147. *pyāū* – public water source, usually placed at crossroads outside a settlement
148. *rajāī* – blanket
149. *raṃgrej* – dyer
150. *rasoī* – kitchen
151. *rāṇī* – queen
152. *rāṇi mangā* – queens
153. *rāvat* – genealogists
154. *roṭī* – bread

155. *sagā* – relatives by marriage
156. *sakkarkadd* – sweet potato
157. *samādh* – memorial
158. *sampradāya* – sect
159. *sardār* – subsidiary rājput chiefs and others who administered territories held as *jāgīr*
160. *sarsū* – mustard
161. *sādhu* – ascetic
162. *sāgar* – lake or tank
163. *sārangīya* – sarangi player
164. *sāsaṇ* – tax-free land grant
165. *sevag* – temple servant
166. *sevā* – service, a small shrine
167. *sire* – primary or main
168. *siropāv* – robe presented as an honour
169. *sirpec* – turban ornament
170. *silāvaṭ* – stone mason, builder
171. *sunār* – gold smith
172. *surmādānī* – collyrium dispenser
173. *suthār* – carpenter
174. *śikhara* – temple spire
175. *tabalhī* – Tabala player
176. *tālāb* – lake or tank
177. *tālim khana* – zenana institution where court performers were trained
178. *tāmboli* – betel leaf producers and sellers
179. *tāzīm* – the privilege of being greeted by the king on entering his darbar
180. *telī* – oil maker and seller
181. *thāl* – tray
182. *timmeriya* – necklace
183. *tīrtha* – ford, a pilgrimage center
184. *tyohār* – festival
185. *ṭānkā* – tank
186. *ṭhākur* – subsidiary rājput chiefs who administered parcelled territories within a kingdom
187. *ṭhikānā* – a *ṭhākur*'s territorial holding
188. *uvākā-nāvis/ uvākā-nāvisaniyā* – news gatherers, spies (m/f)
189. *varṇa* – division within the four-fold classification of Hindu castes
190. *vāv* – stepwell
191. *vīgat* – census, list

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Appendix

1. Timeline of known zenana women patrons from Jodhpur, 1450-1850.

Period (AD)	Patron	Building(s) Commissioned ⁷⁶² , References
c.1459	Hāḍī queen married to Rao Jodha (r. 1453-89)	Rāñīsar (lake) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat., 581
c.1459	Chand Kanwar, Chauhan queen married to Rao Jodha (r. 1453-89)	Chand Bāvaḍī (stepwell) Singh 2002, Rājasthān Ke Kue Evam Bāvaḍiyān, 59–61.
c.1489-92	Queen Phūlā Bhaṭiyāñī married to Rao Satal (r.1489-92)	Phūlelāv Tālāb (lake) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat. , 582
c.1515-32	Queen Padam Devaḍī married to Rao Ganga (r.1515-32)	Padamsar (lake) Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāñī Mangā Bhāṭon Kī Bahī, 21
c.1532-62	Queen Swarūp Deo Jhālī married to Rao Maldev (r.1532-62)	Bahuḷī kā Tālāb also known as Swaroop Sāgar (lake) Singh 1988, Jodhpur Rājya kī Khyāt, 98
1595-1619	Raja Sur Singh(r.1595-1619)'s daughter Indar Kanwar	Indar Kanwar rī Vāv (stepwell) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 565-590
1619-1638	Rūpa, the <i>dhāī</i> (wet nurse) of Princess Manbhāvatī Bāī, daughter of Raja Gaj Singh I (r.1619-1638). Manbhāvatī was married to	Rūpa Dhāī Bāvaḍī (stepwell) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 565-590

⁷⁶² Unless otherwise specified, the structures are/were located in Jodhpur.

	Mughal prince Parvez. Rūpa was married to Gehlot Champa.	
c. 1629 (VS 1686)	Anārā, <i>khavās</i> (concubine) of Raja Gaj Singh I (r.1619-1638).	Anārā rī Bāvaḍi (stepwell) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 565-590.
c. 1629 (VS 1686)	Raja Gaj Singh I (r.1619-1638)'s concubine Anārā's sister Keso	Keso rī Bāvaḍi (stepwell) in Vidyasala Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 565-590.
1619-1638	Queen Bādan Kanwar Jadećiji of Nawanager married to Raja Gaj Singh I (r.1619-1638)	Jadećijī Jhālṛā (stepwell) outside Chand Pol gate of Jodhpur city. Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 584.
1638-1678	Queen Khwāhī Atrangde of Khandela, married Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (1638.1678).	Sekhawatjī rī tālāb/Jān Sāgar (lake) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 583.
c. 1656 (VS 1713)	Unnamed queen married to Raja Gaj Singh (r.1619-38)	Tālāb Kasumdesar Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 584.
c. 1659 (VS 1716)	Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (r.1638-78)'s <i>dhāī</i> from the Gora clan of Rathores.	Gora Dhāī rī Bavaḍī (stepwell), near Pokhran Havelī. Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 565-590.
c. 1673 (VS 1730)	Hāḍī Queen Jasrangde, daughter of Chatarsal, married to Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (r.1638-78)	Kailāna Sāgar (lake) and Rai kā Bāg (garden) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 582.

c. 1719 (VS1776)	Queen Udot Kanwar Rāṇāwat of Mewar married to Maharaja Ajit Singh (r.1707-24)	Ṭhākurjī temple in Gol rā Ghāṭī Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 52.
1724-1749	Queen Jai Kanwar Tunwar of Patan, married to Maharaja Abhai Singh (r.1725-49)	Tunwarjī Jhālrā (stepwell) in Gol ra Ghati, Makrana Mohalla (4) Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 56.
c. 1750	Moti Bāī, daughter of a <i>khavās</i> (concubine) of Maharaja Bakhat Singh (r.1751-52)	Motikuṇḍ (well) and Ṭhākurjī temple Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 580.
1752-93	<i>Dhāī</i> (wetnurse) from Maharaja Bijai Singh's (r.1752-93) zenana	Dhāīsāgar (lake) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 580.
1756	<i>Gāyaṇ</i> (court singer) from Maharaja Bakhat Singh's (r. 1751-52) zenana	Temple, where she installed icons given to her by the Maharaja Mishra 2006, Inscriptions of Rājasthān, Volume II, 79.
1768 (VS. 1825)	Jatan Kanwar Shekhāwat of Khandela, married to Maharaja Bijai Singh (r.1752-93)	Lakshminārāyaṇ temple Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 61-62.
c.1767 (VS 1824)	Daulat Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī of Jakhan, married to Fateh Singh, son of Maharaja Bijai Singh (r.1752-93)	Ṭhākurjī temple in Makrana Jhālrā outside Mertiya Darwaza Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 64.
c.1768 (VS 1825)	Hāḍī princess of Kota, married to Fateh Singh, son of Maharaja Bijai Singh (r.1752-93)	Fateh Sāgar (lake) Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 64.

c. 1774 (VS1831)	Gulāb Rai, <i>pāsvān</i> to Maharaja Bijai Singh (r.1752-93)	Pāsvānjī re bāg (the pāsvān's garden) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 585.
1774-75 (VS 1831-32)		Māylā Bāg Jhālṛā also known as Pasvānjī Jhālṛā (the pāsvān's stepwell) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat, 585.
c.1778		Kunjbihārījī temple Rajasthan State Archives, Jodhpur, PWD file DD127 (1930), C 6/1A-1.
c. 1788 (VS1842-45)		Gulāb Sāgar (tank) Bhati 1968 (Ed.), Mārvāḍ Rā Parganān Rī Vigat. , 585
1789 (VS 1846)	Queen Indar Kanwar Tanwar of Khelwa married to Maharaja Bijai Singh (r.1752-93)	Ṭhākūrjī Madan Mohanjī temple Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 63
c.1803 (VS 1860)	Queen Sire Kanwar Tanwar or Khelwa, married to Maharaja Bhīm Singh (r. 1793-1803)	Ṭhākūrjī Murlī Manoharjī temple at Ram Baari Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 69-72
c.1803 (VS 1860)	Queen Gyān Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī Derawari of Jakhan married to Maharaja Bhīm Singh (r. 1793-1803)	Derawari Tālāb (lake) Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 69-72

c.1805 (VS 1862)	Queen Sūraj Kanwar Devdi of Nimbaj married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Nāth temple Bijai Mandir near Taksaal Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 72-76
c.1808 (VS 1865)	Queen Rai Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī of Khariya (in Jaisalmer) married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Nāth temple Nij Mandir above Padamsar Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 72-76
c.1811 (VS 1868)	Queen Bhom Kanwar of Lakhasar (in Bikaner) married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Jallandharnāth temple Macch Mandir in Dhan Mandi Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 72-76
c. 1820	Amar Kanwar of Chawan, wife of Sher Singh, son of Maharaja Bijai Singh.	Jallandarnāth temple Jasmandir above Gulāb Sāgar 1825 (VS 1882) Ṭhākurjī Raghunāthjī temple in Tharnau village Ṭhākurjī Raghunāthjī temple in Melawas village Amareshwar Mahādev temple within Mehrangarh fort near Imarti Pol gate Garden near Anārā's Bāvaḍi Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 67
c.1830	<i>Pardāyat</i> Chanaṇ Rai, from the zenana	Nāth temple

	of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Jodhpur, Bahi 405.
c.1831(VS 1888)	Queen Gen Kanwar Bhaṭiyāṇī of Gajuri, married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Jalandharnāth temple Abhai Mandir above Gulāb Sāgar MMPP Bahī 405 VS 1887/1830 CE, f.4.
c.1835	<i>Pardāyat</i> Pan Rai, from the zenana of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Garden and stepwell Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Jodhpur, Bahi 10.
c.1839	<i>Pardāyat</i> Chapal Rai, from the zenana of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Garden outside Sojati gate Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Jodhpur, Bahi 260.
c.1840	<i>Pardāyat</i> Kān Rai, from the zenana of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Garden and stepwell Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Jodhpur, Bahi 11.
c.1840	<i>Pardāyat</i> Phūlvel, from the zenana of Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Temple at Sojati gate Maharaja Mān Singh Pustak Prakash (MMPP), Jodhpur, Bahi 11.
1846	Queen Pratāp Kanwar Tījā Bhaṭiyāṇī of Jakhan, married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Ṭhākurjī temple, Gulāb Sāgar MMPP Bahī 152, VS 1903-1905/ 1846-1848 CE, f.5
Unknown		Someshvar temple, Gulāb Sāgar
Unknown		Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 72-76
1856		Shiva temple on Pushkar lake PWD-503 (1928)-C/29-1, Jodhpur Branch of the Rajasthan State Archives.

		Ṭhākurjī temple (Tijāmajīsa temple) in Ghās Maṇḍī Naggar 2002 (Ed.), Rāṇī Mangā Bhāton Kī Bahi, 72-76
Unknown (c.1843)	Jas Kanwar Pāñcmā Bhaṭiyāṇī of Gotde, married to Maharaja Mān Singh (r. 1803-43)	Pāñcmā Mājīsā temple, Chand Pol (Source: Interview with priestly family managing the temple, November 2018)

References to other women patrons of indeterminate periods found across sources:

Mān Singh's *kyāt* refers to a *bāvaḍi* (stepwell) outside Mertiya gate of Jodhpur city built by a *pardāyat* identified only as “rāyana rā cākar kesu ro beṭī” (daughter of the servant of Rāyana, Kesu). Mān Singh is mentioned having taken refuge here after relinquishing his throne and becoming an ascetic in VS. 1899⁷⁶³

MMPP Bahī 59, VS. 1859/ 1802 AD, folio 64, refers to a temple to Lakshmi Narayan from an indeterminate period, built by a queen grandmother identified only as “Dādījī Shekhāwatjī”.

⁷⁶³ Jain and Bhati, *Mahārājā Mānsimhī Rī Khyāt*, 222.

2. Inscription marking the founding of Gulāb Sāgar tank.

Transcription and translation: Prof. Dr. Monika Boehm-Tettelbach

॥श्री रामजी ॥

- (1) श्रीगणेशाय नम(!) ॥ स्वस्ति श्रीऋद्धिवृद्धिर्जयो मंगलाभ्युदय[च्च?] ॥ अ-
- (2) थास्मिन् शुभसंवत्सरे श्रीनृपतिविक्रमार्कसमया[प्ति]तसंवत् ॥
- (3) १८४५ श्रीशालवाहनकृतशाके १७१० प्रवर्तमाने श्रीरवौ दक्षणा-
- (4) यने वर्षार्त्तौ माहामांगल्यप्रदमासोत्तमासे भाद्रपदमासे शुक्ल-
- (5) पक्षे पंचम्यां पुण्यतिथौ गुरुवासरे घटी ५५ पल २७ स्वातिनक्षत्रे घटी ४५
- (6) पल ३७ ब्रह्मनामयोगे घटी ९ पल २६ ववकरणे एवं पंचांगशुद्धौ अत्र-
- (7) दिने गोब्राह्मणप्रतिपालकक्षालधर्मप्रबवर्त्तकसर्बसामंतकमुकटनिरा-
- (8) जितचरणत्वं राजराजेश्वरमहाराजाधिराजमाहाराजाजी श्री १०८ श्री श्रीश्री श्री श्रीविजयसिंघजीकस्वधर्मपत्नी महाराणीजी श्री १०८ श्रीपासवा-
- (9) नजी श्री श्री श्री गुलाबरायजीक(!)पाकरायितं तत्पुत्रमाहाराजकुंबवार
- (10) श्री १०८ सेरसि(!)घजी सागरस्य नाम गुलाबसागरः

Śrī Rāmājī

- (1) Obeisance be to Śrī Gaṇeśa! Be there wealth and accomplishment, victory, and rise of well-being!
- (2) In this auspicious year, in the year according to the time of King Vikramārka,
- (3) 1845, in the year 1710 according to the Śāka reckoning made by Śrī Śālavāhana, when the sun was on its circuit to the south,
- (4) in the most excellent month of Bhādrapada, which gives great well-being when there is the torture caused by the absence of rain, in the bright half of the month, on the 5th lunar day, on Thursday, at 55 *ghaṭīs* and 27 *palas*, at 45 *ghaṭīs*
- (5) and 37 *palas* of the Svāti constellation, at 9 *ghaṭīs* and 26 *palas* of the *yoga* named Brahmā, at the *va-va-karaṇa* and by revision according to the almanach, on this (6–9) day, after the lawful wife (lit. ‘his wife according to her dharma’), the Mahārāṇī Śrī 108 concubine, Śrī (3x) Gulābrāyajī, of Rāja-Rājeśvara Maharājādhirāja Māhārājājī, Śrī 108 Śrī (5x) Vijayasinghajī, who is the unconquered crown on top of all neighbouring rulers, protector of cows and brahmans, and pursuing the *ksatriya-dharma*, had commissioned out of kindness the building (of this lake), her son Mahārājakumāra
- (10) Śrī 108 Sersinghī (gave) the lake (*sāgara*) the name Gulābasāgara.