

**MEDIEVAL BAGAD REGION:  
A STUDY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL  
AND ECONOMIC PATTERNS (1450-1750) A.D.**

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to find out a region on historical ground that now exists only in the public memory and perception. The historical inquiry revealed that Bagad is a semi-arid area of the great Thar Desert in the North West India. The area encompasses some portion of the modern states of Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab. It signifies a geographical area cum cultural zone; and the people and dialect of Bagad is known as Bagadi. In local parlance Bagad amounts to an arid and barren land. Its eastern boundaries touch the fertile belts of Haryana and Punjab. It is a geographic region that has its separate socio-cultural identity distinguishing it from the other parts of Thar Desert. There is a tradition in west India to name the region after the type of geography that region has, such as Khadar, Bangad, Bagad, Dabad, Bhabad, Nardak, Nali, Thali, Magra etc.

The historiography of the Bagad region reveals that there is no research available on the region other than a couple of journal articles that show some curiosity towards the term Bagad. So, this is the first ever research that defines Bagad, finding its sub-regions, making a political map and write history of the region in detail by searching the sources. The Rajasthani scholars have expressed their curiosity over the region of Bagad which gets mentioned in the sources but no area called Bagad could be identified within modern Rajasthan. Agarchand Nahta, Govind Agarwal, Raghuvir Singh Sitamau and Manohar Sharma had pondered over the meaning of word Bagad and the probable areas that could be identified with Bagad.<sup>1</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup> Agarchand Nahta, "Narhad-Narbhat ke Pracheen Ullekh", *Maru Bharti* vol.4 (1957): 11-13; Agarchand Nahta, "Muni Harikalash Virachit Bagad Teerthmala" *Varda*, vol.2 (1972): 20-27; Nahta, Agarchand. "Teerthyatra Sambandhi Ek Mahatvapurna Pracheen Itihasik Raas" *Varda*, vol.2 (1973): 24-37;

they did not delve further than guessing about the region of Bagad of medieval Rajputana. Whereas, Surjan Singh Shekhawat was the first scholar who had given emphasis on the fact that the area of Shekhawati was known as Bagad in medieval period.<sup>2</sup> The detailed history of other regions of Rajputana such as Marwar, Dhundhar, Hadauti etc. that remained intact till the modern period unlike Bagad, have been well established and well-studied regions. But regions like Bagad which lost its identity somewhere in the nineteenth century has been lost on the minds of people and scholars alike. Therefore, there was a need to research about the region in detail which would tell the story of such regions which were created in the medieval period and got vanished in early modern period but shadows of its historical past still lingers in the mind of people. It tells the history of millions of Bagadi speakers settled in Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab. The need to research about the culture and history of a dozen districts justifies the endeavour undertaken to study the region.

The study of the regions is a fairly advance sub-field of the Indian history wherein the history of Rajasthan has its distinct place because it offers a great range of historical documents for scrutiny by the scholars in the forms of archival as well as non-archival materials. The study of Bagad as a region is distinct in a few aspects than the other studies of the regions which mainly conform to the present political boundaries of states in India. The study of Bagad region is unique in the sense that the spatial placement of Bagad was on the borders of three cultures and influential regions namely Haryana, Punjab and Marwar rather than in a single region. Probably the 'divided' Bagad did not attracted the scholars' attention that was needed to study a region of particular importance from fifteenth to eighteenth century.

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Manohar Sharma, "Bagad Des Loowan ka Ghar hai" *Vishwambhara*, 31, Vol.3 Spetember-October (1999); Manohar Sharma, "Bagad Shabd ka Arthchintan", *Varda* July, 3, (1961), 64; Niyamat Khan 'Jaan', *Kyamkhan Rasa*, "Introduction", ed. Jinvijay Muni, Agarchand Nahta, Dashrath Sharma et.al., trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh ka Pracheen Itihas* (Jhajhad: Surjan Singh Shekhawat Smriti Sansthan, 2014 edition).

It is study of a region that existed sometime in the medieval period but got dismantled and broken in the early modern period due to political reasons. However, the memory and consciousness of the region is still surviving among the one section of the people of Bagad whereas, the major area of the region has acquired a new identity breaking the old long standing one. The region is an example of the changing identities and even maintaining multiple identities at the same time as the past history lingers on in some form or other.

There are numerous definitions and explanations of a region that change according to the convenience of the scholar who studies them. There are numerous nomenclatures and terms that categorise the types of regions based on the leading characteristic of the region and the discipline of study. Bagad can be categorised as a 'historical region' as it had a history with definitive markers of collective sense of culture, history, geography, language and belongingness. The lexical meaning of the word Bagad suggests correctly that the defining feature of the region was its geography that had its own climate and ecosystem.

The information on the formative period and the historical processes that forged the region is not available because the sources are not available that could shed light on the region. It seems that the region took shape and identity during the early medieval period when the Chauhans were consolidating their grasp over the region north of Sakambhari. The *Kyamkhan Rasa* tells that the Rana Ghanghu Chauhan had moved to this area from a village near Nagaur. It suggests that the Chauhan Sawants were taking over the new areas of Rajputana and it seems that the region of Bagad came under the suzerainty of the Chauhans during the ninth century. The Chauhan political rule consolidated the discrete areas under one rule that gave shape to the region in the formative years. The Harsh inscription of 973 A.D. signify that the region had become a reality in the tenth century.<sup>3</sup> The Jain sources of tenth to fourteenth centuries confirm

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<sup>3</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati ke Shilalekh* (Jhunjhunu: Shardul Education Trust), 23-47; Ratanlal Mishra, *Rajasthan ke Shilalekh: Shekhawati Pradesh* (Fatehpur Shekhawati: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1991), 28-49.

the formation of Bagad as a separate region within Rajputana. However, the detailed processes and reasons behind its formation is not known.

The Bagad was ruled over by the various branches of Chauhans. The most important chiefdom was of Dadrewa where Rao Guga Chauhan ruled when the Ghaznavid forces attacked this region.<sup>4</sup> The Kyamkhanis became the rulers of large area in Bagad in fifteenth century. The state they ruled were not full blown states but were basic chiefdoms in the beginning which did not had a proper structure but an ad hoc administration was in place. The Kyamkhanis expanded their stature and area of influence in sixteenth and seventeenth century increasingly after joining the Mughal service. The combination of the Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu houses of Kyamkhanis reached the stage of a sub-regional state in the Bagad region. The formation of the sub-regional state helped in forming a distinct flavour of the region by promoting the local Bagadi language which was used in writing inscriptions, administrative documents, poetry etc. The local fair and festivals were promoted by the state making a place of meeting of people of the sub-region. The state embraced the identity of the region as their own as they felt proud in calling themselves the *Bagadpati* or the owners of the Bagad land. The influence of religious men belonging to different strands such as Sufis, Nathpanthis and Dadupanthis were put to use in cementing their rule and imparting a sense of belongingness and trust among the people.

The Kyamkhani state was although a small or minor state but it had its own bureaucracy and officials such as writers, treasurers, accountants, revenue collectors who were expert in running the daily functions of the state. The patronage of the state gave rise to a literati which was involved in producing literature, education and texts pertaining to religious and educative subjects.

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<sup>4</sup> G.S.L. Devra, *Rajasthan Itihas ke Abhigyan Roop* (Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akademi, 2016), 129-33.

The Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu sub-regional states brought the pre state society of Bagad into the mould of a state society gradually by settling people from neighbouring regions and areas to Bagad, founding new villages, planting large *beed* in a planning manner and placing faith into the locally popular religious figures such as Ganganath. The process of region formation that had started in the early medieval period saw its graduation under the Kyamkhanis in the medieval centuries. The towns of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu attracted people from other sub-regions of Bagad and even beyond populating it to form a core of the region. The region earned a distinct identity by giving space to the Non-Brahmanic *nirgun* Bhakti strands to thrive in the sub-region with support and patronage of the rulers. The Kyamkhanis made it a haven for the nirgun philosophers and sants choosing a complete opposite direction to the other Rajputs royal houses who were subscribing to the *sagun* Vishnu Bhakti of various hues.

The Bagad can be divided into three sub-regions mainly. First and the most important was the Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu sub-region which included the areas of Narhad, Khatu, Chhapar and Didwana in addition to the area under the Kyamkhani rule. The second sub-region was the Bhatner-Sirsa region which included the Fatehabad, Nohar, Bhadra, Beniwal and the adjoining areas. The third sub-region included the areas of Puniya, Sheoran, Dadrewa, Rini and Siwani. These sub-regions had their own ecology, spoken dialects and agricultural base that made them different from each other. These sub-regions remained controlled and ruled by different dynasties and branches of Rajputs bringing changes and uniqueness to these areas whereas, the culture and language with slight variations remained same bringing out a collective Bagadi identity to the region as whole. The demography of these sub-regions also differed which had a bearing on the character of the respective regions. The majority of population belonged to the Jat community which dominated the rural society to a large extent. All the sub-regions had different *gotras* of Jats wherein the entire *parganas* were named after the specific *gotra* of the

Jats such as Beniwal, Puniya and Sheoran. The marriage networks also operated separately in these sub-regions.

The region of Bagad like other regions was a part of the larger schema of political economy of north India with intrinsic values of its own but continuously interacting with the neighbouring regions, its own sub-regions and localities. The political activities at Delhi and Rajputana directly affected it which had long term bearings on the region right from Delhi Sultanate to the Mughals and then the Colonisers. The socio-cultural and religious interactions with the neighbouring regions of Haryana, Punjab, Dhundhad and Marwar formed its cultural and spiritual values. One such example could be the tradition of stories, annals and *qissas* that travelled from Punjab to Bagad and shared by Haryana were mutually inclusive in the culture of all three regions. Bagad added its own stories based on its own living experiences and popular personalities that appealed to the local psyche embedded in the local history and context such as Dungji Juharji brought out its own specific ingredient to the tradition. This example shows that how Bagad was taking influences and interacting with the other regions but also retained its own identity and uniqueness. It was not a water tight compartment but an open landscape where people and ideas moved like air from one place to other. It was not a bounded cultural region but a historical region with connected history to the other parts of India. Its boundaries were not analogous to the present political state boundaries which became one of the primary reason for the breakage of the region and its collective identity.

The rural society was divided into *dhanis* and villages where mostly the agro-pastoral community of Jats settled at first. Most of the villages and towns of Bagad were merely a cluster of small hutments or *dhanis* of Jats who remained mobile in search of water. The villages survived the difficult ecology of the region by pooling their resources and coordination among themselves. The collective effort and understanding defined the rules and actions of the society



as can be seen in activities like digging well, use of collective pasture land, water drawing mechanism and coordination in times of distress such as famines and droughts.

The limited sources to study Bagad does not permit to delve into details as the volume and nature of information that we get from the sources are limited. So, due to the limitations of the sources, it is prudent to design the research according to the information it provides. The chapters and themes of the thesis are put in a way to make sense of the region from the limited kind of sources available to study. There are broadly three kinds of sources available for three different sub-regions of the Bagad that enable us to make a sense of the region by integrating the all the three parts together. The Fatehpur sub-region has primary texts like *Kyamkhan Rasa* that provides the first hand narration of the historical events of the Kyamkhanis. The tradition of Nirgun Bhakt Sants based in Bagad are also a highlight of the sources concerning the sixteenth and seventeenth century Bagad. The *Khyats* and *Tawarikhs* written in Jodhpur and later at Bikaner provide a basic structure of political history of Bagad which can be supplemented with the *Kyamkhan Rasa*'s narrative. The Persian sources such as *Ain-i Akbari*, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* are also important sources to make a sense of the house of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu of Kyamkhanis.

The Bikaner state with its elaborate state apparatus provides the information for the Bhatner, Puniya, Beniwal, Sidhmukh sub-region of the Bagad. The archival sources in the form of *bahis* are vital to understand the functioning of trade and commerce of the eighteenth century Bagad when it gained renewed importance as a transit area for the goods and carriages coming from all the directions.

The Sheoran, Bhiwani, Sirsa, Fatehabad sub-region of the Bagad has been covered by the colonial sources written mainly after the East India Company's annexation of the area after 1803 AD and afterwards when the colonial documentation in the form of gazetteers, settlement

reports and books happened for the first time for this neglected area untouched by any other sources.

There is no secondary work that treats the region of Bagad as one unit, however there have been attempts by some scholars to delimit the area which they encountered in the primary sources. The fundamental work done by kinds of Agarchand Nahta and Govind Agarwal<sup>5</sup> are most helpful in decoding the history of religion, traders and political history of the region that fills the void of information in more ways than one. The journal articles and books written by these scholars cover varied topics that are essential readings to make a sense of the medieval Bagad. Prof. GSL Devra's seminal work<sup>6</sup> on the Bikaner state provides the basic administrative structure of the medieval state on the one hand and his analysis of the folk stories, folk deities open up the sources to discussion and newer interpretations. These are some of the important sources that enables to construct a historical narrative of the region.

The research on Bagad was started with searching for the historicity of the region. The secondary sources on history of Rajasthan did not have any word on the region of Bagad. Traditionally the historians working on Rajasthan has recognised the state of Rajasthan as the conglomeration of large and small Rajput states wherein the study is conducted in strict boundaries of the current state of Rajasthan. The point of reference has always been the Rajput states like Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer etc. which means that the basic units of study were the areas falling under these states. These political regions had dominated the imagination of the historians by and large. The cultural regions of Rajasthan such as Marwar, Dhat, Hadauti, Dhundhar etc. were also seen as neatly falling under area of these erstwhile political Rajput states. For example the Rathore states of Jodhpur and Bikaner represented Marwar, the

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<sup>5</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan- Nagar Sri, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> G.S.L Devra, *Rajasthan ki Prashasanik Vyavastha (1574 to 1818 A.D.): Bikaner Sambhag ke Sandarbh Mein* (Gangashahar: Dharti Prakashan, 1981).

Chauhan states of Kota and Bundi represented the Hadauti culture and the Kachhawaha state of Jaipur represented Dhundhad, the Sisodiya state of Udaipur and Chittorgarh represented the Mewar cultural region. However, the reality is much more complex because cultures and regions does not get formed to be fit into cartographic and political maps. The categories thus created to study as diverse a state as Rajasthan cannot take into account those categories of research that go beyond the limits of a particular state, such as ecological study, gender study, linguistic study, cultural studies etc. The historical and cultural regions that does not fit properly into the already created categories of study does not get the attention of the scholars. Studying Rajasthan in entirety or as a single unit is also not a viable option as it would defeat the purpose of learning in detail and nuanced history which has the capacity to fine-tune the sweeping generalisations caused by the projects of meta-history. The purpose of doing regional history is to study the processes and structures that played important role in the evolution of a region. The aim is to study the institutions and traditions of a region objectively to study how the region came into being. The local factors of a region effects the trajectory of evolution and making of a region thus make the case for heterogeneous culture. Therefore, there is a need to do comparative study of regions to understand the similarities between different regions which would help in making generalisations at a broader level. The dissimilarities between regions would suggest how the particular local factors effected the historical trajectory of a region and thus help in modifying the generalisation at the broader level.<sup>7</sup> The information regarding the location of Bagad by Powlett in the gazetteer of Bikaner state is a testimony that the permanent, fixed categories and point of reference were always the Rajput states. He wrote that “the southern and the north eastern portion of the Thar is a vast sandy tract comprising of parts of Marwar and Amber known as Bagar.”<sup>8</sup> A separate region with its own cultural and geographic

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<sup>7</sup> Thapar, Romila, “The scope and significance of Regional history” in *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978), 330.

<sup>8</sup> P.W.Powlett, *Gazetteer of the Bikaner State* (London: Trubner & Co., 1874). 91-92.

identity has always been understood as part of some larger political entities, hence the need to study these regions that does not fit into the traditional categories never get recognised or studied in detail.

The recent trend in study of Rajasthan has brought some welcome changes that has moved away from the traditional framework of Rajput states.<sup>9</sup> So, there is a vast void in the historiography of Rajasthan that needs to be filled by creating new categories, making new frameworks and going beyond the set pattern which is in place from quiet a long time. The study of Bagad is one such attempt to explore a historical region that was unique in its geography, ecology and culture which cannot be explained just by focussing on the Rajput states.

The other studies done by scholars concentrate on the districts of Rajasthan that again take the boundary of a district that primarily were made as revenue collecting units in medieval period. There are always regions, localities and cultures which are transitional in nature in the sense that they are placed between two influential cultures. The region of Puadh one such area that is placed between Haryana and Punjab and represent a mixture of these two cultures in every respect. Such regions had their own linguistic area of influence that neither gets place in any of the neighbouring dominant cultures. These areas that are present their on the ground never gets a realisation in the academic world.

Bagad however, is not exactly the same as Puadh but shares some similarities with it as it is situated between the Punjabi, Marwari and Haryanavi cultural spheres and shares borders and culture with them but still held its own core cultural values. Bagad as a separate cultural unit came into existence in early medieval centuries of ninth to eleventh, and matures its

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<sup>9</sup> Some the studies that go beyond the traditional history frameworks are Mayank Kumar, *Monsoon Ecologies: Irrigation, Agriculture, and Settlement Patterns in Rajasthan during the Pre-Colonial Period* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2013) and Tanuja Kothiyal, *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

identity traits during the fifteenth to seventeenth century and breaks during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. One of the main reasons of its neglect in the academic field is that it is a region which could not carry its consolidated identity and survive in entirety till the modern period. It was created and got broken in medieval period only so there were no conscious people belonging to this region who could search for its past as a project of soul searching for themselves.<sup>10</sup>

The research on Bagad region strides to find out the historicity of the region. The study aims to delimit and delineate the area and boundaries of the region. It chalks out a basic geographic structure of the landscape pin pointing the important towns and villages of the region. The study is conducted to find out the historical processes that took place during the settlement of the noteworthy towns in the specific ecology of the Bagad. The basic characteristics that define the region are studied as it distinguished itself among the other regions of the Thar Desert. One of the objectives of the research is to place Bagad in the north India of medieval period by finding its political, social and economic profile. Every region is part of the whole but still has its unique characteristics that make it different among the many regions that collectively construct the whole. So, the study of Bagad attempts at searching the interconnections and influences that shaped the region with its own sub-regions and with the centre.

The Kyamkhanis has become the topic of curiosity because of their unique social placement as Rajputs who were strongly based in the local traditions but had embraced Islam

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<sup>10</sup> There have been many studies of small regions and localities in Rajasthan that were conducted specifically because they did not fit into the cultural categories such as Marwar, Hadauti etc. One of the best example is Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, 1974). Govind Agarwal shows sensitivity towards the distinct identity of Churu Mandal. Churu was part of Bikaner state which is largely understood as part of the Marwar but the people of Churu strongly believe in their distinctness from the Marwari culture whether it be the language, dresses and other cultural markers. But still the book covers only the administrative area of Churu but does not cover the neighbouring areas of Shekhawati which are exactly similar to Churu.

which had a foreign origin.<sup>11</sup> The Kyamkhanis have been studied to see how did they perceived themselves being Muslim Rajputs and how did the Mughal elites perceived them as the native Muslim converts.<sup>12</sup> The Kyamkhanis are however much more than just Muslim Rajputs in a Mughal India that can be gauged through the diverse primary sources of Bagad which remained virtually unexplored till now. The issue of religious interactions and identities have been dealt in detail to explore the world of Kyamkhanis.

The Fatehpur manuscripts are quite popular among the Bhakti scholars due to their importance as being some of the oldest manuscripts of Braj language that contain the verses of Kabir, Surdas, Meera and many other sants. There is hardly any scholarly work that does not has Fatehpur manuscripts as the primary source material. The studies conducted on the Bhakti movement and its philosophy has concentrated only on the spiritual aspects of the texts found from Fatehpur but does not correlate that with the local history of the place which would be more fruitful to understand the material and political basis of the spirituality in north India. The only background that the scholars know about the Fatehpur manuscripts is that they have been written for local Shekhawat chief of Fatehpur and this information does get repeat without any edition in every single work.<sup>13</sup> So, there much to be explored regarding the culture of manuscript production, spirituality and its relation to the local politics of Rajputana. The study of Fatehpur tries to fulfil that gap of historical information in context of Bhakti movement.

The first chapter is ‘Understanding the Region: Historicity, Notions and Perceptions of Bagad’ introduces the reason because of which the quest for studying the Bagad region started.

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<sup>11</sup> Cynthia Talbot. “Becoming Turk the Rajput Way” in *Expanding Frontiers in South Asian and World History: Essays in honour of John F. Richards*. Eds. Richard M. Eaton, Munis D. Farooqi, and David Gilmartin et. al. (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Ramya Srinivasan, “Faith and Allegiance in Mughal India: Perspectives from Rajasthan” in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* eds. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqi (New Delhi: OUP, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> K.E. Bryant, “The Manuscript Tradition of The Sursagar: The Fatehpur Manuscript” in *Pad Surdas Ji Ka*, ed. Gopal Narayan Bahura, (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, 1982).

There is a certain perception about Bagad in the neighbouring regions of Haryana and Punjab that is still very popular and dominant among the masses. The dominant narrative paints Bagad as a dreadful place where life is very difficult because of the sand and extreme heat. The Bagadi people are ill mannered and poor because they survive on the barest minimum means. The region and people are typecast that depict them in bad light and make them a subject of mockery. There are jokes and small stories popular among the people where they are compared with the other people. Their culture, language and even dresses have been ridiculed by the other cultures. So, there is a narrative in the society that begs the question about the region that held so strong opinions in the society. It was but natural to get curious about the region and the people residing in that region which led to the search of information about Bagad. Surprisingly, Bagad is still very much live in the consciousness of the people of Haryana and Punjab but there was no historical information available about it. One of the main reasons of a popular narrative and perception existing in the neighbouring societies was that there have been a very large scale migration in both Haryana and Punjab from Bagad that placed them in closer contact to each other. So, a need was felt to find out about Bagad in detail and enquire about the reasons of a specific narrative about the region.

The search was started with reading the history texts of Haryana and Punjab to know get some basic idea about Bagad but the sources were completely silent on a region called Bagad. So, the sources pertaining to Rajasthan were studied to find out more about the region. The settlement reports, gazetteers, colonial literature had talked about the region and its culture including the language Bagadi and popular idioms. The colonial scholars had collected primary data on the demography and traits of the populace. The Bagadi men were even graded in comparison to Punjabi and Haryanavis in the gazetteers that gave important lead about the notion, perception and observation about Bagad and Bagadis. The other sources that deal with

the subject of Bagad are mostly non archival material such as folk songs, stories and sayings, literature available in various kinds of sources of Haryana, Punjab and Bagad.

The chapter discusses the similar types of narratives built around geographical regions of India to understand why and how does such narratives take shape. The examples found in various kinds of sources ranging from sixteenth to nineteenth century have been discussed and analysed in detail that cover issues of ecology, materiality and psychology.

The second chapter is titled as State Formation in the Bagad. It primarily deals with the process of new political formations that gave a pace to the historical processes in the region. After the defeat of the Chauhans at the hands of Turks, no serious and pervasive political formation could take place in the region but small pockets of influences had survived of local Rajputs. They got bloomed when the appropriate time and favourable conditions. There is a debate among the historians on the extent of centralisation of the Delhi sultanate and Mughal sultanate over the rest of the India, especially the regions that are away from Delhi. The geographical position of Bagad was near Delhi that had direct impact of the political actions of the Delhi. Bagad was the strong hold of the Chauhans who ruled over the region from power centres of Ajmer and Hansi. All the invasions and attacks happened through the region where powerful fort of Bhatner had displayed fierce resistance to even Timur. Since tenth century onwards we see the integration of the politics of Bagad with that of Delhi as the Ghaznavid army also attacked the area of Bagad wherein Rana Guga Chauhan of Dadrewa was killed with his kinsmen. Later as we see in *Prithwiraj Rasa* as well that forces from Bagad took part in battle of Tarain against the Ghurid armies. The fallout of the Chauhans' defeat was felt directly on the region as the powerful Rajputs that held a sway over Bagad got disintegrated and broken that denied any possibilities of regional state formation in Bagad.

In the fourteenth century, under the rule of Sultan Firuz Shah Bagad's political scenario was changed when Firuz Shah converted the clan of his maternal uncle, the Abohariya Bhat



into Muslims. He gave them the strong *Iqta* of Bhatner that prepared a ground for Bhati supremacy in the area for centuries to come. Firuz Shah also converted the Dadrewa Chauhans, Jadons of Mewat and Khattris of Thaneswar and promoted them as powerful Firuzi slaves. In this way, the local Rajputs of Bagad were given place in the Delhi administration which consolidated their position in Bagad as well. These military elements gained independence from the Delhi Sultanate after Timur's successful invasion of India. However, it seems old fashioned to see Delhi as a centre and other areas as peripheries or subsidiary states but it seems appropriate to understand the history in case of Bagad.

The weakening of the Delhi Sultanate under the later Tughlaqs and then under Syed dynasty gave opportunities to the Rajputs to grow organically. At this time we see the establishment of Dandani dynasty at Nagaur that ruled over the southern parts of Bagad; the foundation of Kyamkhani rule at Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu and few decades later the Rao Bika's rule over much of Bagad. The interplay of power and politics in Rajputana, Delhi and Bagad has been explored in some detail in the chapter with special focus on the sub-regional state of Fatehpur.

The next chapter is 'The Rise of Fatehpur in the Desert of Bagad.' This chapter can be called as the main chapter of the thesis that answers the important research questions. It shows the foundation of Fatehpur which progressed from being a town to a prosperous city in the Mughal period. This chapter looks into the role of Kyamkhanis in setting up a place wherein their choices determined the uniqueness of the Fatehpur as a living space. It goes beyond understanding Kyamkhanis just as Muslim Rajputs but delves more into their lives, inspirations, education, religious bent and overall architects of the Bagad.

The first part of the chapter covers the process of establishment of a new township in middle of Desert that gave a fresh lease of life to the Bagadi identity and redefined it under the Kyamkhanis. The chapter lays out the process of establishment of a city, the reasons behind it

and the forces that make it possible to found a city in middle of a Desert with practically very limited resources.

The next chapter 'Bagad of the Common Man,' is about finding out the experiences of the common man's life in the region of Bagad. It concerns about the ecology of the region, its relationship with the human and its impact on the lives of general population. The next part of the chapter deals with the structure of settlement in villages and towns and the social profile of the people. It captures the difficulty and struggles with the nature that enabled the humans to adapt to the local conditions. The main occupation of the villagers was agro-pastoralism which was a combination of practising agriculture and pastoralism. The agriculture was limited to *kharif* season because of lack of irrigation facilities other than rain water. In such a situation the cattle and livestock became essential to survive. The dairy products were important part of diet and items of sale to the townsfolk. The chapter describes the plight of men during the drought and famine situation that gave birth to many inhuman practices and tradition in society that created further complications and suffering for the common men. The people of Bagad cleverly managed to survive on very less food by preserving the food to eat during the lean months of the year.

'The Economic Patterns of Bagad' region have been discussed in the sixth chapter. This is the only field where some academic work has been done by the scholars because of the availability of the sources that dealt with the economic activities of Bagad. The first part of the chapter describes the lives of the Jain merchants of Bagad that had left behind some literature and inscriptions of the important towns and trade routes of Bagad. The second part talks about the exciting period of time when the Mughals declined and opened the political space for other players. The brief period of about one century saw long trade routes passing through Bagad that gave opportunity to the local traders to grow their businesses. The Bikaner and Shekhawats undertook large scale construction of new towns and commercial *mandis* that filled up the

coffers of the state treasury. Fatehpur as a city declined in the eighteenth century with the decisive defeat of the Kyamkhanis at the hands of Jaipur army that forced migration of the business community within Bagad. This Baniya community played a huge part in generating wealth in Bagad through various means. It looks into the aspects of identity of the merchants of Bagad who gained fame as Marwari merchants in rest of India. The third part of the chapter is about the agricultural production and the taxes levied by the state on the common.

## Chapter 2

### Understanding the Region: Historicity, Notions and Perceptions of Bagad

#### Historicity

The first evidence of the region with clear name as Bagad or 'vargat'<sup>14</sup> comes from the Harshnath temple inscription of Sikar, Rajasthan. The temple construction was started in 956 A.D. and got completed in 973 A.D. It is mentioned that it was located in the region of Vargat and the area around the Harshnath temple is called 'Anant Gochar.' So, it is clear that the region around Sikar district was called Vargat or Bagad.<sup>15</sup> Another inscription found in a Jain temple of Jhunjhunu dated 1453 A.D. has mentions Bagad as the place where the family of the donors lived.<sup>16</sup>

The second reference of Bagad comes from a Persian source *Tajul Masir* of Hasan Nizami. He talks about the battle of Hansi in September 1192 A.D. when Aibek had to come to the rescue of Ghurian army from the attack of a Chauhan chief Jatwan. This Jatwan probably

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<sup>14</sup> वार्गटिकानवोद्भूतसद्विप्र कुलसम्भवः, Sharma, Manohar, "Bagad Shabd ka Arthchintan", *Varda* July, 3, (1961), 64.

<sup>15</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati ke Shilalekh* (Jhunjhunu: Shardul Education Trust), 23-47; Ratanlal Mishra, *Rajasthan ke Shilalekh: Shekhawati Pradesh* (Fatehpur Shekhawati: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1991), 28-49.

<sup>16</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Rajasthan ke Shilalekh: Shekhawati Pradesh* (Fatehpur Shekhawati: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1991), 75. डूंगर पुत्र साधु जिल्हा बागड़ाख्या तेषां मध्य पं० गागड़ाख्या आदि जिनं प्रणमति॥

belonged to the Jor branch of Chauhans which were ruling in the area around Hansi.<sup>17</sup> Hasan Nizami mentions that when chased by the Islamic forces Jatwan retreated and was killed at the borders of Bagad.<sup>18</sup> The area west to the Hansi is semi-arid desert and as Hasan Nizami has mentioned about the borders it shows that there was a concept of borders base on geography. Therefore, this example proves that Bagad was recognised as a region in 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The Jain sources are the most important in locating the Bagad region. The Jain source *Gandhar Sardhshatak Vrihad Vritti*, written in 1238 A.D. and *Yug Pradhancharya Gurwawali* of Jinpalopadhyaya written in 1248 A.D. talks about the Jain religious activities in ‘Bagad Des’. The *khartargachh* branch of Jainism was very popular in Bagad. Jinpalopadhyaya informs that Yug Pradhan Dada Jinvallabh Suri had sent his writings in Prakrit to Bagad Des in 1109 A.D. through his subordinate which became very popular among Jains of Bagad. Then the disciple of Jinvallabh Suri, Jindatt Suri went to Bagad and taught 52 nuns and monks among many other important religious works. Pilgrimage was considered very important in a religious life of Jains and there are a lot of detailed accounts of pilgrimage parties called ‘sangh’ originating from Bagad or going through various towns and villages of Bagad.<sup>19</sup> Narhad and Jhunjhunu were considered *mahateerth* and were very popular prior to the Muslim rule<sup>20</sup>. Some of the names of places mentioned in these sources are Vyaghrapur (Baghor, Sikar), Kanyanayan (Kanana, Sikar), Narbhat (Narhad, Jhunjhunu), Jhunjhunpur (Jhunjhunu), Kedhpur (Kedh, Sikar), Khandela (Khandela, Sikar), Desnau (Dasnau, Sikar), Laundha (Lawanda, Bissau), Rewasa (Raiwasa, Sikar), Ladhnu (Ladnu, Nagore), Chhapar (Tal Chhapar,

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<sup>17</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh ka Pracheen Itihas* (Jhajhar: Surjan Singh Shekhawat Smriti Sansthan, 2014), 68.

<sup>18</sup> Hasan Nizami, “Tajul Masir” in *The History of India as told by Its Own Historians* vol.2 ed. H.M. Elliot and John Dowson (London: Trubner and Co., 1869), 217-18.

<sup>19</sup> Mahopadhyaya Vinaysagar, *Khartargachh ka Vrihad Itihas*, (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharti Akadamy, 2005), 45.

<sup>20</sup> Nahta, Agarchand. “Narhad-Narbhat ke Pracheen Ullekh”, *Maru Bharti* vol.4 (1957): 11-13.

Churu), Raneu (Rinau, Fatehpur), Dadrewa (Dadrewa, Churu), Bhatner (Hanumangarh), Bhadang (Bharang, Churu), Hisar Firoza (Hisar, Haryana), Nahua (Nahua, Sikar), Fatehpur etc.

These names features in many *teerthmalas* or books written on pilgrimages from twelfth century to 16<sup>th</sup> century. The most important being *Bagad Teerthmala* composed in 15<sup>th</sup> century by Muni Harikalash.<sup>21</sup> Another source of 15<sup>th</sup> century with valuable information in *Sanghapati Ladhagar Raas* penned by Ratnaprabh Suri of Gadanau village near Sidhmukh.<sup>22</sup> These places lie in mainly Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts with its periphery towards Hisar in present day Haryana. The credibility of the information gathered from the Jain sources gets complimented by various literary and historical sources belonging to vernacular Rajasthani and Persian sources. Many scholars such as Gaurishanakar Hirachand Ojha, Dashrath Sharma, Manohar Sharma, Agarchand Nahta, Govind Agarwal, Surjan Singh Shekawat and Raghuveer Singh Sitamau have opined that the region between Hisar, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu was known as Bagad.

Bagad was widely known is also proven by the fact that Kabir has mentioned Bagad in his poetry. Bagad is depicted as the opposite of the sacred geography of Malwa. Following is the reference:

वागड़ देश लूवन का घर है,  
तहां जनि जाइ, दाइन का डर है।।टेक।।<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Nahta, Agarchand. "Muni Harikalash Virachit Bagad Teerthmala" *Varda*, vol.2 (1972): 20-27.

<sup>22</sup> Nahta, Agarchand. "Teerthyatra Sambandhi Ek Mahatvapurna Pracheen Itihasik Raas" *Varda*, vol.2 (1973): 24-37.

<sup>23</sup> Winand M. Callewaert, Swapna Sharma and Dieter Taillieu, *The Millenium Kabir Vani: A Collection of Pad-s* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 32; Sharma, Manohar, "Bagad Des Loowan ka Ghar hai" *Vishwambhara*, 31, Vol.3 Spetember-October (1999), 39; Pushppal Singh, ed. *Kabir Granthawali*, (New Delhi: Naman Prakashan, 2004), 335-36; Shyam Sundar Das, ed. *Kabir Granthawali* (New Delhi: Prakashan Sansthan, 2010), 151.

Fatehpur in the present day Sikar district emerged as the capital of Bagad region in 15<sup>th</sup> century and flourished further under the Mughal tutelage. The literature produced in Fatehpur and vicinity from 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century is full of references of Bagad region with its centre at Fatehpur.<sup>24</sup>

Surjan Singh Shekhawat opines that the region's nomenclature has origin in Gurjari language. The Gurjars called it Bagad in the early medieval period and we see that during the Sultanate period the people had started using Bagadi as their surname. The surname or epithet Bagadi exists in every community and caste residing in Bagad such as Baniyas, Jats, Rajputs and Mali. The identity had cemented during the Sultanate period but it peaked during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Muslim Chauhan rulers appropriated the legacy of Bagad region and glorified themselves with the title of 'Bagadpati.'<sup>25</sup> The Kyamkhanis used Bagadi epithet as a symbol of their proud identity.<sup>26</sup> Another example from *Daulat Vinodsaar*, an Ayurvedic text written by Nawab Daulat Khan in seventeenth century shows the use of title '*Bagad Deshadhipati*' (बागड़ देशधिपति- the master of Bagad country).<sup>27</sup>

The Kyamkhanis were not only great warriors but sophisticated poets as well. Nawab Daulat Khan, Niyamat Khan, Chand Bibi who was married to Akbar were renowned poets. Bagad features prominently in their works and other local poets from Fatehpur.<sup>28</sup> One of the

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<sup>24</sup> Sharma, Manohar. "Bagad Des Loovan ka Ghar hai" *Vishwambhara* vol.3 (1999): 39-42; Sharma, Manohar. "Bagad Shabd ka Arthchintan", *Varda* July, 3, (1961), 64.

<sup>25</sup> रूप उजागर बागड़ को पति , लागत है दिन ही दिन नीको। Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 175-76.

<sup>26</sup> Niyamat Khan mentions in *Kyamkhan Rasa* that Nawab Nahar Khan had openly challenged Jagmal Panwar, the faujdar of Ajmer to fight him declaring that he is Nahar Khan 'Bagadi' and cannot compromise on his Rajput chivalry. Niyamat Khan 'Jaan', *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Jinvijay Muni, Agarchand Nahta, Dashrath Sharma et.al., trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 1996), 51.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 38. इति श्री 'बागड़ देशधिपति' श्री अलिफखॉ नंदन श्री दौलतीखान विरचित श्री दौलति विनोद सार संग्रह षोडश ज्वराधिकारः।

<sup>28</sup> Sharma, Manohar. "Bagad Shabd ka Arthchintan", *Varda* July, 3, (1961), 64.

interesting example comes from Niyamat Khan's who is better known as Jaan Kavi and the writer of *Kyamkhan Raso*. He, in the introduction of a *premakhyan* called *Katha Kanwalawati* discusses the reason for choosing the Braj language as the medium of poetry. He says that the people of Bagad cannot understand high and sophisticated language so, he chose an easy language and idioms to follow and took inspiration from the old linguistic traditions.<sup>29</sup>

*Rao Jaitsi ro Chhand* is one of the earliest historical account written in *Dingal* (medieval Rajasthani) written by Vithu Sooja Nagrajot in sixteenth century (1526 A.D.). It is an account of unsuccessful attack of Mirza Kamran on Bikaner. It has references to the *Kyamkhani Nawab Daulat Khan* and Bagad region:

आवयु थाट, मेलिय अथाह ।  
सलखहर राउ, बागड़ सिराह ॥  
दौलत्तिखान दल, साथ देय ।  
बस्सावी देस, बिन्नु बहेय ॥<sup>30</sup>

(The descendent of Salkhan, Rao Lunkaran entered Bagad with a huge army. Daulat Khan welcomed him humbly and joined him along with his army and thus saved his country from attack.)

Thomas Roe had provided a list of provinces of Hindustan and has noted Bagad on the twentieth number as Bakar, the chief city is called Bikaner.<sup>31</sup> Edward Terry has also repeated the same information in his accounts of Indian provinces. Bagad features on the 26<sup>th</sup> number in his list and he writes Bakar, the chief city is called Bikaner; it lies on the west side of river Ganges.<sup>32</sup> So these example tell that Bagad was quite well known during the Mughal period.

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<sup>29</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' "Katha Kanwalawati" in *Jaan Granthawali: Premakhyan Sangrah* vol.4 (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 2004), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh ka Pracheen Itihas*, 113.

<sup>31</sup> P. Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals (1526-1658)*, (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1941), 109.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East India* (London), 82. Archive.org. Accessed on 12 July 2017. <https://archive.org/details/avoyagetoeastin00terrgoog/page/n109/mode/2up>.



During Nawab Alaf Khan's reign, in 1590 A.D. *Rupawati Akhyan* named text was written. It noted in the beginning that:

जम्बूद्वीप देश तहाँ बागर, नगर फतेहपुर नागरां नागर ।  
आसि पासि तहाँ सोरठ- मारु , भाषा भल्ली भाव पूवी सारू ॥<sup>33</sup>

Another text written in 1628 A.D. by Bhikhjan, a noted Dadu panthi who resided in the Dadu *math* (monastery) of Fatehpur by the name of *Bharti Naammala* noted that:

बागर मधि गुन आगरो, सुबस फतेहपुर गांव ।  
चक्रवर्ती चहुवान निरप , राज करत तिहां ठाँव ॥<sup>34</sup>

There were many famous Sufi saints in the region of Bagad, but two of them are specially known as the “*Bagad ke raja*” or the masters of Bagad. Aejazullah Shah was based in Baggar, Jhunjhunu is very famous in the region and he is known as the spiritual leader of Bagad. Another well-known Sufi Najmuddin Farooqui Chishti was based in Fatehpur and belonged to the family of Hamiduddin Nagauri. He had written many books in Persian and one of his books *Najmul Irshad* mentions Bagad as his *wilayat*.<sup>35</sup> He has also written many books on the local history of Bagad and Shekhawati which are in the process of translation from Persian to Urdu. Peer Ghulam Jilani Najmi, a descendent of the saint had told me a song which was sung in his praise by the ladies; आप हो बागड़ के राजा, सच्चे शक्करवार हो। (You are the master of Bagad, you distribute sweets among your followers) One of the most famous deity of North

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<sup>33</sup> Dashrath Sharma, introduction to *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Jinvijay Muni (Jodhpur, Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 1996), 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Najmuddin Chishti Farooqui, *Najmul Irshad*, trans. Maulana Yusuf Shah Ufqi Qadri (Karachi: Peer Qutbuddin Najmi Al Farooqui), 54.

India is Guga who is believed to be ruling over Bagad in first half of eleventh century. His capital was Dadrewa (Churu district) and the ancestor of Kyamkhani Rajputs. He is also invoked as the “Bagad wala” in much of North India.<sup>36</sup>

Bagad is still surviving in the folk songs of Shekhawati region. Examples are following:

थान थानै राव जी बुलावै, ए  
हाँ ए, बागड़ की ए मीणी,  
झीणोड़ी थानै राव जी बुलावै ए<sup>37</sup>

(Hey Meeni of Bagad, Rao ji is calling you.)

The region of Bagad has not been explored by historians, but geographers of Rajasthan and Haryana have included it in their research. So, the geography books provide valuable information about the geographical features and extent of Bagad. Jasbir Singh has described Bagad as “Sand dunes of various shapes and sizes form a thirsty land clothes by steppe vegetation in the southwestern parts of Haryana. These lies in the parts of Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Tosham, Loharu, Dadri and Jhajjar tehsils where they cover about 9820 square kilometres of area, i.e. 22.81 per cent of the total area of Haryana. Of great significance is a great amount of wind-blown sand which is piled up several metres high above the local flats or *Tals* and stretches for kilometers in length forming a continuous strip of significant concentration of sandy billows covering 4859 square kilometers adjacent to Rajasthan Desert, i.e. about 11.23 per cent of the total area of the state. Sand dunes are found on a massive scale in this belt which extends from the southeast of Sirsa tehsil along Rajasthan border of Hisar

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<sup>36</sup> William Crooke, *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of North India* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1894), 133; Susan Wadley, Guga in *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopaedia* eds. Margret A. Mills, Peter J. Claus et.al. (Routledge, 2003), 270.

<sup>37</sup> Manohar Sharma, “Bagad Shabd ka Arthchintan”, *Varda* (Bissau), 67.

district, gradually widening through the Bhiwani district and extending towards the central part of Rohtak district, i.e. Jhajjar tehsil. The region resembles the treeless undulating deserts and is locally known as Bagad.”<sup>38</sup>

The Linguistic Survey of India edited by George Abraham Grierson has recognised Bagadi as one of the dialects of Rajasthani. Grierson has given a description of the area where Bagadi is spoken, the word Bagri literally means the language of the Bagad country. A range of rocky hills intersects nearly the whole of Shekhawati in the Jaipur state, in a northeastern direction, and close upon its eastern frontier. The country on the east side of these hills is called Dhundhar, while that to the west is called Bagad which includes nearly the whole of Shekhawati, and is generally applied to the sandy country where water is only procurable at great depth. This Bagad tract extends to the north-west far beyond Shekhawati, and it is the tract, outside Shekhawati, which is the home of Bagadi.

The home of standard Bagri is in the north-east of the Bikaner State. Immediately to its east and north lies Panjab district of Hissar. The part of Hissar which lies to the north is mainly the Sirsa tehsil, in the south of which Bagri is also spoken in that part of the rest of Hissar district which lies to the east of Bikaner. It extends north even into a small tract of the Patiala state.

South of Hissar lie the state of Loharu and the Dadri Nizamat of the Jind State. In Loharu the language is Bagri, and so it is in Dadri, except at the eastern end, where it is Bangaru.<sup>39</sup> Grierson very clearly has described that Bagad is a region distributed in Rajasthan, Haryana and slightly in Punjab as well.

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<sup>38</sup> Jasbir Singh, *An Agricultural Geography of Haryana* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications, 1976), 41.

<sup>39</sup> Linguistic Survey of India, vol. IX, Indo Aryan Family Central Group, part 2, Specimens of Rajasthani and Gujarati, ed. G.A. Grierson (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1908), 147-159.

Irfan Habib has shown the area adjacent to Siwani (in Bhiwani district of Haryana) as Bagad and desert. The area has no *dastur* circles signifying poor agricultural production.<sup>40</sup> *Ain-i Akbari* also denoted that wells in Hisar are to be dug considerably deep to fetch water signifying the presence of desert.<sup>41</sup> Taking cue from Irfan Habib's work and some colonial sources we can identify the region of Bagad. Bagad came under the *subas* of Ajmer and Dilli. Under *suba* Ajmer, *sarkar* Nagor, Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu<sup>42</sup> were the main *parganas* whereas most of the *Bagad* was under suba Dilli, *sarkar* Hisar-i Firuza. The *parganas* of Bagad region in *sarkar* Hisar-i Firuza were Sirsa, Beniwal, Siwani, Puniya, Sheoran, Sidhmukh, Tosham, Bhiwani, Nohar, Bhatner, Hisar-i Firuza and Fatehabad.<sup>43</sup> The details of the region as given in *Ain-i Akbari* (1590's) are following:

Table 2.1: The Bagad region during Akbar's Reign

Pargana	Subah	Sarkar	Bighas Biswas	Revenue D.	Suyurghal D.	Cavalry	Infantry	Castes
Fatehpur Jhunjhunu, have brick forts	Ajmer	Nagor	152,200	1,233,222	.....	500	2000	Kyamkhani
Narhad	Agra	Narnol	356,293	4,262,837	29,405	500	2000	Kyamkhani
Puniyan	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	.....	1,200,000	.....	150	3000	Jat, Puniyan
Bhadang	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	.....	880,832	.....	200	2000	Rathore, Jat
Bhatner, has a brick fort	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	15,688	933,042	.....	500	10000	Rathore, Rajput
Tosham	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	511,075	4,694,354	150,680	400	3000	Afghan, Lohani
Hisar with sub dist. has 2 forts, one of	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	176,51218	4,039,895	183,879	500	2000	Jatu, Ranghar,

<sup>40</sup> Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: OUP, 1982), 4A.

<sup>41</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i Akbari* vol.2 trans. Col. H.S. Jarrett (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2010), 285.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-300.

brick, one of stone								Sheoran, Sangwan
Sirsa, has a brick fort	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	258,355	4,361,368	163,104	500	5000	Johiya
Sheoran	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	.....	400,000	.....	100	1000	Jat, Sheoran
Sidhmukh, soil mostly sandy	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	.....	171,372	.....	50	100	Rajput, Rathore, Jat
Siwani	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	48,512	76,750	.....	100	1000	Rajput, Tanwar
Fatehabad, has a brick fort	Dehli	Hisar-i Firuza	33,661	1,184,392	81,867	200	3000	Rajput, Rathore, Gujar, Jat

Source: Ain-i Akbari vol.2

*Ain-i Akbari* has enlisted only 12 *parganas*. The total area of 8 of these *parganas* is 19,027,002 Bighas Biswas. The total revenue generated was 23,438,064 Dams with 608,935 Dams of Suyurghal. The total cavalry strength was 3,700 men and infantry of 32,100 men.

### Notions and Perceptions

There have been various studies on historical geographies in India, but these studies are largely confined to the ‘major geographical lineaments or major structure lines’ and ‘perennial nuclear regions’<sup>44</sup> as B.D. Chattopadhyay puts it. But the third type of region the region of ‘relative isolation’ that were less favoured, have not been studied. These scatter zones lacked in resources, and settlements so the trajectory of historical processes of these regions differed in significant ways. The unfavourable geography hindered the formation of strong polities in such areas and these could not go beyond the being the ‘folk regions’<sup>45</sup>. Nonetheless the study of these regions are as important as of any other region as these can enrich our understanding

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<sup>44</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *A Survey of Historical Geography of Ancient India*, (New Delhi: ICHR, 1984), 30.

<sup>45</sup> Eugenia Vanina, *Medieval Indian Mindscapes: Space, Time, Society, Man* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2012), 48- 49.

of historical regions which went on an alternative path. As such regions differed in socio-cultural and eco-political characteristics these have not been theoretically defined and categorised properly.

Perhaps more than any other factor, the geography have a key role in the 'imaginative geography' of Bagad and in the making of Bagadi regional identity. The Bagad is both real-an arid area culturally distinct from the rest of Rajasthan. There are myths, an assemblage of ideologically-laden signs and images: abode of hot winds, uncivilised, dirty, dumb etc. In short, much of the Bagad's has been created by the outsiders on the basis of these symbols and imaginative. This chapter outlines the source of this imaginative representation of the Bagad and considers the reasons for the enduring historiographical place of 'hostile environment and inferior social status' as part of Bagad's geography and historical identity.

In part, this is to address the question of how Bagad's regional identity has been shaped by the people both 'outsiders' and 'insiders' through the persistently constructed imagery. What follows also examines the ways in which the Bagad has been differently seen as a 'natural' and a 'moral' landscape, views which are to be explained in relation to various visions about the cultural place of the Bagad and of the Bagadi people. This is not alone a matter of regional representation and consciousness, the Bagad has been created by cultural attitudes to nature. We would study the representation of Bagad through historical sources ranging from the 13-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries of Mughal era and 19<sup>th</sup> century of colonial period.

Bagad's reputation of an arid, hostile, unpleasant and unproductive land stems from its geographic character. There exists a long tradition of literary description equating arid geographies with hostility and wilderness and Bagad is the classic example of such tradition. The *nirgun Sants* who were itinerants, had travelled far and wide, had created an 'other' and compared it with the lands of contrasting qualities through their poetry. It was presented as the 'problem region' which was despised by them and shown as a punishment for someone for bad

or immoral conduct. Particularly the idea that Bagadi people are and always have been dirty, uncivilised, has very deep roots in the historical imagination of the outsiders as a region discursively portrayed as 'outside and below' given standards of civilisation. The word Bagad had become an ideologically laden word with connotations of dirty, arid and difficult region and it is clear that the particular geography of Bagad was the reason behind it.

Arid environment has created a symbolic landscape stigmatized with negative stereotypes. In the popular imagination, arid desert landscapes, sand dunes and unfertile land, the hot winds had become icons of fear and disgust. However, it is surprising to know that the natives or the insiders also did not appreciate it as well barring a few examples of poets. This chapter is a brief discussion of the different representations of the region of Bagad. The historical literature is found in and around the region provides us the diverse opinions of the natives or the insiders, neighbouring and far away residing outsiders and colonial masters. The diversity of opinions break the simple dichotomy of 'insider' 'native' view versus the 'outsider' view.

Richard Francaviglia has worked on the mining towns of America and has termed them as 'Hard Places.' Borrowing the term from historical geographer Richard Francaviglia, let me call this region as a 'hard region.' He has described these hard places as areas whose residents are burdened by economic, social, and environmental problems.<sup>46</sup>

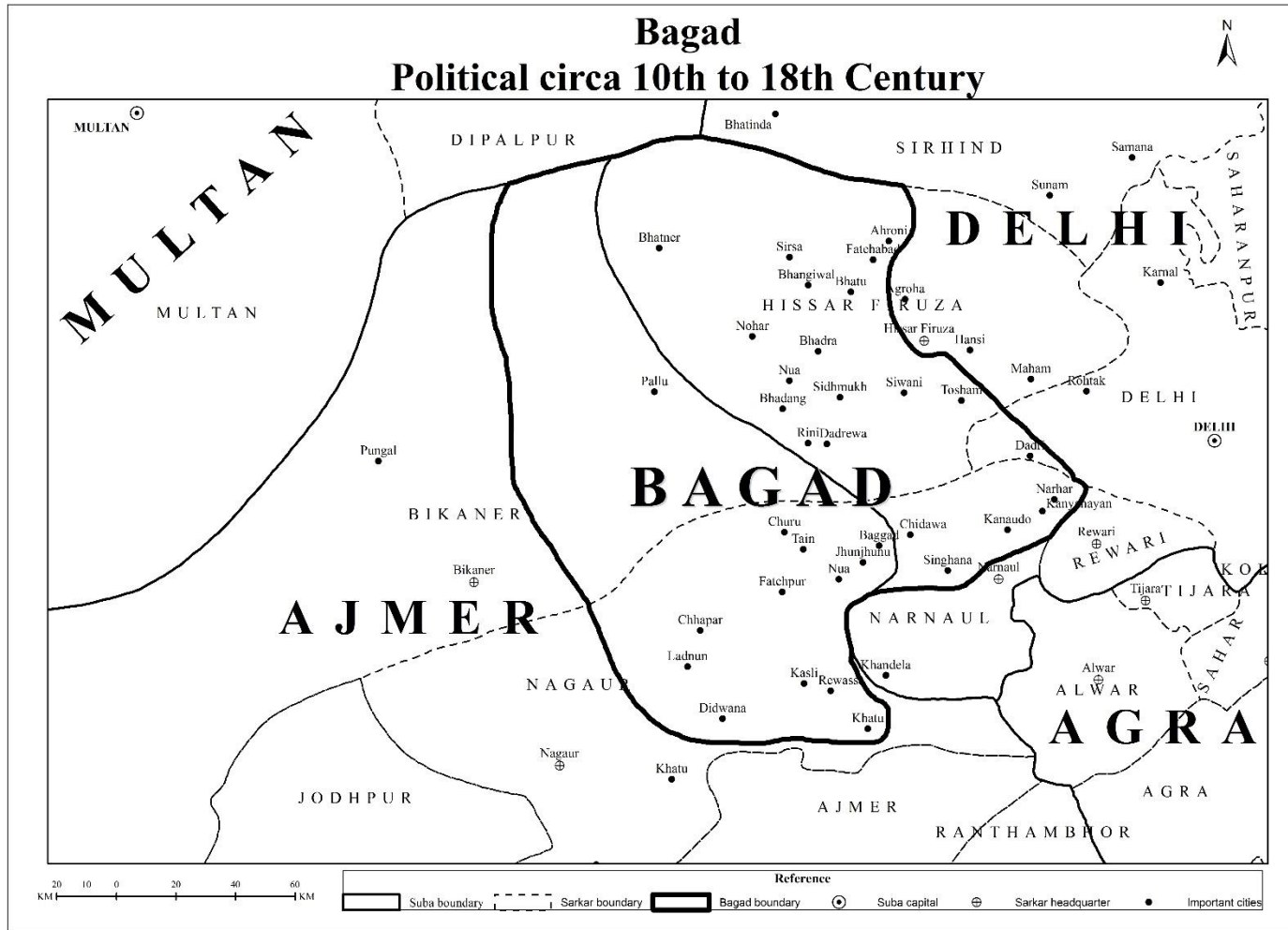
The nature around us is defined by us on the basis of our thoughts and experiences. The categories of nature are socially constructed in the same manner as other notions of world around us.<sup>47</sup> There is a tradition in India which recognises the differences among different

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<sup>46</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 214.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Jeffery, introduction to *The Social Constructions of Indian Forests*, ed. Roger Jeffery (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 1.

Map 2.1: Bagad: Political circa 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Century



Source: Based on Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: OUP, 1982)



geographical area and topographies and value assigned to them.<sup>48</sup> These assigned values created binaries of social attitudes and perceptions linked to geographical spaces and were conceived by people both inhabiting these spaces and outsiders.<sup>49</sup> The value of any region is derived mainly through the utility and the aesthetic component of the particular geography. Well known narratives of Amir Khusrau<sup>50</sup>, Shams Siraj Afif in *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*<sup>51</sup> and Babur in his autobiography *Tuzuk-i Baburi*<sup>52</sup> are a few examples of how evaluation of environment and geography in medieval Indian history.

The utility of a geographic region pertains to its economic status, natural resources, agricultural production and revenue generation capability. It also determines the ease of living conditions of a place. Whereas, aesthetic value of a geographic region pertains to how beautiful, green, picturesque, pleasant weather the region has. These factors are highly subjective in nature and tend to change with the eyes of the beholder, therefore we can observe different attitudes towards the same region. But, largely we see that utility and aesthetic value are the two deciding factors for everybody, whether it be a ruler, traveller, trader or peasant. These factors shape the social attitudes of the communities towards each other.

A well-known episode from the Bagad demonstrates the accepted and desired form of geography. Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1309 A.D.- 1388 A.D.) laid the foundation of Hisar-i Firuza in 1354 A.D. in a barren land which was devoid of any agriculture due to the lack of water

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<sup>48</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyay, "Interrogating 'Unity in Diversity': Voices from India's Ancient Texts," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 43, No.9/10 September- October (2015), 6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, "The Idea of India in Amir Khusrau" in *India- Studies in History of An Idea*, ed. Irfan Habib (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004), 122.

<sup>51</sup> Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, trans. Ishrat Husain Ansari, al- Taimi al-Sidiqi and Hamid Afq Qureshi (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2015), 84-8.

<sup>52</sup> Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, trans. Yugjit Navalpuri (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2016) 318-334.

resources. Afif has shown the huge transformation in the geography of the region after coming of canals. Peasants from various places came by and settled new villages near the canals, and started growing crops two times a year which not only filled the royal treasury but benefitted the entire population of the region.<sup>53</sup> The geography of Hisar got transformed from a barren land to a green land of gardens and agriculture that was not only aesthetically pleasing but economically advantageous.

Baburnama is another source which discusses the geography, environment, architecture and people of India in detail. Babur (1483 A.D. - 1530 A.D.) is looking at India from the Central Asian perspective and had compared it with Central Asian lands. Interestingly, he marked India very poorly on aesthetic scale and found it to be a mundane place where the people are neither sophisticated nor cultured. The people are not beautiful and are unintelligent. He has written in detail about the flora, fauna, and physical features of the land and uncivilised people of India.<sup>54</sup> Although, he is critical of Indian way of things but in the same breath he is impressed by the huge wealth India possess. Babur pitted the harsh and hostile weather of both the lands with each other to justify the better wealth prospects of India. Babur added a model to the genealogy of accepted geographies where ‘utility’ of the geography makes it ‘favourable and acceptable.’

The region of Bagad is the opposite of an ideal geographic space where the water is scarce, rainfall is very low and no river passes through it. There are no worthwhile natural or mineral sources to support the economy. So, the people are agro-pastoralists who cultivate only when there is a good rainfall, not depending on it entirely. The land is full of medium sized sand dunes and infertile soil and deep brackish water table. This is completely an ‘undesirable’

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>54</sup> Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, trans. Yugjit Navalpuri (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2016) 318-334.

geography which fail on both the parameters of utility and aesthetics. This makes it a 'problem region' in the eyes of the traveller passing through it.

The region of Bagad lies in the eastern most portion of the Thar Desert covering three modern states of Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan. Bagad in local parlance amounts to an arid land where agriculture cannot be practiced. Its eastern boundaries touch the fertile belts of Haryana and Punjab. It is a geographic region that has its separate socio-cultural identity distinguishing it from the other parts of Thar Desert. Parts of districts Sirsa, Hisar, Bhiwani, Fatehabad, Hanumangarh, Churu, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Abohar and Fazilka are considered as Bagad region. It is a semi-arid region with average rainfall of 15 inches per annum. This rainfall is highly irregular and famines occur every third year on an average. Only *Kharif* crop (Monsoon) is possible which is entirely dependent on rains. The region is spread with sand dunes all around and no river in the region. The wells are few and very deep making it practically impossible to use it for agricultural purposes. The population is sparse and practice agro-pastoralism. The summers are very hot with temperatures going up to 50 degree Celsius and winters are severe with temperatures dipping to freezing points. The core area of Bagad of Churu and Fatehpur are considered as the most cold in winters and hot in summer areas of the entire Thar where human live. So, the weather is hostile and life is difficult in the region making it a less favourable place to inhabit.

The economy is at the subsistence level and the harsh weather puts it in a binary opposite category from the ideal types making it the undesirable 'other.' It gives us the opportunity to learn that the perceptions of communities are determined by the environmental and economic factors of a particular geographical space.

A devotional song (*bhajan*) attributed to Sant Kabir is popular in Rajasthan regarding the Bagad region. The *bhajan* is found in all the older and newer manuscripts of Kabir, even Winand M. Callewaert's stringent criteria of scrutinising has found it to be authentic Kabir's

bhajan.<sup>55</sup> However, he has provided four versions of this particular *pad* or verses and there are minor differences in each of them.<sup>56</sup> This only suggests its popularity among different areas and people. The Bhajan is as following:

वागड़ देश लूवन का घर है,  
 तहां जनि जाइ, दाइन का डर है।।टेक।।  
 सब जन देखूं, कोई न धीरा।  
 परत धूरि सिर, कहत अभीरा।।1।।  
 न तहां सरवर, न तहां पाणी।  
 न तहां सतगुरु, न साध वाणी।।2।।  
 न तहां कोकिल, न तहां सूवा।  
 उंचे चढ़ि चढ़ि, हंसा मूवा।।3।।  
 देस मालवा, गहर गंभीरा।  
 डग—डग रोटी, पग—पग नीरा।।4।।  
 कहै कबीर, घर ही मन—माना।  
 गूगै का गुड़, गूगै जाना।।5।।<sup>57</sup>

(Bagad is the home of *loo* (hot winds). Beware of going there for you can get burnt (heatstroke). The people are impatient. The dust is plentiful and it fall on people's head which they cherish it as colour (*gulal*). There is neither pond nor water. There is neither sant nor piety. There is neither cuckoo nor parrot. Even the swan dies off if it flies. The country of Malwa<sup>58</sup> on the other hand is of serious character. There is abundance of food and water. Kabir says everybody love their home. A mute person enjoys eating jaggery (sweet made of sugarcane) though he cannot express his joy.)

Bagad here is the metaphor for material world and Malwa is the place where God resides, the spiritual heaven. Bagad is the reality and Malwa is the aim, and Kabir wants the people to undergo the journey of transformation from the abode of *loo* to the place where everybody is well fed. Kabir says that one can feel, but cannot describe the joys of that place same as a mute person can enjoy eating jaggery but cannot express it in words. It's a clear cut

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<sup>55</sup> Winand M. Callewaert, Swapna Sharma and Dieter Taillieu, *The Millenium Kabir Vani: A Collection of Pad-s* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 32.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-9.

<sup>57</sup> Manohar Sharma, "Bagad Des Loowan ka Ghar hai" *Vishwambhara*, 31, Vol.3 Spetember-October (1999), 39; Pushppal Singh, ed. *Kabir Granthawali*, (New Delhi: Naman Prakashan, 2004), 335-36; Shyam Sundar Das, ed. *Kabir Granthawali* (New Delhi: Prakashan Sansthan, 2010), 151.

<sup>58</sup> Malwa is a region of Madhya Pradesh state of India which borders the south east Rajasthan. It was the favourite destination for the migratory people fleeing from the famine stricken areas of Rajputana in the medieval period. Malwa is presented as the ideal geography in many literary creations of medieval Rajasthan.

comparison of the 'good' vs 'bad' or 'desirable' vs 'undesirable.' Bagad is the other that poses existential threats to the animal lives and where the people should rather avoid going. Even religion and spirituality cannot originate and survive in such a severe environment. The people are irreverent towards the saints so the region is not only physically barren but spiritually as well.

To Kabir, who is an outsider the harsh Desert landscape symbolises a Godless country. As the nature was always in tandem with the human society in the indigenous genealogy, Bagad, a Godless country could not have a spiritual and pious community. Bagad here is the metaphor for material world and Malwa is the place where God resides, the spiritual heaven. Bagad is the reality and Malwa is the aim, and Kabir wants the people to undergo the journey of transformation from the abode of *loo* (hot summer winds) to the place where everybody is well fed. Kabir says that one can feel, but cannot describe the joys of that place same as a mute person can enjoy eating jaggery but cannot express it in words.

Sant Sundardas (1596-1689 A.D.) was a Dadupanthi Bhakti saint who was born in Dausa district of Rajasthan but lived most of his life in Fatehpur, the political capital of the Bagad. He was a disciple of saint Dadu and is considered as the most important saint of Dadupanthi sect, after Dadu himself. He was a prolific writer and wrote 42 religious books. He had travelled far and wide and recorded his journeys in a book called *Deshawatan*. Let's look at his opinion on the regions of Malwa, Lahore and Bagad wherein he is looking at Lahore and Malwa from an outsider's perspective and Bagad as an insider. His observations about Malwa are following:

भूमि पवित्र लोग विचित्र हु राग रु उठत वही तें ।  
 उत्तम अन्न असन्न बसन्न प्रसन्न है मन्न जं बात तहीं तें ।।  
 बृच्छ अनंत रु नीर बहंत सु सुन्दर संत बिराजै जहीं तें ।  
 नित्य सुकाल पड़ै न दुकाल सु मालव देस भलौ सब हीतें ।।<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sundar Das, "Introduction" in *Sundar Granthawali*, ed. Ramchandra Mishra, (New Delhi: Kitab Ghar, 1992), 26.

(The land of Malwa is holy and people are extra ordinary. Malwa is a country of festivities. The food is excellent and one stays there with undisturbed peace and remains happy. There is greenery all around with innumerable trees and abundant water, therefore Sundar has chosen this place to stay. The food is always plentiful and famine never takes place, hence Malwa is the best country of all.)

Even after living in Fatehpur for more than seventy years he thought Malwa to be a better place for Bhakti.

He was also impressed with Lahore as he noted delightfully:

हिकक लाहौर दा नीर भी उत्तम हिकक लाहौर दा बाग सिराहे ।  
हिकक लाहौर दा चीर भी उत्तम हिकक लाहौर दा मेवा सिराहे ॥  
हिकक लाहौर दे हे बिरही जन हिकक लाहौर दे सेवग भाये ।  
कितइक बात भली लाहौर दी ताहि तें सुन्दर देशनें आये ॥<sup>60</sup>

(The water of Lahore is excellent and its garden is best. The garments of Lahore are terrific and the fruits of Lahore are the finest. The attendants of Lahore pleased me very much. So many things of Lahore are pleasant, that is why Sundar has come to visit Lahore.)

Sant Sundardas's observation are particularly important as he lived most of his life in Fatehpur, but when he went on to visit different places he saw stark changes and really liked Lahore and Malwa. The lush greenery of Malwa, the aesthetic beauty of innumerable trees and delicious fruits are treat for him. On the other hand the lack of vital resources such as water create health and hygiene problems in Fatehpur. The ladies bathe rarely, does not wash hands regularly which are considered uncouth and uncultured. The practical problem of water shortage is creating hygiene issues. The natural constraints of geography are guiding the perception of Bagadi women.

Just like Kabir, Sundardas also declared Malwa as the best country, the epitome of holy land. A land where not only the nature is beautiful, but people are also equally nice and

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

pleasant. Malwa therefore is a 'sacred geography,' an ideal to look forward to. Lahore, similar to Malwa is also a lush green land with hospitable people and a place of joy and spirituality. However, the important point to note is that the holy places are always placed in a naturally resourceful region. Water is the primary natural resource responsible for a good agriculturally productive land and at the same time has been used by the humans for personal purification from time immemorial. The holy places are based in an easily habitable regions.

भावै तनु काशी तजौ भावै बागड़ मांहीं ।  
 सुंदर जीवत मुक्त कै संसय कोऊ नांहीं ॥  
 जैसो कासी क्षेत्र है तैसो बागड़ देश ।  
 सुंदर जीवत मुक्त कै संक नहीं लवलेस ॥<sup>61</sup>

(Whether you die in Kashi or in Bagad, there is no difference. Kashi is just like Bagad country, there is no doubt in dying at either of the places.)

Sundardas who was a Dadupanthi, believed that an enlightened person does not need to go for pilgrimage as he has found the ultimate God in himself so there is no need to seek him at places like Kashi, Dwarka and Mathura.<sup>62</sup>

Let's study Sudardas's observation about the ladies of Fatehpur:

सुच्चि अचार कछू न बिचारत मास छठै कबहूंक सन्हंहीं ।  
 मूड बुजावत बार परै गिर ते सब आटे मैं वोसनि जांहीं ॥  
 बेटी रु बेटन कौ मल धोवत बैसेहिं हाथन सौं अनं पांही  
 सुन्दरदास उदास भयौ मन फूहड़ नारि फतेहपुर मांही ॥<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Winand M. Callewaert and Bart Op de Beeck, *Nirgun Bhakti Sagar Devotional Hindi Literature: A Critical Edition of the Panc – Vani or the Five Works of Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Raidas, Hardas with the Hindi Songs of Gorakhnath and Sundardas, and a Complete Word-index Vol.1* (Delhi: Manohar, 1991), 545.

<sup>62</sup> Pemaram, *Rajasthan mein Bhakti Andolan* (Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akademi, 2014), 145.

<sup>63</sup> Sundar Das, "Introduction" in *Sundar Granthawali*, ed. Ramchandra Mishra, (New Delhi: Kitab Ghar, 1992), 39.

(The ladies of Fatehpur does not bother to stay clean and bathe hardly once in six months. They scratch their head and face and hair fall in the flour they knead. They clean the faeces of their children and eat from the same dirty hands without cleaning them. Sundardas became sad by seeing the gauche ladies of Fatehpur.

Jaan, a prince of the Kyamkhani royal family provide a different opinion about the land and culture of Bagad. He said that it is not possible to speak a cultured language if someone lives in Bagad. It means that the ruler is convinced that the territory of his rule is not capable of generating ‘high tradition’ and sophisticated language. It is rare to get such opinions from a ruler about the cultural advances of his own land.

रहबो बागर मांझ तो किम आवे भाषा भली

(How can one speak a cultured language if he lives in Bagad.)

Let me give another example which deviates from the typical outsider’s view. So, there can be multiple perceptions even among the so called ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.

नित बरसो हे मेहा बागड़ में, नित बरसो। मोठ बाजरी बागड़ निपजै, गेहुंडा निपजै खादर में,  
नित बरसो हे मेहा बागड़ में नित बरसो। मूंग र चूला बागड़ निपजै, जउड़ा निपजै खादर में,  
नित बरसो हे मेहा बागड़ में, नित बरसो। टोड टोडिया बागड़ निपजै, भैंसां निपजै खादर में,  
नित बरसो हे मेहा बागड़ में, नित बरसो।<sup>64</sup>

(Pour daily o rains. Turkish bean (*Vigna aconitifolia*) and pearl millet grow in Bagad but wheat grow in Khadar. Moong bean (*Vigna radiata*) and Chunla beans grow in Bagad but Barley grow in Khadar. Camel calf is found in Bagad but ox originate in Khadar. Sheep and goat are found in Bagad but buffalo are found in Khadar only. Pour daily o rains, pour daily.)

The folk song is a classic example of how two geographical areas are perceived by the common people. The practical economic concerns are the most important when calculating upon different regions. As has been earlier said, the north eastern region of Bagad shares border

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 67.



with the fertile region of Khadar<sup>65</sup>, people can very easily distinguish and compare between the two on the basis of ease of living and resources. The water thirsty people are asking the rain to pour heavily and make Bagad into Khadar region. The region of khadar are has better living prospects with superior cattle and crops. This folk song is provides us the insider's view about their views about the land to which they belong. However, the more probable reason for such a different take on the motherland is that the ecology of both the geographies are completely distinct. People in such a place are not romantic about their land but very practical and straightforward about the reality and are more concerned about their daily necessities.

बागड़िये मत दीज्यो भोळा बाबोजी ए मा बागड़िये को पाणी है दूर  
 आतां तो जातां घसगी पगथळी ए माय ए मा ईडूणी सैं घसगा बाई का केस  
 घूँघट फाटी चम्पा चूनड़ी ए माय ए माय जीकारै मैं घसगी बाई की जीभ  
 बागड़ देस कुदेसड़ो ए माय ए मा कांटा तो भरुट धणा  
 जां देसां बेटी ब्यायसी ए माय ए मा पासी दुख तो धणा<sup>66</sup>

(Don't marry me into Bagad oh innocent father. The water in Bagad is far away. Soles of my feet got deformed by fetching water from far away. I suffered hair loss due to carrying earthen pot on my hair. Bagad is an unkind country, it is full of thorns and thorny bushes. If you marry me in Bagad, I will suffer a lot.)

सांगर फोग थली रा मेवो, सरजो है कीं पूरन नैं,  
 दूध और दलियो खा मेरी लाडो, मत तरसै उन मेवां नैं।<sup>67</sup>

(Be content with milk and meal my dear, do not long for those fruits (of more favoured climes))

This is a proverb that is supposed to be addressed to a young bride who grumbles at the discomforts of her new home. The *sangari* are the beans of *Prosopis cineraria* are found in abundance in Bagad makes the main part of diet for the people of Bagad. The tree of *Prosopis*

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<sup>65</sup> Khadar is a low lying fertile areas that are floodplains of a river.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>67</sup> J. Wilson, *Final Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Sirsa District in the Punjab 1879-83* (Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press Co., 1884), xxxiv. Accessed on 12 May 2018  
<https://archive.org/details/finalreportonre00wilsgoog>.

cineraria is the most iconic tree of Thar Desert and is the single most valuable tree of it. However, in Haryana region, *sangari* is used to feed animals only and considered unfit for human consumption. The *phog* (*Calligonum poligonoides*) is the fruit of a shrub called which grows only in arid lands and its fruit is eaten by humans and animals of Bagad alike. So, the mother in law gives advice to the newly wed bride that you better get used to these fruits of Bagad, do not long for the delicious dry fruits of your earlier home.

चंदा तू गंगना पति कौण भलेरा देस?  
सम्पत हो तो घर भला, नहीं भला परदेस।<sup>68</sup>

(Say oh moon, thou lord of heaven, what country is good?  
If there be wealth, home is best, if not, a foreign land is best.)

This Bagadi proverb signifies the psyche of the inhabitants of Bagad who are ever ready to move to a new place where they can get a better life. The Bagadis were agro-pastoralists who were quite mobile and stayed at places where the water was available. They are bound by the love of motherland as the main aim is to survive. They cultivate the land if it rained otherwise they move to newer places in the slightest instance. The East India Company officials especially noticed this feature of Bagadis that they remain ready to move in time of difficulty unlike other cultivators from Punjab and Haryana.

There is a common saying of Bagad that:

काल बागड़ से उपजे, बुरा बाहमण से होय<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., xxv.

This saying captures the psyche of a peasant very well that the Bagad is hopelessly infertile where only famine can grow. The peasant very frankly is stating that you can never expect anything positive from a Brahman likewise Bagad is incapable of offering anything more than a famine.

थोथा थल मोथा मंडल, धोरां धूर उडंता  
दूरां दूरां रूखड़ां तहं कदे न जइयो कंत ॥<sup>70</sup>

(The land is very arid and dust blow from the sand dunes.  
The trees are far and wide, you should never go there my husband.)

In the above couplets a wife is describing the tough landscape features of Bagad that make life full of hardships, so the wife warns her husband against going to Bagad. Again, a negative image is portrayed here that is deeply rooted in the conscience of the people. A wife fears for the life of her husband lest he goes to Bagad.

Bagad share its northern border with Punjab and eastern border with Haryana. Both the areas of Haryana and Punjab are more fertile and known for good agriculture. These regions are in direct contact with Bagad and it is obvious that they have developed a certain perception about the Bagadi people. Interestingly, both the cultures have similar perception of Bagad and they treat it as inferior and make it a subject of ridicule. There is a consistency in the description of Bagadis by the East India Company officers in 1870's, the British officer of 1930's, or the comparatively modern folk songs, commercial songs and literature of Haryana and Punjab. The perception and public memory persisted with the time.

The settlement reports prepared by the officers of East India Company has details about the communities living in the administrative region. The settlement report of Sirsa talks of newly settled area where peasants from various cultural backgrounds and regions had come to settle the land of Sirsa. So, the settlement officer has given description about each community

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<sup>70</sup> Ramgopal Verma. *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaraan Naagar*, 184.

describing their cultural background, religion, physical feature and character. The Bagadi Jats are marked as the lowest among all the Jat communities residing there. They are described as slow in intellect due to their long residence in desert and living an isolation from more advanced civilisations. They are short in stature, dark, dirty, spent thrift, lacking in spirit and power of self-defence. They perform their agricultural activities with the help of camel and lack knowledge of cultivating superior crops. They are learning about cultivation of newer crops from the Sikh Jats. They do not attach value to the land and are ready to move to a new place at the slightest pressure of famine.<sup>71</sup> In fact, in Bagad, conditions of uncivility, dirty, miser, and low intellect have been explained in the context of a “desert land mentality,” a psychological insensibility alleged to be the product of daily interaction with a difficult and hostile environment.<sup>72</sup>

Lieutenant A.H.E. Boileau went passed Bagad in 1835. He wrote his memoirs that is invaluable source of historical information on the history and geography of Rajputana during the early years of colonialism. He observed almost the same features of the people of Bagad as his other counterparts referred earlier. He wrote that “a Bengalee Baboo, with his snowy linen would be shocked at the impurities allowed to accumulate on the garments of some of the Hindoo brethren at Beekaneer; for though enough drinking water may be found to supply the wants of the whole capital, yet few persons enjoy the luxury of clean linen....” He further noted that “it is said that the poorer classes in the hot weather obliged to do without the change in the raiment for many weeks, and even the more respectable orders wear the same clothes unwashed for several days.”<sup>73</sup> “Dirty Clothes” for Boileau were of the “nasty habits” among many other.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> J. Wilson, *Sirsa Settlement Report*, 85-86.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant A.H.E. Boileau, *Personal Narrative of a Tour through the Western States of the Rajwara, in 1835; comprising Beekaneer, Jesulmer and Jodhpoor with the Passage of the Great Desert, and a Brief Visit to the Indus and to Buhawalpoor* (Calcutta: N. Grant Tank Square, 1837), 27-8.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

This description clearly establishes the linkage of geographical effect on the human life and ways. The Bagadis had the ability to adapt and survive in hostile nature, however these qualities of adaptation and learning are ignored by the colonisers as well as other neighbouring cultures as has been observed earlier. They are opposite of socially constructed values of cleanliness, physically superior, fair skinned and free willed. There is a consistency in perception of Bagadis by outsiders whether Sundardas in seventeenth century, the colonisers of nineteenth century or the Haryanavi or Punjabi society of modern time. There is an inherent sense of inferiority attached to the Bagadis which in turn is informed by the hostile geography they live in.

Captain A.F.T. Webb has written very interesting memoirs of his stay at Sikar in 1938. He has written about every significant section of the Bagadi society and commented upon the main characteristics of the Bagadi people. His memoir has recently been published for the first time and is completely unused by the scholars to study the history and culture of Bagad. His observation about the hygiene of the Bagadis is remarkably similar to Sant Sundardas's views. Captain Webb noted an unpleasant experience of meeting a well to do businessman who offered him a cup of tea. The cook was very dirty looking and the utensils were filthy, greasy, slimy and unclean. He specially commented that even the rich people of Desert does not care for cleanliness and hygiene.<sup>75</sup> He mentioned a proverb to give words to his distaste for the abundance of sand, sand dunes and dust storm of Bagad.

वाह री तेरी शेखावाटी ।<sup>76</sup>  
आधो चून, आधी माटी<sup>77</sup> ॥

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<sup>75</sup> Capt. A.W.T. Webb, *Sikar ki Kahani Captain Webb ki Zubani: Captain Webb द्वारा Likhit Dastawez ka Hindi Anuwad*, ed. Ganesh Berwal, trans. Bhagwansingh Jhahhadia (Sikar: Shanti Publication, 2009), 52.

<sup>76</sup> After the defeat of Kyamkhanis, Shekhawats became the new rulers of Bagad and they renamed the region by their own ancestral name as Shekhawati or the land of the Shekhawats.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

The lines sarcastically exclaims that Shekhawati has so much sand that it gets mixed with the flour, so it is half sand and half flour. Webb was particularly distressed during the summer months when the dust storms distraught the common life. The railway lines got covered under huge moving sand dunes and the sand spoils even the food and becomes a health hazard.<sup>78</sup>

He further commented on the basic and unchanging nature of the people of Bagad and defined them as innately lazy and shirker. They work only for three months in a year and sleeps for rest of the duration. They do not desire a better life and are satisfied with whatever little they get. They have acclimatised according to the harsh condition of Desert. Even the microbes do not prefer living in such hard conditions but these people thrive here in woeful and undernourished condition.<sup>79</sup>

Malcolm Lyall Darling was a British civil servant, who wrote many books on the peasants of India and their lives. He surveyed the Bagad tract of Haryana during almost the same time as Mr. Webb, but there is a startling difference of opinion between the two regarding the Bagadi people. Darling's opinion is more matured and nuanced as to why there is poverty in the Bagad area. He reflects upon the ecological factors of Bagad and reached different conclusion than the other colonial officers. Describing the ecology of the Bagad near Hisar he said that it an arid tract with the annual rainfall between 9 to 12 inches, which falls down to 3 or 4 in a bad year and increases to not more than 20 in a good year. The agriculture is totally dependent on rainfall as digging a well is a costly affair. Even drawing water from the 100 feet deep wells is not easy therefore, not practical for agricultural purposes. The water is brackish and yellowish which is not good for health. The sand storms destroys the seeds by choking

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 6-12.

them under the moving sand dunes. This creates the insecurity in life of people and the entire emphasis of the people are on survival and makes them thrifty. So, a Bagadi Jat is of frugal habits who store the crops for his family and cattle in advance. “On a journey he walks with shoes in hands; at night he spares his lamp”.<sup>80</sup>

Regarding the favourite topic of the British officials, cleanliness, Malcolm Lyall Darling refuted his other compatriots’ claims. He said it is untrue to call that the peasants live in “filth and squalor”, but large parts of the village are “scrupulously clean”. He even called a Bishnoi village in Bagad as “proverbially clean.”

Sheoran was a pargana of Bagad in Sarkar Hisar-i Firuza. It was famous as the area of Sheoran Jats who are one of the main Jat clans of Bagad which now lie in Haryana. There is an interesting anecdote popular among the Sheorans on the migration of Sheorans out of Bagad. According to the legend, a woman was married in the Mandholi Kalan village of Bagad. As the area was sandy and arid, a local thorny shrub called *Bharunt* was abundant in the village. Its cob sticks to the clothes easily which is difficult to come off. The new bride had brought new clothes with her which got full of the *Bharunt*. She got annoyed and went to her parents’ house and refused to come again. In those times it was difficult to get married in Bagad because of less population of women therefore, marriages were not common in Bagad. The panchayat of both the villages met and decided that this is a serious issue which must be resolved. So, the father of the bride offered some land in nearby village to the groom and invited him to come and settle in Rakhigarhi. Gradually, many Sheorans migrated out of Bagad and got settled in areas around Rakhigarhi.<sup>81</sup> The writer, C.B. Singh Sheoran has dated this event to be of 1480 A.D., but did not provide the source of such precise dating. Nevertheless, it can be taken as an

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<sup>80</sup> Malcolm Lyall Darling, *Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village* (London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press, 1934), 134.

<sup>81</sup> C.B. Singh Sheoran, *Sheoran Bawani (Loharu) ka Hairat Angez Itihas* (Hisar: Modern Publishers, 2008), 28-29.

event that could have happened during the medieval centuries. This example is a prime example of how the people neighbouring Bagad region thought and perceived the harsh conditions of Bagad. This anecdote is preserved in the collective memory of the Sheorans of Bagad.

There is famous folk song of Bagad which reflects the reality of the story of the Bagad preserved in the collective memory of the Sheorans.

बागड़ देस कुदेसड़ो ए माय, ए मा कांटा तौ भरूँट घणा ।  
जां देसां बेटी ब्यायसि ए माय , ए मा पासी दुख तौ घणा<sup>82</sup> ॥

In this folk song a daughter is pleading her mother that Bagad is bad country because it has a lot of thorns and *Bharunt*, if you would marry me in Bagad I would have to endure a lot of troubles and pain. The identity of the girl is not known here but probably she belonged to Bagad only as she was well acquainted with the local flora and ecology of it. She does not want to get married at such difficult terrain where life is extra hard. She wants to get married to a better off place outside Bagad. It captures the daily struggles a women has to go through in Bagad and it lays down the harsh but real facts about the life unlike other usual songs about greatness of a particular region. It is a very practical and straightforward approach towards life which gets reflected in the songs. This song represents the collective experience and sorrows of daily struggles of life in Bagadi women. It shows that the people are out rightly honest in their opinion about the life in their native region of Bagad.

Another example of Bagad's perception in the eyes of girls and women of Bagad from Haryana:

एक मेरे बाप कै चार धीयड़ थी चारों को ब्याही चारां कूंट में ।  
एक बागड़ में, दूजी खादर में , तीजी हरियाणा, चौथी देस में ।  
मेरे सर पर खारी कागा, हाथ भुआरी, भरूँट भुआरु मैं खड़ी खड़ी ।

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<sup>82</sup> “Rajasthani Sabad Kos: Rajasthani Hindi Vrihat Kosh”, ed. Sitaram Lalas (Jodhpur: Up Samiti Rajasthani Shabd Kosh, Chaupasini and Chaupasini Shiksha Samiti, 1962), 2979.



मैं सट-सट मारूं , डस-डस रोऊँ, रोऊँ नाई का तेरे जीव नै ।  
भोत दुखी सूं बागड़ में ॥<sup>83</sup>

This folk song belongs to Haryana where a married women describes her sorrows to a crow and asks it to convey her feelings to her parents. She told that her father had four daughters and each was married into different regions. She was married into Bagad, second was married into *Khadar*, and third was married into Haryana and fourth into Des.<sup>84</sup> She always has broom in her hand to clean *Bharunt* grass. She is very unhappy and depressed in Bagad. This represents the difficult life of Bagad in comparison to other regions where her other sisters have been married. She cries at her condition while cleaning the house and lamented the barber for fixing her marriage at such a challenging place. She bemoaned at her struggles and despised Bagad. She had come from a better-off place where life was comfortable and cheerful but the odd marriage fixture landed her into the dreaded Bagad where she has to constantly work.

The gendered vision to see and experience a region and place can be very different from a man or other categories we have studied here for the simple reason that she has to work laboriously much more than a man.

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<sup>83</sup> *Haryana ke Lokgeet*, ed. Sadhuram Sharda, Nanakchand Sharma and Somdutt Bansal (Panchkula: Haryana Granth Akademy, 2011), 290; *Haryana ki Upbhashayen*, ed. Sadhuram Sharda (Panchkula: Haryana Granth Akademy, 2016), 396.

<sup>84</sup> These regions represent different region of the Haryana state.

## Chapter 3

### State Formation in the Region

Large parts of southern Bagad was inhabited by Dahliya Rajputs who were responsible for founding some of the oldest villages and towns in the region whereas the upper Bagad had the presence of Johiyas or the Yodheyas. The Bagdi Rajputs were ruling on the area of Chhapar who were defeated by the Mohil Chauhans and named the area as Mohilwati. We don't have much information on the region prior to the early medieval period. The early medieval period of eighth and ninth centuries provide historical accounts in the form of stone and copper inscriptions.<sup>85</sup> The first important inscription of the region with the reference of the Bagad comes from the Harshnath temple inscription belonging to 973 A.D. The inscription has valuable information regarding the political dynamics of the region at that time. Various stone and copper plate inscriptions of ninth century inform us that Pratiharas had a sway over the region with Tanwars and Chauhans as their feudatories<sup>86</sup>. The Harshnath temple stone inscription is immensely important for many reasons, it provides the correct genealogy of the Chauhans of Sakambhari and records the tale of their rise under the Pratiharas. During the construction of the temple, Pratihara Nagabhata II was the overlord of the region called as *Anantgochar* (Vast pasture land) with Vighraharaj II and his younger brother Durlabhraj II as the feudatories of the region. They had gifted several villages near the Harsha hill for the

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<sup>85</sup> Ratan Lal Mishra, *Epigraphical Studies of Rajasthan Inscriptions* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2003), 47.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 35-60; Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh ka Pracheen Itihas*, (Jhajhad: Surjan Singh Shekhawat Smriti Sansthan, 2014), 17.

upkeep of the Harshnath temple. The temple was dedicated to Harshanatha, or Pashupatinath (Lord Siva) and the priest Allat belonged to the Pashupati sect.<sup>87</sup>

The Chauhans had gained independence from the declining Pratiharas of Kanauj and spread their rule over much of Bagad during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Chauhans ousted Dahliya Rajputs out of the Bagad region and one Ghangh Rana or Ghanghran Chauhan founded a place called Ghanghu<sup>88</sup> in the last decade of tenth century. He had migrated from Kuchera in Nagaur to the region to consolidate power in new territories. Chauhans spread from Sapadlaksh (Nagaur), the seat of their power, to large parts of Rajputana. B.D. Chattopadhyaya has given the name of 'integrative polity' to the process of springing of new settlements and new set of local rulers in early medieval period.<sup>89</sup> They usurped large parts of Bagad and got recognition from the Chauhans of Sakambhari as *Mandaleshwars*.<sup>90</sup> Niyamat Khan also known as Jaan has recorded the rapid rise of the Ghanghu branch of Rajputs in Bagad region.<sup>91</sup> The Rana married a nymph and had three sons Chand, Ind and Kanh. Then Kanh had four sons Amra, Ajra, Sidhra and Bachhra. The descendants of Amra founded a new small *thikana* (chiefdom) called Dadrewa. The folk deity Guga belonged to this family who had ruled over Dadrewa around 1020-30 A.D. He was known as the *Bagad Des ka Raja* (The king of Bagad) as reported in the colonial records. He belonged to a period between the Arab invasions of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.,72-73.

<sup>88</sup> Ghanghu is now a small village near Churu city in Rajasthan.

<sup>89</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya has satisfactorily proved by his work on Rajasthan that early medieval period saw a rise in settlements with expansion of agriculture and irrigation in Rajasthan. This was the same period when the phenomena of Rajput originated with the rise of new local rulers of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. These new rulers who had lacked a royal legacy claimed a glorious past by making new genealogies and justified their right to rule. For more details see B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: OUP, 1994).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.,63.

<sup>91</sup> Niyamat Khan, *Kyamkhan Rasa* trans. Ratan Lal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 13-18. It is the only source that provides information of the Ghangh Chauhans. The Kyamkhanis belonged to this branch earlier known as Amrawat Chauhans who used the title of Rana.

Sindh and the invasions of Ghaznavid Turks. G.S.L. Devra has called this as a period of transition. The descendants of Sidhra Chauhans were called as Jod Chauhans who ruled over much of Bagad and therefore came into conflict with the newly founded chiefdom of Dadrewa. The Jod and Amrawats fought with each other for the domination in the region. The folk songs of the region gives some hints of this clash for power at the eve of Ghaznavid entry into Indian politics. The well-known folk tale of Guga Rana talks about the struggle between Arjan and Sarjan Chauhans and Guga for the state of Dadrewa. These brothers Arjan and Sarjan could possibly be belonging to Jod branch of Ghanghu Chauhans.<sup>92</sup> So, after defeating the Dahliya Rajputs, these branches of the same family struggled for new territories in Bagad. The folk tale of Guga insinuates this power struggle in Bagad.

Bagad, being a semi-arid region was dependent on cattle rearing and pastoralism rather than agriculture. Mahmud Ghaznavi attacked India through the route of Bhatner, Sirsa and Hansi and Dadrewa was not far away from these places. The folk tale tells that Guga Chauhan got killed defending cows belonging to common pastoralists of Dadrewa. The onus of protecting the lives and material used to lie with the Rajput chief. Historians are unanimous in their opinion that the Turks must have looted the cows of Dadrewa and Rana Guga chased them to protect cows and got killed in the Battle. The battle was fought on the banks of Ghaggar.<sup>93</sup> Udairaj, the son of Guga's younger brother Vairsi became the head of the Dadrewa chiefdom and the rule of Chauhans persisted for centuries.

The Ghurids in the last decade of twelfth century defeated the Chauhans of Shakambhari in the second battle of Tarain (1192 A.D.). However, the Chauhans of Bagad did not bogged down easily and revolted against the Turkish rule every now and then. The main

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<sup>92</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati ka Pracheen Itihas*, 68-69.

<sup>93</sup> Ghanshyam Lal Devra, *Rajasthan Itihas ke Abhigyan Roop* (Jaipur: Rajasthan Hindi Granth Akademi, 2016), 130-131.

ruling branch headed by Prithiviraj Chauhan III of Ajmer got defeated but the Ghurids could not subdue the Rajputs settled in hostile Desert areas. The minor feudatory branches of Chauhans settled in Bagad continued raiding and harassing the Ghurid armies stationed in towns. One such incident is reported in the Persian chronicles by Ghurid writers when “the soldiers of Islam came up to the army of Hind on the borders of Bagar...”<sup>94</sup> Hasan Nizami is referring to a fierce attack on Hansi fort by a certain Jatwan and Qutubuddin Aibeg had to quickly march from Delhi to protect the fort and garrison of Hansi. Hansi was considered a very important fort forming the line of defence just before coming towards Delhi. The Bagad territory is neighbouring Hansi, even Dadrewa is also not far away. So, it is probable that such attacks were mounted from Bagad,<sup>95</sup> however it is difficult to pinpoint the area but it is highly probable that these attackers belonged to Dadrewa or Jod Chauhans’ area.

Firuz Shah was the first sultan of Delhi sultanate who gave attention to this region. There are several reasons for this neglect of Bagad by the Delhi sultanate, firstly it was a semi-arid non-agricultural area with only pastoralism as a permanent economic activity, and hence it lacked the economic attraction for the Sultans. Secondly, the Sultanate was facing the Mongol threat for most part of the time, at least till Muhammad Tughlaq the energies and attention was concentrated towards guarding the Western frontiers and defence line. Firuz Shah was the first one to have got respite from the Mongols. Thirdly, Firuz Shah belonged to the region of Bagad, his mother hailed from the region so he was well acquainted with it. It seems that he had a natural liking for the place and tried to develop it and take it into Delhi’s fold. To

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<sup>94</sup> Tajud din Hasan Nizami, *Taj ul Ma’ Athir*, trans. Bhagwat Swaroop (Delhi: Saud Ahmad Dehalvi, 1998), 100; Hasan Nizami, “Taj-ul Masir”, in *History of India as Told by its Own Historians* Vol. 2, Elliot and Dowson (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1979), 218; Alexander Cunningham, *Report of A Tour in the Punjab 1878-79* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1970), 81; Dashrath Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages Vol. I* (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1966), 301; Major K.D. Erskine, *Rajputana Gazetteers: The Western Rajputana States Residency and Bikaner Agency Vol. III A* (Allahabad: The Pioneer Press, 1909), 314.

<sup>95</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati ka Pracheen Itihas*, 68.

understand the next events of political history in the region, we must look into the past of Tughlaq family.

Shams Siraj Afif while writing about the background of Tughlaqs informed in *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi* that Allaudin Khalji had appointed the Ghazi Malik (Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq) and his brother Sipahsalar Rajab at the city of Diplapur. Ghazi Malik wanted to marry his brother Rajab to the powerful local Rajputs of the area. Dipalpur is the adjoining area of Bagad in the western side which lies in Pakistan today. The Bhatias of Abohar were of some consequence in the area so, he sent the marriage proposal to the Raja Ranmal Bhatti of Abohar. Allaudin Khalji himself had married Rajput women which could have inspired the Tughlaqs to marry Rajput women to have a stronghold in the area. Allaudin Khalji's reign is especially remembered to have abolished the power of middle men such as *Khut*, *Muqaddam* and *Chaudhary* etc. The state machinery came heavily upon the local officials, so it was easier to have pressurising the local chiefs to give in to demands during Allaudin Khalji's reign. The Tughlaqs put forward the marriage proposal of Rajab to the daughter of Rana Ranmal Bhatti. But, he strongly denied the proposal to marry his daughter. Ghazi Malik then coerced Ranmal Bhatti by demanding revenue from him and threatening him of dire consequences if he did not accept the marriage proposal. The Bhatti princess Naila persuaded her parents to marry her off to Rajab to avoid any untoward situation. She was converted to Islam and was renamed as Kad Banu and became the mother of Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq.<sup>96</sup> This example shows that the Tughlaqs wanted to improve their strength by forging matrimonial alliances with the local chiefs. It was one of the earliest examples of marriage of Turks and Rajputs in medieval India. These Bhattis are referred to as the Aboharia Bhatias (belonging to Abohar) in the Rajasthani sources and they are believed to have converted to Islam. However, it is still not very clear at what time did they

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<sup>96</sup> Shams Siraj Afif, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi of Shams Siraj Afif*. Trans. Ishrat Husain Ansari, al-Taimi al-Siddiqi and Hamid Afaq Qureshi (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2015), 22-23.

converted and how many members of the Abohariya Bhattis converted. Afif has narrated an incident about Rai Bheru Bhatti, maternal uncle of Firuz Shah which tells that the Bhattis had joined him in the state service.<sup>97</sup> Sunil Kumar doubts that this matrimonial alliance could bear much fruits for the Tughlaqs as the Persian sources does not mention Bhattis to be actively joining the ranks of state machinery and neither have they mentioned conversion of Bhattis other than Kad Banu, the wife of Sipahsalar Rajab.<sup>98</sup> But we know this for a fact from the Rajasthani sources that the Bhattis of this area got converted to Islam in large numbers and remained a force to reckon with till the times of East India Company. It is one of the earliest example of conversion of Rajputs into Islam. My contention is that the Bhattis of Abohar had converted during the Tughlaq period, at least during the reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq if not earlier.

Allaudin Khalji's state policies had great impact upon the Tughlaq policies as well. They continued policies like recruiting and promoting people of humble background into administration. Even, deserving non-Muslims were given important positions during Allaudin Khalji's reign which Muhammad Tughlaq took up on a greater scale and gathered a heterogeneous set of nobility who came from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Firuz Shah also continued this policy wherein he picked talented locals and gave them important posts in his administration. But, the difference was that he had devised an exhaustive procedure wherein non-Muslims were inducted as the *Banda* or slave and then got converted into a Muslim. Afif has provided the details of the procedure<sup>99</sup> of recruiting slaves by a new ministry called *Deewan-i Badagan* or the ministry of slaves. Firuz had asked from the *muqtis* and other

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>98</sup> Sunil Kumar, "Bandagi and Naukari: Studying Transitions in Political Culture and Service Under the North Indian Sultanates, Thirteenth-Sixteenth Centuries" in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*. Ed. Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: OUP, 2014), 73.

<sup>99</sup> Afif, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, 172-76.

high ranking officials to send talented, able bodied men from their respective areas of appointment to the royal court where they were presented in front of Sultan. They were provided training and education in Islamic studies and then eventually converted. They were given positions accordingly and served as slaves of Firuz Shah. However, the term slave here should not be considered as “slave” in the classical sense, but more of a category of state employees of various status. The Rajputs of small chiefdoms and kingdoms were also taken as Badagan but were well groomed and taken care of.

Firuz Shah took great pleasure in founding new cities and towns, forts and repairing the old structures such as Qutub Minar and old mosques. He built a number of cities in Bagad and its surroundings such Fatehabad, Hisar-i Firuza, Firuzabad, Firuzpur etc. He also built canals on a massive scale and brought life and civilisation to the barren land of Bagad. Barani and Afif have given a vivid description of the transformation of the region after water supply brought through canal network.<sup>100</sup> He built Hisar-i Firuza in 1355 A.D. and stay there for almost five years continuously and saw to its prosperity. The city flourished with markets, merchants, Sufis, scholars, nobles residing in it. It was situated on the Eastern end of Bagad, but became the focal point of Bagad for centuries to come.

### **The Kyamkhanis of Bagad**

The Chauhans of Dadrewa lived in a semi-arid and difficult terrain where resources were limited, so similar to the tradition of Rajputana looting, raiding and plundering other territories was considered a legitimate way for Rajputs to conduct. ‘Might is right’ was the rule of the day. Therefore, after establishment of Hisar the Chauhans saw a good opportunity and

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<sup>100</sup> Prateek, *Socio-Cultural and Economic History of the Hisar Region During Sultanate and Mughal Periods*, unpublished Thesis (Jamia Millia Islamia, 2015), 122-24.



conducted raids regularly on Hisar. Firuz Shah sent his noble and *faujdar* of Hisar Syed Nasir to curb the menace of Rajputs raiding the city. Syed Nasir attacked Dadrewa and defeated the small chiefdom and took Prince Karam Chand Chauhan as hostage to ensure peace in the future. However, Niyamat Khan in *Kyamkhan Rasa* has twisted the story and given a completely different version of events which seems unreasonable. He iterated that Firuz Shah was on a hunting expedition in the vicinity of Dadrewa and he suddenly bumped into Karam Chand. Karam Chand was sleeping under the shade of the tree whereas at that time no other tree had shade under it. So, Firuz Shah was impressed by the magical aura of Karam Chand and requested him to come to Hisar and join his services.<sup>101</sup>

Actully, he was taken to Hisar as a hostage and was inducted as a slave. He was treated very well according to his stature. He was then sent to Hansi at the Chahar Qutub *dargah* to get educated into Islamic studies and Islamic ways of life. The Chishti Sufis of Hansi were very close to Firuz Shah as they had provided help and assistance to him in attaining the throne of Tughlaq dynasty. These Sufis were powerful and well connected to the network of high ranking nobles and religious figures. They were revered by the local population and territory from Sirsa to Delhi and were considered as their *wilayat*.<sup>102</sup> Karam Chand lived with them for years and during his stay he probably got attached to them. Here it is difficult to say whether he was pressurised into conversion or he did it by himself with ulterior motives of grabbing a good military post, but it seems that it was a state policy to convert new recruits as slaves. Karam Chand was converted to a Muslim at Hansi with the new name of Kayam Khan<sup>103</sup> given to him. He was then presented to the sultan Firuz Shah in Delhi and was given some mid ranking military position in Hisar under the supervision of Syed Nasir.

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<sup>101</sup> Niyamat Khan, *Kyamkhan Rasa*, 21-25.

<sup>102</sup> Prateek, *Socio-Economic and Cultural*, 24.

<sup>103</sup> Kayam Khan is spoken and spelled as Kyam Khan in Rajasthan.

Kyam Khan brought his brothers and sons to Hisar with him and his family got converted likewise. They were given similar *iqtas* in the region of Hansi-Hisar which even has places, lakes and monuments in Kyamkhanis' name. They spread out in the region and established themselves in the entire Bagad region after the demise of Tughlaq dynasty.

There is a common misnomer among the scholars and common people of the region that Kyamkhan was the Jagirdar of Hisar after the death of Syed Nasir and possessed it during Firuz Shah's reign (1351-1388) A.D. However, Yahya Ahmad bin Sirhindi clearly mentions that "the district of Hisar Firoza was bestowed upon Kawam Khan (Kyamkhan)"<sup>104</sup> in the year 1406 A.D. during his struggle against the last Tughlaq ruler Nasiruddin Mahmud (1394-1413) A.D. Kyamkhan became an important character in the politics of Delhi and around as he headed the very important military fort with considerable army under him. He switched sides as and when the situation suited him and actively supported Khizr Khan to ascend at the throne of Delhi in 1414 A.D. As has been earlier said that Kyamkhan was among the slaves of Firuz Shah, he along with other former slaves of Firuz Shah revolted against Khizr Khan but got captured and was killed by Khizr Khan on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1419.<sup>105</sup>

The sons and relatives of Kyamkhan were all posted in areas around Hisar and Hansi, but there is no mention of the particular posts they held. The monuments and lake just outside the fort of Hansi suggest that they probably had also stationed there. Kyamkhan had six sons and all were stationed around Hisar-Hansi. Muhammad Khan was in Hisar, Taj Khan and Kutub Khan were in Tosham (Bhiwani, Haryana), Moin Khan in Fatehabad (Haryana) and Akhtiyar (Akhan) Khan in Dhosi (Narnaul, Haryana).<sup>106</sup> After the failed attempt of revolt the

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<sup>104</sup> Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi* Trans. Henry Beveridge (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2010), 182.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>106</sup> Ata Muhammad Khan, *Waqait-i Qaum Kyamkhani*, Trans. and Ed. Tahira Khan (2005), 62.

family and relatives of Kyamkhan had to vacate the places they held and leave for Rajputana again.

Another fallacy, quite popular among the people of Bagad and scholars alike is that the Kyamkhanis came direct from Hisar and founded the principalities of Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur. However, there is huge gap of about thirty one years which gets unnoticed as we know Fatehpur was founded in 1450 A.D. So, the question arises where does the Kyamkhanis stayed between these thirty odd years? The answer to the question gives us a new dimension of political history where cooperation and congeniality based on ethnicity, faith and political relations was built. *Waqait-i qaum Kyamkhani*, a book written in 1925 by Ata Muhammad Khan, a Kyamkhani himself has informed that the Kyamkhanis went to Jaisalmer after their flight from Hisar-Hansi. Kyamkhan had seven wives, Ata Muhammad provided details of two marriages where he was married to the daughters of Rajpal Bhati of Jaisalmer and Dwarka Das Taank. Firuz Shah Tughlaq himself was the nephew of Bhatias of Abohar and there is a possibility that he had arranged for the marriage of Kyamkhan into Bhatias of Jaisalmer. Firuz Shah was known for converting his slaves and taking good care of them. He had converted prominent Rajputs from the region of Haryana and took them as his slaves and elevated them to important military posts.<sup>107</sup> All these converted Rajputs at the hands of Firuz Shah adopted the title of “*Khanzada*”.<sup>108</sup> The title of *Khanazad* or *Khanazadun* was given to those Firuzi slaves who were close to the Firuz Shah<sup>109</sup> and got appointed at high military and administrative positions. The most well-known Khanzada slaves were the Khanzada rulers of Gujarat and Nagaur who

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<sup>107</sup> The story of conversion of these Rajputs are quite similar wherein the army of Firuz Shah attacked them and imprisoned them. To avoid imprisonment and their ancestral estate they converted to Islam and joined the army of Firuz Shah as slaves. Two striking examples are Kyamkhanis of Dadrewa and Khanzada Rajputs of Mewat.

<sup>108</sup> Suraj Bhan Bhardwaj, *Contestations and Accommodations: Mewat and Meos in Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 21.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Subsequently, the word Khanazad became Khanzada.

belonged to the family of Sadharan Taank of Thaneswar (near Kurukshetra).<sup>110</sup> Sadharan Taank was converted to Islam and taken to Delhi as a personal attendee of Firuz Shah. He was entrusted with the work of serving liquor and worked as *Sharabdar*, but his sons Zafar Khan and Shams Khan were given high military posts. Zafar Khan was sent to Gujarat as governor who became independent after the decline of Tughlaq dynasty whereas his younger brother Shams Khan had setup his independent rule over Nagaur and ruled as the 'Khanzadas'.

The Kyamkhanis used the epithet of Khanzadas as found on a painting painted by a Kyamkhan prince Khanazad Kyamkhan Azfar Khan Bahadur. There is a famous couplet regarding the political conditions during the last years of the Kyamkhani rule of Fatehpur. The couplet addresses the Kyamkhanis as the Khanzadas.

नवाब थारे राज में , दौय बात दुर्ग  
खानज़ादा खेती करै, तेली चढे तुरंग<sup>111</sup>

So, there is a clear pattern that show that Firuz Shah being intimately acquainted with the Bagad and Haryana territory used the local Rajputs and talented people, even of humble origins to join the Sultanate administration by converting them and inducting them as slaves. They all adopted the identities of Khanzadas and worked in close coordination and worked as a lobby after the demise of Firuz Shah. They all carved out their own independent military estates and helped each other at the time of difficulty.

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<sup>110</sup> S.C. Misra, *The Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat: A history of Gujarat from 1298 to 1442* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1982), 137; Mehrdad Shokohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993), 10-12.

<sup>111</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh ka Pracheen Itihas* (Jhajhad: Surjan Singh Shekhawat Smriti Sansthan, 2014), 121.

The Kyamkhanis Taj Khan and Muhammad Khan went to Jaisalmer<sup>112</sup> and stayed there for some time before going to Nagaur to seek help from Firuz Khan I who was the second sultan of Nagaur after Shams Khan. The Kyamkhanis were given respectful military posts of governing Didwana and then Khatu under the Dandani Khanzada dynasty. *Kyamkhan Rasa* has references of Kyamkhanis fighting on behalf of ‘Nagauri Khan’ when Rana Mokal of Mewar attacked Nagaur in May 1429 A.D.<sup>113</sup> Unlike the boisterous and high claims of the writer of *Kyamkhan Rasa*, the Khans of Nagaur got defeated and Rana Mokal took possession of the eastern parts of the Nagaur territory. But, Mujahid Khan, elder brother of sultan Firuz Khan I had recaptured these territories as indicated by an inscription in belonging to 1437.<sup>114</sup> The Kyamkhanis were present in Didwana and Khatu till this time, but there is no exact date available about when the Kyamkhanis left the territory and what were the reasons behind it. Ratanlal Mishra suggests that after they had moved again to the region of Hansi-Hisar after the death of Mubarak Shah in 1434 and takeover of Muhammad Shah whose rule slackened the grip of Delhi Sultanate over provinces. This might be true because the Kyamkhani family’s base remained in areas around Hansi-Hisar and there are tombs and lakes after the names of Kyamkhani members. Another important evidence is that the *Brahmbhat* of Fatehpur Kishanlal’s record show that Fateh Khan invited important traders and Brahmins from Hisar in V.S. 1503 or 1446 A.D. The record says that prominent people who came along with Fateh Khan were Khemraj Chaudhary, Tuhinmal Sarawagi, Bhotan Das Purohit, Ishwari Das Bhojak, Bastiram Khedwal etc.<sup>115</sup> The reason for fleeing from Hisar once again by the Kyamkhanis

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<sup>112</sup> “Report on the Census of 1891, Vol.2: The Castes of Marwar” (Jodhpur: Marwar Darbar, 1894), 37.

<sup>113</sup> ; Mehrdad Shokoohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur: Sultanate and Early Mughal History and Architecture of the District of Nagaur, India* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993), 13.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh ka Itihas evam Sanskriti* (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, 2002), 74.

could be the annexation of Hisar and surrounding areas by Bahlol Lodhi and his enmity towards them. This enmity ended when Fateh Khan helped Bahlol Lodhi capture Ranthambhore later during 1482 A.D. However, Surjan Singh Shekhawat wrongly writes that Kyamkhanis had to leave their territory in Khatu and Didwana because Rathore Ridmal had captured the area and ousted the Kyamkhanis from there.<sup>116</sup> The Rathores had captured the Nagaur about 100 years later in 1537 by Rana Maldeo<sup>117</sup> and had ended the rule of Khan Dynasty's rule over Nagaur.

The city of Nagaur is known for its great Sufi saints and shrines, particularly Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri, also known by his epithet *Sultan-i Tarikeen*. The Kyamkhanis who were neo Muslims, came into contact with the Chishti Sufis of Nagaur and had great faith in them. It is often suggested by the Chishti Sufis of Nagaur that the Kyamkhanis captured the territories of Bagad due to the blessings and careful guidance of Sheikh Kamaluddin, the fifth generation Sufi in the family of Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri. The books written later by Sufi Sheikh Najmuddin Farooqui of this family who was based in Fatehpur in 19<sup>th</sup> century have narrated an incident about the way the Sheikh Kamaluddin had blessed the territory of Bagad upon Kyamkhanis. According to the story once Sheikh Kamaluddin was on his way from Nagaur to Delhi for his regular pilgrimage trips to Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya's Dargah in Delhi. He used to take a rest in the vicinities of Jhunjhunu and was sitting on a stone under a tree. The Kyamkhanis who were ousted from Khatu were roaming about in despair and met Sheikh Kamaluddin. Sheikh Kamaluddin exclaimed "*Aao mere Bhomiyao*"<sup>118</sup> and welcomed them with water in the Desert.<sup>119</sup> The Kyamkhani head Muhammad Khan replied that we are wandering in despair, we are not *Bhomia*. Then, Sheikh Kamaludin prophesised that you are soon going

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<sup>116</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh*, 89.

<sup>117</sup> Mehrdad Shokohy and Natalie H. Shokoohy, *Nagaur*, 20.

<sup>118</sup> Bhomiya is the head of a territory ruled by a Rajput.

<sup>119</sup> Khwaja Najmuddin Chishti, *Shajratul Abrar* (Fatehpur, n.d.), 617; Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh*, 89.

to become the Bhomias of Bagad, so don't worry and try your luck. Surjan Singh Shekhawat is of the opinion that the Sufi Kamaluddin frequented this route and was intimately aware of the political conditions of the region, so he knew that the then rulers Jod Rajputs are in a bad shape and can be easily defeated. So, he advised them to attack them and win the territory. This sounds very much like Karni Mata of Deshnok who was instrumental in helping Rao Bika to establish his rule over the vast territory of Jangaldesh.

But, it don't seem true historically as it was written much later in nineteenth century, more than three centuries later by the Sufi of same lineage. It seems more of an attempt to take undue credit to gain traction in the local populace against the other Sufi family of Hansi Chishtis based in Fatehpur from the inception. The Hansi Chishti Sufis were the de facto official religious preceptors of the Nawabs of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. They were asked by the Nawabs to come from Hansi and settle in their territory to bless them. They played the role of teachers of Islamic education as well as the performers of Islamic rituals in an area where Muslims were new. They belonged to the powerful house of Hansi Sufis who provided a legitimacy to the newly formed rule of Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur as well as played the role of guides. The Hansi Sufis were given tax free lands for their upkeep until the very last of their rule in eighteenth century. Whereas, the Nagauri Sufis were not recognised so much and were never permitted to settle in Fatehpur. Prince Jaan or Niyamat Khan, the writer of *Kyamkhan Rasa*, had invoked the blessings of Hansi Chahar Qutub Chishtis in every of his almost eighty books including *Kyamkhan Rasa*. I will show in subsequent chapters that the Nawabs remained in the fold of Sufism strongly unlike what is generally suggested about them by the historians.<sup>120</sup> Fatehpur was the *wilayat* (spiritual territory) of Hansi Sufis exclusively in which

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<sup>120</sup> It is often said about the Kyamkhanis that they were Muslims in the name only and practically remained Hindus with no noticeable influence of Islam on their lives. But, it is important to remember that the Kyamkhani Nawabs had great faith in Chishti Sufis of Hansi and Nagaur throughout their rule till 1735 A.D.

Among other many historians and scholars the significant and popular works of Cynthia Talbot and Ramya Sreenivasan reinforce this idea that they were practically Hindus and remained rooted in the Rajput ways

no other Sufis were recognised by the state. It was only after the end of Kyamkhani rule over Fatehpur that a Sufi from Nagauri lineage could settle in Fatehpur, and thus challenged the superiority of Hansi Sufis by claiming that the Kyamkhanis got their rule only by the blessings of his ancestor. The writer of this story had come from Jhunjhunu where his forefather Sheikh Kamaludin was given tax free land grants by the Jhunjhunu Nawabs<sup>121</sup>, but still remained a lesser important than Hansi Sufis.

The Kyamkhanis came to the northern region from Nagaur called Bagad where Jod Rajputs were ruling over large parts along with some minor Rajput chieftains such as Chandels, Nirbans etc. Muhammad Khan became the first Nawab of Jhunjhunu around 1447-48 probably, because there is no exact date available to indicate the beginnings of his rule. But, he soon died and his son, Shams Khan became the second Nawab of Jhunjhunu. Fateh Khan, the son of Taj Khan and nephew of Muhammad Khan parted his ways from the Jhunjhunu rulers and ventured out to found a new principality for himself.

Fateh Khan founded the small state of Fatehpur on his name on V.S. Magh Sudi 5 1505<sup>122</sup> (January 1448 A.D.) However, some say the year of foundation to be 1451 from the date of a Jain temple, but the fort was in the process of construction from earlier to that date. Fateh Khan chose a very apt and strategic location to found new city. There was *beed* (jungle in semi-arid Desert) all around and a small lake inside that. The place was surrounded by high rise sand dunes that was hidden from all around making it appropriate place for a fort.<sup>123</sup> The valley between the sand dunes was similar to a bowl where rain water could be stored in the

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of life ignoring their show of religiosity where three of the Nawabs became Sufis denouncing their political throne for a life of a simple Sufi.

<sup>121</sup> Khwaja Najmuddin Chishti, *Shajratul Abrar*, (Urdu) (Fatehpur, n.d.), 740-43.

<sup>122</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagara Nagar* (Fatehpur: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1992), 101.

<sup>123</sup> The villages in the region of Fatehpur are mostly settled in such valleys surrounded by high rise sand dunes providing natural water in middle, whereas the sand dunes were used as watch towers by the villagers for their protection from oncoming armies and dacoits who were a constant threat.



natural depression making it a suitable place for supporting population and providing water for the moat encircling the fort.

Fateh Khan stayed at village Rinau<sup>124</sup> till the construction of fort. A city or a small fort town's construction reflected the personal choices and preferences of a ruler. There was a pattern to settling a city where, an active support of traders was sought along with artisans of different kinds. The oldest families of Fatehpur tell that their ancestors came to Fatehpur from Hisar on an invitation from Fateh Khan.<sup>125</sup> One of the prominent person was Seth Tuhinmal of Hisar who was a richer trader and helped Fateh Khan build a fort and a small town. It was common practice to lend money from such rich traders to build forts and other amenities and in return they got special privileges, protection, tax free business, and land on concessional rates etc. Seth Tuhinmal is also remembered as the architect of the fort and town of Fatehpur, however it is totally an oral information based on memories of people without any written source. He is also credited with constructing grand Jain temple of Fatehpur.<sup>126</sup>

The region of Bagad was a semi-arid with scant resources limiting its expansion and political power. It was not far away from Delhi as well, therefore it always remained effected by the political dispensation based in Delhi. So, when Timur left the Tughlaq dynasty in shambles, the provincial governors of Tughlaqs declared independence and a political void was created in the situation thereafter. In the situation of chaos and confusion it became easier for the Kyamkhanis to establish themselves in the arid region of Bagad without much attention

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<sup>124</sup> It is 8 kilometres far from Fatehpur.

<sup>125</sup> There are Baniya families in Fatehpur who use the surname Hisariya that show their roots belonged to Hisar. The Apbhamsha literature of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century show that the Baniyas from the towns like Hisar, Jhunjhunu, Kurukshetra, Narnaul migrated to different new developing cities and towns for better business prospects. Reference can be given of Jain scholar Raidhu's clients who hailed mostly from this region. See Eva De Clercq, "Apabhamsha as a Literary Medium in Fifteenth-Century North India" in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India*, eds. Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: OUP, 2014).

<sup>126</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagara Nagar* (Fatehpur: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1992), 105.

from Delhi. The sultanate of Gujarat, Nagaur, Mewar and Bagad under Kyamkhanis were established under such circumstances where Tughlaqs became weak and a new small and short lived Syed dynasty was established. It gave time to these new military estates to establish themselves firmly. Even, the Lodhi dynasty could not contain these small states and did not intervene much as the stronger Suri and Mughals did in the future. However, the Lodhis introduced and established the Panni Pathans of Afghanistan to settle down in a very old area of Narhad and Bagdad which represented the interests of Delhi Sultanate in the Region of Bagad. This would be discussed in detail in the coming pages of this chapter.

The Kyamkhanis had a large area under the house of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. They cooperated with each other and stayed united in times of distress. However, the region was not fertile and the resources were very less compared to other areas of the same size in Rajputana.<sup>127</sup> It was also not very far from the centre of power, Delhi which restricted any possible expansion of power for Kyamkhanis. So, the state remained in perpetual danger of attack from other bigger well placed powers of Rajputana, hence the Kyamkhanis remained under the tutelage of bigger powerful states from time to time like Nagaur, Mewar and Delhi. They paid tributes to bigger states along with helping them in their military pursuits whenever needed.<sup>128</sup>

*Kyamkhan Rasa* is of utmost importance in understanding the political scenario of Bagad as we hardly have any other credible source on this part of Rajputana. *Kyamkhan Rasa* was written by Kavi Jaan polemically to establish a counter narrative of a small principality of Muslim Rajputs. The seventeenth century was the time when Rajputs were creating their

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<sup>127</sup> It is a common perception among the people of the Bagad region that as one goes down in south direction from Fatehpur, the land becomes progressively fertile. Whereas, the North to Fatehpur, that is the Bagad region is arid and infertile.

<sup>128</sup> *Kyamkhan Rasa* has many such examples where the Kyamkhanis participated in battles on behalf of Nagaur, Mewar, Lodhis of Delhi before coming of the Mughals. *Chhand Rao Jaitsi Ro* by Vithu Suja also testifies that the Kyamkhanis had provide military help to Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner and hosted the Bikaner army in Fatehpur.

genealogical histories and hierarchies of Rajputs based on glorious past, illustrious genealogy, chivalry and high *mansabdari* rank among themselves. It was a period when *Nainsi Ri Khyat* was being written and an atmosphere of competition was fomented among Rajputs serving the Mughals.<sup>129</sup> Cynthia Talbot rightly observes that *Kyamkhan Rasa* was an attempt to establish the Kyamkhanis among the superior group of chosen Rajputs drawing upon the glorious gallant history of Chauhans<sup>130</sup> who once ruled Delhi.<sup>131</sup> We get the glimpse of the narrative provided by others, in *Nainsi Ri Khyat*<sup>132</sup> who Niyamat alias Jaan tried to counter by writing *Kyamkhan Rasa*. Rathores were the bitter enemies of Kyamkhanis as they had fought many battles against each other and Rathores had annexed a large portion of Kyamkhani territory. Still Kyamkhanis were a force to reckon with and played active role in establishing Mughal rule in Nagaur and Jodhpur, Bhatner and Bikaner at different point of times. Mughals had actively sought Kyamkhanis' services especially in containing Rathores many times during Shahjahan and Aurangzeb's period. Being Muslims helped Kyamkhanis in furthering their career and Mughals chose them several times as they stood against the tacit alliance of big Rajput houses of Mewar, Amber, Bikaner and Jodhpur who had matrimonial alliances and avoided conflicts with each other. It is not a coincidence that Kyamkhanis played their Muslim religion card as and when required but also placed themselves among the Rajput fraternity comfortably.

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<sup>129</sup> Norman P. Ziegler, "Marvari Historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social and Cultural History of Rajasthan." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 13, no. 2 (April 1976): 219–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001946467601300204>.

<sup>130</sup> Cynthia Talbot, "Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative" in *Modern Asian Studies* 43, 1 (2009), 217-18. She also informs that Jaan Kavi had used the word Chauhan 136 times in the *Rasa*.

<sup>131</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 11.

<sup>132</sup> Nainsi, *Nainsi Ri Khyat* vol III ed. Badriprasad Skaria (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 2014), 275.

पहली तो हिन्दू हुता, पीछे भया तुक्क ।  
ता पीछे गोलै भये , तातै वडपण तुक्क ॥  
धाये काम न आवही, क्यामखानी गंदेह ।  
बंदी आद जुगाद के , सैद नासिर हंदेह ॥

Some scholars like Dashrath Sharma and Surjan Singh Shekhawat are of opinion that in order to eulogise the history of Kyamkhanis, Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' had exaggerated the political and military strength and thus *Kyamkhan Rasa* has many factual errors and it should be taken with a pinch of salt. Whereas, the translator of *Kyamkhan Rasa*, Ratanlal Mishra refutes the claim and say that Kyamkhanis were quite powerful in fifteenth and sixteenth century and the facts provided in *Kyamkhan Rasa* should be taken seriously barring a few exceptions. To clear doubts about the correct history of that period we should look at the larger political situation prevailing in Northern India. Kyamkhanis had established themselves at Bagad after the weakening of Delhi Sultanate after the demise of Tughlaq dynasty. The successors of Tughlaqs, the Syeds and Lodhis also were engaged in defence rather than expansion and consolidation in Rajputana. This proved to be optimal conditions for rulers like Maldeo Rathore, Rao Bika Rathore and Mewar rulers as well. The Kyamkhanis being a smaller power in comparison had to seek protection from some bigger political power and they had to pay tribute and accept the larger suzerainty of those powers. We get the evidences that Kyamkhanis changed many alliances during this period and always sought the cooperation of Delhi whether it be Lodhis and Suris on one hand and a local Rajput power on the other. Such a situation changed once the Mughals established themselves firmly and a permanence or status quo was maintained. However, they never accepted the superiority of Rathores, whether it be Bika Rathores, Kandhalots, Bidawats or Jodha Rathores for that matter. They were surrounded by Rathores on three sides and always had a tensed relation with them. It should also be taken into account that in fifteenth and beginning of sixteenth century the Rathores were also expanding and had smaller kingdoms comparatively. We will evaluate a few important battles and incidents in the history of Bagad region which will also help us understand the debate and political dynamics of the Bagad vis-a-vis Delhi and Rajputana.

The geographical location of Bagad is such that it is closer to Delhi<sup>133</sup> and Hisar which is Delhi's military outpost on the border of Rajputana.<sup>134</sup> The combined power of Kyamkhanis of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu had annexed large parts of Bagad which comprised the areas of district Jhunjhunu which was then known as Jhunjhunuwati, Fatehpur which was then known as Fatehpurwati, almost all of Churu including Dadrewa, Bhadang, Sahba, and Baila. In further north it consisted Pallu and Bhadra near Bhatner. The southern contained 57 villages of Jharod *patti* near Didwana and Kuchaman (Nagaur district).<sup>135</sup> Daulatpura was their stronghold against the Rathores in later years. Ringas was also under Kyamkhanis in fifteenth century. They had established small principalities such as Nua, Ked, Badwasi, Beri, Dhosi (Narnaul) etc.<sup>136</sup> It was a quite a big territory but the point to remember here is that it was a semi-arid region with very less resources, no perennial river and totally dependent on rain for agriculture. It lacked the kind of resources Mewar and Mandore enjoyed that was a big restraint in the growth of a 'state' in the region. The name Bagad itself means an 'unproductive land' could not match up to other well placed states. The Kyamkhanis represented Bagad region of Rajputana and eventually came to known as Bagadi in Rajputana.<sup>137</sup>

Bahlol Lodhi was going towards Ranthambhore to take it from the Malwa Sultan in 1482 A.D. The Kyamkhani forces under Fateh Khan joined him even without his invitation and helped him in the venture. This laid the foundation of good relations with the Lodhis.

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<sup>133</sup> The capital of Bagad, Fatehpur is about 275 km from Delhi.

<sup>134</sup> Hisar similar to Ajmer, acted as a military outpost of Delhi to control and keep an eye on political activities of Rajputana. It is 165 km far away from Fatehpur.

<sup>135</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh ka Itihas evam Sanskriti* (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, 2002), 139-140.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> There are many references in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that call the Kyamkhanis by the name of Bagadi. Harinam Upadhyay, *Kesari Singh Gun Raso*, ed. Gopal Narayan Bahura and Raghunath Prasad Tiwadi 'Umang' (Jaipur: Madanlal Pareek Shodh Sansthan, 1999), 14.

अलफखान बागड़ी कोट हिसार सु गाजे,  
सरसा पट्टनि मुहिम पर औदक पुर भाजे ।

According to *Kyamkhan Rasa* Bahlol Lodhi proposed marriage of his daughter to Fateh Khan's son and in sought to marry one of his daughter to himself. Fateh Khan rejected it but Shams Khan, the ruler of Jhunjhunu accepted the proposal and married his son to Bahlol's daughter and married his daughter to Bahlol Lodhi.<sup>138</sup> This emboldened their position and secured them further.

Fateh Khan of Fatehpur and Shams Khan of Jhunjhunu used to actively change allegiances and once they were closer to Mewar ruler Rana Kumbha. So, Fateh Khan went to Chittaurgarh to meet Rana Kumbha and in his absence the combined forces of Rao Kandhal and Pathans of Narhad attacked Fatehpur and looted it.<sup>139</sup> The collected memory of the people of Fatehpur has preserved this battle in their conscience and made it a part of folk history which is not even found in texts like *Kyamkhan Rasa*. The people of Fatehpur tell that the common people of Fatehpur along with the local Nathpanthi Ganganath came out with his supporters to fight against the invading armies of Kandhal Rathore. It shows the popular support Fateh Khan commanded and the love and respect for the city of people. Nathpanthis had helped Fateh Khan in establishing the city and fully supported him which shows the closeness between them. The Nathpanthis were not averse to Muslim rule but became active supporters. Fateh Khan sought blessings from Ganganath while founding the city and granted land to him and built an ashram for him as well.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 72-73.

<sup>139</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, 67-69.

<sup>140</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 127. The tradition of Nathpanth flourished and continued in Fatehpur. Sevanath and Sarnath became famous Nath yogis so much so that they were remembered by people till a few decades ago. The temple complex had original structures belonging to Nawab Fateh Khan's times as per local people. The temple still exists but now has been repaired. There is an inscription in Persian in the temple:

दर आमद शाद मारूद मीदारखां दौलतखां  
जनतखां अल्लाबख्शा इमारते अम्बरीख रास  
नमोद 1549

There is another bilingual inscription in Persian and Sanskrit in the premise on the wall of well constructed by Rathodi ji queen, wife of Nawab Sardar Khan (1654-1680).

The battle took place at Alakhpura<sup>141</sup> village where the commander in chief of the army of Kyamkhanis, Bahugun Sarkhel fought valiantly and died in the battle. His death was mourned by the people at large and he remains a revered figure in Fatehpur. People in Fatehpur remember martyrs by constructing *madhis*, *samadhis* for such valiant fighters.<sup>142</sup> It is told that Bahugun's head fell in Alakhpura village but his body was carried back by his horse to the city of Fatehpur. It is a popular belief among the people of Fatehpur that Bahugun continued fighting even after his head was cut. The horse stopped under a Janti tree where a cenotaph was built in the memory of Bahugun Sarkhel. It was revered by the common people who started worshipping the cenotaph. The practice is still prevalent in Fatehpur. One another cenotaph was built at Alakhpura village where his head fell. Both the places remain popular to this date.

Mohilwati was situated on the western boundary of Fatehpur principality. It was ruled over by Mohil Chauhans who were brethren of Kyamkhanis who had descended from the same ancestor Rai Ghangharan of Ghanghu in Churu district. The Mohils and Kyamkhanis had cordial relations with each other and helped each other. Nainsi narrates the episode in *Nainsi Ri Khyat* that how did the Rathores took over Mohilwati from Mohils. The occurrence of these events show the reputation and political status of Kyamkhanis in fifteenth century.

Nainsi narrated that Ajit Singh Mohil, who was a great warrior and very powerful chief of Mohilwati was married to the daughter of Rao Jodha. Rao Jodha wanted to capture Mohilwati from him at any cost and killed him treacherously at the time when he came to visit Rao Jodha at Mandowar.<sup>143</sup> Rao Jodha captured it and settled his son Bida at Tal Chhapar. The

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<sup>141</sup> It is 16 miles away from Fatehpur. The name Alakhpura suggests the deep influence of Nathpanth in the Bagad region.

<sup>142</sup> I have seen many such *madhis* and *samadhis* of fighters in almost every village of Fatehpur tehsil. There is always a story of courage attached behind such constructions. People remember the fighters in the name of death. For greater details see Janet Kampfrost's *In the Name of Death*, who has worked on this phenomena in Rajasthan.

<sup>143</sup> Nainsi, *Nainsi Ri Khyat* vol III ed. Badriprasad Sakaria (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 2014), 158-67.

Mohil prince came to Fatehpur and tried to regain his territory from there. Fateh Khan helped him garnering support from Ranas of Mewar for him but it did not had any positive results. It is possible that the above mentioned attack on Fatehpur by Rao Kandhal might have been after their annexing of Mohilwati and knowing that Mohil prince Vairsal was present at Fatehpur in



Figure 3.1: Cenotaph of Bahugun Sarkhel under a Janti tree in Fatehpur.

1475 A.D.<sup>144</sup> The Mohils went to Lodhis at Delhi to appeal for support against the Rathores. The feud ensued and Lodhis sent their army from Hisar fort under Sarang Khan in support of Mohils. The armies of Mohils, Lodhis gathered in Fatehpur and mounted their attack from Fatehpur. They successfully ousted Rao Bida and again the Mohils caught hold of their paternal

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<sup>144</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh ka Itihas evam Sanskriti* (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, 2002), 77-78.



territory of Mohilwati. But after a few years, Rao Jodha again snatched Mohilwati from the Mohils. Sarang Khan from Hisar representing the Lodhis again came to Fatehpur to support the Mohils. The Kyamkhanis were allies of Lodhis at that time so they hosted these armies and the combined armies of Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur came out in support of Mohils. Rao Jodha, Rao Bika, Rao Bida and Rao Kandhal all came down to Fatehpur where the allied forces of Kyamkhanis lost the battle. Sarang Khan revenged the loss in this battle by killing Rao Kandhal afterwards.<sup>145</sup> The Mohil Narbad stayed at Fatehpur after that. This episode amply shows the power and status of Kyamkhanis in fifteenth century where they had good political relationships with Delhi, Mewar and Mohils and were participating in the political affairs.

Rao Jodha proposed marriage of his daughter to Fateh Khan who denied it probably due to their enmity with the Rathores and attack on Fatehpur by Rao Kandhal. However, Nawab Shams Khan Kyamkhani of Jhunjhunu accepted the proposal of Rao Jodha.<sup>146</sup> At this point of time Kyamkhanis had a good reputation with the other Rajput houses.

The Rathores expanded their territories in the coming years and Bikaner state got established in 1488 A.D.<sup>147</sup> The main ancestral place of Kyamkhanis, Dadrewa in Churu district was ruled by other family members of them who had not converted to Islam. Rao Lunkaran attacked Dadrewa in 1505 A.D. when Mansa Depalot Chauhan was the Thakur of Dadrewa. The fort was sieged for seven months by the Bikaner army before the final battle where the Chauhan Thakur died and Dadrewa was annexed to the territories of Bikaner state. This increased their military might significantly. Rao Lunkaran annexed a large territory of 120 villages around Ratangarh in Churu and Bhadang, Bhadra etc. from the Fatehpur principality

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<sup>145</sup> Prateek, *Socio-Cultural and Economic History of the Hisar Region During the Sultanate and Mughal Periods*, unpublished thesis (Jamia Millia Islamia, 2015), 57.

<sup>146</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 71.

<sup>147</sup> Sindhayach Dayaldas, *Khyat Desh Darpan: Bikaner Rajya ka Itihas* (Bikaner: Rajasthan Rajya Abhilekhagar, 1989), 20.

in V.S. 1569 or 1512 A.D. Thus the Kyamkhanis further got weakened by losing the large portion of Fatehpur *patti* under Nawab Daulat Khan.<sup>148</sup> However, they gained some territory of Punkh and Chhapoli from the Nirban Chauhans but the loss was bigger in comparison. Establishment of a bigger states of Bikaner, Nagaur and Jodhpur constantly put the Kyamkhanis under pressure of defence and continuing warfare in the coming fifty years.

The death of Rao Lunkaran of Bikaner in the battle of Dhosi near Narnaul in 1516 is a well-known incident in the history of Rajputana. Vithu Suja, the state funded Charan wrote a rhetorical text for his masters by the name of *Chhand Rao Jaitsi Ro*. It has important information on Bagad:

बहलोलसाहि सुं बोली बोल , ढीली ढढोली वावड़ी ढोल  
पुरफत्ते लाइ झींझणु पाई, रखिये बांह दे रोपी राइ<sup>149</sup>

It means Rao Bika took possession of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu on request of Bahlol Lodhi. The Nawabs of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu were reinstalled by him and given assurance of protection. We do not find any evidence of such an incident when Rao Bika had attacked Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu and took the Nawabs uner his protection. It is definitely an exaggeration on the bard's part.

आवियु थाट मेलिय अथाह , सलखहर राउ बागड़ सिराह  
दौलत्तिखान दाल साथी देय वस्सावी देस विन्नू वहेय  
नहवा निजाम झींझणु झंप , काबाल नरहड़ी काढ़ि कम्प  
सिंघाणौ पाए गाहि सेन , मेल्लाण पंचैरी दीन्ह मेन<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Suja Vithu, *Chhand Rao Jaitsi Ro*, ed. Moolchand Pranesh (Bikaner: Bhartiya Vidya Mandir Shodh Pratishthan, 1991), 22.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 28.

These lines say that Rao Lunkaran came to Bagad and ordered Daulat Khan to join him along with his army to save Bagad from his might. He went on to destroy Nahwa, Jhunjhunu, Narhad, Singhana and Kabal. However, *Kyamkhan Rasa* refutes these claims and provide a counter view. Accordig to *Kyamkhan Rasa*:

बीका ढोसी गयो हो , उतते आया भाजि  
 रन चित चोख धरि, चल्यो उताहे दल साजि  
 पाटोघ डेरा भयो , तब पठये परधान  
 लूणकरण चिट्ठी लिखी, करके बहुत गुमान  
 वाचत ही अति पार्जार्यो , खां जलाल को पूत  
 कह्यौ काम ले भांडको , या चिट्ठी में मूत<sup>151</sup>

Niyamat Khan say that Rao Bika had gone to Dhosi earlier but had fled from the battle saving his life, so Rao Lunkaran who was the son of Rao Bika went there to avenge his father's humiliating defeat. So, while he was going towards Dhosi, Rao Lunkaran sent a letter to Daulat Khan for sending his forces with him which offended the Nawab and he ordered a *Bhand* to pee on the letter and humiliated the ambassadors of Rao Lunkaran. He further describes that the Turks and Pathans of Dhosi inflicted a devastating defeat on the Bikaner army killing Rao Lunkaran and looted his army. Scholars have given many different versions of this battle in their accounts but Ratanlal Mishra says that Lunkaran did not die in the battle but he fled from the battleground in an injured state. According to a new local text called *Nawab Kyamkhan Charit* Rao Lunkaran came to Fatehpur where he was received and treated. *Kyamkhan Rasa* clearly say that the Kyamkhanis had not joined the Bikaner army for the battle of Dhosi. So, all the description of destroying various towns and places of Bagad is mere parabolic poetry of the bard Vithu Suja. Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' also reveals one unknown fact of history concealed

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<sup>151</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 83.

by the Bikaner historians and bards that Rao Bika had to face defeat and flee from the battleground in Dhosi.

The Rathores of Jodhpur under Rao Maldeo had annexed large parts of Rajputana including Bikaner and Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu. Sher Shah Suri led an alliance of many Rajputs whose territories were annexed by the Rao Maldeo of Jodhpur. Rao Maldeo had given the Fatehpur Mandan Kumpawat and Kyamkhanis' position had deteriorated under him. So, Kyamkhanis also approached Sher Shah Suri along with Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner who had sought refuge in Sirsa, which was also a part of Bagad. Sher Shah Suri chose the route through Bagad to reach Jodhpur and his army camped at Fatehpur while passing by Bagad. It was difficult to dig trenches due to sandy soil hence sand bags were placed around the encampments. Sher Shah was received with warmth by the Kyamkhanis and good personal relations developed between them. One of the sources say that they married one of their daughters to Sher Shah, however *Kyamkhan Rasa* has not provided any such detail. Still, *Kyamkhan Rasa* gives an interesting account that when Sher Shah gave Fatehpur to Nawab Nahar Khan but he really liked the fragrance wore by the Nawab so he asked for the attar scent from him.<sup>152</sup>

The Mughals got established firmly after the second battle of Panipat in 1556 A.D. Rajputs joined the Mughal ranks and marriage alliances took place between Rajput and Mughals to cement the friendly relationships. Nawab Fadan Khan was the head of Fatehpur at that time who had married his daughter Chand Bibi to Akbar.<sup>153</sup> It is difficult to understand that the Kyamkhanis' did not joined the Mughal service even after having a marriage alliance with Akbar. Unlike other Rajput states, Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu were not recognised as the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>153</sup> *Kyamkhan Rasa* informs about this marriage but does not mention the name of the bride. It is only a conjecture that she was the well-known poetess Chand Bibi who had written *Bibi Bandi ka Jhagda* and other poems. She is also said to be a Krishna devotee. However, there is no historical evidence about her.

*watan jagir* of the Kyamkhanis but were allotted to other jagirdars. *Nainsi Ri Khyat* informs that Rathore Mandan Kumpawat was once again given the jagir of Jhunjhunu whereas, Kachhwaha Gopaldas Sujawat was given Fatehpur.<sup>154</sup> Jaimal son of Roop Singh Bairagi got Fatehpur as jagir on Akbar's order.<sup>155</sup> He died in 1640 V.S or 1583 A.D. and after his death Gopaldas Sujawat again claimed Fatehpur as his jagir. The oldest and very famous manuscript extant of Surdas and Kabir known as *Pada Surdasji Ka* was compiled in Fatehpur in 1582 A.D. It was written by Ram Das Ratna on the orders of Narharidas. It was compiled for especially for Narharidas's son Chhitar Das.<sup>156</sup> The colophon of the manuscript denoted:

सम्बत १६३९ वर्षे ज्येष्ठ मासे शुक्ल पक्षे वैसाख नक्षत्रे पातिसाह श्री अकबर राज्ये फतेपुर मध्ये पोथी लिखी । राज श्री नरहरि दास जी तस्य पुत्र कु श्री छीतर जी पठनार्थ ॥ शुभम भवतु लेखक पाठक या शुभम अस्तु ॥ लिखतम रामदास रतना ॥<sup>157</sup>

Therefore, we have prominent information regarding the Kachhwahas controlling Fatehpur at the time of Akbar. Alaf Khan who was the son of Nawab Muhammad Khan joined the Mughal service on the suggestion of Muhabbat Khan in 1582 A.D. Akbar gave Fatehpur as the *watan jagir* to Alaf Khan but Narharidas and his son Nahar Khan did not vacate the place, so Mughal forces came in support of Alaf Khan Kyamkhani to oust the Kachhwahas. Once the Kyamkhanis attained the territories they defeated the Kachhwahas and forced them to go out of Bagad.<sup>158</sup> *Kyamkhan Rasa* mentioned the name of Narharidas and Nahar Khan and the

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<sup>154</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh*, 116.

<sup>155</sup> Nainsi, *Muhnta Nainsi Ri Khyat*, vol.1, ed. Badriprasad Sakaria (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 2006), 312.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 325; Nainsi has noted down the names of Narhari Das and Chhitar who died without any children. These must be the persons who had ordered the writer Ram Das Ratna to write the manuscript.

<sup>157</sup> *Pad Surasji Ka: The Padas of Surdas*, ed. G.N. Bahura and Kent Bryant (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum City Palace, 1982), 328.

<sup>158</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan', *Kyamkhan Rasa*, 124-5.

confrontation between Kyamkhanis and these Kachhwahas, who are also listed by Nainsi in his Khyat.

The Kyamkhanis rapidly gained the status and higher mansabs under the Mughals. They got important postings and expeditions where they proved their might and valour gaining the confidence of Mughals. They got the *lal muhar patta* or the red sealed royal Mughal orders from Jahangir in recognition of their bravery in Mewar where he got the chance to work under Jahangir's supervision. Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu as their *watan jagir* which could not be assigned to any other. The Kyamkhanis remained powerful till their complete demise in 1736 A.D.

Ramya Sreenivasan in her paper "Faith and Allegiance in the Mughal Era: Perspectives from Rajasthan" has studied the case of Kyamkhanis in order to find whether being Muslims they gave any special privilege, favour or treatment to the Kyamkhanis in the Mughal era. She concluded that "the political benefits of being a Muslim Rajput or becoming one during the Mughal period remained contested."<sup>159</sup> Her point largely holds truth except in the case of Kyamkhanis which she had studied. The Kyamkhanis did not gain immensely for being Muslim Rajputs but nonetheless they were profited and preferred over other Rajputs at certain times.

Amar Singh Rathore of Nagaur had killed Salawat Khan in the Mughal court in front of Shah Jahan. The Rathores were so powerful that Mughals mansabdars were reluctant to go to Nagaur and capture it. The Rajputs especially were uneasy with the orders of annexing Nagaur because all the major houses of Rajputana had matrimonial alliances with each other and the Rathores were really agitated at that time due to killing of Amar Singh and his servants

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<sup>159</sup> Ramya Sreenivasan, "Faith and Allegiance in the Mughal Era: Perspectives from Rajasthan" in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi: OUP, 2014), 188.

in big numbers. Nobody wanted to make relations hostile with the Rathores and denied the royal orders.

In such a situation, Kyamkhanis, being Muslim Rajputs and traditional enemies of Rathores were given the duty to capture Nagaur. Emperor Shah Jahan called Tahar Khan, son of Sardar Khan at court and ordered him to go and annexe the Nagaur fort. He gave Nagaur in *jagir* to Tahar Khan and honoured him with *Sir-o paw*.<sup>160</sup> Shah Jahan increased the *mansab* one and half fold of his father Daulat Khan who was posted at Kabul at that time. Daulat Khan was also asked to come back to Rajputana. Tahar Khan, son of Daulat Khan defeated the Rathores and ousted them from the fort. Tahar Khan was posted there for eight months and then was asked to go to Kabul. The Kyamkhanis never fell out of favour after that and steadily improved their *mansabs*. Another important point which proves that the Kyamkhanis wanted to show their Muslim identity against their old rivals was that Tahar Khan built a mosque in Nagaur after his victory over Rathores.<sup>161</sup> This shows that Islam was a deciding factor here which played a significant role in this entire episode. It can also be seen as an attempt to be seen as different and special from other Rajputs and the point of difference was Islam here. The Kyamkhanis are not known as rulers that had strong religious beliefs. They did not make any mosque in Fatehpur barring a small insignificant mosque in the fort but always constructed buildings of secular nature such as *Bawadi*. The mosque in Nagaur also suggest that they were posing their religious identity to come closer to the Mughals by building religious monuments.

After the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur, Aurangzeb added the entire Jodhpur state into Mughal Khalsa land. The Rathores rebelled against the Mughals and resisted Mughal armies to take charge of Mehrangarh fort and Jodhpur city. However, Dindar Khan had a conflict with the *qiledar* of Mehrangarh fort so he went back to his base at Nagaur fort

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<sup>160</sup> Headgear and special dress presented by the king to honour somebody.

<sup>161</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhan Vansh*, 177.

with his contingent of 1000 cavalry and 600 infantry and wrote for further orders to the Bakshi of Ajmer *suba*. He was then sent to Merta. His son Abdul Rashid Khan got the mansab of 100/10 in the suba of Ajmer.<sup>162</sup> Whereas, Saadat Kyamkhani was appointed as the *thanedar* of Rahula. Dindar Khan Kyamkhani played important role during the Rathore rebellion in defending Jodhpur, Nagaur and then Didwana for the Mughals. He was also appointed as the *waqia navees* of Jodhpur by Aurangzeb in 1679 A.D. He had friendly relationships with the Rathore rebels as well, so he was instrumental in bringing peace between the Mughals and Rathores.

He was also instrumental in avoiding conflict between Rathores and Mughal forces when Aurangzeb's son Akbar had revolted against him in 1680 A.D. Aurangzeb was pleased by his service and handling of conflict with the Rathores so he was given Didwana as *jagir*. He had built a large gate in his name known as Din Darwaza in Didwana in 1681.<sup>163</sup>

The period after Aurangzeb's death was of political turmoil in Rajputana. The Syed brothers had taken over charge as de facto rulers and ran the empire whereas, the grip of Mughals got weakened and as a result local rulers and Mughal *mansabdars* attained an independent status. As the Mughals were unable to run the administration smoothly and collect the revenues effectively they started issuing *ijaras* or revenue farming contracts to big *mansabdars*. Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur state successfully use his influence and closeness to the Mughal Empire and attained *ijaras* of in neighbouring areas of his state. Eventually, like other *mansabdars* he grabbed large Mughal territories and expanded his own territories. Sawai Jai Singh wanted to usurp the region of Bagad as well but Kyamkhani houses of Jhunjhunu and

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<sup>162</sup> Ishteyaque Alam, *Muslim Communities in Rajputana During Medieval Period* (New Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 2018), 71-2.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.



Fatehpur were strong and resisted his attempts by making friendship with Syed brothers who were rivals of Sawai Jai Singh.

The Kyamkhanis lost their rule of Bagad in 1736 and were succeeded by Shekhawats, a branch of Kachhwaha Rajputs. The winners presented the distorted version of history which favoured them and popularised false history in their favour by appointing Charans and Bhats to write their history. These false narratives were carried forward by many writers in the future who copied these versions without critically checking and analysing the facts. Therefore, this false narrative got popularised even among the masses of Bagad. Ratanlal Mishra has exposed the Shekhawats' wrong claims quite convincingly through his research but it remained unsuccessful in reaching the masses.

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Mughal administration became more decentralised and independent of the Mughals. The Kachhwaha Rajput King Sawai Jai Singh and the Syed brothers had fallen apart due to various political reasons.<sup>164</sup> Sawai Jai Singh took large portions of Bagad including those of Jhunjhunu on revenue farming who actually wanted to annexe those lands to his kingdom. Thus, the Kyamkhanis sided with the Syed brothers who could have helped them to resist the powerful Jai Singh. Nawab Sardar Khan of Fatehpur married his daughter to Syed Hussain Ali and received many favours from him in return. Sardar Khan's *mansab* was increased to 2500 and he also got the *jagirdari* of Jhunjhunu as well. He had 51 *parganas* under his *jagirdari* during the Syed brothers' time that tell his power and stature.<sup>165</sup> The Syed brothers, Chudaman Jat and Kyamkhani Sardar Khan II became a team against Sawai Jai Singh. The Syed brothers were murdered in 1720 that changed the dynamics of politics completely as Sawai Jai Singh now had an upper hand at Delhi court. The Nawab

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<sup>164</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughlas Mughal Empire (1526-1748)* Part Two (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 2016), 479.

<sup>165</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh*, 107.

of Jhunjhunu again got the *jagirdari* of Jhunjhunu in 1721.<sup>166</sup> A painting of Kabir drawn by a Kyamkhani probably celebrates this particular occasion as it is dated 1721 and it is written on verso that royal robe or *Khilat* was presented to them.<sup>167</sup>

Just after ten years of Syed brothers' death, Sawai Jai Singh sent his army against the Nawab of Fatehpur. Jaipur's army was also joined by the army of Sikar's king Rao Shiv Singh, Nawab of Jhunjhunu and other ijaradars of the region which amounted to about 30000 in total. Nawab Sardar Khan called Thakur Inder Singh of Churu in his support who came with 1000 soldiers in favour of Nawab. Nawab had total army of 3000 including 1000 common people of Fatehpur to fight against the Jaipur's forces. The Nawab lost the battle, therefore he had to pay a hefty amount to Jaipur Maharaja but retained four *pattis* namely Katrathal, Juliasar, Sihot and Patod but lost the Fatehpur patti. The Nawab Sardar Khan went to Narnaul after that and died there. Son of Sardar Khan became the new Nawab with the title of Kamyab Khan who lost his small in battle to Jaipur in 1736 A.D. eventually he left for Kuchaman and joined the service of Bikaner state where he died fighting for the Bikaner state in 1754 A.D.<sup>168</sup> Later the entire region was usurped by the Shekhawats among themselves with the help of Jaipur Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh.

The Kyamkhanis struggled after being ousted by Khizr Khan in 1419 A.D. Taj Khan and Muhammad Khan remained together along with their sons and family. They won a large territory of Bagad during the 1440's and founded two separate houses of Jhunjhunu ruled by the Muhammad Khan who was the son of Kyam Khan and Fatehpur by Fateh Khan who was the grandson of Kyam Khan. Jhunjhunu was less powerful than Fatehpur and its Nawabs

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<sup>166</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh*, 124.

<sup>167</sup> "Album Page with Miniature Painting of mystic poet Kabir, Amber or Bikaner circa 1725 with fine Persian Calligraphic Verses on verso, signed and dated 1720-21". Mughal Art Network. <http://www.mughalart.net/weaver-kabir-with-calligraphic-inscription-amber-or-bikaner-18th-century.html> (Accessed on 16 Nov 2019)

<sup>168</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh*, 108.

remained influenced by Fatehpur Nawabs and their decisions. We know very less about the Jhunjhunu principality as there are almost no sources available about it. *Kyamkhan Rasa* has few references pertaining to Jhunjhunu which are quoted commonly by scholars whereas, the later period of eighteenth century is known through the British colonial records such as Wills report.

Shams Khan was ruling over Jhunjhunu as the second Nawab after Muhammad Khan. He built a pond in Jhunjhunu with stone steps and undertook the important task of afforestation of a Beed (Jungle) around Jhunjhunu. He was assisted by his able brother Bahram Khan whose descendants are known as Buhans. Since, the Fatehpur principality was stronger in strength than Jhunjhunu, the rule at Jhunjhunu was conducted with the agreement of Fatehpur only. At many times Fatehpur Nawabs had interfered in Jhunjhunu militarily and dethroned the Nawabs to replace them with people of their choice. However, more or less, both the principalities remained peacefully and stayed together with each other to survive in the tough and hostile conditions of being surrounded by much bigger political powers. Nawab Alaf Khan of Fatehpur and Nawab Shams Khan II joined the Mughal services together in 1582 A.D. and regained their territories respectively as watan jagirs which were previously given to Rathore Mandan Kumpawat. Not much is known about the history of Jhunjhunu after that.

During the reign of Saadat Khan (1671-1718) A.D., the bhomias under Jhunjhunu principality were becoming bolder and were creating difficulties for the Nawab in governance. The Nawabs of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu both had much veneration for the Sufis of Hansi, so they invited them in Bagad and were given revenue free grants for living comfortably. As the Nawabs thought it improper to marry their daughters in families of lower status than them, they used to marry their daughters into the Sufis of Hansi. Nawab Saadat Khan's sister was married to Sheikh Muzaffar of Hansi who was also part of the Mughal administration and thus commanded great respect. Therefore, the Nawab Saadat Khan wanted his nephew Yusuf Khan

to come from Hansi and rule Jhunjhunu after him. He invited Yusuf Khan to come to Jhunjhunu but the other family members became jealous of him because they wanted somebody from themselves to become the next Nawab and murdered him while entering the fort of Jhunjhunu. Nawab Saadat Khan then avenged the death of his nephew by killing the perpetrators. The Sufis of Hansi were at high posts during Aurangzeb's reign hence commanded power in the region. They also wanted to take revenge of the murder of their son, therefore two girls of the murderers were married into the Sufi family to pacify them.<sup>169</sup>

During the later Mughal period in Jhunjhunu, Sawai Jai Singh's intervention increased when he took the areas under Jhunjhunu on *ijara* and distributed it further to sub-*ijaradars*. Nawab Muzaffar Khan, the then Nawab of Jhunjhunu got 1, 41,331 Dams from these *ijaradars*. One of the *ijaradar* was Shardul Singh Shekhawat who had paid the advance sum to the Nawab in lieu of the *ijara* contract which in later sources was proclaimed as the victory of the Shekhawats over the Kyamkhanis.<sup>170</sup> There are correspondence related to these *ijaras* are present to counter the narrative of victory presented later by the Shekhawats in their favour.<sup>171</sup> It is also claimed that the last Nawab of Jhunjhunu Ruhela Khan renounced his throne and gave it to the able Shardul Singh in 1730 A.D. However, this is also incorrect as there are records to show that Nawab had attacked Fatehpur in 1731 A.D. Ruhella Khan remained the ruler of Jhunjhunu in the name only as actual ruler was the Jaipur's Sawai Jai Singh. After the death of Ruhella Khan, the Shekhawats took over the territory of Jhunjhunu whose actual date is not known.

The Kyamhanis also had smaller principalities of Ked, Badwasi, Beri and Jharod. The chieftain of these small chieftaincy were also known as Nawabs who operated under the

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<sup>169</sup> Surjan Singh Shekhawat, *Shekhawati Pradesh*, 95-97.

<sup>170</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh*, 126.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

tutelage of main principality of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. The rule of Ked was established by Jabruddin Khan who used to looted and plundered in the area around Ked. Once, he met some Seth and proposed them to settle at a new village so that he can rule over by making it his base. The Kyamkhanis constructed forts, palaces, wells and Baodis at Ked. The famous Kediya Baniyas belong to this place only. The town of Ked was thus established in 1458 A.D.<sup>172</sup> The descendants of Jabruddin Khan, elder brother of Kyam Khan, continuously ruled over the small principality of Ked till 1720 A.D. when Gopal Singh Shekhawat ended their rule.

One of the son of Kyam Khan, Mohan Khan was based in Fatehabad. His son Elam Khan and Ahmad Khan settled at Badwasi, near Jhunjhunu. They ruled over a few villages and called themselves Nawabs. They also operated under the tutelage of Jhunjhunu. The last Nawab of Badwasi was Amanullah Khan who was a famous warrior of his time but the date of his death is not known. Their rule also ended when Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu were annexed by the Shekhawats.

Jainuddin Khan was the elder brother of Kyam Khan and was based in Narnaul. His son Nasirudin Khan then got settled in in Nua near Didwana in 1395 A.D. Then one of the descendants had moved to Beri near Didwana in 1494 A.D. and constructed a fort as well. One of his son Togaji moved to another place called Bansa near Didwana in 1588 A.D. Their descendants ruled over the patti of 57 villages also known as Jharod patti till 1751 A.D.

The Kyamkhanis were a significant power in the region of Bagad who were mansabdars in the Mughal service and had reached up to the rank of 2500 during the reign of Sardar Khan II. They served the Mughals in local Bagad, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Phalodi, Mewar, Mewat, Dipalpur to far flung areas of Deccan, Balkh, Kabul, Badakhshan and Bengal etc. They always

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 133-34.

sided with the rule of Delhi and benefitted from their allegiance. Their might peaked during the Mughal period.

### **Nagad Pathans of Narhad**

Narhad is one of the oldest towns of Bagad situated between Loharu and Jhunjhunu. It is situated 31 km away from Jhunjhunu city. It was the main city of Bagad in 12<sup>th</sup> century according to the Jain sources. Its sanskritised name found in the Jain sources is Narbhat. It was an important centre of Jain religion with significant number of Jain traders living in the city. It was well connected with Delhi, Hansi, Rohtak, Kanana, Nagaur, Medta, Falodhi, Nua and Jhunjhunu, Dhara Nagari, Rudrapalli, Vikrampur, Patan etc.<sup>173</sup> The town once had Jain temples with precious statues of Jain Tirthankaras which were destroyed and looted by the incoming Muslim armies. The Jain traders also moved out of Narhad to new safer places.<sup>174</sup>

Not much is known about Narhad except the brief information available in the Jain sources. It was the territory of Jod Chauhans who had established themselves during the Chauhan period of tenth eleventh centuries. They were the local *sawants* or chieftains of the Chauhans of Sambhar similar to the Chauhans of Dadrewa. During the reign of Bahlol Lodhi, Pathans of Panni and Nagad tribe of Sibi, Baluchistan came to this part of Bagad. They fought many battles with the Jod Chauhans and established themselves here with the help of Lodhis. They established themselves based in Narhad and Baggad<sup>175</sup> towns and ruled till the Shekhawats with the aid from Jaipur defeated them in eighteenth century.

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<sup>173</sup> Mahopadhyaya Vinaysagar, *Khartargachh ka Brihad Itihas*, (Jaipur: n.a, 2005), 173.

<sup>174</sup> Nahta, Agarchand, "Narhad-Narbhat ke Prachin Ullekh" in *Maru Bharti* vol. 4 (1957), 12.

<sup>175</sup> A town in Jhunjhunu district, not to be confused with Bagad region.

The Pathans of Narhad were friendly with the Rathores of Bikaner and Bidawati. Nawab Dilawar Khan joined Rao Kandhal and attacked Fatehpur when Fateh Khan had gone to Chittaurgarh. The Kyamkhanis received the Narhad pargana as jagir during Alaf Khan's period which was fiercely resisted by the Pathan Nawab Nahar Khan.<sup>176</sup> Nawab was defeated by the Kyamkhanis and pacified them by marrying his daughter to the grandson of Alaf Khan.

The Pathans served the Mughals but nothing substantial is known about them. The names of the Nawabs of Narhad Pathans are Yunus Khan, Ismail Khan Diler Jang, Dilawar Khan, Allaudin Khan, Kutub Khan, Abdullah Khan, Bhikhan Khan Etc.

### **North Bagad**

The area of Bhatner, Sirsa, Hisar, Fatehabad and northern parts of Churu are the northern parts of Bagad. Sirsa, Fatehabad and Hisar usually remained under the direct control of Delhi Sultanate so there are very less historical records about it. Firuz Shah constructed Hisar-i Firuza in 1355 A.D. as a *shiq* with very large territory under it. Entire Bagad was put under it in addition to the entire area of erstwhile Hansi *shiq* that included large parts of Haryana. Mehrdad Shokoohy informs that Ladnun was governed by Hisar during the Tughlaq dynasty.

It is said that Chauhans ruled over the northern Bagad during their hey days in eleventh-twelfth centuries but after the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in thirteenth century the area of north Bagad remained free from any major political domination. The Delhi Sultans concentrated on key areas of Rajputana such as Ajmer and Nagaur whereas less fertile and arid regions did not get their attention. The Chauhans on the other hand could not maintain their

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<sup>176</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Kyamkhani Vansh*, 92.

rule barring a few small principalities like Dadrewa and Mohilwati. So, in these areas relatively weaker Rajput clans took over on some parts such as Jod Chauhans and Bhatias. But large parts of northern Bagad were then self-governed by the agro-pastoralist tribe of Jats. They governed large territories from Churu to parts of Hisar-Sirsa for three centuries until Rao Bika forced them to surrender with the help of Karni Mata.

Govind Agarwal had prepared a list<sup>177</sup> of these self-governed clan based territories from the earlier sources with updates of his own. Scholars had termed these clan based self-governed territories as *Janpads* whereas, Ghan Shyam Lal Deora has termed them as *Bhomichara* and *Grasiya*.<sup>178</sup> The details are following:

Table 3.1: Jat *Janpads*

Branch	Chief	Capital	No. of Villages
Godara	Pandu	Shekhsar and Ladhadiya	360
Sihag	Chokha	Suin	140
Sohuwa	Amra	Dhansiya	84
Saran	Pula	Bhadang	360
Beniwal	Raisal	Raislana	360
Kaswan	Kanwarpal	Sidhmukh	360
Puniyan	Kanha	Badi Lundi (Luddi)	360

Source: Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, 1974)

Bhadang, Sidhmukh and Lundi are near Dadrewa; Shekhsar, Suin are near Lunkaransar whereas Dhansiya and Raisalana are located near Bhatner. Total area of this territory was 4000 square miles. The correct number of villages according to Govind Agarwal is not more than 700.<sup>179</sup> The chief of these Jat clans was called as Chaudhary and Grasiya. The Grasiyas of one

<sup>177</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, 1974), 107.

<sup>178</sup> G.S.L. Deora, *Rajasthan ki Prashasnik Vyavastha 1574 to 1818 A.D.: Bikaner Sambhag ke Sandarbh Mein* (Gangashahar: Dharti Prakashan, 1981), 3.

<sup>179</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, 1974), 109.



clan used to choose one Chaudhary among themselves.<sup>180</sup> The Rathores took advantage of the feuds among these clans to conquer this large area of Bagad. The Rajputs were militarily far advanced and organised than the Jat counterparts which made the annexation relatively easier. This episode is very well covered in many of the history books therefore there is no need to repeat those events here.<sup>181</sup>

The main centre of politics in northern Bagad was Bhatner before the foundation of Bikaner in 1488 A.D. It had a strong fort which was situated near the Lakhi jungle and Ghaggar passed nearby it. It was a stronghold of Bhati Rajputs who had converted to Islam at the time of Firuz Shah. The Lakhi forest was the protective haven for many such haughty tribes like Johiya, Bhati, Watu, Khokhar and Rath. Bhati, Johiya and Rath were spread in north and north western part of the Jat Bhomichar areas whereas, the Chauhan Mohils were based in southern area of Chhapar. These Rajputs of north Bagad were quite strong and dissuaded the attacks and attempts of Rathores as well as the Baluchis from Multan.

It was not easy for the Rathores to penetrate into this area but the Sankhals sought their help in warding off the Baluchi and Bhaties' attacks on them. The Rathores under Rao Bika used the area of Sankhla Rajputs as base camp to consolidate their position in Bagad. The different groups of Bhaties, Jats, Johiyas and Sankhals were constantly at war with each other which a window of opportunity to the Rathores therefore they gradually won over the Sankhals, Bhaties and then the Jats one by one and cemented their position. Rao Bika founded the capital of his new kingdom in Ratighati in 1488 A.D. His successor Rao Lunkaran (1505-1526) A.D. furthered the expansionist campaign by winning over the Chahilwada or the land of the Chahils. Chahil was a branch of Chauhan who had sway over parts of Churu, and areas west of Sirsa

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<sup>180</sup> G.S.L. Deora, *Rajasthan ki Prashasnik Vyavastha*, 5.

<sup>181</sup> To read in detail see Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas*. (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan, 1974), 100-21.

and Hisar.<sup>182</sup> They even won the strong fort of Bhatner from the Chahils after a few years in 1530. However, they lost Bhatner to Mirza Kamran after a hard fought battle lasting several months. The Rathores regained Bhatner after defeating Mirza Kamran at Bikaner but again lost it to Chahil Firoz in 1533 A.D.<sup>183</sup> Bhatner remained the spot of contention for the Rathores,

Table 3.2: Bagad region under Bikaner State

Ruler	Watan Jagir <sup>184</sup> (pargana)	Neighbouring <i>Tankhwah</i> Jagir <sup>185</sup> (pargana)	Ordinary <i>Tankhwah</i> Jagir <sup>186</sup> (pargana)
Kalyan Singh		Sirsa	
Rai Singh	Dadrewa, Sidhmukh, Bhadang	Bhatner, Puniya, Hisar, Beniwal, Sheoran, Sirsa	
Dalpat Singh	Same as above	Tosham, Sirsa, Bhatner, Beniwal, Sheoran, Puniya	
Surat Singh	Same as above	Hisar, Tosham, Puniya, Beniwal, Bhatner, Sheoran	
Karan Singh	Same as above	Tosham, Bhatner, Puniya, Beniwal, Bhatner	
Anup Singh	Same as above	Sirsa, Bhatner, Beniwal, Tosham, Puniya, Sheoran	Fatehabad, Charkhi Dadri, Jhunjhunu
Swarup Singh	Same as above	Puniya, Beniwal	

Source: G.S.L. Devra, *Rajasthan ki Prashasanik Vyavastha (1574-1818)*

<sup>182</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Mohil Vansh ka Itihas* (Johpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, 2019), 209.

<sup>183</sup> Sindhayach Dayaldas, *Khyat Deshdarpan: Bikaner Rajya ka Itihas*, ed. J.K. Jain and Girijashankar Sharma (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1989), 31.

<sup>184</sup> Bikaner state claimed hereditary rights over these Jagirs.

<sup>185</sup> Bikaner state claimed them to be part of their watan jagir but it was not accepted by the Mughals, but they remained with Bikaner almost permanently.

<sup>186</sup> These were ordinary tankhwah jagirs received by the Bikaner state in lieu of their increasing mansabs. They also remained with the Bikaner state for most of the Mughal period.

Chahils and Bhatris for much of the time till Mughals came and took over the area permanently.<sup>187</sup> However, the Bikaner rulers received the parganas and areas of Hisar, Bhatner and Puniya as *tankhwah jagir*. The warring Bhattis and Johiyas wrested the eastern Bagad territories of Bhatner and Hisar from the Rathores during Maharaja Anup Singh's (1667-1698 A.D.) reign.<sup>188</sup> After the death of Aurangzeb the Mughal military power declined progressively. The Rathores took advantage of the weak central authority of the Mughals and usurped the pargana of Punia and Bhatner and expanded their rule in eastern Bagad once again. However, Bhatner was again snatched from the Rathores by Bhatris. Bhatner could only be regained again in 1805 A.D. by the Rathores under Maharaja Surat Singh's time (1787-1858 A.D.).

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<sup>187</sup> G.S.L. Deora, *Rajasthan ki Prashasnik Vyavastha*, 10.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

## Chapter 4

### The Rise of Fatehpur in the Desert of Bagad:

#### Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar

#### Bagad: The Land of Opportunities

जम्बुद्वीप देश तहां बागर  
नगर फतेहपुर नगरां नागर<sup>189</sup>

(In Jambudweep Desh, there is Bagad  
Fatehpur is the city of cities)

Timur invaded India in 1398 A.D. which resulted in weakening of the Delhi Sultanate. The Tughlaqs lost their grip and control over much of the empire which was already waning during the last years of Firuz Shah. The provincial governors deepened their roots locally to strengthen their positions against Delhi's will and started practically autonomous rule. The Tughlaq princes sought help from these powerful provincial powers to claim their right over Delhi's crown.

Meanwhile, the governor of Multan, Khizr Khan won the favour of Timur to succeed the Tughlaqs as the new Delhi emperor. The many of the old Tughlaq slaves and military officers went on to join the Khizr Khan. The Kyamhanis were among the notable nobles who had switched their loyalties. However, Kyamkhan soon got punished at the hands of Khizr because

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<sup>189</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar* (Fatehpur: Sri Saraswati Pustkalaya, 1992), 11. These are the opening lines of the *Mangalcharan* of *Rupawati Akhyanika* written in 1600 A.D.

of a failed attempt to revolt against the Khizr Khan. The Kyamkhanis lost favour with the Delhi Sultanate under the Syeds which forced them to leave their strong military positions at Hisar-Hansi region. The larger Kyamkhani family fled to Jaisalmer to take refuge with the Bhatias who were their relatives and avoided the ire of Khizr Khan. They soon reached out to their old friends, the Khanzadas of Gujarat who were former slaves of the Firuz Shah. The Kyamkhanis joined the Khanzadas of Nagaur, who were the junior branch of the Gujarat sultanate. The Kyamkhanis were posted at the important towns of Didwana and Nagaur for about twelve years. They would have strengthened themselves in the long twelve years' time, organised themselves and amassed wealth to have venture out in the open to establish their own principality. They were placed at a strategic location at Didwana which was the border town between Bagad and Marwad that allowed them to have a good knowledge of both the regions. The Kyamkhanis ventured out at the opportune moment and won over the town of Jhunjhunu and its surroundings. It is possible that their collective strength proved to be too good for the old families of Jaud Rajputs, who had ruled over much of Bagad and soon the Kyamkhanis established themselves as the new masters of Bagad in a few years' time. Thus, the Kymkhanis were back again to their ancestral region of Bagad in a few years' time.

Various factors were responsible that made Bagad suitable for the Kyamkhanis to settle down. It was their ancestral area where their ancestors had ruled before joining the Delhi Sultanate. However, they did not go back to Dadrewa where they were ruling earlier because it was probably given to the other son of Mota Rao Chauhan and rightfully belonged to them. The other reason was that the region was sparsely populated with almost no important town that could have attracted big military powers in the region. The region was less fertile with almost no settled agriculture and sustained economy that could have sustained a mighty and large kingdom. Therefore, it was easy for the Kyamkhanis to establish themselves at Bagad when the danger from the Syeds of Delhi had also receded.

After the victory over Jhunjhunu, the elder son of Kyamkhan, named Fateh Khan thought it to be appropriate to find another suitable place to build his own town. The weakening of Delhi Sultanate opened the gates of opportunities for many regional political players to establish themselves strongly in new areas, build new villages, towns and cities. (Examples from After Timur Left). The unfolding of events in Bagad were in tandem to the larger trend of the fifteenth century India in many ways such as new regional polities became independent, new towns and cities were built, new long distance trade routes got established, migration of businessmen to newly developed towns and markets, dissemination of Bhakti ideology, Bhasha literature became popular, literisation of oral vernaculars.

### **Foundation of Fatehpur**

Fatehpur can be justifiably called as the capital city of Bagad as became the centre of polity, culture, education, architecture, business, construction, religion, etc. which would be discussed in detail. Its location was carefully chosen. Some of the reasons are it was a valley between sand dunes where rain water would gather as it was a bowl shaped, water from sand dunes would flow towards one point and gather at a natural pond of water. A few huts of pastoralists were also present there. It was strategically important as it was hidden between sand dunes. It was also important as it was not far from Jhunjhunu from where any military help could be quickly sought. There was probably some small *beed* there that could sustain pastoralism. It was not very far from Hisar-Hansi either.

There was almost a fixed way to build a new city or town by the Rajputs in the medieval Rajputana. The Rajput King was the sole authority or it was his discretion to decide how the town should be made.

The early history of the Kyamkhanis is not available, even *Kyamkhan Rasa* does not have the required details of the history prior to the establishment of Fatehpur in 1450 A.D. Nonetheless, it is important to understand the background and context and conditions behind the Kyamkhanis' moving back into Bagad and founding two separate principalities of Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur. The *Rasa* gives the impression that the Kyamkhanis came in from Hisar directly and established their rule over Jhunjhunu and founded Fatehpur. However, there is at least thirty years long gap between banishment from Hisar in around 1420 A.D. and foundation of Fatehpur in 1450 A.D. *Rasa*'s writer Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' has written account of the battles fought by the Kyamkhanis in between these years but does not clearly mention their status in the political hierarchy of Rajputana nor the place where they were based during these years. He omits the fact that they had lost their previous political stature when they held many areas in the *shiq* of Hisar-i Firuza while serving as the slaves of Firuz Shah. This gave the general impression in the people and scholars alike that the Kyamkhanis came directly from Hisar-i Firuza to Bagad and established their small principalities. *Rasa* also states wrong historical facts that Sultan Firuz Shah was impressed by the sheer divinity of Karamchand (before conversion) and gifted him the position of *shiqdar* of Hisar-i Firuza on the request of Syed Nasir, who himself was the *shiqdar* of Hisar-i Firuza. However, a keen study of Persian and Rajasthani sources shows the history in a different light.

The Kyamkhanis fled from Hisar from the threat of Syed Sultan Khizr Khan who had killed Kyamkhan in 1419 A.D. to punish him for his purported role in the revolt against him. Kyamkhan's two sons Taj Khan and Muhammad Khan went straight to Jaisalmer at their maternal uncle's home. However, there is no written evidence anywhere but by reading the history and joining the dots one could postulate that Firoz Shah was central to this wedding between the Bhatris of Jaisalmer and the Kyamkhan. Firoz Shah was the son of Bhati Rajput from mother's side, who when became the Emperor of the Delhi gave the fort of Bhatner to his

maternal uncle. His maternal uncle and his family converted their religion by the inspiration of Firoz Shah himself. Similarly, the family of Kirti Singh Bhati, the uncle of Kyamkhani brothers also left Jaisalmer for Bhatner where he changed his religion from Hindu to Islam. By these events, one can conjecture that Firoz Shah was not only fundamental behind converting leading Rajput families into Islam and co-opting them into the structure of Delhi Sultanate but making matrimonial relations and alliances as well. This helped in bringing together the neo-Muslim Rajputs of Bagad and forging a network of their own where they could fall back on in the period of crisis. The Kyamkhanis then went to their old time friends from the same batch of neo-converted slaves, the Tanks of Thanesar. This family now headed the prosperous and very important region of Gujarat and Nagaur after the decline of their Tughlaq masters. The Kyamkhanis got employment at Nagaur Sultanate, which was the junior branch of Gujarat Sultanate. They were given the important *iqta* of Khatu. Khatu is an ancient town of Bagad which was situated on the route of Naraina, Didwana, Nagaur, Ajmer and Delhi. Due to its strategic position it remained under the rule of Delhi Sultans from the beginning. It has one of the oldest Islamic monuments in entire Rajputana. It also has the reputation of maintaining a long tradition of Sufis, among whom there is prominent Sufi Shaikh Ahmad Khatu who later went to Ahmedabad. Therefore, by the old connections, the Kyamkhanis received this important Iqta of Khatu. However, the Rathores rose rapidly under Rao Rinmal's reign where he adopted the policy of annexing the areas in north of Marwar along with continuing his struggle with the Mewar state. Rao Rinmal Rathore won the area around Khatu for a brief period of time and gave it to Khemsi Pancholi. The Kyamkhanis were ousted from their *iqta* of Khatu by the Rathores. The Kyamkhanis then concentrated on the central Bagad to put their foot down and sensed an opportunity in winning over the small chieftains of Bagad. It is in this context that the Fateh Khan thought of founding a new town in his name in the political virgin land of central Bagad.



Actually, there was a sophisticated nexus operating especially during the reign of Firuz Shah where religion, region, politics, ethnicity were intertwined together that played major role in making the history of the region. The Chishti Sufi Nasiruddin Mahmood Chiragh-i Dehli played decisive role in choosing Firuz Shah as the new Sultan instead of many closer relatives of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The Chahar Qutub Chishti Sufis of Hansi had also put their weight behind Firuz Shah and gave him a clear passage from Sirsa to Dehli using his socio-political standing in his spiritual *vilayat*. Firuz Shah was given a hefty loan of some lakh *tankas* by the Baniyas of Sirsa on the guarantee of the Sufis. After gaining the confidence of these Sufis great repute the opponents of Firuz Shah got discouraged to contest the throne of Delhi making things easier for Firuz Shah. This way Firuz Shah was obliged to these Sufis and returned the favour by gifting them money, granting villages and high positions in the administration. Shams Siraj Afif has noted that Shaikh Jamaluddin Hanswi had always said that “Sultan Firoz Shah is included within the ambit of the spiritual guides of Gnosticism, who sits upon the throne of the Government by keeping the regal crown upon his head.”<sup>190</sup> The Sufis’ predilection was also towards Firuz Shah as they wanted a weak Sultan unlike Muhammad Tughlaq who was strong headed, unpredictable and ruthless. They never enjoyed healthy relationship with Muhammad Tughlaq so choosing Firuz Tughlaq was more of political compromise between the Tughlaq nobles and Sufis.

There is a general perception about Firuz Shah that he was a staunch Islamist who worked for the propagation of Islam by converting nobles and lower caste people in large numbers and inducted them as slaves in his administration. It is quite possible that he pursue the agenda of conversion on his own but there could also be a possibility that he had done this in compliance to the Sufis’ policy of converting people at large to propagate Islam in the *Dar-*

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<sup>190</sup> Shams Siraj Afif, “*Tarikh-i- Firoz Shahi of Shams Siraj Afif*”, trans. Ishrat Husain Ansari, al-taimi al-siddiqui and Hamid Afaq Qureshi (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2015), 16.

*ul harb*. This might be a common interest programme that thrust conversion at large scale during the reign of Firuz Shah by creating a new office of slaves called *Diwan-i Bandagan*. The slaves were chosen, converted, given religious training and then posted in various departments throughout the Empire.<sup>191</sup>

The Chahar Qutub Sufis were much respected and celebrated citizens of the town whose position as religious guides and men of piety authorised them power in the physical and materialistic world as well. They enjoyed influence among the rich and important men of their *vilayat* which was expanded from Sirsa to Delhi with the centre in Hansi. The writer of *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, Shams Siraj Afif was the disciple of Hazrat Shaikh Qutubuddin Chishti Hanswi. Shams Siraj Afif belonged to an influential noble family of the region who were attached to the Tuglaq family from the time when Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq was the governor of Dipalpur and great grandfather of Shams Siraj Afif was the in charge of Abohar town. It gives an idea into the influential circle of people who followed these Sufis as their spiritual guides. They were also popular among Non-Muslims of the region including rich merchants and townsmen. So, the nexus of politics, power and religion was natural that conglomerated to run the business of Empire and religion in the region of Bagad.

In addition to these dominant entities, other groups and forms of power were also operating. The local chieftains of Bagad who once had supremacy over the region before the establishment of Delhi Sultanate held a significant presence in the interiors of the Desert in the Bagad. They belonged mainly to Bhati and various branches of Chauhans Rajputs. Dadrewa was a significant *thikana* of Chauhans which served as the gateway to the Bagad and was placed close to the very important military centre of Hansi. The Chauhans of Dadrewa had participated bravely against the Ghazni onslaught when Rana Guga was the ruler of Dadrewa. He put up

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<sup>191</sup> Shams Siraj Afif, "*Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*," 173-76.

stiff resistance against the army of Mahmood Ghaznavi but lost his life in the battle which fame him as the saviour of the common people. The people remembered him as the benevolent, divine and righteous king of Bagad who laid his life for the commitment of saving his subjects life and material. The ideal attributes of a Rajput king were identified with him that won him the title of *Bagad ko Raja* (King of Bagad) and Deity. His descendants continued ruling over Dadrewa and gained strength under the tutelage of Chauhan Kingdom of early medieval period. They defended Hansi from the Turkish Ghuri armies in the twelfth century as well. The Persian chronicles had noted the severity of attack by them at Hansi against the army of Islam that even Sultan Qutubuddin Aibeg had to come from Delhi to save the very important military town of Hansi. However, as the Delhi Sultanate under the Turkish rulers got established firmly, the Chauhans of Bagad also suffered hugely. They lost much of the territory, influence, money and got pushed to interiors of Bagad with limited resources to fend upon. The Bagad was a sandy terrain without water and rich sources that could propel prosperity to the owners of the territory so the Rajputs had to change tactics to survive. Agriculture was not practised because of the ecology, so the people were mostly agro-pastoralists who were heavily dependent on the cattle stock. They were not practising settled agriculture but use to move frequently where they could find some water and green pasture for their animals. The entire economy was unable to support a state which requires some basic surplus production in the state. So, the Rajputs changed their tactics and started looting and raiding other Rajputs' territories. Their main target was the livestock and dromedaries such as camels of the enemies' area. This was the model that continued to operate unabated in the entire Rajputna and Haryana till the independence of India in 1947.

Under such circumstances, Firoz Shah built a new city of Hisar at the borders of Bagad in 1354 A.D. The Chauhan Rajputs of Dadrewa along with the Jat associates went on raiding and looting Hisar regularly. Hisar was the dream project of Firoz Shah who had planned the

complete transformation of Haryana making Hisar as the centre of that new region of development. Hisar-i Firoza was made into a shiq under which huge areas of Haryana and Bagad were put and administered. It attracted rich merchants, traders, Sufis, teachers, nobles and dignitaries to settle down in Hisar. Hisar attracted the attention of Chauhans who started raiding Hisar regularly. In retaliation the Imperial forces from Hisar attacked Dadrewa unawares resulting in capture of the Rana Mote Rao and his Jat chief. Syed Nasir, who was the leader of Hisar army took away the eldest son Kunwar Karam Chand Chauhan and son of the Jat chief (name not mentioned) to Hisar. It was a well-known Central Asian tactic where the sons of the enemy were taken into custody to ensure cooperation and safety from their side. These small children were then admitted as slaves in the army of the Sultan where they were trained as the most loyal and able soldiers who were attached to the Sultan. Firoz Shah had a grand plan for the development of Haryana by building forts, cities, digging canals and settling down people in new villages that would give him security from the Mongols from the western border, increased income from revenue and taking the local Rajput chiefs into his administration. At this stage, the interest of Sufis and the state got amalgamated and they coalesced together, where on one hand the State generated revenues from newly built cities and villages and Sufis got chance to disseminate the ideology of Islam and their influence among the masses. The state encouraged conversion of not only the elites of the society but the lower class as well who worked as the labour in the factories (*karkhana*) of the state that produced the goods, articles, armoury and arsenal etc. as per the requirement of the state. The close tie up between the Chishti Sufis and Firoz Shah led state is quite evident in the region of Bagad and Haryana.

The history Chahar Qutub Chishtis of Hansi is well known to be reiterated here in detail. It should suffice to say that they commanded immense respect not only in their vast area of *vilayat* but much wider and farther than that. They were quite popular among the masses and

political spheres alike so much so that they were the prime identity of the garrison town of Hansi. They were synonymous with the name of the city and even asserted their identity by using the epithet 'Hanswi' after their names. They were involved in converting Hindus of the area into Muslims as has been demonstrated in the case of Kyamkhanis. As, it has been observed in other areas of Indian subcontinent the Sufis were closely involved in the increasing the agricultural activity, settling down new places and propagation of Islam through proselytising the new agricultural settlers.<sup>192</sup> The Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu also showcase the same tendency in mid fifteenth century Bagad.

There are many reasons why the politics desired the religious alliance for its growth. The history of the Chahar Qutub family of Sufis is well known and recorded by the historians but nobody has recorded the story of growth of the family out of Hansi. It is a very important tale of how a prominent Sufi family maintains its influence and even increases its reach in the society. The socio-political influence of the Chahar Qutubs saw its peak during the period of Firoz Shah and lost much of its sheen during successive dynasties but it did survive and diversified their reach in the changing times by moving to new cities and territories diversifying their clientele and resources. It is well known that the Emperors asked the leading Sufis of their time to come and reside in their newly built cities or new settlements are built around their homes or *khanqahs*.<sup>193</sup> Emperor Firoz Shah had also asked Hazrat Sheikh Qutubuddin Chishti of Hansi to shift to his newly built city of Hisar. It is very important at this point to remember the conversation between Shaikh Qutubuddin and Badshah Firoz Shah. He said, "I have built Hisar Firozah merely for the comfort and peace of the people at large and providing relief to

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<sup>192</sup> Gulati Jyoti Gulati Balachandran, *Narrative Past: The Making of a Muslim Community in Gujarat, c.1400-1650* (New Delhi: OUP, 2020); Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (California: University of California Press, 1996). The process of making of Muslim community and the role of leading Sufis in settling up new towns in Gujarat has many similarities to the same process happening in fifteenth century Bagad.

<sup>193</sup> Emperor Akbar built Fatehpur Sikri near the residence of Sheikh Salim Chishti.

the followers of Islam. If the Janab-i Shaikh too stays in the Hisar for the sake of mercy and affection, it will be very proper. A hospice will be constructed for the stay of His holiness and expenses will be fixed keeping in view the number of the persons passing through it and arriving to it. If Hazrat-i Shaikh stays in the Hisar, it is hoped that, by the blessing of the feet of His holiness, the persons staying in the fort will be free and secured from all evils and vagaries of time.”<sup>194</sup>

We don't have the written history so neatly noted about the Kyamkhanis as the reign of Firoz Shah but it would not be very difficult to understand what the conversation between the Sufis of Hansi and Fateh Khan would be like. The Kyamkhanis had also asked the Chahar Qutub Sufis to come at their newly built town of Fatehpur. Among the many practical reasons for such an invitation was that the presence of a famous Sufi was considered auspicious and fortunate for the ruler. Living with the pious soles was considered as a blissful experience that would bring peace and prosperity to their lives. The Emperors and nobles wanted to remain in company of these pious men even after their death as they desired to be buried near their spiritual leader's grave.<sup>195</sup>

The other and equally important reason for inviting Sufis of repute to settle at new towns was to use their spiritual authority in attracting people to come down to inhabit their towns. The Sufis were not only popular among Muslims but in all the communities therefore, sheer presence of a renowned Sufi was the guarantee of safety and security of the town and their folks. It gave them a sense of safety and peace. During Timur's invasion of Bagad and Haryana, people from all around had gathered in Hansi in the belief that the pious city of Hansi

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<sup>194</sup> Shams Siraj Afif, “*Tarikh-i- Firoz Shahi of Shams Siraj Afif*”, trans. Ishrat Husain Ansari, al-taimi al-siddiqui and Hamid Afaq Qureshi (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2015), 89.

<sup>195</sup> The Dargah graveyard of Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizamuddin Awliya are full of high ranking nobles and Mughal Emperors. Even, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar wanted to be buried in the Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's premises.

would remain safe from the attack of Timur. The invaders also respected the religious and pious men and hesitated from disrespecting them by attacking their *khanqah*, *dargahs* and cities. Timur mercilessly killed people and looted the people of Bhatner, Sirsa, Fatehabad and Hisar one by one but did not touch the city of Hansi out of respect for Sheikh Qutubuddin Hanswi. Afif has specially mentioned this incident when the Mongols were raiding the region but did not touch Hansi<sup>196</sup> due to the miraculous powers and splendour of his spiritual guide and mentor Hazrat Sheikh Qutubuddin Hanswi. He became a legendary figure in the region after that as this incident became part of the folk tale of the region.

The name of Chahar Qutubs was very well known for the people of Hansi-Hisar therefore, it would have positively impacted in attracting the important persons of the region to live in the new town. Their name was the guarantee of stability and security of their investment and lives.

All the olden respected Rajput families had their own *kul devta* and *kul devi* that were supposed as the divine guarding and guiding forces that would save them from any trouble. They are much respected by the royal families who worship them at special occasions like battles and festivities. The status of Karni Mata for the Bika Rathores is very well known to be reiterated here, but is a good example to understand the concept of an ancestral deity in the life of the royals. Likewise, the Kyamkhanis considered the Chahar Qutub Sufis of Hansi as their prime spiritual gurus. The Kyamkhanis were originally Chauhans who used to worship deity Shakambhari, the salt deity as their ancestral deity, however, after converting to Islam they did not worship Hindu God and Goddesses. Nevertheless, they started a similar tradition in Islam where they started treating the Sufis of Hansi as their personal family spiritual, guru, guide and

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<sup>196</sup> “.....due to the blessings of whose feet the multitude of the people at large of the city is safe from the pillaging of the Mughals.”; Shams Siraj Afif, “*Tarikh-i- Firoz Shahi of Shams Siraj Afif*”, trans. Ishrat Husain Ansari, al-taimi al-siddiqui and Hamid Afaq Qureshi (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2015), 55.

mentors. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to the Kyamkhnais that they come and settle down with them save them with every potential trouble and threat.

The learned Sufis had many religious and administrative duties to perform in the town of Fatehpur. The Hansi Sufis were very close to the state administration from the beginning itself. The possible reason for that could be found in the origins of the family who were a family belonging to nobility serving in the Sultanate administration in Hansi. Their closeness to the Tughlaqs has been described in the earlier pages so need to repeat it here. After the decline of the Tughlaqs, who had favoured them immensely, their position also weakened over the time. The sources are mostly silent about them after the Tughlaq period, only to be briefly mentioned during the Emperor Akbar's reign. We get to know that they were also serving at high posts in the Akbar's army. Nevertheless, during the Sultanate period after the Tughlaqs, the Hanswis changed their strategy to adjust according to the changed political environment. The family decided upon sending members of their family with Fateh Khan on his request to Fatehpur, whereas, at the time of their splendour they had even denied Sultan Firoz Shah's offer of moving their base to the then newly built town of Hisar. As neither the Kyamkhanis nor the Hanswis maintain their historical records we do not come to know about the history of this important Sufi family of north India. One gets to know about them only after reading Niyamat Khan's stories and *Kyamkhan Rasa* that the Sufis were the spiritual leaders of the Kyamkhanis. One finds the mention of the names of prominent Sufis of the family of the Nawabi period on the monuments of the Kyamkhan family. This localised history gets revealed only after searching in Fatehpur and does not find any mention in the Mughal historical narratives.

There is no way to know about much of the history of the Kyamkhanis in the absence of any historical records and the fact that the royal family of the Kyamkhanis did not survive. Nevertheless, the descendants of the Hanswi Sufi family are scattered in the present Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. We can attempt to write the history of Fatehpur branch of the Sufis of Hansi



on the basis of their oral narrative.<sup>197</sup> Some prominent members of the family of Hansi Sufis moved to Bagad on the invitation of the Kyamkhanis. Some went on to live in Jhunjhunu whereas, the others came down to settle in Fatehpur.

The Sufis were given grants in the form of villages to sustain themselves. They have been provided different sources and grants over the period but now they remember the name of only two villages as they do not possess any written document. One of the villages given as the grant was called Thithawata Peeran in which 'Peeran' signifies the fact that it was the village that had been awarded to the peers.



Figure 4.1: The two trees are considered holy as they symbolise the place where the Pirs lived in Thithawta Piran village near Fatehpur.

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<sup>197</sup> Interviews conducted over phone and by meeting them personally on several occasions in Fatehpur. They have maintained their family tree starting from Shaikh Jamaluddin Hanswi to their present generations residing in Fatehpur and Jhunjuhnu.

The villagers still remember the old Sufi residents and have maintained cordial relationship with them till this time. The Sufis had lost this village as grant during the tumultuous period war and succession between the Kyamkhanis and the Jaipur state. They had moved to several locations in the city itself after losing the village grant. The Jaipur state instated their junior partners, the Shekhawats in place of the Kyamkhanis in 1730s. The Sufis were much respected by everybody in the society as the holy men, hence they were treated with reverence by the Shekhawats as well. They were given land at new village near the city of Fatehpur which is still in possession of the family. The piece of land is known as the peer's fields among the people. Some families of Hanswi Sufis stayed with the Jhunjhunu Diwans where they similarly received village grants that continued to be in their possession during Shekhawat's reign as well. The relationship between the Jhunjhunu branch of Kyamkhanis and the Sufis living in Hansi became more profound and deeper as they married their girls to them and even wanted to declare the offspring from that marriage to be the heir apparent of the principality of Jhunjhunu. This claim was however challenged by the other family members of the Diwan who killed the young men on the entrance gate before entering the fort of Jhunjhunu. This feud became one of the prime reason for the rapid decline of the house of the Kyamkhanis in Jhunjhunu.

The Sufis of Hansi were one of the leading families in the vast Sufi network of north India that operated from small villages to cities like Delhi. They had been educated at the paramount centre of education in Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya's dargah at Delhi. They were endorsed by the best teachers available there at Delhi that increased their reputation as scholars and teachers which in turn increased their chances of employability and influence in the society. They used to go to Delhi for education and training but came back to Hansi and maintained their independence. They turned down requests by the Sufis at Delhi to leave Hansi and settle down at Delhi permanently in the manner to continue their long standing tradition of *vilayat* of

Hansi. This helped them to remain powerful and increase their clout independent of Delhi.<sup>198</sup> This strategy helped them remain relevant even during the political upheavals and ever changing situations.

Being highly educated and accomplished in the Islamic rituals and way of life, these Sufis sustained the tradition of the house of Hansi that not only increased their influence but bettered the chances of employability. The Kyamkhanis needed such people in their towns who could teach their children the basics of Islamic philosophy and inculcate the ideal Islamic values in the family. They were required to have experts for performing the essential Islamic rituals such as *namaz*, *namaz-i tarawi*, *khutba*, Eid celebration, performing marriage ceremonies, burial of the dead, *namaz-i janaza* etc. Other than these duties, the Kyamkhanis entrusted the Hanswi Sufis with the important post of Mufti of their principality. They also worked as personal and confidant advisers to the Diwans. The head of the Hanswi family was given a special seat besides the Diwan in the *darbar*.<sup>199</sup> They looked over the religious and administrative works for them. Therefore, as one can see the Sufis were essential in running a town headed by Muslims as they provided the religious sanctity to their rule.

The history of Fatehpur tells that the Sufis were central to the life of Kyamkhani royal family and their relation and affinity got even stronger with the time. Diwan Daulat Khan was the third Diwan of Fatehpur, who was inclined towards mysticism and Sufism to such an extent that he became a disciple of the Mohd. Yusuf Hanswi. Even after becoming the Diwan he used to stay with his *pir* for most part of his day. He is famed to be a true dervish who lived an austere life of a Sufi. He wished to be buried besides his *murshid*'s grave therefore, he was buried next to him in the corner of the Fatehpur fort. A tomb was constructed over his grave

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<sup>198</sup> Jyoti Gulati Balachandran, "Exploring the Elite World in *Siyar al- Awliya*: Urban Elites, their Lineages and Social Networks." *The Economic and Social History Review*, 52, 3, (2015): 257-59.

<sup>199</sup> Khursheed Ahmad Hanswi, personal conversation with the author, 08 April, 2018.

which is known as Dar-i Daulat Khan. The dargah remained popular during the Kyamkhani period where people of every religion and caste came to worship. It was famed to fulfil wishes of the needy people. Naubat was played at the dargah every Friday.



Figure 4.2: Dar-i Daulat Khan Masjid complex in Fatehpur.

Alaf Khan Kyamkhani's tomb also worked as a dargah where people came to pray and worship on Thursdays. Alaf Khan was known as Pir Alaf Khan after death who was famed as the charismatic Sufi pir who fulfilled people's wishes.

Jaan, who was a prince and the celebrated poet of Bagad has shown the reverence towards the Hanswi Sufis by paying homage and eulogising about them in many of his poetic creations. He remembers them through his poetry:



Figure 4.3: Alaf Khan's tomb in Fatehpur.

सेष मुहंमद मेरौ पीरा हांसी ठांव गुननि गंभीरा॥<sup>200</sup>

पीर सैख महमद है चिसता। बदन नूरि भाषतु हौ फिसता।  
रहन ठांव जानहु तिंह हांसी। देखत कटै चिंत की फांसी।।  
नांव धरयो याही तैं हांसी। रुदन हरन दाता सुख हांसी।।  
रिधु सिधु नौ निधु संपूरन। दुख हरबै कौं उन सम मूरन।।  
पीर हरन कौं वैसे पीर ना। पीर हि देहि न सेवक पीर ना।  
क्यौं न होइ पाछै जहिं कुतबा। चहुं कूटर गटति न रुतबा॥<sup>201</sup>

पहिलै कुतब जमाल हैं ; दूसर हैं बुरहाना  
नांव जहि औषद परम ; लये चिंत जुर हाना॥ (1)  
तीसर जानहु नूर दी ; चतुर मनवर हेरा॥  
सभ जग में जिनकी फिरी ; कुतब पनें की रेरा॥ (2)<sup>202</sup>

The poetry of Jaan defines Hansi as a sacred geography where the Kyamkhanis went for pilgrimage. The vilayat of Hansi got extended to Bagad on arrival of the Hanswi Sufi family at Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. The reason to settle the Sufis at Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu was to establish the same sacrality of the Chahar Qutub Hanswis in their towns. The Sufis were organised on the principle of *pir-mureed*<sup>203</sup> as can also be seen in Fatehpur where the Nawabs and other family members treated the Sufis of Hansi as their pir and had profound reverence for them. They replaced the Isht Dev and Kul Devi concept of faith of Hindu Rajputs with their faith in the Sufis of Hansi.

Niyamat Khan, the writer of *Kyamkhan Rasa* had the sole purpose of recording the glorious history of his family and chivalrous deeds of his ancestors to establish the Kyamkhanis

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<sup>200</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Jaan - Granthawali Bhag – 4: Premakhyan Sangrah* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratiishthan, 2005), 132.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Pir is a Persian word that means aged, however, it got popular in India as a religious guru. Whereas, Mureed is also a Persian word which means devotee or the student or follower in the religious sense. Pir-Mureed defines the Sufi tradition of teaching where a student of Islamic mysticism would completely devote himself to the pir or guru. This tradition is one of the fundamental principles of Sufism.

among the superior, choicest old Rajput families having illustrious lineage. He compared their stature with the Rathores, Kachhwahas and Sisodias as they enjoyed the pinnacle of glory and power during the Mughal period whereas the Kyamkhanis were minor partners of the Mughals at best. Therefore, the writer concealed a lot of historical facts that could show the family in bad light; even described hyperbolic versions of small battles and presented wrong information at many places as well. So, it is the imperative of the researcher to study the Rasa with a pinch of salt to gather the actual history of the region. Niyamat Khan gave a complete twist to the incident of capture of Karam Chand at the hands of Imperial forces from Hisar and presented it as the Emperor Firoz Shah casually bumped into him one fine day and requested him to join his services. There is a popular sentiment among the people that these religious conversions during the reign of Firoz Shah were forceful and done with coercion. However, apart from the religious conversion and marriage of Bibi Naila or Kad Bano, the mother of Firoz Shah, these examples does not show any intimidation instead there was a promise of better political prospects that convinced the Rajputs and other important families to convert and join the Delhi administration. If we take example of Bagad and Rajputana at large the penetration of the Islamic ideology was since the at least eleventh century when Shaikh Moinuddin Chishti had established himself at Ajmer. The important towns of Nagaur, Didwana, Khatu, Naraina, Ladnu, Ajmer, Fatehabad, Narhad, Hisar, Hansi, Bhatner, Abohar, Dipalpur, Multan and Delhi were already under the Islamic control wherein popular Sufis Sants had established a network of *Khanqahs* and enjoyed popular support among the masses. It was very well known to the Rajputs that it would be impossible to resist the Turkish forces and Islamic spread so, it was better to join them for a better future. The Persian language and culture had become the new high culture among the elites that naturally attracted the indigenous people to embrace the new religion, culture and political master as well. Most of the regional successor states after the

decline of Tughlaqs were headed by Hindu converts such as the Gujarat and Nagaur Sultanate, Mewat kingdom, Sharqi Empire, Deccan Sultanate etc.

The neo-converted slaves of Firoz Shah had developed a network among themselves and their respective spiritual Sufi leaders that became the base to further their political careers. There is a similarity in the pattern of settling of new cities, towns and small principalities and kingdoms where the Firozi slaves helped each other and with the active support of Sufis expanded into new territories.

Muhammad Khan defeated the Jaud Chauhans somewhere around 1440's after which the Fateh Khan thought of founding his own territory. The weak Delhi Sultanate and the eventful and volatile fifteenth century provided opportunities to those who had organised and trained troops of people at their command. To know why Fateh Khan chose the location of Fatehpur, we have to briefly look at the political situation of Rajputana. There was strong Mewar in the south whereas, the Bhatias were firmly holding position in the West of Rajputana. The Central part was the hotly contested battleground between the Khans of Nagaur, the Gujarat state, the Rathores of Mandor and the Mewar state. Chhapar area was held by powerful Mohil Chauhans whereas their ancestral *thikana* of Dadrewa was already ruled over by another branch of their extended Chauhan family. The only possibility at such a time was moving towards north in Bagad where relatively smaller chieftains were ruling over small pockets of influence. With Jhunjhunu already ruled by the family, it appeared apposite to Fateh Khan to settle down at a virgin land and develop it as his kingdom.

If we look at the location of Fatehpur carefully, it would be clear why the spot was chosen to build a new town. The area is hidden behind sand dunes from all the sides making it invisible from the distance that helps with securing the place from enemies. It was easier and advantageous to build security posts at high points of sand dunes from where entire area could be watched. The villagers of Fatehpur have traditionally used the top of sand dunes as watch



towers for centuries. As the location of Fatehpur was encircled by high sand dunes the rain water gathered around the middle in the bowl shaped natural pond of water.<sup>204</sup> Water is utmost requirement for survival in the Desert therefore it became the prime attraction for choosing it at the site of new town. The underground water was sweet and drinkable due to rain water seepage in the area that made it possible to dig numerous wells at Fatehpur. Due to water availability there were some trees also around the lake that made the place suitable and attractive to build a new town.

Foundation of a new city was big endeavour that needs people of different professions to come together and pool their resources and money. Unlike, Jhunjhunu where Muhammad Khan, who was the second son of Kyamkhan had captured and occupied an old town, Fateh Khan had to start from the scratch. So, he took help from various groups of people to settle the new town in a short period of two years. First of all, large amount of money is required to start the construction of new buildings and creating basic infrastructure of a working town. Fateh Khan as per the tradition of those days asked the Baniyas to invest in the town and settle down there on the assurance of safety and friendly trading terms and conditions. For that Fateh Khan used his old friendly relations with the people of Hisar as Fateh Khan had lived in Hisar in favourable times. He invited wealthy Baniya merchants and traders of Hisar to come to Bagad and help him in building a new town. He successfully persuaded some of the influential and experienced traders of Hisar to join him and invest in the endeavour of building a new town. As the wealthy businessmen were quite prominent citizens of Hisar they commanded respect and influence among the people of all castes and professions, so they convinced other people of Hisar to move with them to the new town. The Bhat records and the collective memory of

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<sup>204</sup> नयो बसायो फतिहपुर, हौ सरवर उद्यान; Niyamat Khan 'Jaan', *Kayam Khan Rasa*, trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Kayamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 64.

the people of Fatehpur insinuates that these prominent businessmen were very active in settling Fatehpur and took extra efforts building the new town.

The fifteenth century witnessed large scale migration of the Baniya community especially out of Hisar and other parts of Haryana to places which were growing in importance such as Gwalior. The Baniyas were part of a pan Indian network who were aware about the emerging markets and business prospects in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, when Fateh Khan planned of founding a town in Bagad, the Jain Baniyas of Hisar had sensed an opportunity to grow their business. It was not uncommon for the Baniyas to give loans to the rulers of Rajputana on interest. Likewise, it seems that the Seths had given monetary assistance to the Kyamkhanis. Though there is no historical account of the trade and business of the Fatehpur, but going by the convention prevalent in those days, it would safe to assume that the Diwans would have offered free land to the merchants and traders. The traders were facilitated to business on friendly terms such as free or negligible tax, free land for the shop, house and agricultural land as well. In addition to that security was provided to the merchant caravans by the Rajputs. The safety and security of the traders was the state's responsibility which was taken very seriously by the ruling men. The town of Fatehpur grew into a sprawling city under the stable rule of the Mughals. Fatehpur became the biggest market and *mandi* which was connected to all the major cities and towns of north India by the trade routes. The city of Fatehpur had become the capital of Bagad in the seventeenth century in every sense of the word. Its influence and prosperity increased rapidly after the Kyamkhanis became the loyal partners of the Mughals and attained Mansabdari rank of 2000. Diwan Alaf Khan onwards, the Kyamkhanis received much of the Bagad as jagir with Fatehpur acknowledged as their ancestral jagir. Hence, Fatehpur attained a special stature in seventeenth century which continued through first half of eighteenth century as well. As with the greater part of Rajputana, Fatehpur also gained prosperity from the strong Mughal rule that had

prevented the Rajputs from warring between each other and stabilising the situation for centuries altogether. Fatehpur had now been the centre of Bagad that attracted people of consequence in Bagad and neighbouring Haryana to move to Fatehpur. The businessmen from Haryana and Bagad bordering areas are believed to have started settling down outside the city walls during seventeenth century as there was no space left inside the walled city. Supposedly, it is believed that by the Baniyas that they had come to Rajputana on the invitation of Fateh Khan Kyamkhani, so their first ancestral home is Hisar and second home is Fatehpur where they had stayed for many centuries thereafter. The Baniyas of Fatehpur consider that the Diwani period was the ideal period for them as a community when they enjoyed prosperity, privileges, security and a close relationship with the ruling family but after the coming of Shekhawats things fell apart quickly. There is a common perception among the Baniya community that most of the families had dispersed into the other parts of Bagad from Fatehpur only. However, there is no substantial historical record about these common perceptions of the Baniya community but they seem to be the collective memory of the community what by and large seem correct. The rulers of newly built towns invited the Baniyas of Fatehpur who further flourished in new places. The Shekhawats of Sikar had antagonistic behaviour with the Baniyas of Fatehpur because they tried to forcefully usurp money from them regularly that upset the community and migrated from Fatehpur in consequence.

The rule of Kyamkhanis had ended in 1740s that was succeeded by the Shekhawats who remained the bhomiya of Fatehpur. The Shekhawats were ruling over the region as the junior partners of Jaipur state. The Shekhawats never showed any interest in governing Fatehpur, instead they founded a number of new small and large towns whose conglomeration is loosely called as the Shekhawati. The glory of Fatehpur waned away with the defeat of the Kyamkhanis to such an extent that it never regained its earlier status. Interestingly, this sentiment is reflected by the old families of Fatehpur irrespective of the caste and creed that

the Kyamkhani were the better rulers. The memories of their families and ancestors are connected to the Diwani period.

The town of Fatehpur was not a secluded place hidden into deep Desert environed by sand dunes only but a lively, well connected towns on the frontier of both Delhi and Rajputana. Interestingly, in the process of foundation, construction and the gradual development of Fatehpur, the linkages and connections of the Kyamkhani Diwans had played a major role. The architectural planning of the fort and walled city of Fatehpur was heavily influenced by the architecture of Hisar-i Firoza. The cities of Hisar, Hansi, Didwana, Khatu and Nagaur must have been the models before them to be followed and replicated in planning of a new town. The Kyamkhanis had social relations in all these places as they had served and lived in all these areas in the past decades. The architect to build the magnificent Baodi of Fatehpur was called from Nagaur.

The Kyamkhanis had some past experience in commissioning construction of forts, tombs, ponds, baodis etc. They had built a tomb of their ancestors in Hansi and Hisar when they were serving directly under the Delhi Sultanate. A pond was also constructed near the Hansi fort which was named as Kyamsar after their progenitor Kyamkhan. They had also experience of building a mud fort in Khatu when serving under the Nagaur Khanzada family. They continued the construction of buildings and monuments even after founding Fatehpur because they had ruled over a vast part of Bagad in the initial years when Rathores had not started annexing their kingdom. At different period of times they had possessed different parts of Bagad as Mughal Jagirdars where they had undertaken construction of forts, mosques, tombs and other public utility buildings. Some of the examples are the forts at Jhunjhunu, Barua, Ked, Daulatpura, Dhosi, Pallu and two mosques at Nagaur. However, their primary area of activities remained Fatehpur where they had constructed ashrams, *Maths*, temples, wells, tombs, palaces, baodis and wells etc.

The construction work started in 1448 A.D. near the natural pond and beed which made it a small oasis in midst of the Desert. The fort was surrounded by dense trees on the one side and high sand dunes on the other making it difficult to attack suddenly. The first phase of the fort was completed in 1451 in which the inner residential palaces and the outer defence wall was constructed by Diwan Fateh Khan. The larger main gate of the fort was added by the second Diwan Jalal Khan who is especially remembered by the people of Fatehpur to have commissioned the famous Fatehpur beed that gave it a unique character in the Rajputana. The fort is 7000 feet long whereas, the breadth was about 3500 feet. The rampart was 25 feet broad and 70 feet high with bastions constructed at all the corners of the fort. The fort was protected by a deep moat that remained filled with water. The entry in the fort was not easy as three gates had to be passed to reach the main residential palaces. The first gate was there on the south which was opened into a large ground. The second gate was larger in size and was built in the eastern side. This gateway was opened into another large ground in which there were stables and army quarters on the right side and palaces on the left. There were four temples, dargah, graves and mosque, wells were present inside the fort. The land on which the fort was built was very hard and even the stones to build the fort were used from the same land.

The palaces inside the fort of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu were famous for their luxury and beauty. The Nau Mahla of the Jhunjhunu and Phool Mahal of Fatehpur were considered as the epitomes of grandeur and luxury. The intricate jali work of the windows of residential rooms was quite artistic and appealing. The fort had baradaris, deewan-i khas and durbar hall as well. Phool Mahal was a three stories palace that was constructed at the time of third Diwan Daulat Khan. Another three storied building was there besides Phool Mahal where a Persian inscription was written on the second floor. The inscription dated back to 1557 A.D.<sup>205</sup> There

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<sup>205</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 101-4.

were many inscriptions available in the fort at various buildings as a reference to the construction year, architect and the reign ruler, but they are all lost to the vagaries of time and carelessness of the owners of the fort. A beautiful Zenana palace was constructed by Nawab Daulat Khan Sher son of Alf Khan in 1605 A.D. during the reign of Emperor Jahangir.<sup>206</sup> Another palace was added to the premise during Diwan Nahar Khan's period. These palaces had beautiful wood work and paintings. Another famous and controversial palace was built during the last Diwan's rule which was known as Teli Mahal. There is a story related to the palace that this palace was especially built for Diwan's lover who belonged to the Teli caste. However, the historicity of this belief is not known.

Seth Tuhinmal Sarawagi belonged to the Jain religion who started building the Jain temple alongside the construction of fort. The Jain temple and the fort are the oldest structures of the town. The construction date of the Fatehpur can be ascertained by two sources, one is by the *chaupai* registered in the *Kyamkhan Rasa* and the other is the inscription of the Digambar Jain temple. The Jain temple has the inscription containing its date of construction and its main builder. The language of the second inscription indicates that this inscription was a later addition. The inscription is following:

1. सम्बत् 1508 मिति फागुण
  2. सुदि 2 साह श्रावक तो
  3. होण देहरा की नीव ढला
  4. ही । सम्बत 1700 मिति फा
  5. गण सुदि 2 भट्टारक श्री खे
  6. म कीर्ति तत् पटे भट्टा
  7. रके श्री देवेन्द्र कीती जो
  8. तत् आमनाय चौधरी रूप
  9. मल तस्य पुत्र चौधरी रूप
  10. चंद का सकल पंच श्रावक ॥
- मील कर देहरा की मरमत कराई ।<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> M.S.Ahluwalia, "Social Importance of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Persian Epigraphy From Rajasthan," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 40 (1979): 1139-144. Accessed July 13, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44142078>.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 106.

श्रावक कुल दयाधारी, धर्मन्त उपकारी हिसार से निकास बास फतेहपुर पाये है।  
 चौधर अरु हुकम जारी, बैठने को अम्बावारी फतहखां नबाब ने सब दरजा बंधायो है।  
 मान मुग्जाद बांधी ..... द्वादश बसना चौरासी पैली इनका खुलाया है।  
 पन्द्रह सौ आठ साल रौपी जैन धर्म प्रतियाल तूनमल श्रावग ने मन्दिर बनवाया है।<sup>208</sup>

Niyamat Khan Jaan has noted the foundation day of Fatehpur in following words:

पंदरहसै जु अठौतरै, बस्यो फतहपुर बासा।  
 सुद पांचे तिथ ही तबहिं, और चैतकौ मासा॥

संन सत्तावन आठसै, अजमै करयो प्रकासा।  
 माह सफर दिन बीसवै, बस्यो फतहपुर बासा॥

कोट चिन्यो नीकै नखित, सुधिर क रयो करतारा।  
 आस पासके भोमियां, आवहि करन जुहारा॥<sup>209</sup>

Bagad was on the frontier of big cities like Delhi, Hansi and Hisar where the merchants and traders lived in large numbers. The Vaishyas mostly believed in Jainism and were involved in construction, repair of temples and public welfare structures to propagate their religion. All the old towns of Bagad had Jain temples and *Badis* that had attracted the looters and invaders at various points of time in history. The Jain sources of early medieval period has records of these grand Jain temples of Bagad that had ashtdhatu statues, precious jewels and gold work. The Jain monks, Shravaks, updeshtaks, yatis regularly visited the towns of Kanina, Narhad, Nua, Khatu and Jhunjhunu etc. for the propagation and organising Jainism. Khartargachh branch of Jainism was already popular in Bagad since at least 12<sup>th</sup> century as per the Jain

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<sup>208</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 105.

<sup>209</sup> Niyamat Khan 'Jaan', *Kayam Khan Rasa*, trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Kayamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 63.

sources.<sup>210</sup> The wealthy Jain merchants established Jainism in Fatehpur from the very initial year of its foundation.

The town was protected by a wall and four gates. The eastern gate was called as Ugniya darwaza, Bawadi darwaza on the south, Aathuna darwaza on the west and Churu<sup>211</sup> Darwaza on the northern side of the town. The old population of the town is settled into different *baas* according to people's profession and castes.

Fatehpur in the present days is known for its lavish havelis and mansions of the British period that are known for the beautiful fresco paintings drawn over the walls of them. It is popularly believed that these mansions came into being during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the important thing to note here is that Fatehpur was the first city to have started making the famed coloured fresco paintings and grand mansions during the Mughal period only. Limestone is found in abundance in the soil around Fatehpur which was used as a constructing material in Fatehpur which is a prerequisite to make the wall smooth enough to draw beautiful fresco paintings. Limestone was used in the old mansions and fort of Fatehpur where the first example of fresco paintings could be seen. The land where limestone can be found is easily identified by the white colour of the soil. Fatehpur town was settled over a site where hard stone and white soil was present in abundance that was used to make the earliest structures of the town such as fort and temples. As the Fatehpur was the prime and oldest city among the later mushroomed cities and towns of Shekhawati, the trend has been already set by Fatehpur that was followed by the other places.

The fort of Fatehpur is considered as the grandest in Shekhawati and second to only Bhatner in the Bagad region.

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<sup>210</sup> Vinaysagar Mahopadhyay, *Khartargachh ka Brihad Itihas*, ed. Bhanwarlal Nahta (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharati Academy, 2005), 272-3.

<sup>211</sup> The name of this gate suggests that its original name would have been something else that had changed to Churu gate in the later years.



The towns, villages and cities are always known and named after the ruler of that particular place but it is the collective effort of different groups of people who partake keenly in building the place. The role of common people and communities are never registered in the official histories of the rulers, so the sole credit of founding a city is given to the ruler. However, Fatehpur demonstrates a different example where people still remember it as a collective effort of the oldest families of Fatehpur along with the Kyamkhani Rajputs and display a sense of belongingness to the place. The descendants of earliest settlers iterate that their forefathers had enjoyed great reputation and friendly relations with the Kyamkhani rulers. The pleasant behaviour and cooperation of the Kyamkhanis was exemplary in the sense that they never felt the discrimination on the religious basis under the Islamic rulers. Therefore, it should be noted here that however the religion of the rulers of Bagad was Islam but it was not the Islamic rule.

The Bhat records of Didwana notes that the prominent people of various castes and groups had come with Fateh Khan at village Rinau with the objective of building a new town of opportunities. The names are Seth Tuhinmal Sarawagi represented the Baniyas, Khemraj Chaudhary of Jat community, Bhotanmal Purohit (priest), Ishwardas Bhojak of the Brahmins, Bastiram Khedwal, Daul and Maal from the Mali community.<sup>212</sup> These records have name of a limited number of people amongst the people who had come but it shows the spectrum of diverse communities, professionals and castes that came together in founding a new town. It gives a fair idea about the prerequisite services and requirements to run a town smoothly. The Baniyas as we would see shortly invested in building the town whereas the priests took upon the charge of not only religious duties but worked as teachers and scribes for state and general public as well. The farmer were the backbone of the rural economy in the sandy Desert who provided grains and dairy products for the town people. The Malis or gardeners of Fatehpur

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<sup>212</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 30.

cultivated vegetables for the townsfolk from the various wells present in the city. All the people had their role in running the town effectively.

The retinue of Fateh Khan stayed at village Rinau<sup>213</sup> for two years while the construction of fort, houses and temples were taking place. There is a story popular among the people about the numinous yogi Baba Gangnath and the construction of Fatehpur fort. According to the anecdote the masons were constructing the wall of the fort on a sand dune where a Nath yogi was sitting in front of fire (*dhuna*) performing religious ritual. The soldiers of Fateh Khan objected to his presence and asked him to move away from the area. The Nath replied that build the wall of fort some distance away from me as the walls of forts are often zigzag. But the soldiers did not listen and the Nath also did not budged from his place. At last, on the repeated insistence of the soldiers, the yogi reluctantly lifted the fire in his clothes and went away. The soldiers got impressed and afraid from the divine powers of the Yogi told about the Nath yogi's incident to Fateh Khan. Fateh Khan immediately rushed in the search of Yogi and found him soon. Fateh Khan prayed to him to come back to Fatehpur and bless him by staying at the place like earlier. The Nath yogi whose name was Ganganath showed mercy and forgave him. Fateh Khan asked for his blessings and cooperation in building Fatehpur and promised him to make an ashram for him and his disciple yogis. He fulfilled his promise and constructed an ashram for Ganganath where a long continuous chain of Nathpanth tradition prospered under the state protection. The ashram yogis enjoyed special status under the Kyamkhanis who not only built an ashram for them but granted villages for the maintenance of the *Math*. The disciples of Ganganath yogi, Sevanath and Sarnath also became famous in the region. The Kyamkhanis time to time maintained the *Math* and added buildings, wells etc. The Diwans constructed *samadhis* (tomb) for the Nath *gaddi nasheen* or the leader of the

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<sup>213</sup> The village of Rinau is situated about 15 km away from Fatehpur.

monastery (*Math*). The *chhatri* or tomb of Sevanath Yogi is an example of this long standing relationship between the ruling dispensation and the religious sect. The *chhatri* of Sevanath is octagonal wherein Persian inscription dating 1549 is inscribed. The organic link with the Nathpanth remained lively as the Hindu Rajput wives of the Kyamkhani Diwans remained committed to the Nath yogis as well. During the period of Diwan Sardar Khan, his wife Rathodi ji constructed a well for the monastery in 1566 A.D.<sup>214</sup> A bilingual inscription of Persian and Sanskrit is still extant on the well in the monastery. The simultaneous use of Sanskrit and Persian tell scores about the multilingual, plural and cosmopolitan nature of the Kyamkhani rule and Fatehpur's diverse traditions and demography.

To understand the relationship between the Kyamkhani Muslim rulers and the Nathas, it is important to look at the wider trends prevalent in the fifteenth century north India. First of all, the Nathas were a loose organisation in which all kinds of Aughads, Awdhoot, wandering mendicants and *pirs* were attached to it. Nathpanth and Sufi *pirs* were coming closer at that time where they were exchanging ideas and learning from each other. The line between Sufis and Nathas was not very defined and clear instead there was fair amount of intermixing between them. The examples of Haji Ratan Nath *pir* and Abdul Quddus Gangohi, the writer of *Rushdnama* are a testimony to that. In fact, the Nathas still use the term *pir* for themselves in day to day life. Another fine example of the intermixing of the ideas is of Rana Guga Chauhan himself. The tradition of Guga has that Guga got birth due the blessings of Guru Gorakhnath himself and he was a disciple of Guru Gorakhnath. But some versions say that he had become Muslim before attaining death. He is popular among both Hindus and Muslims who equally worship him as Zawahir *pir*. He was buried at Guga Medhi, Hanumangarh where his grave is worshipped by his Hindu and Muslim followers alike. The Kyamkhanis were the direct

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<sup>214</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 129.

descendants of folk deity Guga who inherited that syncretic tradition and by considering all these facts the conversion of Chauhans to Islam does not look like a drastic step but it appears to be quite normal.

The anecdote of the Ganganath and Diwan Fateh Khan signifies another very important aspect of that period. The period saw the decline of strong Delhi Sultanate whereas a number of small and large independent successor states mushroomed in its place. The early years of these states lacked the resources and organised structure to maintain a large standing army that gave way to hiring mercenaries, small groups of armed men and contingents on a temporary basis. The success depended on the better management in hiring and siding the better troops with themselves. In such a period the organised bands of religious sects and spiritual groups came in handy for the warring factions who could hire them and use their capabilities at the time of war. The religious *akhadas* trained their sadhus for spiritual as well as military purposes. This tradition of hiring *akhadas* of sadhus for military campaigns was continued till the British period in Rajputana and north India. Therefore, the anecdote of Fateh Khan Kyamkhani and the siddha Ganganath symbolises this pact of cooperation and service with each other. Once, Rao Bida, the younger brother of Rao Bika attacked Fatehpur in absence of Diwan Fateh Khan who had gone to Chittor. The newly founded principality of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu were unable to defend themselves from the mightier enemies like the Rathores, so they accepted the suzerainty of Rana Kumbha of Mewar. The Rathores on the other hand were waging war against the Mewar state on one hand and expanding their rule in the northern Rajputana. Therefore, to punish the small partners of the Mewar state, Rao Bida Rathore attacked Fatehpur. In such an emergency situation the Nath forces of Fatehpur took position in defending the fort town of Fatehpur and fought so valiantly that it got registered in the folklore of the region for centuries to come. This example clearly demonstrates that the Nathpanthis of Fatehpur were not only spiritual guides but professional mercenaries working for the

Kyamhanis. As the Nathpanthis were involved in making of the Fatehpur from the beginning, having their base there, they had stake in Fatehpur's peace and prosperity. Bagad was a stronghold of Nathpanth from since at least tenth century as old deras, *Maths*, monasteries and religious sites belonging to Nathpanthis existed in the region. Ganganath was not an ordinary Nath yogi who just bumped into Fateh Khan by chance but a prominent Nath of Bagad who belonged to the famous and important seat of Nathpanthis situated in village Tain of Jhunjhunu district. It is clear that the Fateh Khan had approached the locally powerful Naths to assist him in setting up a new town. It is possible that the Naths had used their influence in the area to mobilise people in building and settling down in the town and nearby villages. The Nath yogis were provided with a new *Math* in the town and a *sasan* grant for the *Math* in return for the favour. This shows that founding a town in middle of Desert required effort and energy from various people, groups and forces.

The second Diwan of Fatehpur, Jalal Khan started the procedure to settle new villages and organise and develop the territory in such a manner that it become resource rich and revenue generating. As the *Kyamkhan Rasa* tell that the Fatehpur was founded at a green oasis Jalal Khan undertook the task of plantation at a large scale in view of making it a resource rich area with trees and pastures. The same exercise was undertaken at Jhunjhunu as well insinuating that the Kyamkhanis planned it deliberately to change the face of region from Desert to a green area full of pasture and foliage. The *beed* of Fatehpur has different kinds of trees in different portions that helped in sustaining the population who could use and exchange the fruits and products of the trees with each other. The planned plantation of the *beed* proved to be a profitable step because it prepared a valuable asset for the people who could use the pastures, fruits, timber, fodder and other products to sustain in the Desert. It had created an ecological and economical basis for the local population that proved to be beneficial for them for centuries. The agro-pastoralists of the villages produced dairy products and grains for their

own consumption and selling it off in the town where townsfolk could buy the products. The town Fatehpur served the hinterland economy as well. The Diwans followed the age old practice of Rajputana to settle down people in their territory by settling new villages and offering friendly help and aid to the migrant people. The Kyamkhani family distributed these villages into their own large extended family members so that they could also find ways to survive and live. This way, the Fatehpur had wealthy merchants who brought in funds to rise the buildings of the town and set up a market that could serve the people's daily needs. Fatehpur had the powerful religious groups like Naths, Brahmans and Sufis who supported the state building project by instilling confidence in the populace for the ruler and his deeds. Various caste and professional groups came together at the newly settled place and channelized their energies and efforts. Thus, the Kyamkhanis had gradually developed their territory into a lively principality with its own economic basis, a bustling town and populous villages. The Kyamkhanis ruled over large expanse of land until the rise of Rathores from the Marwar who gradually annexed much of the northern parganas of Bagad.

The rich and affluent people of Fatehpur constructed their own temples, ashrams, monasteries respectively. However, there was no Hindu temple in the town other than perhaps the temples of the fort which were exclusively built for the royal queens and family. There is a story as to how this temple came into being which is also written on the walls of the temple. According to the legend, statues of God Laxminarayan and Bhairon were buried under the house of a Muslim named Muhammad Ali Khan in Hyderabad's (Pakistan) Alor village. They came out of the ground on their own in 1472 A.D. to Muhammad Ali Khan's wonder. A devotee named Gauri Datt Bhojak came to know about the miraculous statues of God Laxminarayan and Bhairon which were situated in the Muslim's house. Gauri Datt requested Muhammad Ali Khan and took away the statues with him. Gauri Datt Bhojak was passing through the Bagad region in search of employment and reached village Mandela, which is

situated closer to Fatehpur. He installed the God Bhairon's statue at the temple of Mandela village whereas, when he came to Fatehpur the bullock cart carrying the statue stopped and did not move at all. Gauri Datt Bhojak understood it as the God's will that God wants to stay at Fatehpur only.<sup>215</sup> So, this way God Laxminarayan came to Fatehpur in 1531 A.D. However, the statue was installed by the Agarwal Baniyas near their houses in 1564 A.D. Then, the reigning Diwan of Fatehpur, Nahar Khan had given a big amount for the construction of the temple whereas, Diwan Daulat Khan II had given 125 bigha agricultural land belonging to Khalsa as *sasan* grant to the temple.<sup>216</sup>

शंख चक्र शोभित गदा, लिये कर कमल विशाल  
 वाम रमा वाहन गरुड, प्रगटे दीन दयाल  
 पन्द्रह सौ गुणतीस में, धराफाड़ निकलन्त  
 शहर अलोक पठार घर, बहु दिन बास करन्त।  
 गोरू भोजक विप्रकुल, सुनत गये तिहि दौर  
 श्रीपति करुणा सिंधु को, ले आये यहि ठौर  
 पन्द्रह सौ अठ्यासियां, करी प्रभुने महर  
 लक्ष्मीनाथ पधारिया, फतनापुर में शहर।<sup>217</sup>

Given, the history of Rajputana and Fatehpur, it is difficult to believe the story as it is because there could be several logical reasons behind it. The story of the statue coming out of the Earth on its own and the bullock cart's inability to move further is a very common story behind establishment of several temples of Rajputana and central India. Such a story is used to create a miraculous and divine intervention to attract the attention of the people. This trope was used in medieval India commonly to increase the temple's reputation and fame. Another point to be remembered is that the pujari of the temple belongs to the Khedwal family whereas, the

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<sup>215</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 130.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-32.

man who brought the statue belonged to the Bhojak family. These two families of Brahmans feature in the selected men of importance who had come to Fatehpur on Fateh Khan's invitation. It is strange that a temple of such importance belonging to the Vaishnav branch of the Sagun Bhakti was established after more than one hundred years of the Fatehpur's formation whereas, temples belonging to all other major religions were built during the initial years of its foundation. Fatehpur was a famous centre of Nirgun ideology which dominated the narrative in the town and surrounding areas with some patronage from the Diwan themselves. So, it seems that the Brahmans representing the Sagun Vaishnav Bhakti stream tried to place their ideology powerfully by building a temple of God Laxminarayan and defending their faith from various strands of Nirgun Bhaktas. Another obvious reason could be the economic and social benefit the temple could provide to the Brahmanas of the town. The temple afterwards became the centre point of struggle and contention between the people believing in the competing Nirgun and Sagun Bhakti.

### **Fatehpur Manuscripts**

Fatehpur had been established as a spiritual and religious centre of Bagad in the sixteenth century. Fatehpur is famous among the scholars of religion because of its reputation as being the producer of manuscripts of immense historical value. These manuscripts are known as the 'Fatehpur Manuscripts' which date from as early as 1582 A.D. to twentieth century containing subjects ranging from spirituality, religion, astronomy, literature, Ayurveda, magic, Sufism, history, *vrat katha*, medicine, translation, commentary, hagiography etc. The most unique and outstanding thing about these Fatehpur manuscripts are that they are among the oldest and most authentic manuscripts containing the poetry of the Bhakt Sants in entire India. The Fatehpur manuscripts form the basis of numerous studies and researches on the



Sants like Kabir, Surdas, Meera, Raidas etc. A number of manuscripts written and copied in Fatehpur have been found in libraries of the royals and elites of Rajputana dating back to sixteenth and early seventeenth century making them the one of the oldest manuscripts in India.

The most renowned manuscript of Fatehpur is known as the '*Pad Surdas Ji Ka*,<sup>218</sup> which was published by Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum due to its immense popularity and value among the scholars of the world. The Sants did not write these *pads* by themselves in all probability, but the followers of the Sants by hearted these creations to sing and pray during *satsangs*. These poetry were sung by the wandering sadhus, yogis, Naths who disseminated their message to every part of India. The poetry was based on ragas and *raginis* making it easier for the people to sing and remember thus making its reach wider and the access easier for the common people. Some people used to note down these *pads* to record it properly instead of memorising these poetries. Once, the poetry was written, scribes and copyists made more such copies to circulate the text among other interested people. The copying and distribution was done by both professional scribes who charged for the copying and by Sants, sadhus and yogis of various beliefs for their personal reading and distributing the texts among themselves. Most of such poetry was done in Braj language which worked as a lingua franca for poetry among the very linguistically diverse people of India. The poetry while travelling around from place to place kept changing and adjusting according to local language and dialects of the specific regions. As there was lack of standardisation of language and script in those times, the poetry got moulded into different local linguistic cultures. That is the reason why the western cannon of Kabir's *pads* and the eastern *Bijak* are so different than each other in language and even *pads*.

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<sup>218</sup> Gopal Narayan Bahura, ed., *Pad Surdas Ji Ka* (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, 1982)

Most of the popular Sants belonged to the fifteenth and sixteenth century who left a legacy of their ideas and thoughts in form of songs and *bhajans* sung and read by people in all of India. However, most of the poetry of the bhakts found were written and copied down in eighteenth and nineteenth century. There was major differences in regards to the form, language, vocabulary and content of the manuscripts discovered from different parts of the country. The western tradition of the cannons had Rajasthani flavour to it whereas, the eastern tradition had more of Awadhi and eastern dialects' effect. Therefore, it became increasingly difficult to find out the original verses, hymns from the plethora of manuscripts. It is however, very difficult to say with surety and definitive certainty which are the authentic verses and which are not. There is debate among the scholars regarding the question of determining the originality. One of the accepted approach has been the carefully reading, matching, eliminating different versions of the available manuscripts according to their time of creation and thus fixing their originality index. This approach has been quite popular among the western scholars especially Winand Callewaert who has worked profoundly on the Sant tradition of India. On the other hand, scholars like Purushottam Agarwal has criticised this approach of selecting and delineating some as more closer to the original and others as fakes or less important than others. His understanding about the matter is that one should accept those verses as originals whose spirit of poetry and argument are in line with the poet's overall ideology.<sup>219</sup>

The Fatehpur manuscript titled as *Pad Surdas Ji Ka* has been part of the *Pothikhana* of the Jaipur state. It was the library of the rulers where valuable books and texts were collected and carefully kept. The said manuscript had been present there in the *Pothikhana* for over three centuries before it was discovered again in 1971.<sup>220</sup> The manuscript has the *Khasmohar* or the

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<sup>219</sup> Purushottam Agarwal, *Akath Kahani Prem Ki: Kabir ki Kavita aur Unka Samay* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2016), 205-9.

<sup>220</sup> Gopal Narayan Bahura, ed., Introduction to *Pad Surdas Ji Ka* (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, 1982), ii.

royal seal imprint on it with the issuance date of 04.04.1944. The manuscript has “163 fol; size 18×16 cms; paper local: lines to a page 12; letters per line 20; date 1639 V.S. (1582 A.D.), written by Ramdas Ratna at Fatehpur for Chitarji, Kunwar of Rajsri Nahardasji.”<sup>221</sup>

The last page of the manuscript has the seal marked in red colour with the name of Maharaj Kumar Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh. The seal has a lion drawn on it with the year of the seal is marked as 1718 Vikram Samvat or 1661 A.D.<sup>222</sup>

The manuscript has 37 Sants' *pads* compiled including Kabir, Raidas, Surdas and Namdev. Scholars has estimated that this particular manuscript is a compilation of three other manuscripts which are older than this. It is divided into three parts wherein the writer of the first two parts have not been mentioned. This signifies the fact that it was part of the tradition of writing and copying manuscripts that was taking place in Fatehpur at a larger level. This particular text was based on older manuscripts makes it even more important as the scholars have suggested that those older manuscripts were in all probability produced during the lifetime of many of the Sants whose verses are written in the Fatehpur manuscript. Even, the Fatehpur manuscript's date of 1582 A.D. could be counted as ben written during the Sants' lifetime. This gives a fair idea of the popular *pads* of these Sants during their lifetime or during the time very near to their demise.

The royals named in the colophon of the manuscript have been identified as the member of Shekhawat clan who had occupied a part of Fatehpur *patti* during the Badshah Akbar's time. It is well known that Emperor Akbar had given much importance to the Kachhawahas of Amber by marrying their daughter, creating a matrimonial cum political alliance and bestowing *Mansabdaris* and governorships on them. Before the arrival of Mughals, Kachhawahas are not even mentioned in any of the important texts and sources of Rajputana and Persian alike. So,

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

कछुसोत्रावैसबसोदि॥३॥ ॥३॥ ॥

संबत १६३९ वर्षे ज्येष्ठमासे शुक्लपक्षे  
 द्वादश्यां तिथौ रविवासरे घटी  
 विसाषानक्षत्रे पातिसाहस्रीत्रकब्र  
 राजपेफते पुरमध्ये पोथी लिषी ॥ राज  
 श्रीनरहरिदासजी तस्य पुत्रकु श्रीची  
 तरजीपठनार्थं ॥ ॥ शुभं च वत्तु ॥ ॥ लेष  
 कयाठकयोश्च मस्तु ॥ ॥ लिषते राम  
 दासरतना ॥ ॥ ३ ॥ ॥ ३ ॥ ॥ ३ ॥



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Figure 4.4 Colophon of the last page of the Pad Surdasji Ka manuscript.

there is a possibility that the Shekhawats who belonged to the larger Kachhawaha clan got the Fatehpur *patti* from the Kachhawahas during Akbar's time. Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' has mentioned in *Kyamkhan Rasa* that the Shekhawats made an alliance with the Pathans of Narhad and attacked the Chauhans. Diwan Daulat Khan however, ousted them from his areas

forcefully.<sup>223</sup> He has mentioned the names of Madho and Narhar Kachhawahas and Nahar Khan Pathan of Narhad. This description must be of the same Narhari Das mentioned in the Fatehpur manuscript. It is seems that after this capture of some areas of Fatehpur by the Kachhawahas, the Kyamkhanis approached the Mughals and formally joined their services as low rank Mansabdars.

K.E. Bryant has defined the importance of Fatehpur manuscripts in following words:

“The Fatehpur manuscript is, in short, an extraordinarily important document for a number of reasons; first, for providing us with the oldest collection of Sur’ poetry in existence; second, for contributing to the task of reconstructing the history of the Sur-tradition as a whole; and third, for displaying a miniature cross-section of the work of Hindi poets popular in the sixteenth century.”<sup>224</sup>

Most of the manuscripts produced in the medieval and early modern period are now lost forever because of the neglect of the town in general during the Shekhawat period when the town saw decline in practically every field. Fatehpur ceased to be the capital city of Bagad after the defeat of Kyamkhanis as the new royalty never lived in the town taking away the money and resources of Fatehpur and invested that in founding new towns and cities at its cost. The Shekhawats who were a subsidiary branch of the Kachhawahas of Jaipur adopted the Vaishnava Sagun Bhakti as the state religion in an imitation of the Kachhawahas. Fatehpur had always been the centre of Nirgun Bhakti that had challenged the propaganda of the Vaishnavites for centuries as there was conducive atmosphere as well as the active patronage from the Kyamkhani rulers. The scribes who copied all types of texts stopped getting work gradually in absence of patronage and deterioration of the city as whole.

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<sup>223</sup> Niyamat Khan ‘Jaan’, *Kayam Khan Rasa*, 125.

<sup>224</sup> K.E. Bryant, “The Manuscript Tradition of The Sursagar: The Fatehpur Manuscript in Gopal Narayan Bahura”, ed., *Pad Surdas Ji Ka* (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, 1982), xvii.

The Fatehpur manuscript is also the oldest manuscript containing Kabir's sabads. It is however, easily accepted that Kabir had become fairly popular in all India. According to most of the scholars, Kabir died in 1518 A.D. but within fifty years afterwards his poems had travelled all around from Rajputana to Punjab where the Sikhs had compiled his *dohas* into the Goindwal *pothi* and later into Adi Granth. Fatehpur manuscript has been called as the part of the first wave of the flood of manuscripts containing Kabir's popular poetry by John Stratton Hawley. He has also mentioned that Banaras was the centre of education, pilgrimage and business therefore, it helped the voices of Kabir, Tulsidas and Raidas to reach far and wide into the hinterlands of Rajputana and Punjab.<sup>225</sup> Our research on Fatehpur tells the exact process through which the popular voices of Kabir and Raidas had reached Fatehpur. It is important to note here that not only does Kabir's popularity had reached to Bagad, but Bagad's popularity had also reached to Banaras and Kabir himself. There was a strong connection and tradition of sending the children of elites especially from the Brahman and Baniya community to study in Banaras. Due to the lack of major education centre teaching the classic Sanskrit and religious studies near Bagad, the people of Bagad thought it to be better to send their children directly to Banaras. Those Bagadi students from Fatehpur must have met Kabir at Banaras and interacted with him. It is also possible that the wave of Nirgun Bhakti was thus directly emitting from Banaras was reaching Fatehpur. It explains the reason why Fatehpur had become the centre of Nirgun Bhakti in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This could be a strong reason why Sant Sundardas chose Fatehpur to settle down after completing his studies at Banaras. He must have stayed with other students from Fatehpur at Banaras. We know for a fact that Kabir did not travel to Bagad but still wrote a sabad using Bagad as the metaphor for *prithvi lok*, a denigrated place on Earth which is the living hell in all respects. Kabir explained

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<sup>225</sup> John Stratton Hawley, *Bhakti ke Teen Swar: Meeran, Sur, Kabir*. trans., Ashok Kumar (New Delhi: Rajkamal, 2019), 187.

that scorching heat, plentiful sand and dearth of water made it a difficult place to live. Kabir has not written much about the geographical places far from his home in Banaras, but he has surely written about Bagad,<sup>226</sup> which proves in a way that Bagadi students and people from Fatehpur flocked Banaras regularly for the purpose of education and pilgrimage where they came into contact with Kabir. Winand M. Callewaert has worked extensively on the Bhakt Sants of medieval India. The sole purpose of his book *The Millennium Kabir Vani: A Collection of Pad-s* is to find and compile the most authentic *pads* of Kabir in one book. Winand Callewaert has followed a very stringent and conservative process to select these *pads*. The *sabad* compiled in raga Gaudi 'Bagad Des Loovan ka Ghar hai' has featured among the most authentic *pads* of Kabir leaving no doubt about the interaction of Kabir and the people of Bagad.

बागड देस लुवन का घर है ।

मत कोउ जाहु दाइन का डर है ॥ टेक ॥

1. न तहा कोकिला न तहा सूवा । उंचै चढि चढि हंसा मूवा ॥
2. न तहा हंस सरोवर पांनी । न तहा साधू सतगुर बांनी ॥
3. सब जगु काईर नही कोई धीर । सिर पै धूर नर कहै अबीर ॥
4. देस माल वो गहर गंभीर । डग डग रोटी पग पग नीर ॥
5. कहै कबीर मैं सबद समानां । गूगे का गुर गूगे भल जानां ॥<sup>227</sup>

It is quite amazing to know that the Fatehpur manuscript was also the first ever evidence of written *pads* of Sant Raidas. The manuscript is invaluable in the richness of its content that covers the most important Sants' poetry. Winand M. Callewaert while describing about the special features of the Fatehpur manuscript has opined that

“This is the earliest manuscript with the *pads* attributed to 'Ravidas' and the only known non-sectarian manuscript dating from before AD 1600 which contains *pads* attributed to 'Raidas'. Because it was

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<sup>226</sup> Winand M. Callewaert, Swapna Sharma and Dieter Taillieu, *The Millennium Kabir Vani: A Collection of Pad-s* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 208-9.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

based on three earlier manuscripts, it is legitimate to regard it as a representative of the non-sectarian textual tradition which was active in Rajasthan from at least as early as the mid sixteenth century.<sup>228</sup>

Mulla Daud's Chandayan has been a popular literary text often dubbed as the first Sufi romance written in the genre of literature widely known as Premakhyān. The second oldest manuscript of Chandayan has been written and copied in Fatehpur by a scribe for his clients in Bikaner. The colophon of the manuscript has 1616 A.D. as the date of completion of the text. The manuscript was written in Fatehpur by Durga Gaur, son of maharasiya Amru Gaur in the reign of Sri Alaf Khan. It was written especially for reading of Mahiraj Voswal Maharaja Rai Singh's son, Sur who resided in Bikaner.<sup>229</sup> This particular manuscript has been stored and preserved in the famous Anup Sanskrit Library of Lal Garh, Bikaner which belongs to the royal family of Bikaner and contains the rarest and invaluable collection of manuscripts. It is clear that Fatehpur had been a famous place for copying and writing of texts in medieval period where a number of scribes mostly belonging to the Brahman caste lived. The clients from all Rajputana availed their services for copying of texts of various nature ranging from literature to spiritual poetry. The manuscripts of Fatehpur was circulated in all of Rajputana where they were further copied and circulated. Many Manuscripts which were originally written and produced in Fatehpur had ended up in cities like Jodhpur, Bikaner, Didwana and Jaipur. The manuscripts that were preserved in the well maintained libraries and personal collections of noblemen could survive the vagaries of time whereas, most of them had perished unfortunately.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Winand M. Callewaert and Peter G. Friedlander, *The Life and Works of Raidas* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1992), 38.

<sup>229</sup> Mataprasad Gupt, *Chandayan: Daud Virachit Pratham Hindi Sufi Prem –Kavya* (Agra: Pramanik Prakashan, 1967), 53.

<sup>230</sup> Many of the manuscripts had been collected in the famous Saraswati Library of Fatehpur, but unfortunately a local writer (name not mentioned here intentionally) took all the manuscripts to his home. He kept those in his personal custody and did not let anybody consult those. The exact number of the manuscripts are not known but people say that they were at least one room full, hence they occupied a large space of the



Fatehpur produced intellectuals and litterateurs who were deeply religious and spiritual in nature. Literacy was the prerogative which a small section of society could afford and indulge in. the structure of society was designed in such a way that the powerful tool of literacy was monopoly of the dominant castes and communities which included Brahmana, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Charans, Rajputs, Syeds etc. It was same in Fatehpur as well wherein most of the writers of the literature belonged to Brahman, Baniya and Rajput castes. But, what makes Fatehpur different is that most of the literature produced was of religious nature and even the secular literature was also preceded by long praise for the God. Comparing that to other secular literature such as history texts written in medieval Rajputana for instance large collection of *Khyat* and *Vaat* genres of literature are devoid of any overtly religious underpinnings. Whereas, literature like *Kyamkhan Rasa* many literary story narrations by Niyamat Khan ‘Jaan’ are full of religious laudation. One of the possible reasons behind this could be that *Kyamkhan Rasa* was specially written to assert the separate religious identity of the Kyamkhanis Rajputs whereas, the *premakhyans* were the texts to disseminate the Sufi ideology by way of interesting stories. However, the *premakhyans* of Jaan does not appear remotely to be the texts with hidden Sufi tropes. The stories are completely secular in nature where no divine intervention or Godly supernatural powers were involved in effecting the storyline. The other renowned intellectuals and litterateurs of Fatehpur were Sant Sundardas Fatehpuria, Bhikhjan, Pragdas Biyani. Other literature that was copied and circulated to different parts of Rajputana was also religious anthologies and treatise. Hundreds of religious *bhajans*, *sabads*, and *pads* of the Bhakti Sants were popular among the masses. The people learned the bhajans at *satsang* gatherings in many *Maths*, ashrams and temples of Fatehpur. Overall, it gives an impression that the society was deeply religious and spiritual including the elites and noblemen.

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writer’s home. Therefore, just after the death of the writer, his family sold all the manuscripts to the local *raddi* vendor to clear up the space.

However, it is also worthwhile to note that Fatehpur was also a centre of Bagadi culture where *phag*, *nautanki*, *khyal*, festive songs etc. were very popular among the people of Bagad. This folk literature and folk theatre of Fatehpur was very popular among the masses which in later period disseminated to other towns of Bagad as well. The folk culture was much more than just religious themes.

Most of the big centres of Bhakti Sants were the towns and cities with significant business activity. These ashrams, *Maths* and *deras* were placed on the main trading routes of North India that were well connected with the rest of the India. These big and small towns and cities, naturally had significant presence of the Baniya community. The Baniyas were a mobile community who did not hesitate in migrating from place to another in search of better business prospects. The early migration of fifteenth century from Hisar, Rohtak, Maham, Agroha, Sthaneshwar and Hansi of the Baniyas to various parts of Rajputana, Malwa, Kannauj and central India resulted in the creation of a network of pan north Indian trading routes that got further developed during the Mughal period. These Baniyas were educated and well off people who mostly belonged to Jainism but the rising wave of Vaishnavism and Nirgun Bhakti attracted this community in large numbers. They adopted the Bhakti ideology enthusiastically and helped the different sects of Bhakti in growing and reaching to various parts of the country.

Jainism had an elaborate structure and network of temples, pilgrimages and a strong concept of religious journeys called *sangh yatras* wherein the Jains of a place mobilised the people together in the form of *sanghs* who would then go on to famous pilgrimage centres of Jains. These *sanghs* were a regular feature of Jain religion practice and propagation who set out to far off places using the vast networks amongst the Jains. The Jain monks, *yatis* and *sadhus* regularly went to villages and towns to give sermon and organise the Jain religion in a better manner. The same module was followed by the Bhakti Sants and *sadhus* who went on for long journeys visiting ashrams, *Maths*, *deras* situated in various parts of India. The Baniyas

who came in influence of the Bhakti ideology patronised the bhakti movement in same manner as the Jainism. They donated money for building new ashrams, temples, *Maths* and invited important Sants to their cities for delivering sermons and recruiting new entrants in their sects. Fatehpur being an important town on the frontier of Delhi and Marwad was in middle of the ongoing historical processes and could not remain aloof as it was well connected in the network religion, traders and state power itself. It was situated in the area of heavy influence of Nathpanth and Jainism whereas, the Kyamkhanis brought in the Islam along with them with the help of Sufis of Hansi and Nagaur. Narayana, which is not far away from Fatehpur, had become the centre of Dadupanth as Sant Dadu lived their along with his famed Sant disciples. Therefore, Fatehpur also came in contact of the Dadupanthis along with other small panths of varying hues.

### **Fatehpur as Dadupanth and Nirgun Bhakti Centre**

Fatehpur had also grown as a centre of *nirgun* Bhakti in the similar manner as described above. It was an important trading centre of Bagad which was situated on the route from Marwar to Delhi and Delhi to Multan. There it had significant population of the businessmen Baniya community which was wealthy and much more active, aware and interested in religion. Dadupanth was very popular among the Baniyas of Rajputana so much so that children at small age devoted their lives for religion and became monks at small age. Sant Sundardas Fatehpuria also known as Chhote Sundardas is a quintessential example of the process of initiation of children in Dadupanth from the Baniya community. Sant Sundardas's life would be a great way to understand the sixteenth-seventeenth century's Fatehpur.

Sant Pragdas Bihani belonged to a Maheshwari Baniya family of village Kirdoli of Fatehpur. He was a direct disciple of Sant Dadu and it is possible that Dadu had suggested him

living in Didwana after completion of his education. He had joined Dadupanth and started living in Didwana. He moved to Fatehpur in 1606 when the Kyamkhanis had already joined the Mughals as *Mansabdars* and it was fast becoming an important town. He established a *Dadu dwara* in Fatehpur which soon became a prominent *Dadu dwara* of Rajputana. Sant Pragdas was highly educated and talented who established himself firmly in Fatehpur by impressing people with his intellect. However, caste also had an important role to play as he belonged to the Baniya caste, hence he became popular among the Baniyas of Fatehpur quickly. This helped him in getting a firm hold at Fatehpur wherein the Baniyas of Fatehpur donated generous amount of money for the construction of the *Dadu Dwara*. He was fine a poet whose collection of verses became popular in the region and people collected the texts of his verses. As he was worthy and famous Sant, he involved many Sants from his community to meet him at Fatehpur and settle down with him at Fatehpur *Dadu dwara*. Thus a chain of Sants belonging to Baniya caste came down to Fatehpur and settled down there. Sant Pragdas was very successful in joining people with Dadupanth and Nirgun Bhakti. Names of some of the notable disciples are Ramdas, Madhavdas, Keshavdas, Narayandas, Vohitdas, Dharamdas, Hariramdas, Pramandas and Tikudas. The inscription placed at the samadh of Sant Pragdas Bihani at Fatehpur *Math* had a short biography of him written by Sant Santdas were engraved in following words:

श्री राम राम । सम्वत् 1688

1. सोलह सो अठयासिये कातिक मास उदार ।
2. आसित अष्टमी तिथि हुती बार कहत बुधवार ॥
3. दादू को सिष संत जन ताकी पटतर कौन ।
4. प्रयागदास जगजीत के कियो परम पद गौन ॥
5. ढीलीपति जहांगीर सुत राजतिसाह जहान ।
6. दौलतिखां नृप फतेहपुर तानंद ताहरखान ॥
7. संतदास सब विधि सरस सकल मंडली संत ।
8. रामसाल बहुविधि स्पी जहां हरिदास बसंत ॥<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar* (Fatehpur: Sri Saraswati Pustkalaya, 1992), 135.

Sant Pragdas Bihani was joined by Sant Santdas in 1623 A.D. at Fatehpur who became a favourite with the people for sharp acumen and deep religious understanding. He was Baniya of Chamadiya sub caste.<sup>232</sup> He was also a prolific writer who propagated the word of Nirgun Bhakti among his followers. He was counted as the main Sants of Dadu Dayal as he was initiated in Dadu panth by Dadu himself and his name is registered among the fifty two prominent disciples of Dadu. He had a very able and equally famous disciple by the name of Bhikhjan who was a local Brahman boy from Fatehpur. Sant Santdas died at Fatehpur in 1639 A.D. It is said that Diwan Daulat Khan went to meet him at Dadu *Math*, however, there are no authentic sources to confirm this. Charandas and Balakram were also among the Sants of Fatehpur who left behind a large corpus of Sant literature behind them. Sant Santdas's Samadhi had following inscription:

सम्बत् 1696 दिवन माघ बदी पंचमी पंचघटी परमाण ।  
 संतदास समरथ सुतन पायो पद निरवान ॥1॥  
 अग्रवंश तो उपनो चहुँ दिस अधिक सुवास ।  
 फतेहपुर में आहकर कियौ सुगंधे पास ॥2॥  
 सुत मधुसूदन हरि भगति, संत आगे दीन ।  
 प्रीत गदाधर अतिभली, मिलि के कथाजुकीन ॥3॥  
 माघ बदी 5 पंचमी पक्ष कृष्ण सुकरवार सुजान ॥<sup>233</sup>

The most able and highly intellectual scholar of Dadu was Sant Sundardas who was identified by the suffix of Fatehpuria as he spent 60 long years of his life in Fatehpur. His residence at Fatehpur is described by him as:

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<sup>232</sup> Chamadiya *seths* of Fatehpur are very famous in Shekhawati as they among the leading builders of modern Fatehpur who started school, college and other welfare institutions in Fatehpur during the Shekhawat period.

<sup>233</sup> Ramgopal Verma, *Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar*, 135.

पूरब पच्छिम उतर दच्छिन देस बिदेस फिरे सब जानै ।  
केतक द्यौस फतहपुर मांहि जु केतक द्यौस रहे डिडवानै ॥<sup>234</sup>

He was born in 1596 A.D. at Dausa in a Khandelwal of Busar gotra and Baniya caste. He was accepted as the youngest disciple (*sikh*) of Dadu Dayal when he had come to Dausa. He stayed with Dadu at Narayana for a brief period of time before leaving for Banaras to study along with other Dadu's disciple such as Rajjab. He came to Fatehpur after completing his studies and then stayed for most of his lifetime at Fatehpur and thus was called as Sundardas Fatehpuria. He died at Sanganer in 1689 A.D. He had five prominent disciples wherein Dayaldas succeeded him at Fatehpur *gaddi* as per Raghavdas. The others were Shyam, Damodardas, and Narayandas.<sup>235</sup>

Purohit Harinarayan Sharma has done extensive research on Sant Sundardas for forty years and published *Sundar Granthawali: Mahatma Kavivar Swami Sri Sundardas ji Rachit Samast Grantho ka Sangrah*.<sup>236</sup> The introduction of the anthology is very interesting as well as important to understand the functioning of Dadu panth, its propagation ways, the process of manuscript writing, copying and circulation; Fatehpur city of medieval period and the general religious atmosphere of Bagad as all the information is directly sourced from the Mahant Gangaram of Fatehpur Dadu *Math* who provided the authentic manuscripts preserved in the *Math* from centuries to the research and orally dictated him the history of the Fatehpur *Math* in detail. Sant Sundardas had started organising and compiling all his writings at one place by assigning writing of a new complete anthology to his disciple Rupdas Mahajan, who was a

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<sup>234</sup> Purohit Harinarayan Sharma, *Sundar Granthawali: Mahatma Kavivar Swami Sri Sundardas ji Rachit Samast Grantho ka Sangrah* (Calcutta: Rajasthan Research Society, 1936) 40.

<sup>235</sup> Purohit Harinarayan Sharma, *Sundar Granthawali: Mahatma Kavivar Swami Sri Sundardas ji Rachit Samast Grantho ka Sangrah* (Calcutta: Rajasthan Research Society, 1936), 29.

<sup>236</sup> Purohit Harinarayan Sharma, *Sundar Granthawali: Mahatma Kavivar Swami Sri Sundardas ji Rachit Samast Grantho ka Sangrah* (Calcutta: Rajasthan Research Society, 1936)

Baniya belonging to Fatehpur only. It should be noted here that writing and copying of such manuscripts could be done by only a few people who were literate and could read the old scripts of Rajputana. Therefore, the Brahmans and Baniyas were especially apt at this work because of their long tradition and training to work as *munshis*, scribes, teachers and businessmen who were specialists in accounts, poetics, letter writing etc.

This anthology has 7000 shlokas with 20 lines written on every page and 550 pages in total. The pages of the *pothi* are brown coloured Kashmiri pages. The colophon tells that this invaluable manuscript in the form of a *pothi* was completed in 1685 in Fatehpur. The poems of Sant Sundardas are available at every Nirgun Bhakti *Math* of Rajputana where the time period of the manuscripts range from seventeenth to twentieth century. Sant Sundardas was immensely popular among the Sant community who read his poems compulsorily to train themselves with the philosophy of Nirgun Bhakti because Sundardas was among the foremost intellectuals who had participated in debates and set the narrative in seventeenth century. Monika Horstmann has stated that Sundardas was the brightest among the Nirgun Sants who defended the nirgun philosophy against the onslaught of Vaishnavs of various hues. He was very critical of the Brahmanic sects, Nathpanthis and others and continuously pulled them up by using his grasp over classic Vaidic and Puranic philosophy. There are many small anecdotes popular in Fatehpur regarding Sant Sudardas. The stories place him as superior to any Vaishnavite who objected and challenged the Nirgun philosophy of the Dadupanthis. Due to intellect and divine powers Sant Sundardas defeated the Vaishnavites. Other stories about the miracles performed by him to help the diseased common people, soldiers, Nawab, women and Baniyas of Fatehpur. The popularity of Sundardas is evident through these short but informative anecdotes.

Sant Pragdas who was a disciple of Dadu Dayal belonged to a village called Kirdoli near Fatehpur. Dadu who based in Dhundhar region's Naraina was not far away from Bagad,

so he had roamed in Bagad with the purpose of conveying the spiritual lesson of *nirgun* ideology. He remained successful in introducing the religious message in rural areas and even inspired people to join him as his *sikh* or disciple. Sant Pragdas Bihani was a committed Dadupanthi who started a Dadu *Math* in Didwana with the intention of propagating Dadu's religious ideas. He was pretty popular among the people of Didwana, especially among his caste fellows. He had several worthy disciples who became well-known Sants afterword. But Pragdas thought of moving to Fatehpur and set up a new *Math* there as well. It is important to understand the reasons behind choosing Fatehpur for establishing a Dadu *Math* leaving an already running Dadu Dwara in Didwana. Firstly, Fatehpur had achieved political stability under the Mughals wherein the Kyamkhani rulers had reached a respectable *Mansabdari* rank of 1500 *zat* under Alaf Khan, hence an increase in prestige of the city had increased along with the rulers' elevation. Secondly, the city was an important centre on the trade route from Marwar to Delhi and Delhi to Multan, so there was decent market and economy of the town making it a lucrative prospect. It is well known that the large sects and religious organisations were competing for state patronage to keep their organisations running and empowerment by forming ties with the powerful states. The seventeenth century saw the tremendous rise of all kinds of *sagun* bhakti sects like Pushtimargis, Vallabhites, Gaudis, Vaishnavites etc. who had transformed the allegiance and belief of the major dynasties from Shakt and Shaivism to Krishna bhakti Vaishnavites of different hues. The Nathpanthis and *nirgun* bhakti sects could not keep up with the ongoing competition and strived for support among people and royal dynasts. Fatehpur's rulers were Muslims who had a background of strong faith in Nathpanth as we have seen earlier in this chapter. The religious inclination of the Fatehpur Diwans' was more towards Sufism and Nathpanth therefore, Brahmanism had not become powerfully established in Fatehpur despite being a large number of Brahman population in the city. There are many reasons to reach this conclusion that we have already studied earlier in this chapter.



The monotheistic and disbelief in idol worship are some of the ideological reasons as to why the Sufis, Nirgun Bhakts and the *Diwans* would have come on the same page of agreement. The cities and towns in medieval India were fully governed by the sole discretion of the rulers and their will, therefore it can be safely assumed that the ruler's authority played a crucial role in regulating the social, religious and cultural practices of their subjects.<sup>237</sup> Living in the walled city and construction of shops, residential and religious buildings was a highly regulated affair where the decision of permission was a ruler's privilege. Taxes were levied for all such activities and legal documents were prepared for all sale purchase of land after paying the state's taxes. Therefore, it can be said that the ruler had control over his territory to decide upon the matters of religion, faith and spirituality along with whole lot of other aspects.

However, it is very difficult to say conclusively that Fatehpur was radically different in social, cultural, political and religious spheres but the study of Fatehpur insinuates that Fatehpur was different in at least some aspects of its governance and therefore, society which had direct bearing on it.

The temples dedicated to Radha-Krishna, Govind Dev and of other Vaishnav belief were mostly established during the Shekhawat rule of almost three centuries. The Shekhawats followed the Kachhawahas in supporting and propagating the Vasihnavas in Shekhawati. Earlier to that Bagad was almost devoid of any Vaishnav temples and pilgrimage centres. The famous ancient temples and pilgrimage were all belonged to Shaivism in one form or another. Be it Lohargal, Jeen Mata temple, Harshnath temple and old Nathpanthi *Math* of Tain and Dadrewa. The Parmars and Chauhans who had ruled over Bagad for many centuries both were firm believers of Shaivism. Other popular centres of Bagad were Sufi shrines, *dargahs* and *khanqahs* but Vaishnavism was absent from Bagad before the takeover of the Shekhawats.

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<sup>237</sup> *Sanad parwana bahis* of Jodhpur state and *Kagad bahis* of Bikaner state are testimonies to the process of regulating society by the rulers with the support and encouragement of Brahmans who designed the normative structure and rules to follow by the society including their access to temples and religious beliefs.

Prof. Pemaram has described the process of propagation of Vaishnavism in Shekhawati in detail. He has provided details of construction of Radha-Krishna temples throughout Shekhawati including Fatehpur with dates and ruler's name who had built these grand temples with state's private money. The Shekhawats were Krishna Bhakts and their *Isht Dev* was Gopinath.<sup>238</sup> Shekhawati's world famous fresco paintings had a very popular theme of Ras Lila wherein Krishna is depicted playing with Radha and Gopis in Braj. These paintings, temples, *chhatris* dedicated to Vaisnavism were the salient feature of the Shekhawat period which show a transformation from Shaivism to Vaishnavism in Bagad.

To buttress this line of argument let's take a look at the personal belief system of the Kyamkhani rulers which they had expressed in many ways including writing books. Easily, the brightest of them all was Niyamat Khan who wrote with the penname of Jaan.<sup>239</sup> The dates of his death and birth is not known but the colophons of his books record the date of his literary activities that can give us the idea about time of reference. He was the second son of illustrious Diwan of Fatehpur Alaf Khan who reigned from 1597-1626 A.D. Niyamat Khan Jaan was active during fifty years from 1614 to 1664 A.D. in which he wrote 86 books at least.<sup>240</sup> These books were very popular among the people as can be estimated by the circulation of the manuscripts and long span of two centuries till these were copied by scribes. These texts were collected by elites, noblemen, students, businessmen, sadhus alike. These manuscripts were found in personal collections, Jain temples, Hindu temples, royal libraries etc. from Delhi, Fatehpur, Jhunjhunu, Churu, Jodhpur, Singhana, Didwana, Ramgarh and Bikaner etc. He was an expert on many languages like Persian, Arabic, Braj, Sanskrit etc. and his knowledge

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<sup>238</sup> Pemaram, *Rajasthan Mein Bhakti Andolan* (Jaipur: RajasthanHindi Granth Academy, 2014), 223-5.

<sup>239</sup> अरधसेर पतिसाह की, सुलप कथा कहि जान ।

जेसी बिधि ग्रंथन पढी, सौ हौ करौं बखान ॥

<sup>240</sup> Agarchand Nahata, "Kavivar Jaan aur uske Granth," *Rajasthan Bharti* April 1, no.1 (1946), 42.

included subjects like classical music, medicine, history, theology, literature of many different genres like normative literature, religion, premakhyan, fiction and folk stories etc. Some of his very popular books are *Kyamkhan Rasa*, Budhisagar, Alaf Khan ki Paidi, Vaidik Mati, Gyandeep, Pahan Pariksha, Shikhya Sagar, Laila Majnu, Chhita ki Katha, Roop Manjari, Shringar Shatak, Virah Shatak, Valukiya Virahi, Bandi Nama, Prem Sagar, Kamlata, Sikh Granth, Uttam Sabad, Ras Kosh, Chetan Nama, Kautuhali ki Katha etc.

The royal house of Kyamkhanis trained their children into education along with the military. He is known mainly for his book *Kyamkhan Rasa* and about forty *premakhyans*. *Kyamkhan Rasa* is basically a eulogy of the house of Kyamkhan which seems to be written as an answer to the narrative among the then Rajputs that the Kyamkhanis were a slave of Badshah Firoz Shah which denigrates their position in the hierarchical order of the Rajputs.<sup>241</sup> It tells us about the debate, conversation, narration, propoganda was happening through the books among the literati and elites of the Rajputana society. The book culture had made a firm place in the society during the seventeenth century, whereas pre-Mughal period completely lacks such vibrant book culture among the Rajputs. Prior to that books were of mainly limited to religion and fiction as topics.

The other texts that made Jaan popular was *premakhyan* which simple means narration of love. Earlier *premakhyans* were considered as the forte of medieval Muslim authors who chose story telling as the medium to propagate Islam. However, this theory has now been rejected and rightly so as can be inferred by studying the *premakhyans* written by Jaan closely. The *premakhyans* of Jaan completely lack the basic features stipulated for a Sufi *premakhyan* written with an intention to propagate Islam. Instead, the main purpose of writing these love stories is entertainment. Premakhyan as a genre of literature had been quite popular between

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<sup>241</sup> Munhta Nainsi, *Muhnta Nainsiri Khyat Bhag 3* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 2014), 263-5.

fifteenth to seventeenth centuries which Niyamat Khan also pursued. He has told very straightforwardly that he is composing these stories as heard from somebody or read from somewhere and now he is producing those stories in simple language for the purpose of enjoyment and entertainment of the common people.

कथा पुरातन अैसें सुनी । ग्रेक जौहरी हौ बडगुनी ॥  
ताकै सीलवंत इक नार । रुपवंत कीनी करतार ॥<sup>242</sup>

अरधसेर पतिसाह की, सुलप कथा कहि जान ।  
जैसी बिधि ग्रंथन पढी, सौ हौ करौं बखान ॥<sup>243</sup>

अबहि पुरातन कथा बखानू । कानन परी सु रसना आनू ॥  
रुप राइ राजा इक राजे । रुपपुरी नगरी तिह छाजे ॥<sup>244</sup>

He clearly says that he has specially changed the original esoteric language to be simpler and understandable by the common people of Bagad. This also tells us that the elites literature of Bagad could understand, read and compose in multiple languages. They were involved in reading literature from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Braj etc., and translated the worthwhile literature of different languages into local languages. He was understanding the need to translate the texts into simpler language so that others could also enjoy and take benefit from the literature. He was also concerned with the need to textualisation of the oral knowledge. The large scribal community, litterateurs and intellectual Sants of Fatehpur who were partaking into various kinds of intellectual activities like writing books are a proof to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Fatehpur. As Fatehpur was home to all types of people such as traders, banjaras, sadhus etc. coming in from all parts of India, it made Fatehpur an ideal place to pick up

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<sup>242</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Jaan - Granthawali Bhag – 4: Premakhyan Sangrah* (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratiishthan, 2005), 119.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 10.

interesting stories and tales of all sorts. The stories written by Jaan were inspired by literature present in other languages, local anecdotes and stories heard over from the itinerant people.

रहबो बागर मांझ, किम भाषा आवै भली ।  
पैं दिन ढिग ज्यों सांझ, तैसी भाषा ऊकती ढिग ॥<sup>245</sup>

ऊकती विशेष सांचु कै जानहु । भाषा जो आवै सो मानहु ॥  
ऊकती भली भाषा में आवै । तो यह सोना सुगंध कहावै ॥  
देखि देखि में दरब परायौ । बहुत बहुत मन ना ललिचायौ ॥<sup>246</sup>

मैं जहां मारग नयौ न पायौ । महा पुरातन ही मग धायौ ॥  
मथन ग्रंथ करिहै जौ कोई । वाकी उकति न कहिये सोई ॥<sup>247</sup>

संस्कृत प्रारेर मिलायौ । मथ बिलाय कै साज बनायौ ॥  
यहु कुंबल वामै कठिनाई । तातैं कहि यहु जुगति जनाई ॥  
नयौ न कछु गायौ ही गायौ । साज वहै सुर फेरि चढायौ ॥<sup>248</sup>

The most noticed point about Jaan's literature is his understanding of religion. The scholars have taken his book *Kyamkhan Rasa* as a case study to understand the concept of religion of an Indian Muslim belonging to the elite echelons of society. Most of the scholars have termed his religious philosophy as syncretic, tolerant, mixed, and local and rooted into the Hindu past. Some local scholars have understood the Niyamat Khan's religiosity as being purposefully accommodating and tolerant of the "other" faith and therefore take pride in declaring the Kyamkhanis as the ideal rulers per se. However, reading his thoughts carefully along with taking into consideration the contemporary society, belief system and rituals of Kyamkhanis it becomes clear that this amalgamation was the result of organic intertwining of faiths, societies and ethnicities that had taken place gradually during long medieval centuries.

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

It is important to remember that religion had not taken the overarching effect over every socio-cultural aspect of people's life. There are ample studies that show that common medieval men believed in more than one strict faith. Having said that, it is also important to note that Kyamkhanis' religiosity was aligned with the *nirgun* bhakti philosophy. The medieval man was conscious and commanded the agency to decide for himself the discretion to distinguish between faiths, ideologies and ideas. He chose between the more appropriate ideology, which was closer to his socio-political outlook and distant or unsuitable one. Religion also was a tool for empowerment, upliftment and security for a community and thus it was not a question of plain faith that the people chose and picked certain ideologies, sects, religions over others. The popularity of folk deities among the most downtrodden castes in Rajputana are exemplary in showing lower caste assertion in the realm of religion and society.<sup>249</sup> The struggle between the lower and upper castes over the right to worship, entering a temple<sup>250</sup> are not new to the modern time but was an age old fault line running between the different communities of society.

The Kyamkhanis were fighting the perception about themselves that they are slaves and inferior to the other Rajputs who held superior power and closeness to the Mughlas but had not converted to Islam. The major Rajput states decidedly adopted Vaishnavism as their preferred religious choice even though continued their support to *nirgun* sects and host of other minor sects due to various reasons. However, they provided robust patronage to the Vaishnavites of numerous hues. The Kyamkhanis adopted a different strategy to assert their identity both as strong political adversaries and clan superiority among the cluster of Rajput clans. They put up their Muslim identity to the fore with confidence along with highlighting their *gotra* as superior

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<sup>249</sup> Rajshree Dhali, "A Study of the Religious Process of a Popular Folk Deity in Rajasthan: in *Revisiting the History of Medieval Rajasthan: Essays for Professor Dilbagh Singh* eds., Suraj Bhan Bhardwaj, Rameshwar Prasad Bahuguna and Mayank Kumar (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2017) 116-30.

<sup>250</sup> Divya Cherian, "Fall from Grace?: Caste, Bhakti and Politics in Late- Eighteenth Century Marwar" in *Bhakti and Power: Debating India's Religion of the Heart*, eds. John Stratton Hawley, Christian Lee Novetzke and Swapna Sharma (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 181-88.

and ancient who once ruled over even Delhi.<sup>251</sup> The monotheism and aversion to idol worship of *nirgun* philosophy provided a middle ground with the Islam to make them comfortable with them. The interaction and a relationship of mutual respect<sup>252</sup> between the yogis, Nathpanthis and Sufis was also a positive trend happening in medieval India. The Nirgunis on the other hand, represented a socio-religious wave in support of the lower class and distinctively anti Brahmanism in its nature. It is striking to note that when almost all the Hindu Rajput clans headed by the major Rajput states opted for the Sagun sects which were led by Brahmans invariably thus supporting the Rajput-Brahman hegemony intensely, the lone Muslim Rajput clan of consequence treaded into opposite path. The rule of Mughals at the centre kept the Kyamkhanis motivated enough to assert their Muslim identity stongly in the society of Rajputana. The Kyamkhani Diwan Nahar Khan was chosen by Mughals in the entire Rajputana to take over the fort and city of Nagaur after the killing of Amar Singh Rathore at Delhi Durbar. The other Hindu clans of Rajputs did not dare to attack Nagar on Mughals' behalf as a sign of solidarity, sorrow and fear of protest from the fellow Rajput community. In such a crucial time the Mughals chose the Kyamkhani Nawab to lead the Mughal forces into Nagaur expedition. The Muslim identity of the Kyamkhanis had become the deciding factor for the Mughals. The Kyamkhanis are not known for building mosques, not even in Fatehpur but Nahar Khan had built a mosque in his name as a stamp of political authority and assertion of Muslim identity. The choices were clearer as the motivation behind this move was a combination of political, cultural, social and religious considerations.

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<sup>251</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Kyamkhan Rasa*, 11.

<sup>252</sup> Simon Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend" in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical, Writing in India*, eds., Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Hassarovitz Verlag, 1994), 99-130. The process of interaction also included the confrontation between the Sufis and Yogis as narrated in vast Sufi *mal'uzat* corpus wherein a Sufi is said to have defeated the Yogi challenging his religious superiority with the help of divine powers and miracles.

Studying Jaan's idea of Allah as narrated in his books buttresses the argument that the Kyamkhani Muslims were not only strong supports of nirgun philosophy of God but firmly believed in them. A continuity of thought is displayed by Jaan wherein the Nirgun belief system amalgamates perfectly into the Sufi notions. Some of the examples from his *premakhyans* are following:

परथम निमसकार **अबिनासी**। जिन बिरही औ रचे बिलासी॥  
 रचे दोइ दीवा ऊजियारे। ते बिन तेल न होंहि अंध्यारे॥  
**निरगुन सगुन** अगन गुन, मन के गने न जाहिं।  
**अलष** भेद ना लखि सकै, लष लषा लिषहि लषाहि॥<sup>253</sup>

परथम सुमिरौ सिरजनहारा। **अलष अगोचर** ये ऊँकारा॥  
 अधम ऊधार अधार **निरंजना**। मलिन रसन **सुमिरन** तिहि मंजना।  
 ब्याध असाध महा अपराधा **बिधि सुमिरन** ते होत **समाधा**।  
 जिहि रसना सुमिर नर सरसी। प्रगट भयौ ज्यौ सविता ससी॥  
**सुमिरन रसना रसना पीजै** तिह रसना षटरस कत दीजै॥<sup>254</sup>

आदि सुमिरिहौं **येकंकार**। **अलख अगोचर** अपरंमपार ॥  
 कांन सुनत देखित भरि दिस्टि। पल मै सकल रची यह सिस्टि ॥  
 येक भांति सब जगति न कीनौ। **को निरगुन काहू गुन दीनौ** ॥<sup>255</sup>

पर्थम नाव **निरंजन** लीजै ।  
 सब सुधरै पाछे जौ कीजै ॥  
**नाव प्रसाद** करै जो चाहै ।  
 जो पकरै सौ वोर निबाहै ॥  
 ग्रंथ आदि बिनु नाव न होइ ।  
 ताकौ हाथ छुवो जिन कोइ ॥  
**नाव निरंजन** निस दिन लीजै ।  
 रसन पियालै अंब्रित पीजै ॥<sup>256</sup>

परथम निरगुन के गुण गाऊँ। हाँ, निरगुन-गुन पार न पाऊँ ।

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<sup>253</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Jaan - Granthawali Bhag – 4: Premakhyan Sangrah* eds. Om Prakash Sharma et.al. (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratiishthan, 2005), 7.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 218.



बाकै गुन, अनगन, अन लेषैं। मोसे निरगुन कहा परेषैं ॥<sup>257</sup>

सुंदर सरूप गुनी कौन कै न मानै मन,  
निरगुन निरूप, निरगुन ही कै मानिये ।  
कहै कवि जान भरे भरियो सैंसार गति,  
अभरे, भरन करता ही बषानिये ॥<sup>258</sup>

आदि अगोचर सुमिरिहौं, सिस्ट करन करतार ।  
येक सब्द ही मैं (मैं) कर्यौ, सब कछु सुरग पतार ॥<sup>259</sup>

The above examples show that it is impossible to tell the difference between a text belonging to Dadupanth and Niranjani sect and Jaan's commentary on his idea of God. The vocabulary and thoughts are totally in spirit of the Nirgun concept of God who is formless, faceless, and indestructible, Omkar and whose *sumiran* or remembrance gives immense pleasure to the devotee. It also suggests that while Jaan kept his faith in Islam but he had remained in company of the Dadupanthis. It is also possible that he had learned the skills of writing and acumen inherited from the Dadupanthis for his writing style closely resembles those of Dadupanthis.

Therefore, it is clear that Fatehpur was an ideal choice for the Dadupanthis who were based in and around Bagad to establish themselves in the largest, most important and capital city of Bagad. They could attract more traction among the people and propagate their ideology with much more ease by basing themselves at such an important city of seventeenth century Rajptana.

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<sup>257</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Jaan - Granthawali Bhag – 3: Premakhyan Sangrah, Katha Kankawati, Katha Kautuhali, Katha Madhukar Malti* eds. Om Prakash Sharma, et. al. trans. Devkumar (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratiishthan, 2004), 73.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 187.

Fatehpur's Dadu Dwara was home to seven famed Sants who lived together in one *gufa* or cave where they meditated and practised Yog. Out of these seven initial Sants, five were direct disciples or Sikhs of Dadu Dayal. These were Ghadsidas, Pragdas Bihani, Sant das Agarwal, Sundardas Busar, and Bakhnaji. Other than these Sants of stature, Haridas Niranjani, the founder Sant of Niranjani sect also lived in this Dadu Dwara as a disciple of Sant Pragdas Bihani. Haridas Niranjani belonged to Didwana where he met Pragdas Bihani in Dadu Dwara and started his venture into spiritual world of *nirgun bhakti* and came to Fatehpur with Sant Pragdas. The Niranjani later established their own *Math* at Fatehpur. However, the followers of Niranjani sect reject any such possibility on the base of difference between these two sects who had their own separate identities. The Raghavdas' *Bhaktmal* clearly has recorded the status of Haridas Niranjani being a disciple of Pragdas Bihani in Fatehpur but later going to a different path of founding a new sect called Niranjani. Prof. R.P. Bahuguna is of the opinion that during the seventeenth century, the Sant community was not very rigid and compartmentalised and divided into different sects but was of a very fluid in structure and ideas where Sants of various hues and beliefs visited each other freely in *Maths* and ashrams interacting and learning from each other.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, it is quite possible that Haridas Niranjani had lived at the Fatehpur *Dadu dwara* for few years.

Pragdas Bihani left Didwana for Fatehpur but the *Math* at Didwana did not closed down but remained a smaller branch of the Fatehpur *Math*. It was managed by the Fatehpur *Math* where the head Sants were appointed by the Pragdas Bihani and even this arrangement continued after his death as well. The Sants from Didwana frequented the Fatehpur *Math* for educational purposes. The sources suggest a strong connection between Fatehpur and Didwana at various levels. Firstly, the Kyamkhanis had lived at Khatu and Didwana for about twelve

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<sup>260</sup> R.P. Bahuguna, "Symbols of Resistance: Non-Brahmanical Sants as Religious Heroes in Late Medieval India" in *Negotiating India's Past: Essays in Memory of Partha Sarthi Gupta* ed. Biswamoy Pati, Bhairabi Prasad Sahu and T.K Venkatsubramanian (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2003), 226-7.

years before coming north towards Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur, so they developed many kinds of ties and relationships with Didwana where significant Muslim population lived including their kin. They kept their political interest alive in south Bagad region and even retained it for some time under the Mughals. The other connection was that of Sufis who visited the towns of Didwana and Fatehpur regularly as these places were also known as old centres of Sufism. The third reason that connected these two towns of Bagad was large Nathpanth and Dadu *Math* at both the places. These religious organisations maintained strong ties and connections with each other.

Sant Sundardas came to Fatehpur to stay with his senior Pragdas Bihani for whom he had brotherly affection and respect. The presence of seven prominent Sants adhering to *nirgun* stream of Bhakti elevated the status of Fatehpur as an important nirgun Bhakti centre where sadhus from varying faiths and affiliations visited the city. Sundardas added much to the reputation of the *Math* and Fatehpur as well because he became the foremost authority on nirgun Bhakti and his glory reached to entire north India from Punjab to Banaras. The striking feature which also tells volumes about the popularity of Sant Sundardas is that manuscripts containing collection of his poems dating back to his lifetime are freely available at temples, *Maths*, private collections and libraries. As, Sant Sundardas had created most of his literary corpus at Fatehpur only, it can be assumed that the copies of his verses were mostly done at Fatehpur from where they reached to other places. It is well known that the satsangs were a regular feature at Dadu *Maths* wherein the Sants gave sermons, sang *bhajans* and recited his new *sabads* that were memorised by the common illiterate people and written by the literate disciples and followers. There are thousands of his manuscripts in India which preserve the poems of Sant Sundardas. He was a well-connected man who liked to tour at new places and meet other *nirguni Sants*. The collection of letters and conversations of Sundardas reveal that

he was in contact of a large number of sadhus, poets and Sants from across India.<sup>261</sup> The *Math* was already popular among the sadhus of Rajputana but it seems that Sant Sundardas expanded the network, area of connections and popularity to entire India. His works made him so popular that people wrote letters to him and even come to meet him personally at the *Math*. He wrote verses on his journeys to different parts of India by the name of *Deshatan* as he was well travelled and informed man. He noted his interesting observations and experiences about the places that range from Punjab to Banaras. As he was an erudite and intelligent man, he picked up languages of different regions and used words from all regions in his poems. He even wrote exclusively in Punjabi in praise of Lahore and its environs. The most interesting fact about the Fatehpur *Math* was that Sikhs from Punjab frequently came down to Fatehpur to meet Sant Sundardas. Sant Sundardas had journeyed to Punjab twice where he had developed good relations with Sant community including the Sikhs. The interaction was not limited to just meeting but serious discussions on various religious concepts and topics. Exchange and learning was inherent part of these journeys of sadhus and Sikhs who exchanged, copied and gifted texts to each other. Purohit Harinarayan has noted an incident about a sadhu from Punjab came to Fatehpur to meet Sant Sundardas as he was very impressed by his writings. Sant Sundardas was quite popular in Punjab because of his interaction with the *nirgunis* including Sikhs. That Punjabi sadhu when reached Fatehpur *Math* and saw Sant Sundardas he suddenly lost his temper and threw sand on Sant Sundardas three times and went away hurriedly. Sant Sundardas followed him out of curiosity and managed to convince him to stay with him at Fatehpur for some time. That sadhu later on became his good friend and stayed with him for long time before returning again to Punjab. These incidents and stories are important pieces of information that tell us about the process of interaction, communication, building relations,

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<sup>261</sup> Purohit Harinarayan Sharma, introduction to *Sundar Granthawali: Mahatma Kavivar Swami Sri Sundardas ji Rachit Samast Grantho ka Sangrah* (Calcutta: Rajasthan Research Society, 1936)

propagation of ideas and dissemination of religious concepts and philosophy, organisation, functioning of *Maths*, pilgrimage and networking at pan Indian level.

Fatehpur, despite being in middle of the Desert, was well-connected to rest of India and actively involved in the historical processes taking place in the medieval centuries. Monika Horstmann, the foremost authority on Dadupanth, has signalled towards the sect of Sikhism that came into contact of Sant Sundardas. These Sikhs wrote in Gurmukhi preferably but could also read and write in Braj *bhasha* as well. Their forte was writing texts on medicine. They came to Fatehpur many times where exchanges of texts and manuscripts between the Dadupanthis and Punjabi Sikhs happened. She is of the view that the Sikhs were the first among the *nirgunis* who started creating, organising and starting the process of canonisation of Sikhism. The Dadupanthis then started the canonisation process in reaction to the Sikhs and a competition between them ensued to organise texts in the form of anthologies which attained the status of scriptures later on.<sup>262</sup> Monika Horstmann has also worked upon the Nath-Dadupanthis interaction taking place at Fatehpur and writing of texts in the response of the confrontation. Dadupanthis *Math* at Fatehpur was a haven for sadhus from all backgrounds including the Naths who came and lived there for some time before leaving for the next *Math* or ashram on their route. It was a meeting ground for various ideologies, sects and communities. Dadupanthis from other than Bagad also lived at Fatehpur. Sants from Marwar, Ajmer-Pushkar region had come to Fatehpur and completed their collection of verses their as can be seen by the texts found in different parts of Rajasthan. Sant Narayandas, Chaturdas, Amardas and Bhikhjan of Fatehpur *Math* were among the Sants who were deeply involved in

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<sup>262</sup> Monika Horstmann, "Nathyoga in the Dadupanth: The Adibodhasiddhantgrantha-yogasastra Attributed to Mohan Mevarau" in *Early Modern India: Literature and Images, Texts and Languages*, eds., Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni (Hiedelberg: Cross Asia eBooks, 2019), 219, xAsia Books, accessed on 10 June, 2020. [10. Nāthyoga in the Dādūpanth: The Ādibodhasiddhāntagrāntha-yogaśāstra Attributed to Mohan Mevārau \(uni-heidelberg.de\)](https://www.xasia.com/early-modern-india-literature-and-images-texts-and-languages)

creating of anthologies, collecting, writing, copying and compilation of their own work as well as their senior Sants ' as well.

The closeness of Sant Sundardas and Diwan Daulat Khan was remembered by the sadhus of the Fatehpur as noted by Purohit Harinarayan. There was a picture drawn on papers of the original *pothi* of Diwan Daulat Khan and Sant Sundardas that signify that the later bhakts at the *Math* memorised the cordial relations between them. Raghavdas's *Bhaktmal* has described two miracles done by Sant Sundardas in front of the Nawab.<sup>263</sup> The miracles avoided the potential danger to the Kyamkhani Diwan, horses and army by timely alarming him about the destruction of the royal stable in the fort. Another miracle was to impress the Diwan about Sant Sundardas's extraordinary powers of watching his entire kingdom signifying that his kingship and powers are under his watchful eye and control. These anecdotes of miracles signal about the close relationship of the rulers of Fatehpur and Sant Sundardas. Also by looking at the religious philosophy Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' has displayed in his writings complement that of the *nirgunis* undoubtedly. The Dadu dwara had influenced and shaped the religious temperament of the Kyamkhanis is a surety. These evidence corroborate the argument that the Dadupanthis deliberately chose Fatehpur to establish their *gaddi* because they had enjoyed a great reputation with the Kyamkhani rulers who themselves believed in similar religious ideas if *nirgun* philosophy. Monika Horstmann is right in observing that Jaan Kavi's compositions were based in the Indic poetic traditions that "surely reflects a merging of Islamicate and Hindu traditions, not merely the appreciation of it by the author, but also his being a product of it."<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Raghavdas, *Bhaktmal: Chaturdas Tika Sahit* ed., Agarchand Nahata (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 1965), 199.

<sup>264</sup> Monika Horstmann, "Sant and Sufi in Sundardas's Poetry" in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* eds., Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi: OUP, 2014), 247.



Figure 4.5: Painting of Kabir attributed to a Kyamkhani Khanzada prince of Jhunjhunu.

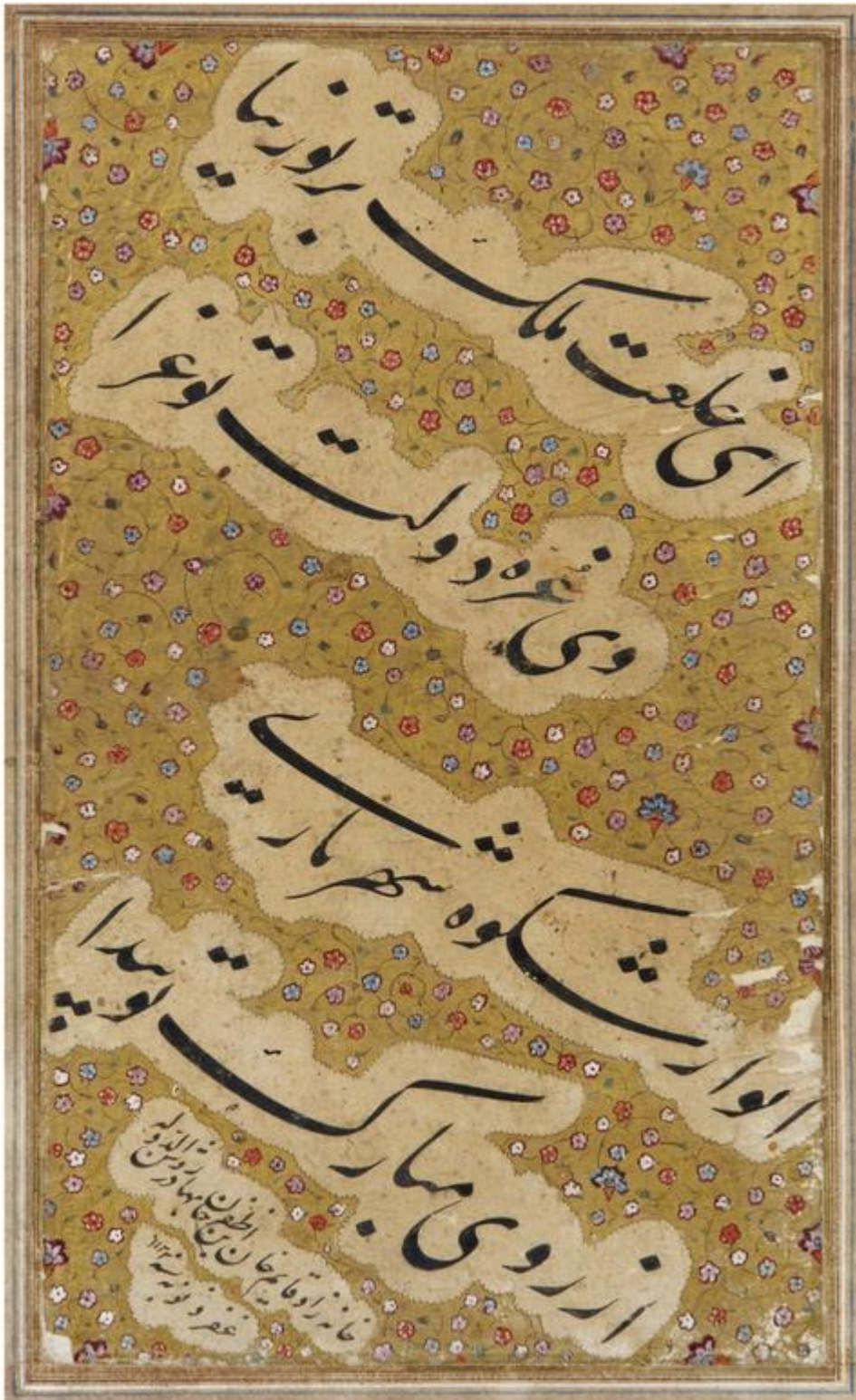


Figure 4.6: Reverse side of the Kabir's painting.



Some works of Sant Sundardas are of particular interest to our research theme. These are Ajab Khyal Ashtak and Pir-Murid Ashtak.<sup>265</sup> Sant Sundardas has composed these two Sufi poems that try to find a common middle ground between the two Sufi Islamic idea of religion and *nirguni* philosophy. It looks like as if he was trying to engage and reciprocate the friendly gestures with the Sufis and Kyamkhani rulers. It strongly suggests that the Dadupanthis of Fatehpur were patronised by the Kyamkhanis by various means including monetary and appreciation and social sanction. However, we would investigate the concept of religion and Allah in Jaan's understanding by reading closely his texts. The Kyamkhani Khanzada of Jhunjhunu branch also showed same respect and love for the nirgun Sants and ideology. However, the sources about the Jhunjhunu's Kyamkhanis are utterly lacking but there is a painting belonging to a prince of Kyamkhani from Jhunjhunu who had drawn a painting of Sant Kabir in which Kabir is drawn as making clothes while sitting with one of his follower. This painting undoubtedly signifies the reverence and deep faith in *nirgun* stream of religion.

The study of medieval Fatehpur reveals that a town worked as a part of the large juggernaut where it functions in unison or accordance of the whole movements. A place is an open space which is open to all kinds of influences, interferences, movement of people, goods and ideas that effects the life of the town's people. There are different networks that operate through a town which regulates the movement of ideas, people and goods. The vastness and area of this network suggests the area of activity, influence, communication and contact of a place. Similarly, Fatehpur had networks or areas of activeness of politics, religion and trade. The political network of the Kyamkhanis coincided with the Bagad's geographical neighbouring regions as well. These are mainly Bagad- Marwar- Haryana- Delhi. However, the Mughals had posted sent them to far off places like Kangra, Kandahar and Kabul but the

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 251-6.

primary area of activity was limited to surrounding areas of Bagad only. The Sufi network or circuit of Fatehpur was between Fatehpur-Nagaur-Didwana-Khatu-Jhunjhunu-Narhad-Hansi-Maham-Hisar-Delhi. The Bhakti network was much bigger due to the popular Dadu Dwara situated at Fatehpur; Fatehpur-Churu-Naraina-Sanganer-Didwana-Marwar-Lahore.

## Chapter 5

### The Bagad of the Common People

#### Natural Settings

The geography, topography, morphology regulate the material conditions of the inhabitants of a place. Bagad is essentially a region that signify a specific type of geography within the large ecosystem of Thar Desert. Therefore, the study of ecology of Bagad is paramount to understand the formation of the basic material and social condition of its inhabitants. The study of its ecology would lead to further understanding of its social formation, culture and economy. The chapter would show the organic link between the natural settings of Bagad and the psyche and culture of the common people of Bagad.

Physiographically, Rajasthan is divided into two main parts, one is the Great Plains and the Central Highlands. The Aravalli Mountains divide Rajasthan into two main geographical parts as Eastern and Western Rajasthan. The eastern Rajasthan is cladded by Aravalli Mountain range accounts for the heavy precipitation and existence of rivers possible in that part of Rajasthan. As the Aravalli range of Mountains blocks the movement of clouds to the western side of Rajasthan, it remains largely arid. The Western Rajasthan is then further divided into many morphological and physiographical zones depending on the rainfall, aridity, sand dunes patterns, relief and soil texture. The area lying west of the Aravalli Mountains is known as Western Sandy Plains.<sup>266</sup> This Western Sandy Plain is further divided into many

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<sup>266</sup> V.C. Misra, *Geography of Rajasthan*, India-The Land and People (New Delhi: National Book Trust India, 1967), 23.

physiographical regions, out of which the major part is the Semi-Arid Transitional Plains, better known as the Rajasthan Bagad. Rajasthan Bagad is then further divided into a) The Luni Basin (Godwar Tract) and b) Plain of Interior Drainage (Shekhawati Tract).<sup>267</sup> The Western Rajasthan is a large area that can be further divided into many natural regions. The whole of Western Rajasthan is a diverse area that is not entirely covered by the sand dunes but the magnitude of sand dunes determines the economic activities of the area up to a great extent.

The Western Sandy Plains are subdivided into two parts:

- (i) Sandy Arid Plains (Marusthali) and
- (ii) Semi-Arid Transitional Plain (Rajasthan Bagad) which can be further divided into a) Luni Basin (Godwar Tract)
  - (b) Plain of Interior Drainage (Shekhawati Tract) and
  - (c) Ghaggar Plain.<sup>268</sup>

The factor that divides Sandy Arid Plains from Semi-arid Transitional Plains is the 25 cm rainfall climatic line. The region of our research Bagad falls into both the categories of Sandy Arid Plains and Semi-Arid Transitional Plains. The geography of Rajasthan is also determined by the severity and extent of sand dunes. The region of Bagad is divided into three categories of severity and extent of the sand dunes which are (i) Strong 40%-60% of the total area affected (ii) Moderate 20%-40% of the total area affected, and (iii) Slight 0-20% of the total area affected.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> V.C. Misra, *Rajasthan : Extent and Degree of Sand Dunes* [map] in *Geography of Rajasthan, India-The Land and People* (New Delhi: National Book Trust India, 1967), 26.

The average rainfall in different parts of Bagad range from 20 cm to 30 cm. The actual experience of the severity of heat depends on the aridity of the land. The humidity of Bagad is very low making it the most severe area in summers to live.

Bagad can be divided into two major geographical regions based on the climate, soil, vegetation, agriculture etc. as Western Arid Region and Semi-Arid Region. The Western Arid Region includes the places like Churu, Ratanagr, Sardarshahar, Reni, Pallu, Fatehpur, Bhatner etc. whereas, the Semi-Arid Region include all the areas lying to the east such as Jhunjhunu, Narhad, Loharu, Sheoran, Puniya, Sidhmukh, Fatehabad, Sirsa and parts of Hisar.

The Western Arid Region shows the typical features of a Desert such as large sand dunes of different kinds and rainfall ranging between 10 cm to 25 cm. The temperatures are very severe in the summer from 32 C to 48 C and the aridity of the region exacerbates the severity of heat further. The line that divides these two regions is the 25 cm rainfall line. As the severity of heat, sand dunes increases and rainfall decreases as one goes towards the western regions, the possibility of agriculture diminishes in the same proportion. The population decreases and get scattered increasingly on the western regions wherein the settlement is not permanent but is based on the source of water in the form of naturally formed ponds mostly. The ground water also depletes progressively and the quality of water is invariably brackish therefore, the use of wells is impractical for the agriculture except at some valleys between the sand dunes. A good example of such a flat valley between the sand dunes is Fatehpur where the water gets accumulated in the bowl shaped valley drifting from the surrounding high sand dunes. Digging well in the Desert is a difficult prospect as it incurred high costs and it was difficult to predict with certainty of water availability at a particular spot. It needed skilled labour to dig wells in the very light sand that had the tendency to collapse easily killing people while digging the very deep wells. It is important to note here that the entire Western Arid Region has innumerable small and large settlements whose name ends with the suffix 'sar' that

indicates that the habitation is based around a pond which in Bagdi and Marwadi is known as *sar*. The basic requirement for a temporary or permanent settlement whether large or small was the availability of water in the form of these naturally made ponds. These ponds were created by the monsoon rain in the natural depressions between the sand dunes that lasted up to a few months of the year and then gets evaporated by the heat of the summer. So, it was easy for the people to exploit the water resource from the ponds as they did not had to put their effort in getting the water. The structures such as *tanka*, *beri*, *johda*, *bawadi*, *kuan* were then developed on the spots where such natural depressions were present. There is no river in entire Bagad region.

So, the common people opted for a practical mobile life that included both agriculture and pastoralism. The activity of cattle rearing becomes of utmost importance in such a case where the people depend heavily on the dairy products, wool, meat and hide of the animals. The Western Arid Region had the maximum number of cattle in the Rajputana that produced wool in huge quantities so much so that it became the main item of export from the region in the medieval period. The livestock was the backbone of the rural economy of the Western Arid Region.

The eastern part of Bagad lies in the Haryana state that forms the western part of Haryana that runs through the border of Rajasthan from north to south. The administrative boundaries of states has divided even the studies of the regions of India as can be seen in the case of Bagad where the studies on Rajasthan covers the areas under Rajasthan and leave the adjacent areas of Haryana having similar physiography unstudied and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to study the researches done on both the states separately and then join the knowledge of both the states to research on Bagad in a cognitive manner.

The Bagad covers about 23% area of Haryana which is characterised by the sand dunes of various shapes and sizes. These sand dunes lie in Sirsa, Tosham, Fatehabad, Bhiwani,

Loharu, Dadri and Jhajjar tehsils covering 9280 sq. km.<sup>270</sup> There is a continuous strip of 4850 sq. km. that is formed by the windblown sand coming from the adjacent Rajasthan Desert making significant sand billows on the flat *tals* of Haryana. This region is treeless undulating Desert known by the name of Bagar locally.<sup>271</sup> The sand dunes are as high as 15 metres to 6 metres in different parts of Bagad that are formed majorly in the direction of the wind from the Rajasthan. Most of the sand dunes are stationery while some change according to the wind direction. The area is lacking in water and it is difficult to draw water from ground, however the soil has the potential to produce crop on providing the irrigation. The Bagad in Haryana has two rainfall patterns covering the western part of Haryana. The immediate border areas have less than 30 cm rainfall whereas, rest of the Bagad has rainfall less than 40 cm.<sup>272</sup>

The soil of Bagad in Haryana is sandy whereas the land is characterised as the undulating sand plains. The sandy soils are known to have the alkaline character in comparison to the alluvial soils, therefore the amount of calcium is greater in the crops and shrubs grown in this area. Major parts of Haryana including Bagad has this particular quality of producing calcium rich crops therefore, the cattle of the area is of superior quality to rest of the regions. The bone formation is better in the breeds belonging to this area leading to their fame as the best breeds in India. The soil of Bagad is characterised as Aridic and Torridic based on the moisture and chemical composition of the soil.<sup>273</sup> The soil of Bagad is very light in texture that is known as the sandy loamy soil. Due to severe aridity prevailing in the area, the Desert sand have well-rounded quartz grains with fair amount of calcium in it. The areas covered with the

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<sup>270</sup> Jasbir Singh, *An Agricultural Atlas of Haryana* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications, 1976), 41.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Jasbir Singh, *Haryana: Annual Rainfall (Total)* [map] in *An Agricultural Atlas of Haryana* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications, 1976), 50.

<sup>273</sup> Jasbir Singh, *An Agricultural Atlas of Haryana* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications, 1976), 89.

sand dunes have sandy soil such as Bhiwani Bagad, but in the inter-dune plains the soil is loamy in character such as in the area of Hisar Bagad.<sup>274</sup>

The area of Bagad is classified as the *barani* area based on the rainfall irrigation pattern of Haryana. The soil in such an area is very light that retains moisture easily and ploughing is much easier in such type of soil. Therefore, it is best suitable for the dry farming or the *barani* cultivation. Such a soil is known as relatively sandy loam in geographic terms. It is porous and granular that gives good response to the irrigation if provided. It has crumb structure which supports plant growth as it has both water holding capacity and permeability.

*Beed* are the unique ecological characteristics of Bagad that were planted at large scale by the Kyamkhani rulers of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. There are other smaller *Beed* around Fatehpur that are extensions of the main Fatehpur *Beed*. These *Beed* had variety of trees, shrubs and grasses that provided the basis for the survival of humans, livestock and wild life of Bagad around Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. These *Beed* functioned as the pasture land for the cattle

Bagad have various kinds of grasses such as Bharunt, Doob, Baru, Kala Dhaman, Dudhiya Sata, Muni, Aagiya, Duchab, Bhakhdi, Mandsi, Lampdi, Sevan, Gantheel etc. Jaant or Khejdi is the most common tree of Bagad. It is very useful for the survival of people in the Desert as every part of this tree is used judiciously by the people of Bagad. The wood is used as fuel and making furniture, leaves which are known as long is used as fodder for the livestock. Its leaves are used in making many local medicines as well. The fruit of Khejdi is called as Sangri which is used as a vegetable for human consumption whereas its dried form, known as *khokha* is stored for eating it as dry fruit in the lean months when agriculture is not possible. Therefore, every part of the Khejdi is of importance for the survival in precarious situation of Desert. The tree is so vital for the ecology of Bagad that it has been given the status of deity

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 92.



that should not be cut. The women worship this tree on special festivals like Akha Teej. This tree is also considered as a symbol of the folk deities such as Guga and Khetarpal whose place of worship is constructed near or under a Jaant tree. The female offer oil to the tree of holy Jaant tree on the occasion of festivals. Water is served to the tree on the occasion of birth of a male child. Jaant was also worshipped on the occasion of marriage by the newlywed couple.

It does not require any special attention or care as it needs very less water for its sustenance. It provides shade for people along with its fruits and leaves. It is regularly pruned every year so that fresh leaves come in the next season. Therefore it is called as the lifeline of the Desert much like a camel. There are many sayings regarding the Jaant or Khejdi tree. It is known as Jaant or Janti in Bagad exclusively whereas, in Marwar it is known by the name of *Khejdi*. The Bagad can be divided into two main areas as per the density of Jaant per hectare area. The western area with the density of 20-120 Jaant per hectare cover the area of Churu, Fatehpur, Jhunjhunu and parts of Bhatner. The second area has the density of only 20-40 trees per hectare. These areas are Churu and Bikaner.<sup>275</sup> The foliage of Jaant known as loong in Bagadi is full of trace elements essential for the animals' proper health. Zinc, Copper, Magnesium and Iron are found in adequate amounts.<sup>276</sup> It is found that Jhunjhunu has the highest level of all these trace elements in entire Rajasthan that makes it one of the healthies and nutritious foliage in Rajasthan.

An average sized Jaant of the Bagad yields 25-30 kg of *loong* or dry forage per year. It provides the much needed moisture and nutrients to the livestock during the peak summer

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<sup>275</sup> Vinod Shankar, "Distribution of Khejri (*Prosopis Cineraria* Mac Bride) in Western Rajasthan" in *Khejri (Prosopis Cineraria) in the Indian Desert* eds. H.S. Mann and S.K. Saxena (Jodhpur: Central Arid Zone Research India, 1980), 18.

<sup>276</sup> R.P. Dhir and B.K. Sharma, "Trace Elements Concentration in the Foliage" in *Khejri (Prosopis Cineraria) in The Indian Desert* eds. H.S. Mann and S.K. Saxena (Jodhpur: Central Arid Zone Research India, 1980), 52.

months of June and July. The Bagadi men lop the tree in the winter and dry it in the sun and store it carefully in the structures called *Bagar* to prolong its use in the summer months.

*Tecoma undulata (rohera)* was present in abundance in this area. Other than this *farash* was common tree in the forest area. Some other trees such as *tali* or *shisham* (*dalbergia sisoo*), *nimb* (*melia indica*), *ber* (*zizyphus jujuba*), *pipal* (*ficus religiosa*) and *bar* (*ficus bengalensis*) were also present in the towns or in villages nearby some irrigation resource.

One common shrub of the area was *zizyphus nummalaria (jhadberi)*. Its red berries (*ber*) were commonly consumed by poor people. Its leaves were called *pala* which were used as fodder. Its branches, full of spikes were used to make hedges. The bark of root of *jharberi* known as *raangjar* was used in alcohol production and in leather tanning.

*Sarkanda* or *Sarr* was present in abundance in the region of Bagad. It was used for roofing, in making of stool (*mooda*), broom, *sarki*, *khariya*, and winnowing basket (*chhaj*). Other than *sarkanda*, *calligonum polygonoides (phog)* was also very common shrub in the region. It produces a fruit during rainy season which was called *fogla* and was consumed by the people here. Its leaves were called *lyasu* and used as a cattle fodder.

Plenty of *Calotropis procera (aak)* was present in sandy soil of the region. Its green leaves were fed to goats and dry leaves were often used as dishes for food. Milk produces by this plant was used to clean leather and its fibers were used to make ropes. Some small plants such as *bui*, *phage*, *dhodh*, *lana* and *salsola (sajji plant)* were also found in abundance in these dry tract and are consumed by camels, sheeps and goats. Barilla, made from the leaves of *salsola* plants, was used in the dyeing of clothes and leather. Because of its economic value, *salsola* was often cultivated by the lower castes. Some shrubs such as *lathya*, *dhamahan* and *gandi buti* presented in the fields were sign of bad soil. Other small plants presented in the region were *lamb*, *khimp*, *thuhar*, *dhatara*, *kair*, *van* or *jal*, *saniya*, aloe vera, *croton burhia* and weeds such as *jaman*, *kanda*, *katara*, *kateli*, *leh*, *bakra* and *mudphal*. The unripe fruit of

kair was known as *tet* or *dela* and ripe fruit was known as pinju was commonly consumed by the people here. The ripened fruit of van, *pilu* was also consumed by the poor people. *Dhatura* was used for medicinal purposes.

### *Fruits and Vegetables*

The commonly produced vegetables in the area were radish, cucumber, bitter gourd, onion, garlic, chilly, ridged gourd, indian round gourd, mint, coriander, spinach, sangria, amaranth, kumhra and gondli. Some vegetable such as sangri and cluster beans were dried up after boiling in hot water and further used as a fresh vegetable for whole year. The best quality of water melon were produced in this area. Except water melon, most common fruits of the area were cucumber and red berries (ber). Other than this gondiya, piliya, mothiya, dansriya, lhesuaa etc were also cultivated in the area.

### *Climate*

The climate of this region was dry and all the six seasons were visible here. There was very high variation in the temperature as it fluctuated from 0<sup>0</sup> C in month of December to 50<sup>0</sup> C in month of June. In the beginning of winter season, generally in month of November and December air used to be very clean and less moist. There was very high amount of dew falls on leaves at night during this time of year. In the month of January air became very cold which would bring the chills in winter seasons and further brought down the temperature to its lowest point. The month of February was mostly very pleasant when temperature started to increase during day time. In the month of May and June, temperature would increase to its peak. This used to be also the time of heavy storms and hot wind which caused the movement of sand

dunes. Sometime very strong sandstorms would bring the night time lookalike darkness even in day time and this type of sandstorms were known as *kaali pili aandhi*. During the summer season when the days were hottest, the night were still cold because the sand dunes which easily heat up during day time also cool down quickly at night. In the month of July humidity in air started to increase which showed the advent of monsoon season. All the rainfall used to come with a prior thunderstorm and usually lasted for only two to three hours. The rainfall would continue till mid-September. After that the humidity in the air started to decline and fall of night dews showed the arrival of winter season. There was also some rainfall in the month of January.

### *Rainfall*

The average rainfall in this area was 11-12 inches. The lives of human beings and animals of the region was dependent on the rainfall. Due to scarcity of the other water resources and availability of saline water in the area people would store rain water into ponds and *kunds* and use this water for whole year. There was very high variation in the rainfall from year to year and from place to place as well. Even the level of rainfall varied for one village where one side of village had very high rainfall but on the other side of village it was very less. The difference in this type of rainfall was clearly advent in the differences of the crop produce. Mostly rainy season occurred twice in year, once from mid-July to mid- September and again from end-December to start of March. Rainfall in the month of October was considered very important because it insured the harvesting in winter season since agriculture in the region was highly dependent on rainfall.

*Animals, birds and insects*

Cow, ox, buffalo, camel, goat and sheep were the most common livestock in this area. Desert ship camel was of very high importance. Best breeds of camel, cow and buffalo were found in this area. The number of sheep and goats was also very high. The production of wool was also high in this region. Other than these animal horses, *nilgai*, hare, black bucks, pigs, donkeys, dogs and cats were also common in the region. Fox, wild cat, mongoose, jackal, hare and black buck were mostly found in some forest area of region. Shooting of black busk was strictly prohibited in the region because it is sacred for Bishnoi community. Ravine deer (*Chinkara*) was also common animal in the region.

The most commonly found birds in the region were peacocks, pigeons, eagles, partridges, crows, doves, sparrows, weaver birds, blue jays, *kunj*, *mainas* and *kamedi*. Shooting of peacock was also prohibited in the region because it was considered to be sacred bird by the devotees of Hindu religion. *Kunj* visited the region in the cold weather in large number and fed over barley and gram crops. Florican and large sand-grouse also flew in large flights during the cold weather and flew back as soon as climate turn warm. Quails also visited the region but in very small number. Various types of wild ducks were also common near lakes. Both small sand-grouse and great bustard bred in the region.

Various type of snakes and scorpion were common in the region. The number of frogs would increase very sharply during the rainy season. Mice were also common in the region. Squirrel was found only near the trees.

Various kind of ants and flies were very common in the region. Different type of worms and caterpillars were seen in the crop fields. Wasps, spiders, mosquitoes, moths, beetles, crickets, butterflies and some woolly and carpenter insects were also existed here. Large flocks of locust flew in every year and did a great damage to standing crops. A type of ground beetle

which has a velvet like coating known as *birbahuti* also appeared soon after rain. Earth-worm was also seen in large number as soon as rain would end.

### **Demographic Profile**

The city of Fatehpur was fairly populated under the Kyamkhanis. There are no statistics available today about the medieval centuries but the census figures done by the colonial academicians give us an idea about the population of Fatehpur. The population of Fatehpur town in 1881 was 14, 731.<sup>277</sup> The main Hindu castes residing in Fatehpur are Brahmans, Rajput, Jat, Mali, Baniya, Balai, Chamar, Bhambhi, Jatav, Mochi, Raigar, Nayak, Thori, Khatik, Bhangi, Meghwal, Bawaria, Aheri, Dhankia, Sansi, Gavaria, Kamadia, Garo, Kooch Band, Kanjar, Bazigar, Bhand, Dedh, Dom and Kalbelia. Other occupational castes are Dhobi, Sunar, Luhar, Khati, Nai, Darzi, Chhimpa, Teli, Lakhera, Rangrez, Tamboli, Thathera and Raibari, Raika. There are almost no tribes live in the area.

The Muslims were also prominent among the society of Fatehpur. The most prominent were of course, Kyamkhanis who had founded the significant principality of Jhunjhunu and Fatehpur. They were originally Chauhan Rajputs who married into other Hindu Rajputs till fifty years back. The genealogical tree of the Kyamkhani Nawabs show that the continued marrying Hindu Rajput from all over Rajputana. Other important Muslim Rajputs of the region are Mohil and Chahil, and Bhati.

The second prominent member of the Muslim society were the Chishti Sufis from Hansi who are known as *Pirzadas*. There were other Sufis living in the Bagad who mainly belonged to Chishti branch of Sufism, however, unlike the claims of Dominique Silakhan no

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<sup>277</sup> Directorate of District Gazetteers, *Rajasthan District Gazetteers: Sikar* (Jaipur), 50.

Sufi of Ismaili branch was there in Fatehpur. There are many Sufi shrines in villages of Bagad whose history and background is unknown. There are innumerable places, shrines and graves, tombs, pedestals, trees scattered around in Bagad that belonged to some Muslim holy men. Some of these are still popular and function as the small shrines popular among the local people of villages and others have ceased to be popular but people still have strong faith and reverence for them. The history of such places are irretrievable as the society has now forgotten the memory of these holy shrines, tombs and graves.

The Nagad Pathans of Narhad are another well-known Muslim community of Bagad that deserves mention. They are however confined to only the area of Narhad. They had come to Bagad during the time of Bahlol Lodhi. They were known as the Nawabs of Narhad. The other details are covered in previous chapter.

The other Muslim castes are Qassab, Chungar, Chejara, Silawat, Chitera, Lakhera, Kalal, Pinjara, Vyopari, Saqqa, Qazi, Julaha, Darzi, Teli, Mirasi etc.

The Brahmans had the role as preachers and pujari in the society. The Brahmans were well educated that enabled them to practice jobs as scribes and writers. They were also proficient in teaching the traditional education to the people of noble class. The main sub castes of the Brahmans are Bhojak, Dhayal, Tayal, Gaur, Dhadhich, Joshi, Pareek, Khandelwal, Dayma etc.

Hindu Rajputs were among the elite strata of the population who ruled over Bagad at different points of time. They mainly belonged to Chauhan, Chandel, Tanwar, Panwar, Gaur, Shekhawat, Rathore and Kachhawaha.

The most numerous community of Bagad around Fatehpur was of Jats that resided in villages and *dhanis* overwhelmingly. The main *gotras* of the Jats around Fatehpur are Bagadia, Pachar, Kulheri, Thalor, Gandas, Balhara, Kadwasara, Bajiya, Bijarniya, Khichad, Bhinchad, Sunda, Godara, Dhaka, Puniya, Burdak, Bhakar, Jakhad etc.

Baniyas of Bagad are famous for their business skills, wealth and majestic residences known as *havelis*. It is important to note here that the Baniyas of Bagad or Shekhawati as it was known afterwards originally stayed in Fatehpur and its surrounding villages. They trace their ancestry from Fatehpur only as Fatehpur was the only town of significance where market and *mandis* existed, so when opportunities grew in newly built towns of Shekhawati Baniyas migrated at rapid pace to the new towns such as Churu, Ramgarh, Bissau, Nawalgarh, Mukundgarh, Mandawa etc. The Baniyas who had come at Fatehpur in fifteenth century were mainly Jains such as Oswal, Sarawagi. The Hindu Baniyas include Khandelwal, Agarwal, Maheswari, Hisariya, Bhartiya, Chamdiya, Bihani, Mahajan, Poddar etc.

The region of Bagad is a huge area and roughly three sub-regions. The demographic profile of the first sub-region of Fatehpur has been described above but the other sub-region of Bagad under the Bikaner state had different kind of demography. Therefore, it needs to be looked upon separately. This sub-region includes the area of Bhatner, Nohar, Bhadra, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Churu, etc. This sub-region is now divided into Haryana and Rajasthan but during the medieval period it was part of the greater Bhattiana wherein the Bhati Rajputs ruled. The Bhatias had influence over big area from Pugal, Abohar, Bhatner, Bhatinda, Sirsa to Nohar and Bhadra. So, this area had large population of Bhati Rajputs who had converted largely at the time of Firoz Shah because his mother belonged to the Bhatias of Abohar. The Johiyas are considered as the original settlers of the area who maintained their independence fiercely all through the centuries and ruled over this area intermittently by defeating the Bhatias and Rathores. The Johiyas also converted to Islam about the same period as the Bhatias, however nothing much is known about the reasons and process of conversion thereby. The other important faction of the Rajputs are the Chahils who ruled over the area between Bhatner and Sirsa known as Chahilwada after them. The Chahils had also accepted Islam overwhelmingly sometime around the fifteenth century, however, like the Johiyas nothing is known about the



reasons and process of conversion. Rath and Wattu were also important military power in the area of Bhattiana who belonged to the Muslim Rajputs community. The word 'Rath' literally means cruel as they were famed to be the cruellest of all the lot. They lived the lives of marauders and always challenged the dominant power whether it be the Mughals, Rathores and English men.

This area of Bhattiana had the most fierce and unrelenting Rajputs in the Rajputana who never accepted the sovereignty of any overlord throughout the medieval centuries. It is important to note here that the geography of the area is such that it enabled these Rajputs to inflict attack and retreat in the haven of Lakhi Jungle. Lakhi Jungle was a huge jungle that ran through Bhatner, Sirsa, Abohar to Dipalpur (now in Pakistan). This jungle had naturally grown due the Ghaggar River and its many small rivulets known by the name of Nali. The thick forest was vast where these Rajputs lived and knew the geography intimately whereas, the other military forces could not chase and find them in such difficult environs. *Kyamkhan Rasa* has that the Kyamkhanis were sent several times by the Mughals to punish the Wattu, Johiya, Bhati and Chahils of the Lakhi Jungle. However, nobody was able to control them fully. The power and influence of these Muslim Rajputs can be understood by the fact that the Bikaner state could not win the fort of Bhatner for much time before losing it again to the Johiyas, Chahils and Bhatīs. It was only with the help of British forces in nineteenth century that the Bikaner state could set their foot in the area after pacifying Bhatīs by purchasing the area around Bhatner with the help of Britishers.

The Rathores are the dominant and ruling Rajputs of this sub-region. They mainly belong to the branches or khamps of the Rao Bika and his brothers who had come in the area from Marwar in the fifteenth century. The Bika Rathores are the rulers who rule from the city of Bikaner; the Bidawats are concentrated in the area of Chhapar also known as Bidawati; the Kandhalots are concentrated in the area near Bhadra.

This region has also been the ancestral area of independent Jat kingdoms governed by the respective Chaudharies. Therefore, this region populated by the Jats of Saharan, Sihag, Kaswan, Godara, Beniwal and Puniya *gotras* mainly along with many smaller Jat branches.<sup>278</sup> Jats of this region believed in two Non-Brahmanic sects of Bishnoi and Jasnath that are influenced by the mix principles of Bhakti, Nathpanth and Sufism.

The Baniyas belong to three main branches of Maheswari, Oswal and Agarwal in this region. The Baniyas are concentrated in towns, *mandis* and cities mainly. They belong to Jainism and Hinduism faiths. Main *gotras* of the Baniyas of this region are Dhariwal, Nahta, Kothari, Bafna, Khazanchi, Bhadani, Rampuriya, Patwa, Pugaliya, Surana, Shah, Bhandawat, Daga, Dugad, Chhajed, Sethia etc.

Brahmans of three divisions are in majority here; Pokarna, Paliwal and Chhanyat. The Pokarna Brahmans are in majority that follow the profession of agriculture mostly along with servicing as scribes and accountants for the Bikaner state. The Pokarnas are told to have 84 Al and 14 *Gotras* in which Sadani, Byas, Kalla, Joshi, Ranga, Derasari, Acharaj, Bissa, Hart, Bohra, Kalwani, Ojha, Chhagani, Pirohit, Upadhya, Mohta, Churani, Kiradu, Boda, Golani, Pansiya, Basu, Bhadani etc. are the notable ones. The Paliwals are mostly involved in agriculture. The Chhanyat are the names of six different *gotras* of Brahmans namely Gaur, Sarsut, Pareek, Dayma, Gujar-Gaur and Khandelwal. They are involved in the religious works and agriculture.<sup>279</sup>

The other castes, communities and groups of the region have not been covered in detail in the *tawarikh*, gazetteers and census reports. The most numerous and significant caste after the above mentioned groups were the people who worked with leather. They all have different occupation and work on different aspects of leather making such as the khatiks, dedh took out

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<sup>278</sup> Munshi Sohanlal, *Tawarikh Raj Sri Bikaner* (n.d), 45.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-2.

the hide from the animal, meghwal, raigar, mochi were involved in making the shoes from the leather whereas, some groups were expert in making and dyeing the leather from raw hide of the animal. The Meghwals also made khes, dari, kambal etc. The other castes returned in the gazetteer are nai, khati, kumhar, thori, balai.

### **Rural Settlement**

Bagad was a sparsely populated area with low density of people living in small sized villages and *dhanis*. A typical village of Bagad was smaller in size with population less than 500 people generally. Most of the villages were confined to a few dozen hutments that were built in the *tals*<sup>280</sup> between the sand dunes. As Bagad is a water thirsty land, every aspect of the life in Bagad revolves around the availability of water, therefore, the huts come up around small lakes and ponds formed during the monsoon season. These rain water lakes are called as ‘sar’ and *johad* in Bagad that are the prominent feature of the settlements all around the Bagad. Hence, majority of the names of villages have ‘sar’ suffix such as Jalalsar, Alafsar, Gogasar, Takhalsar, Jaitsar. Vegetation in form of grasses and shrubs such as *fog* grew around this village pond which is used for grazing the livestock and hence this small pasture land was specially kept fallow and unused by the villagers.<sup>281</sup> Unlike, today's villages of Bagad, the settlements were of temporary nature mostly because of the uncertainty of resource availability, climate and errant rain. The large villages of permanent nature were mostly concentrated towards the *parganas* of Sheoran, Punia and Beniwal all lying towards the borders of Haryana.

A village had clusters of huts each belonging to a separate community. The agricultural fields were far off from the village. It was difficult to travel daily to the fields in the summer

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<sup>280</sup> Tals are the relatively flat land between the high rising sand dunes.

<sup>281</sup> Kumar Narayan Singh, *Shekhawati ka Bhugol* (Fatehpur: Shekhawati Shiksha Mandal, n.d.), 12-13.

heat of Desert therefore, many people preferred to live near their fields. These house near the fields was called as *dhani*. So, a village had mainly two residential places, one at main village away from the fields and secondly at *dhani* near the fields. Some settlements had only a few *ghanis* instead of a full village whereas, some villages had both. Practically every village had its own pasture land that served the important purpose of grazing land for the livestock of the villagers.

The huts were normally circular and rectangular in shape which were made up of dry stems, branches of Janti tree and covered by *panni* grass on top. These huts remained cool in summer and warm in winter and were called as *Jhumpa*. These huts made of dry figs and woods were prone to fire during summer months when the temperature reaches up to 50 degree Celsius. The incidents of fire were common during summer that burnt down entire villages. Such an incident was known as “*Pata Utarna*.” The people rushed to help and extinguish the fire which was known as “*Laay Butana*.” There was prevalence of various forms of superstition in the society including the belief in the evil *Dakan* or witch that caused harm to the children and burning of the villages by fire was also believed to be a *dakan*’s handiwork. The precarious living conditions of Bagad had prepared the Bagadi people to adapt to the difficult situations such as famines, fire and Bagad’s peculiar climatic phenomenon called *Kali-peeli Aandhi*.

Apart from the pond of the village, *kachcha* well were also dug in the village to fulfil the requirement of water in the months when the ponds get dried. The digging of wells was an expensive proposition therefore very few villagers could afford them. Different castes and communities had their own well which no other caste could use, so the empowered groups of the village had the superior rights over the wells. Sometimes, the water was provided to the so called lower castes from the same well but from a distance as the concept untouchability was practised in the villages. Mostly, these wells were the property of upper castes as only they could afford digging up a well. The other source of water were *kund*, *beri* and *tanka*, *bawadi*

and *johad* which stored the rain water which could be utilised for drinking purpose throughout the year. The farmers also used to dig pits between the fields of two or three farmers so that they do not have to go back to the village to drink water. These pits were very basic pits that remained uncovered that were filled by the rain water.

Every household had its own *bari* and *dol* to fetch water from the well. Bari was a rope made up of jute which was manufactured by special artisans. *Dol* was a pot shaped metal utensil used specially for drawing and carrying water. Malis were assigned with the work of drawing water from the well, however it was not compulsory to take the services of the Mali for drawing water from the well. One could draw the water by himself but it was a tedious job besides waiting for the turn to draw water as Malis used to take control of the well until their clients had filled their pots. The wealthy people like Baniyas and Brahmans used the service of the Mali to get water at their homes. Caste system was very much prevalent at the site of well. One could not put the *dol* into the well if a Brahman was drawing water from the well, so other castes had to wait till a Brahman had filled his pitcher.

Water was the most important and prized resource in the Desert therefore the wealthy men considered providing water for the society as the supreme act of “*dharm*” and philanthropy. The Baniyas were foremost in such acts of kindness which were beneficial for the society. The tradition of digging wells, johads and bawadis have been in place in Bagad since at least thirteenth century as can be found by the inscriptions of Jain Baniyas. These wells were made to serve all the castes and communities of the society and a Mali was appointed on the wells who would serve water to the people. The *khel* of the wells were always filled with water for the animals. In addition to the wells, *pyaoo* were also constructed at public places, markets, crossroads and pathways.

The well was an important structure on which the villagers depended very much. The villagers had adopted a system where a person was appointed for drawing water from the well

for the people on a fixed remuneration charged from every household. The well's architecture was such that each side of the well served water to different caste groups. The extra water was filled in the *khel* of the wells from where the animals could drink water. The water was drawn from the leather rope made of buffalo hide called *law*.<sup>282</sup> It was drawn by the camels and oxen with the help of *chadas*. Ground was dug in accordance of the depth of the well in opposite direction to the well where the animals drawing water plied to draw water. This area was known as *Saran* and the act of drawing water was called as *Tevan* whereas, the person who drew water was called as *Khambhi*. Different castes were involved in drawing water from the wells such as Mali, Saqqa, Pakhaliya and Kahar.<sup>283</sup>

The sandy soil, dry environment, scanty rains, extreme hot and cold weather, lack of water resources made Bagad a very difficult terrain to live in. but, the humans had learnt the technique to survive in extreme situations therefore, the Bagadi society's forte was its resilience, endurance, adaptability and survival skills. The art of adaptability helped them in surviving in such adverse and unfavourable living conditions. The common Bagadi living in the middle of Desert lived a life of semi-nomad who was ever prepared to move to a more favourable place. The settlements of Bagad were of a temporary nature mostly which because the uncertainty of monsoon forced them to seek new avenues where water could be found. So, migration was a defining feature of their lives unlike today's Rajasthan where agriculturists have settled permanently in the villages. The people practised agro-pastoralism which was a pragmatic approach that involved agriculture during favourable monsoon and pastoralism that supported their survival throughout the year.

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<sup>282</sup> Girija Shankar Sharma, "Uttar-Pashchimi Rajasthan ke Jal Prabandhan ki Vikas Yatra" in *Jal, Jeevan aur Samaj* ed. Jibraeil (New Delhi: Annie Books, 2019), 43.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

Due to the uncertain nature of life the Bagadis kept the barest minimum accessories, luggage, material and paraphernalia. Every Bagadi family kept camels for transportation, ploughing, milk, riding and carrying load. The camels were the quintessential members of a Bagadi family that could do everything for them except preparing meals as per the popular Bagadi proverb.<sup>284</sup> The camels were expert in carrying load in the sandy soil and high sand dunes. The entire transportation of goods were dependent on the camels including essential items like grains. Oxen were also used but they could only tread on flat lands effectively and the uneven sand dunes made the camel best choice for the Bagadi people. The fare for renting the camel was of two types. One was called *sukha bhada* meaning dry rent which included only the money whereas, the *aala bhada* or wet rent meant that food was also provided to the camel owner and camel's fodder along with the money fixed for the journey. The fodder for camel and other livestock was available in the markets to be purchased readily. Bagad was devoid of any large and dangerous animals that could threaten the lives of people therefore, it was safe to travel without any fear of animal attack. Nights were the ideal time for travelling because it was cool during the night that increased the travelling distance and ease of the dromedary and the rider. The travel was started just before the sunset and continued till the sunrise. This way a camel could travel about 15-20 miles per night. The poor common men mostly travelled on foot.

It is important to understand the nature of settlements of Bagad. As it has been already described that the settlements were not of permanent nature but a nuanced understanding of the sources tells us that people belonged to fixed places mostly where they usually stayed during favourable conditions, but they frequently travelled to other places abandoning their permanent villages and *dhanis* in search of pastures, water and agricultural land. As the general perception

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<sup>284</sup> Malcolm Lyall Darling, *Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1934), 125.

about the climate of Bagad that famine occurred every three years that forced the people to migrate to newer places in search of food and water, but it was also a trend that those people came again to their villages once the difficult time passed away. It was always a conundrum for the rulers of Bagad to retain the native population in their villages so that their country does not get depopulated as it was very difficult to settle those people again. The seasonal migration was frequent feature of the life of Bagadis. Another tendency was seen in Bagad that the male members of a village used to migrate together seasonally to places where they could get some employment and assurance of food. They do all kind of laborious jobs such as agricultural labours that earned them some money which they used to send back home. Such kind of migration did not occur only during the famine years but happened otherwise as well. An important point to note here is that generally it is understood that the people from Rajputana migrated towards Malwa in search of employment but the experience from Bagad distinguishes itself from other regions of Rajputana. The geography of Bagad was such that Malwa was very far from it and an impractical possibility therefore, they opted to go towards different areas of Haryana which were rich and resourceful. Bagad shared very large border with Haryana so it was a better choice for them to have gone towards cities like Hisar and Rohtak.

In this background it is easier to understand the ecology of Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu that was dominated by the very large jungle called *Beed* in Bagdi language. The *Beed* was the marking feature of the Fatehpur *patti*<sup>285</sup> as it served multi purposes for the people and the rulers. First of all it gave a protection to the fort of Fatehpur which was constructed at plain ground. It was heavily guarded by the natural barrier of Beed that covered the fort and the city from two sides. This Beed had different types of flora including shrubs and grasses that were essential for any small or large state to survive in the Desert because the horses, camels and

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<sup>285</sup> The area under the Kyamkhanis was divided into *pattis*. A *patti* was the cluster of forty to sixty villages. The Fatehpur patti, Katrathal patti, Jharod patti are some of the examples of such clusters. These *pattis* were also known as *Fatehpur wati* and *Jhunjhunu wati*.



other animals of the state were directly dependent on such grasslands. The military strength of the state was heavily dependent on the availability of fodder and pastures for its horses and dromedaries. It was a necessity of the state to provide nutritious food to the horses because the India lacked the optimal conditions for breeding of high quality horses, hence they were imported at very high prices. To take care of these highly priced horses fodder was specially arranged and in Desert states of Rajputana where famines were a regular occurrence, special attention was paid that fodder for the animals was available throughout the year.

The importance of maintaining food and fodder supply in Desert can be understood by the example of Reni town under the Dahliya Rajputs in early medieval period. The famine completely destroyed the kingdom of the Dahliyas as the population perished and the town was deserted forever and could not relive again.

The Chauhans were conscious about maintaining the cavalry by providing high quality grass fodder to the horses as ca be seen by *doha* of *Kyamkhan Rasa* wherein Jaan is telling that the Prithviraj Chauhan had specially arranged grass from Kabul and planted it in Delhi for his horses.<sup>286</sup>

This could well be one of the reasons why the Kyamkhanis were able to maintain their military strength and state even while surrounded by the Jodhpur and Bikaner states during pre-Mughal period. However, once the Mughals became paramount power they decided the dynamics of politics in Rajputana. Nonetheless, it can be argued that they remained a potent military force that served the Mughals successfully because of their home-grown grasses and shrubs that sustained a strong military structure.

Another advantage from the pasture land of the *Beed* was the tax collection on the grazing of animals. There are no sources to provide us with the information on the rates and

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<sup>286</sup> Niyamat Khan Jaan, *Kyamkhan Rasa*, 111.



Figure 5.1: Kair Shrub in the Beed near Garinda village of Fatehpur.



Figure 5.2: Beed of Takhalsar village near Fatehpur.



Figure 5.3: Trees planted in a planned manner in Takhalsar village near Fatehpur.

types of taxes on these pastures but it was a common practice in the Rajputana to levy tax on grazing by the state. It can be safely assumed that such taxes would have also been levied in Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu that could generate substantial amount of state revenue in a place where agriculture was very unpredictable.

The *Beed* also served the common people who could take their livestock to the pasture that would provide them a guarantee to live against low agricultural output. The people could sustain their livelihood in times of distress from the fruits of the tress such as *bor*, *kair*, *sangari*, *fogla* etc. It would stem migration of people to some extent in time of famine and distress. The *Beed* was not a homogeneous jungle of similar trees all around as it was carefully planned by the state to cater to the diverse needs of the state and subjects. It had variety of shrubs according to the food habits of the different animals. There was a portion of jungle which had fog shrubs that produced the yellow flowers called *ghitiyal* which was the favourite diet for the camels. The shrubs of the *fog* were so dense that it was difficult for the people to search for their lost camels in that jungle. The leaves and flower of the *fog* is considered as the best food for the camel. Some grasses like *sinia* and *panni* which were locally grown were used in making huts.

Fatehpur also produced wool in large quantity which was exported outside because Fatehpur contained huge number of sheep in the villages. The sheep provided meat, milk, hide and wool to the pastoralists of Bagad who could gain some cash from its products as well. Every household reared cows, sheep, goat and camel. The village society had some common pasture lands where the livestock could graze easily.

*Kair* is a shrub whose fruit make very important part in the diet of Bagadi people. *Kair* was another local product of Fatehpur which was sold across to Haryana and Delhi as it makes excellent pickle which is both tasty and nutritious. The *kair* was also sold locally by the villagers in the Fatehpur town in the daily market where fresh produce of *kair*, *bor*, *kakdi*, *matira*, milk, vegetables etc. were sold to the townsmen. These products aided the income of

the villagers who was involved in agriculture, pastoralism and gathering to meet ends of their lives somehow.

### Culture

The medical treatment was in the hands of Sants, Pandits and Baid. The society had faith in superstitious powers and evil spirits that could inflict harm and cause pain and diseases. It was a common belief that *Bhoot*, *Pishach*, *Dakan*, *Aatma* were the main reasons behind the diseases therefore, people went for chanting mantras, praying to God, *jhada*, black magic etc. as the primary treatment and Medicare instead of going to a *Baid*. Disease and suffering was understood to be the result of the wrath of Gods and *pitar* or ancestors therefore, the people tried to pacify them by praying, worshipping and offering food in the name of ancestors. People also had faith in *Shakun-Apshakun* that could affect the outcome of the people's work and destiny. The Beed of Fatehpur was considered as the fearful place where all kinds of spirits, ghosts, and witches lived who could change their form to deceive and harm living beings including the animals as well. People were afraid of entering into the Beed because of the fear of these dreadful beings. Haunting stories related to the encounter with such supernatural powers are still very common in the area that discourage people from venturing inside the Beed after sunset.

Every village of the Fatehpur region has many religious places of worship that are out of the purview of organised religions. They are mostly based on the feeling and emotion of reverence towards the brave who perished while fighting. Such places and personalities are the remembered in "praise of death"<sup>287</sup> who fought for honour and died valiantly. Structures like

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<sup>287</sup> Janet Kamphrost, *In praise of Death: History and Poetry in Medieval Marwar (South Asia)* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2008), 10-25.

*chhatris*, tombs, platforms, *marhis*, and temples are built by the society for such persons who had died unexpectedly or in early age. Memorabilia of the dead person are carefully preserved and installed at the site of death which the people worshipped to fulfil their desires as the dead persons are considered as holy spirits possessing supernatural powers. This medieval practice is still in vogue in Rajasthan.<sup>288</sup> There are many stories popular among the villagers about unknown structures such as graves, platforms etc. For example the village Takhalsar has many worship places like one mosque, one Guga *Than*, one worship place of Sahnu Shaheed, one group of unknown people's graves, one place with a story related to a banjara, one alleged place of a witch in *beed* and djinns' colony in the *beed* and one place where a warring Rajput had once died. Another village Darunda has one unknown *Chabutara* (platform), one mosque, a Janti tree where two *barats* (marriage processions) had fought and grooms had died, Guga *Than*, an unknown person's tomb. There are also graves of a Rajput in two different villages. People believe that a Rajput while fighting on a horse was killed and his head fell at one place and the horse carried the body to a different place, therefore at both the places, graves were constructed and people revered such places. However, the Rajputs or any person for that matter, whose grave was constructed were not Muslims. Even then, only graves or tombs were constructed in their remembrance. It is an interesting phenomena that who died fighting, was revered by the people. There is a sentiment of respect for valour in the Bagad's society. There are also numerous stories popular among people about witches, djinns and spectres. There are places in *beed* or village where people avoid going in the dark or alone.

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<sup>288</sup> One such Folk deity in the present times is Om Banna whose temple is situated in Pali district of Rajasthan. Garima, Singh, "Is Bullet ki Pooja Karne se Hoti hain Muraden Puri, Log Kehte hain is par baitha hai Om". *Navbharat Times*, December 13, 2019. Accessed on August 18, 2020. <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/astro/photo/bullet-temple-pali-district-rajasthan-devoted-to-om-banna-surprising-temple-of-india-46845/>. ; Harshita, Is Mandir mein hoti hai Motorcycle ki Pooja, Door Door se Aate hain Log. *Amar Ujala*, July 18, 2017. Accessed on August 18, 2020. <https://www.amarujala.com/photo-gallery/bizarre-news/super-natural-stories/story-behind-om-banna-temple-of-rajasthan-where-motorcycle-royal-enfield-bullet-is-worshipped>.

The worship places of the folk deities are mostly constructed under a tree of Janti or any other tree which is considered to be holy. The worshipping site could be just a simple pile of stones or a platform, tomb or even a tree. People associate a battle or miraculous incident where the deceased person showed honour, dignity and piety that impressed upon the minds of common people elevating their status from common people to deities. The villagers often gather at such holy sites to organise feasts. The villagers ask for rain from the supernatural being by offering him or her the food. The villagers collectively organise a feast where *khichdi* is cooked and offered to the deity and then distributed among the children and elders of the village because they were the weakest and vulnerable who needed the nourishment in crisis situations like famine. Such feasts are organised to pray for rains during a famine, drought and other calamities. This practice was common across the entire Bagad and Punjab. For example, in Takhalsar village of Fatehpur, such a feast is organised at a graveyard of unknown origin situated on the highest sand dune of the village.

Fatehpur was the fountainhead of the folk art forms of Bagad that are now renowned by the name of Shekhawati culture. The art and cultural forms of Bagad were linked to the festivals where people performed dances, songs and folk theatre. This culture of celebrating festivities was mainly a city affair than the villages because people at the city had the resources and time to devote and develop the art forms. The professional castes like Mirasi, Kalawant, Bazigar were active in producing a distinct folk theatre, gymnastics, dances etc. that gave Fatehpur its cultural and recreational life. The learned people like Brahmans were also involved in writing, directing and acting in the folk theatre called *sang*. These dance performances and folk theatre were also performed at fairs where people from the villages gathered to buy articles of need, trade and enjoy the recreational activities.

The artistic taste and refinement can be enjoyed by the people of means. The royal house of Fatehpur was a patron of art forms such as dance and music. The people of Fatehpur

still remember that Nawab Nahar Khan was a great admirer of music and patronised musicians of repute in his durbar. Niyamat Khan alias Jaan was also a connoisseur of classical dance and music. He had written a book on classical music describing the intricacies of *raag* and *raginis*. He has also written about the festivities, singing and dance performances of the *patars* in the royal palace in his stories. Nawab Sardar Khan was also known for his interest in dance and singing *mehfils* which were organised by him. The medieval royals were known for maintaining a retinue of the fine dancers, singers, wrestlers, poets and artisans. The *Khyal gayaki* and *sang* of Fatehpur became so famous that it gained popularity in towns of Marwar as well. Different towns and cities of Bagad in later period had their own professional groups who performed *khyal* and *sang*. The art form of *khyal* singing disseminated from Fatehpur to other places as people from other places came and learned this art from famous artists of Fatehpur and then formed their own groups. The *sang* were also made popular by the itinerant Nath sadhus who sang the qissas of gone by times. The *khyal* was also a theatrical performance inspired by the *sang* art form. The *qissas* of the *khyal* were Dule Dhadwi, Risalu, Bhoj, Seth Sethani, Nihalde, Karanrajamal ki Lat, Raja Vikaramdit, Shishupal Rukmani, Jyan Alamde, Bhoj Bhanmati, Phool Bhanwar, Wazir Pyadi, Alamdar, Lajwati, Kaivrani, Tiriya ko Sadh Cheli, Baliraja, Jauhari, chhotekanth, Raja Nal, Mordhwaj, Hedaumeri, Amar Singh, Bharthari, Chand Malyagir etc.

A very popular phenomena among the Bagadi society was of *Dakan* who was generally a widowed childless woman. A *dakan* was thought to be eating small children at night in the cremation ground. A *dakan* was supposed to ride a *jarakh* (hyena) and inflicted harm to the children by looking in the eye. She was also held responsible for quarrels and squabbles in families because of her evil black magic and *jadu tona*. Violence against such women was common wherein such a woman was thrashed and burnt. The sociological reasons behind creating terror of a woman were that it was easy to target a widow woman in a patriarchal



society. She was targeted to usurp the property after death of her husband by declaring her a *dakan* who was a danger to the society. Such a vulnerable woman was also sexually exploited by the elite of the village society who defamed and maligned her if resistance was shown towards them by the woman.



Figure 5.4: Graves where feast for rain is organised at Takhalsar village in Fatehpur.

The *dargahs*, *ashrams*, *maths* doubled up as the Medicare centres in Bagad where Sants belonging to various hues prepared *aukhad* or medicines sourced from local flora and fauna. It increased the relevance and popularity of the religion which served the ailing humanity and helping the needy in physical terms in addition to fulfilling the spiritual needs. The Dadupanthis were particularly efficient *baid*s who followed a tradition of learning and writing texts on diseases and their treatment. *Jarrah* was a specialist in setting bones and treating muscular pains, fractures and wounds. The wounds inflicted in the battle were also treated by these

*Jarrahs*. The paste of Neem leaves was applied on the wounds inflicted by swords. A special *dhuni* or smoke made up of herbs was also applied to such wounds for faster recovery and healing of the wound.

The dress of the Bagadi men was determined according to the caste and community. The Jats wore white attire of coarse cotton and white headgear called *pagdi*. Dhoti was worn till knee and *kamri* on the torso which had strings to tighten the dress. They wore *juti* made of leather which was very heavy but durable at the same time. The wealthy people such as Rajputs and Baniyas wore *juti* of fine quality leather of goat crafted by the Raigar caste who were experts in making *jutis*. The Baniya wore colourful *pagdi* with *pecha* whereas, Brahmans wore copper coloured *pagdi*. Rajputs wore six coloured Rumal on their heads as headgear. The Rajput men wore Ghaghra. The women's dress was more colourful. They wore Ghaghra, choli and *odhna* whereas, the women from lower strata of society wore *Dhabla*.<sup>289</sup>

The climate of Bagad put the life of Bagadis in a precarious condition that required extraordinary measures to tackle. Bagad offered very less resources for the people to survive comfortably. The harsh environment determined the living conditions and shaped the lifestyle of the Bagadis. The unpredictability of the rain, the frequency of famine, extreme heat and cold enabled the Bagadi psyche of preparing for the imminent, thinking for the long term, organising for the distressed time, surviving on the barest minimum to save for the future and preserving food for the summer months. The agriculture produce could provide for only half the year as the agriculture was completely based on rain because of deep water table and absence of any river. The Bagadis ate less but stored more for the rest of the months so that they could survive on little grain they produce from the Kharif season. The ladies of the house cut and dried the fruits, shrubs, herbs, seeds of the local flora that was consumed during the summer season. So,

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<sup>289</sup> Ratanlal Misra, *Mandawa Nagar ka Itihas: Kala, Samaj aur Sanskriti* (Mandawa: Nagar Vikas Sansthan, 1990), 130.

there is a huge variety of consumables in the diet of Bagadis that are eaten as dry fruits and vegetables. The common perception in our country is that the dry fruits are almonds, walnuts, apricot, dates, figs, raisins etc. but the Bagadi dry fruits are all local such as *khokha, kair, boriya, kachri, kachra, kachar, kakadi, chaptiya, fog, goond, matira, sangari, tindasi, kumathiya, Ramfali* etc. Spices were also sun dried to reduce the moisture content which would enable longer life of the spices. These fruits and vegetables were prepared mostly as dried vegetables without the water because water was very difficult to come by. The dry dishes preparation was a speciality and an adaptation according to the practical use of available resources. This way of dried vegetable cuisine was pervasive all through the Bagad whether it be southern Punjab or Sheoran *pargana* in the east. Water was mainly used for only drinking only otherwise every household chore and activity was done without using any water. Utensils are still cleaned with ash and soil instead of water in Rajasthan. Bathing and washing clothes with water was a rarity because of the utter lack of water, or it can also be said that bathing and washing clothes was not practised in Bagad at all. So, the activities that are done with the use of water in other parts of India were done without water. It is a common saying in Bagad that one can get milk easily in Bagad but not water to drink. So, the life of Bagadi people had adapted and adjusted itself in such a manner that water was least used. Sant Sundradas's famous *chaupai* about Fatehpur's women showcase the living conditions and manners of a common Bagadi women who would perform all her daily chores practically without water.

The main crops of Bagad were Bajra (Millet), Moth (*Vigna Aconitifolia*), Chana (Chickpeas) and Chulai. Bajra was the staple crop and formed the major part of diet during the winter season. Chapati and Khichdi made of Bajra were common dishes during the winter months that could be eaten with ghee, milk, curd and buttermilk. Wheat was not grown in Bagad except at few places such as Chhapar and Nali area of Bhatner so, wheat was a luxurious crop that was imported mainly for the consumption of the wealthy class. Sugarcane was also

not grown in Bagad, so all the products made out of sugarcane were very rare and expensive which only the rich could afford. Preparations like halwa and laddoo were cooked only during a feast on special occasions such as marriage function and death feast. So, the life of a Bagadi was difficult that inculcated a resolute and resilient character of the Bagadi men that knew how to survive during the difficult time.

The difficult terrain had trained the Bagadis to save money and expense it judiciously. The money was expended mainly at the occasion of marriage and death otherwise most of the activities happened through exchange of kind. The feast organised at the time of marriage and death were considered as the main reasons for debt because it required money which a common man could not afford easily. The recurring famine was another big reason for the poverty because all the grains of the previous season's crop were already consumed by the end of the year and cost of grain in the market would become exorbitantly high which the majority of population could not buy. A normal villager could not save much as he lived on the verge of poverty with meagre amount of money saved for contingency which would get expended in situation like famine, marriage ceremony and death ceremony.

Malcolm Lyall Darling had surveyed the region of Bagad under Hisar district of British India. He had keenly observed the ways and manners of peasants in Bagad. He observed that due to the frequent droughts in Bagad the Bagadi Jats have become thrifty in spending and consuming the grains. They have learnt to manage in very less means that help them survive even in the successive lean years when rain does not come. They store the crop and fodder that would last for at least one year as otherwise this could mean death to them and the cattle sooner or later.<sup>290</sup> He expresses his views in the following words, "accordingly the Jat is a man of frugal habits and pinches himself at every turn. On a journey he walks shoes in hand; at night

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<sup>290</sup> Malcolm Lyall Darling, *Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1934), 134.

he spares his lamp; and when he goes abroad, unlike the peasant farther north, he wears a homespun puggaree, and if it coils droopingly about his head, it is because it is only five or six yards long instead of the normal ten or twelve. His diet too is of a Lenten simplicity. Few touch meat and no one eats eggs: 'there is no habit.' Most live entirely on grain, buttermilk, and ghi, eating bread made of the wheat in the hot and of millet in the cold."<sup>291</sup> It is important to note here that the civil servant Malcolm had recorded these observations in 1920s when the crop like wheat had been grown and two crops a year had become normal. But, during the medieval centuries, it was not so, as wheat was not grown in Bagad except at a few places in very miniscule quantity. It was also not possible to grow two crops in a year at that time so it was not possible to store grain for one year in advance. Other than these changes, the observation and statement of Malcolm Lyall Darling are not off the mark.

Droughts and famines were regularly occurring natural phenomena. In the thirty years' time, on an average, ten normal famine (*अकाल*) and three high intensity (*दुर्भिक्ष*) famines used to occur in Bagad. The people had adapted themselves to the extreme vagaries of nature. People used to eat even the inedible thorny shrubs and bushes.<sup>292</sup> A local informed that *moth* (*मोठ-Vigna aconitifolia*) was eaten more than *Bajri* and in the days of drought and famine flour of *moth* was mixed with flour of *Janti* tree's bark and eaten.<sup>293</sup> The condition of Bagad in drought can be understood by Malcolm Darling Lyall's experience of travelling in it; "I remember a year in Hissar when we had less than four inches (of rainfall), and a man could ride for fifty miles and see nothing greener than the poisonous *akk* (*Calotropis gigantea*)."<sup>294</sup> Migration in

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> People use to eat the mixture of flour and thorny grass called *bhurat*, core of *ber* (plum) and bark of *Janti* tree.

<sup>293</sup> Rajkumar Khinchar. (Peasant, village Chachibas Bada) interviewed by Prateek in April 2008.

<sup>294</sup> Malcolm Lyall Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1928), 92.

large numbers was a common under such circumstances. The locals told me that the people from Bagad would migrate towards Haryana during famine. Sometimes they would take their animals with them. They elders used to go to Hisar, Bhiwani for doing labour such as cutting crops or making bricks. Men from every village used to go in groups and one or two people would come in between to disburse the money to every household. Women never use to migrate for doing such labour. Almost all able bodied men flocked towards Haryana and came upon the end of famine.<sup>295</sup> People also dug and cleaned the water bodies of the area in such condition when all the water had been evaporated or consumed. A curious point to note here is that only the Jats told me about the migrations and the Kyamkhani Rajputs did not remember such a tradition. It seems that the high caste Rajputs did not worked as labours.

Some of the proverbs popular about the famines are following:

टूट गई ताखड़ी, फूट गए बाट ।  
जीए बणिये, अर मर गए जाट ॥<sup>296</sup>

(The Baniyas hoarded the grain and earned great profits in the famines whereas, a Jat would die of hunger as he wouldn't be able to buy costly grain.)

टूट गई गाडी ,मर गए बैल ।<sup>297</sup>  
बिन मुकलावे हो लयी गैल ॥

(The wagons got destroyed and the ox died in the famine. A bride went to her in-laws' house without any fanfare.)

एक रोटी मैं बलध बिक्या अर एक पीसै मैं ऊँट ।  
चौतीस नै तै खो दिया भाई गाय भैंस का बूट ॥<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Many people told me these facts during interviews such as Ramkumar Khinchar (Chachibas bada), Phoolaram Jat (Tajsar).

<sup>296</sup> C.B. Singh Sheoran, *Sheoran Bawani (Loharu) ka Hairatangez Itihas* (Hisar: Modern Publishers, 2008), 91

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

(The famine forced people to sell their ox and camel in exchange for mere a chapatti and a paisa. The famine of year 34 destroyed the breed of cattle.)

चौंतीसे नै चौंतीस मारे, जीए बैस कसाई |<sup>299</sup>  
वोह मारे ताखड़ी, अर उसनै छुरी चलाई ॥

(The famine of year 34 killed many, only the Baniyas and butcher thrived. One profited by high grain prices and the other by selling the meat of dead animals.)

काल पचहतरा इसा देख्या, मार दिए जमींदार ।  
हलोटिया करण नै तरसै सूखे खाती अर लुहार ॥<sup>300</sup>

(The famine of year 75 destroyed peasants, carpenters and ironsmiths.)

आधो रह्यो ऊखली, आधो रह्यो छाज ।  
सांगर साटै धण गई, अब मदरो मदरो गाज ॥<sup>301</sup>

(A peasant sold his wife for *sangari* [fruit of *Janti* tree]. It would be difficult for him to lead a lonely life, so he is advised to be patient and lead it somehow.)

Suicide, selling children, women<sup>302</sup> or *roti-satta*<sup>303</sup> system was fairly common in entire western Rajasthan.<sup>304</sup> *Basipana* (from *basna* or to settle) was another well-established custom practised in the years of famine wherein a woman (her husband would migrate for earning money to some other place) with her children would settle in a wealthy high caste man's house for entire life in lieu of shelter, food and money. This was a form of servitude commonly

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>301</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan-Nagar Sri, 1974), 13.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Roti satta was a practice in which a woman or child was given to a high caste wealthy man in lieu of food and shelter. It literally means in exchange for *rotis* (bread).

<sup>304</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurna Itihas*, 13.

practised in medieval Rajasthan. The women and her children would thus lost her complete rights whatsoever. This form of servitude was sanctioned by the state and official papers of the contract were made by the state in *basipana* and *roti-satta* both.



## Chapter 6

### The Economic Patterns of Bagad

The earliest settlements of the Bagad region are all situated on the eastern side near its borders. The inscriptions are the only credible sources that inform us about the significant towns of Bagad in early medieval period. These inscriptions were placed at the temples, pilgrimages centres and public utility structures like wells.<sup>305</sup> Reading these inscriptions along with the Jain texts of early medieval period gives a fair idea of the towns, markets and business community residing in Bagad. These towns were Narbhattpur, Bhatner, Kanyanayan, Jhunjhunu, Chidawa, Rini, Sirsa and Fatehpur in the Lodhi period. The Jain Baniyas' sizable population and presence of Jain Chaityas and temples suggest that these towns had large markets and trade taking place in Bagad. The route of Jain *sanghas*, which were large pilgrimage groups that visited the Jain religious places of importance suggest that these towns were settled on the trading route from Gujarat-Marwar-Bagad-Delhi to further in the Gangetic plains.<sup>306</sup> The fact that the earliest towns and markets of Bagad were all concentrated on the eastern border shows that the population was concentrated towards the less sandy and arid areas. The sandy core of the Bagad had very less and scattered population due to the difficult living conditions. All the older towns and settlements of Bagad are all situated on the eastern side of Bagad such as Chidawa, Rini, Narhad, Kanina, Bhatner, Sirsa, Dadrewa, Jhunjhunu and

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<sup>305</sup> Ratanlal Mishra, *Rajasthan ke Abhilekh: Shekhawati Pradesh* (Fatehpur: Sri Saraswati Pustakalaya, 1991), 67-70.

<sup>306</sup> Mahopadhyay Vinaysagar, *Khartargachh ka Brihad Itihas* (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharti Akademy, 2005), 160.

Chhapar, Khatu, Didwana on the southern border and Pallu, Pungal on the western side, however not much is known about Pallu. The polity of medieval Rajputana pushed the political powers into the core arid areas that gave birth to the places like Fatehpur and Churu which became the populous centres of Bagad taking the centre of activity from the peripheral towns to the core.

The northern town of Bhatner and Sirsa were on the route towards Delhi therefore, all the invaders who approached Delhi came through the Bagad and destroyed these towns in the process. Similarly, the south eastern border of Bagad where Dadrewa was situated near Hansi was also not far from Delhi, it also bore the brunt of the Turkic army which resulted in tragic battles that killed the entire family of the reigning Rana Guga of Dadrewa. These attacks happening from time to time destructed the temples and markets of the towns. The Jain sources inform that towns like Jhunjhunu, Kanina, Narhad were attacked by the invading Ghaznavid armies that looted the Jain temples and destroyed the towns. They took away the precious statues of Jain deities with them to Delhi and some were buried in the sand dunes by the Jain themselves to save them from destruction.<sup>307</sup> The Jain Baniyas were expert at accounts maintaining and were considered as wise among the natives therefore, the invading Turks captured the able Jains and took them away. They wanted to utilise their traditional knowledge of business and accounts for their profit. One Jinprabhsuri, who was a master of Ramal Vidya was touring the country and went to a place where “Turks” were ruling. The Jain Acharya was famous for his Ramal Vidya that attracted the attention of one Turk who seemed to an important man. He tested the knowledge of Jinprabhsuri by asking him what is in his hand. Jinprabhsuri answered that he has a lump of sand, one almond and one hair in his hand. The Turk checked and found it to be true, however he did not know that he has one hair in his hand as well. The

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<sup>307</sup> Jinprabhsuri, *Vividh Teerth Kalp* (Balotra: Sri Jain Shwetambar Nakoda Parshavnath Teerth, 1978), 101; Nahta Agarchand, “Muni Harikalash Virachit Wagad Desh Teerthmala” in *Varda*, 2 (1972), 20.

Turk got impressed by the Jain and asked him to work for him as his power to see the unseen could prove beneficial for him. However, Jinprabhsuri was wary of him and thought that the “Yavans” are evil and deceiving. The Turk might murder him, so he escaped from his house at night and came back to Bagad again.<sup>308</sup>

Gunchandra Gani was another Jain follower from Bagad who was captured by the Turks because of his expertise in business and accounting activities. A Turk thought that he can work for him as a *Bhandari*. They prisoned him and handcuffed him. He recited the Namaskar mantra repeatedly for one lac times that broke the chains. He escaped from the confinement of the Turks by hiding at an old woman’s house at night. He then returned to his home and became an ascetic due to this incident.<sup>309</sup> These incidents belong to the late eleventh and early twelfth century during the period of Yugpradhan Jindattsuri of Khartargachh.

In 1318 A.D. the Jain pilgrims travelling from Merta, Nagaur reached the town of Narhad or Narbhat as mentioned in the Jain sources. The Jain pilgrimage *sangh* under the guidance of Jindattsuri worshipped at the grand temple where a statue of nine snake hoods of Parsavnath was present. A large number of Jain followers welcomed the pilgrims with joyous celebrations. They next reached the town of Kanyanayan or Kanina<sup>310</sup> which was apparently ruled by the Turks as per the Jain Prakrit sources. Thakur Pheru who worked in the Khalji administration and wrote *Ratnapariksha* belonged to this place whose name is mentioned among the prominent people of the then Kanina in the Jain sources. This was a period when Khalji dynasty was ruling the Delhi Sultanate. The Muslim cavalry guarded this large congregation of pilgrims who were coming from the Narhad. The same *sangh* came back from

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<sup>308</sup> Mahopadhyay Vinaysagar, *Khartargachh ka Brihad Itihas* (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharti Academy, 2005), 46.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>310</sup> Kanina is situated at 20 kilometres far from Mahendragarh, Haryana.

Delhi and visited same towns of Kanina and Narhad where Jainis from other towns and villages of Bagad such as Jhunjhunu and Khatu reached there as well. The text talks of Bagad as a separate region where the Jains had a strong religious network. The Jains are known to be involved in business activities but it must be kept in mind that not all the Baniyas and Jains were doing business for living as much population was also living in villages and practised agro-pastoralism like other rural communities. The above information of the Jain sources suggest that the towns of Bagad which were situated on the route from Gujarat-Marwar-Delhi had significant population of Jains who were mainly involved in the trade business. The towns of Narhad and Kanina were important stops before Delhi as the *sangha* took this route several times. Other significant places of Bagad which get mention in the Jain sources are Pallu, Rini, Jhunjhunu and Khatu.

The inscriptions dating to eleventh to fourteenth century found from Jhunjhunu, Narhad and Rini provide information regarding construction of temples, statue installation and well construction etc.<sup>311</sup> These inscriptions corroborate the Jain "*Teerth Mala*" narratives that these towns were busy trading centres on the route to Gujarat-Delhi. The Khartargachh branch of Shwetambar Jainism was very active in this entire route length from Gujarat to Delhi and further in Gangetic plains. The Khartargachh originated in Patan, Gujarat in 1013 A.D.<sup>312</sup> and spread to various regions through the trading community which was settled in major trading towns along the trade routes. As we have seen that the trading community was a catalyst in disseminating the Bhakti philosophy and religion in Bagad through same process using the

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<sup>311</sup> Ratan Lal Mishra, *Epigraphical Studies of Rajasthan Inscriptions* (New Delhi: B.R. Publications, 1990), 96-102.

<sup>312</sup> Agarchand Nahta, "Khartargachh ka Shraman Samuday" in *Khartargachh ka Itihas*, vol.1, ed. Mahopadhyay Vinaysagar (Ajmer: Dada Jindattsuri Ashtam Shatabdi Mahotsav Swagatkarini Samiti Ajmer, 1956), 6.

network of trading routes, similar process seems to have worked in the early medieval and medieval period for the Khartargachh branch of Jainism.

The economic history of Bagad can be understood through the social history of the Baniyas as direct sources of economic history on Fatehpur are not extant anymore. If we follow the movement, migration and immigration of the traders and merchants in and outside Bagad, we can understand an economic trend of the region. The Baniyas were involved in the philanthropist works from the beginning with a motivation to save their memory in the posterity. They placed inscription stones declaring their family history and lineage in detail with their names and surnames that carried their social history as well. It was a common practice for the Baniyas to keep the place of their residence or origin as surname, for example, surname Bagadi signifies the place of origin as Bagadi. Likewise Hisariya were who hailed originally from Hisar, Khandelwal who hailed from Khandela, Dhusar who hailed originally from Dhosi, Jhunjhunuwala who hailed from Jhunjhunu, Pilaniya who belonged to Pilani, Rampuriya belonged to Rampur so forth so on.

We have already discussed the instrumental role of the Baniya community in founding Fatehpur by investing heavily in its infrastructure development, construction of market, temples, ashrams, wells and *baodis*. They linked Fatehpur to the trade route from Multan-Sindh-Gujarat-Marwar-Hisar-Delhi and to smaller market towns such as Didwana, Khatu, and Jhunjhunu etc. Fatehpur rose to prominence in the Mughal period when it became the prime city of Bagad which attracted the Baniyas from Haryana and other villages, small towns of Bagad to settle down in Fatehpur. This way it attracted a wealthy population who became an asset that increased its prosperity manifold. Fatehpur had become a very wealthy city which the Jaipur state wanted to annex in the aftermath of Mughal decline. Immigration of Baniyas into Fatehpur first happened in fifteenth century when wealthy merchants from Hisar came to setup a new market. As the Kyamkhanis became important nobles of the Mughals during

Jahangir and Shahjahan's reign the city's stability and prosperity also increased. The well-known *havelis* of Shekhawati were first constructed in Fatehpur that set a trend and architecture of its own.

### **Decline of Fatehpur and Migration of Fatehpuriya Baniyas within Bagad**

After the defeat of Kyamkhanis in 1730's, the Shekhawat's acquired most of the areas under the erstwhile Fatehpur principality by the grace of Jaipur state. They further divided those areas among themselves and setup new towns in Bagad in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fatehpur did not get the due attention from the rulers of Sikar who exploited the rich resources of Fatehpur. The Shekhawats extorted huge amount of money from the Baniyas multiple times that upset the community very much. They left the city in protest and started settling in newer towns such as Churu, Ramgarh, Ratangarh, Bikaner, Navalagarh, Mukundgarh, Bissau and Mandawa etc.

With the decline of the Mughal authority and rise of the East India Company's rule the Rajputana became better aligned with the rest of the areas under Company. The business minded approach of the EIC energised the long distance trade routes of India. Prof. G.S.L. Devra opines that after the decline of the Mughal power, the long distance trade routes used at that period also became dysfunctional in the eighteenth century. Instead, the local and regional routes which were in place in the pre-Mughal era again became active. The rise of the successor states and the Maratha power stabilised the economy and due to this new centres came into existence. These centres created a demand for goods and articles that induced the long distance trade again.<sup>313</sup> The popular route that was used by all the forces attacking Delhi passed through

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<sup>313</sup> G.S.L Devra, "Formation and Growth of Mandis and Chowkis in Western Rajasthan, AD 1700-1830" in *Cities in Medieval India*, eds. Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014), 247.

Bagad. This route passed through Bhatner-Sirsa-Hisar-Hansi-Delhi was much popular in the Sultanate period again became active in the eighteenth century.

The geographical location of Bagad was such that major trade routes joining different parts of India passed through it. The EIC ensured that these trade routes remain clear and functioning by deploying its military troops in Bagad that forced the recalcitrant Thakurs to surrender the forts to EIC and controlling the Dacoits of Bagad. The trade became safer and smoother that minimised the roles of smaller Thakurs in the political economy of Bagad. The large states like Bikaner, Sikar and minor Thikanas like Churu had their income from the movement of trade goods in their territory.

### **Fatehpuriya Identity of the Baniyas**

Almost all the famous *Seths* of the various towns of Shekhawati hail from Fatehpur originally. Eighteenth century saw the emergence of many new towns due to the victory of Shekhawats over the Kyamkhanis who scrambled their entire territory among themselves. Each of the prince build a township by his name such as Navalgarh, Mukundgarh, Laxmangarh etc. They constructed small forts, *havelis* and palaces in these towns and asked the wealthy traders to settle down there. As Fatehpur had been the capital of Bagad for many centuries now, it had become a centre of wealth and prosperity that had a population of Baniyas who had the ability to fund the new towns and markets and expertise to run the business in new places. The Baniyas were not only involved in personal business but were also employed in the state administration as bureaucrats who run the state finances efficiently. After the coming of Shekhawats, Fatehpur remained a neglected city because the administrative centre of the Shekhawats was Sikar. The Shekhawats had no attachment to Fatehpur nor had any vision to run the administration or develop Fatehpur further, they started exploiting the local wealthy *Seths*. This forced the

Baniyas of Fatehpur to leave it for better prospects in Bagad. So, the Fatehpur first saw the immigration of Baniyas from other parts of Bagad during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth<sup>314</sup> centuries from Hisar, Meerut, Rewari, Osian, Multan, Rohtak and other parts of Bagad whereas, the migration started in eighteenth century.

Munshi Sohanlal, the official historian of the Bikaner state has stated very important fact that finds echo in the Marwari sources that after the defeat of the Kyamkhanis, Nahar Singh Shekhawat became the master of Fatehpur. He tortured the Baniyas of Fatehpur which led the Baniyas to flee from Fatehpur. The Churu Thikanedar Hari Singh gave them shelter in Churu against the Shekhawat exigencies in 1739 A.D.<sup>315</sup> The migration of Fatehpur Baniyas proved beneficial to Churu because they brought wealth, business and experience to run the administration with them that elevated the status of Churu as the town of wealthy Seths.

One of the most prominent family was the Poddar family of Churu and Ramgarh who were among the first to leave Fatehpur in protest of extortion by the Sikar Raja. They belonged to Bansal *gotra* of the Agarwal Baniyas. This family was in service of the Kyamkhani Nawabs as the *Fotedars* or the *Khajanchi* of the treasury.<sup>316</sup> After the decline of Fatehpur as a trading city, the Fotedars went to Bathinda on the northern border of Bagad to setup business there. The head of the family was Chaturbhuj who had four sons that went with him to Bathinda where they quickly rose to new heights by earning vast amount of wealth.<sup>317</sup> Chaturbhuj settled in Churu in the first half of eighteenth century along with his four sons. But, disagreements grew between the Potedar family and the Churu Thakur Shivji Singh that gave an opportunity

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<sup>314</sup> Brijkishore Bhargava, *Indigenous Banking in Ancient and Medieval India* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Co., 1934), 215.

<sup>315</sup> Munshi Sohanlal, *Tawarikh Raj Sri Bikaner* (n.d.), 38.

<sup>316</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Potedar Sangrah ke Farsi Kagzat* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Sansthan Nagar Sri, 1978), 1-2.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*



to the Sikar ruler Rao Devi Singh to approach them to settle in his territory. On the invitation of the Sikar state, they moved to a small village in the outskirts of Churu called 'Nosha ki Dhani' under the Sikar rule. The Potedars brought wealth and fame to the small village and transformed it into a sprawling town in a few years' time. A lot of Baniyas were attracted to this new place that had lower tariffs and greater independence in comparison to Churu which made it a town of the *Seths* literally. It came to known as the 'Ramgarh Sethan'.<sup>318</sup>

Similarly, the town of Ratanagarh which lied in the territory of the Bikaner state was founded after the decline of Fatehpur by the Maharaja Bikaner Surat Singh in 1741 A.D. Suratgarh is situated near Fatehpur on the western side, on the territory that once belonged to the Kyamkhanis of Fatehpur only. Munshi Sohanlal described Ratanagarh as modern town that was carefully planned, hence the streets and markets are in straight line and the town is orderly constructed. Most of the Baniyas are Agarwals who are notorious for being quarrelsome and hooliganism. They mostly came from Fatehpur and Ramgarh.<sup>319</sup>

Fatehpur had acquired great significance in the Mughal period that influenced the identities and lives of the people living in Fatehpur. The Baniyas who migrated from Fatehpur came to be known as Fatehpuriyas. Some of them even used Fatehpuriya as surnames as an acknowledgement of their origin from Fatehpur. This identity makes it easy to trace at least some of the persons who had moved to different towns and *mandis* of Bagad. Rajgarh, was founded by Maharaja Bikaner Gaj Singh in 1765 A.D. after his son Kunwar Raj Singh on the eastern border of his kingdom that was near to Bhiwani, another trading town in the Haryana territory. The Fatehpuriyas shifted there as well as can be seen by the list of prominent traders of Bikaner by Dr. Girijashankar Sharma. Seth Ganpatrai Kedarnath Chaudahry Fatehpuriya was a big name among the foremost business personalities of Bikaner state. He had the honour

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Munshi Sohanlal, *Tawarikh Raj Sri Bikaner* (n.d.), 42.

and privilege of wearing the gold bangle, silver stick gifted by the Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner.<sup>320</sup> Bikaner also received some of the wealthy traders of Fatehpur just after the defeat of the Kyamkhanis. One such big trader was Hansraj Fatehpuriya who was a famous Seth of Bikaner. He operated between Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Delhi. Bikaner and Fatehpur were both the major centres of wool trade as can be seen by the Zagat Bahi no. 81 of 1750A.D. wherein the Hansraj Fatehpuriya traded 18 *man* of woollen cloth from Bikaner to Delhi.<sup>321</sup>

As we have seen that Fatehpur had become part of the identity of the Baniya community that gave them their surname Fatehpuriya, similarly Bagadi identity had also become crystallised among the people of Bagad belonging to every caste and community. Bagadi identity signify belonging to a large region rather than a particular city, but as Fatehpur represented the Bagad region there is a possibility that Bagadi surname was popular among the traders of Fatehpur as well. As the Kyamkhanis were called as the Bagadis, there is a strong possibility that some families of Fatehpur Baniya community also used this as their surname. Other castes and communities residing in Fatehpur still use Bagadi as their surnames. The name 'Bagad' had been popular among the masses since eleventh century as can be seen from the Harsha inscription and Jain sources, however, time of its use as part of individual or community's identity is not exactly known. Two references of Bagadi Rajputs belong to the early medieval period, one in the Prithviraj Raso and another as the rulers of Chhapar before the Mohils. However, during the long medieval centuries, it is difficult to pinpoint at the time and place where Bagadi as a part of identity started with the common people of Bagad other than Rajputs. We find the surname 'Bagadi' in the Baniya community as quite popular during the eighteenth century when the history of this community gets registered in some form or

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<sup>320</sup> Girijashankar, *Marwadi Vyapari* (Bikaner: Vikas Prakashan, 2017), 174-78.

<sup>321</sup> Rajendra Kumar, "Bikaner Rajya ke Arthik Itihas Lekhan mein Puralekhiya Stroton ki Bhumika: Zagat Bahiyon ke Vishesh Sandarbh mein" in *Historical Documents and History*, ed. Anuradha Mathur (Jodhpur: Rajasthani Granthagar, 2016), 13.

another. Some of the well-known people with Bagadi surnames were Seth Chand Ratandas Bagadi of Bikaner, Ramratandas of Bikaner, Shिवbaksh Bagadi of Bikaner, Bhikhamchand Suganchand Bagadi, Prayagdas Mathuradas Bagadi<sup>322</sup> and Seth Ramkishandas Bagadi<sup>323</sup> etc.

The first migration of Marwadi tradesmen from Jodhpur state to Bengal happened in the late sixteenth century. After that in seventeenth century much more tradesmen went towards Bihar and Bengal. These migration waves were limited to the Marwad region only.<sup>324</sup> This is the prime reason why all the people who went outside of Rajputana came to be known as the Marwadis. However, the later migrations of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries took place from the region of Bagad. The people outside of Rajputana could not distinguish between different cultures, languages and people of Rajputana therefore, the Bagadis were also fitted into to the already made Marwadi identity. There are instances when the Bagadis asserted their separated identity from the Marwadis and counted themselves as belonging to their particular native places and speaking different language such as Churu wali.<sup>325</sup> The Bagadi cultural identity had weakened since the demise of the Kyamkhanis (the phenomena which is still present) led to the splinter into many different identities such as Churu, Shekhawati, Bikaneri, Marwadi, Rajasthani etc.

The Mahajans were part of the administration of the state. They held the important posts of treasurers as did the Purohits and Poddars of Fatehpur. The Purohits also advanced large amount of loan to the Nawab of Fatehpur to enable him to pay salary to his troops so that he could join the Mughal royal camp.<sup>326</sup> The Poddars had also given very huge amount of loans

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<sup>322</sup> Girijashankar, *Marwadi Vyapari* (Bikaner: Vikas Prakashan, 2017), 172-78.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>325</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan Nagar Sri, 1974), 484.

<sup>326</sup> Brijkishore Bhargava, *Indigenous Banking in Ancient and Medieval India* (Bombay: D.B. Taraporevala Co., 1934), 225.

to the Bikaner state. One such loan paper of four lac rupees is present at the Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan Nagar Sri museum Churu.<sup>327</sup>

### **The Growth of Chowkis and Mandis in Eighteenth Century**

When large volumes of goods and articles were traded through the region of Bagad, the Bikaner and Sikar states developed a network of small towns called as *chowkis* and *mandis* on the eastern borders of their territory. The initial function of these *chowkis* was to collect the transit taxes from the caravans of the merchants. These *chowkis* were transit posts and police check posts where the police and bureaucrats of the state were deployed in collecting the revenue and regulating the trade traffic.<sup>328</sup> The employees of the state in the *mandis* were called as *Bholawaniya*. These *chowkis* and *mandis* were preferred as the halting point by the traders for security purposes. These *chowkis* and *mandis* then developed into *qasbas* or smaller towns where markets also were established.<sup>329</sup> The majority of inhabitants of these *mandis* were Baniyas who had come in these *mandis* from all of the Rajputana such as Nagore, Jalore, and Jodhpur etc.

The *mandis* under Bikaner state were Churu, Reni, Nohar, Bhadra, Rajgarh on the eastern border whereas, Pugal, Anupgarh, Lunkaransar, Mahajan on the western side, Sujangarh on the southern side.

#### *Taxes*

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<sup>327</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas* (Churu: Lok Sanskriti Shodh Sansthan Nagar Sri, 1974), 486-8.

<sup>328</sup> G.S.L Devra, "Formation and Growth of Mandis and Chowkis in Western Rajasthan, AD 1700-1830" in *Cities in Medieval India*, eds. Yogesh Sharma and Pius Malekandathil (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014), 245.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

The local terms for import was *paisar*, export was *naikal*, and passing through transportation was called *Bahatiwaan* or *Bahat*.<sup>330</sup> The income from these *mandis* was mainly by the transit tax levied on the articles and goods carried by the caravans. The main transit tax was the Jagat tax which was levied on the goods coming in the state, going outside of the state, transporting through the state and selling in the state. Some of the other main taxes were following:

Rahdari: It was realised for transporting goods through the state.

Singoti: Tax on the sale of cattle and livestock.

Baithak: Tax levied upon artisans and merchants on finished products for sale in weekly bazar in a town or big village.

Kori Bhom ki; it was levied by the *Bhomias* or local *jagirdars* and *pattadars* from whose territory the traffic passed through.

Rupota: Tax levied on shops, camel traders and any trader who sell commodities in the state.

Rukhwali Bhachh: It was levied from every person living in a town and *mandis* in lieu of providing him security.

Chowkidara Bhachh: It was a tax collected in lieu of patrolling and keeping watch on the shops of markets at night.

Sahukara Bhachh: Bhachh means tax in Marwadi. Sahukara Bhachh was levied on the Mahajans who was involved in the business of money lending. It was not fixed.

Takadi: It was levied on shopkeepers who dealt in ghee, *khand*, tobacco and groceries or *kiryana*.

Sone Rupe ki Chhadami: It was levied on jewellers.

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<sup>330</sup> Girijashankar, *Marwadi Vyapari* (Bikaner: Vikas Prakashan, 2017), 31.

Dalali: It was levied on brokers involved in trade of wool, cotton clothes, fodder, grass, bullion etc.

Hundawan: It was levied on the agents who received commission on writing the hundis.

Mukatiya: It was levied on various kinds of *Mukatis* or merchants working on tender basis.

Haat Bhada: It was rent of the shops.

Mapa: It was levied on the sale of any kind of commodity in the state.

Tolawatiya: Tax levied on weighing of commodities.

Kiyali: It was levied on weighing of the goods.

Mohrano: It was collected for stamping the weighed goods.

Taka Ghadai ka Lajma: It was the tax on the merchants who ordered minting of new coins in the mint of the state.

Kandoiyon ki Laag: Levied on the producers of sweets.

Kirayat Logan ri Bhachh: It was levied on various types of artisanal castes involved in the business of producing artefacts and goods.

Bichhwati Maal par Chungi: It was collected from the merchants who sold their articles on pavements or in open.

Tahbazari ki Zagat: It was levied on running a shop in the market.

Ghee ka Kunpa: It was collected from merchants involved in producing and selling ghee.

Resham ka Lajma: It was collected from the merchants who did business of silk.

The monetisation of land revenue (*hasil*) demand in Bikaner state led to commercialisation of the economy, wherein the agricultural surplus was converted into money by selling the produce in the markets. The cash inflow in the economy boosted the mercantile activities in the eighteenth century when a network of *mandis* was in place. The Baniyas

channelized the surplus of the economy towards running businesses using the local agricultural and artisanal products.<sup>331</sup>

The Jagat taxes had become the major portion of the overall income of the Bikaner state. A *mandi* had about five *chowkis* under it that managed the mercantile traffic by collecting the Jagat taxes. The *mandi* of Rini was one of the most important *mandis* in the eighteenth century. G.S.L. Devra has calculated the income, expenditure and amount of Jagat taxes out of total collection of Rini *mandi* and of *chowkis* under it. The figures show that the Jagat taxes were more than fifty percent of total income of the *mandi* going up to eighty percent in some years.<sup>332</sup>

These *mandis* were the centres of exchange of commodities coming from all over India, China, Central Asia and Europe. These *mandis* did not have big population but the concentration of the Baniyas made them the commercial hubs on all India basis. The firms established in these towns such as Churu were so big that their branches were present in every important town of India, China and European countries as well. The hundis issued from Churu had acceptance all over India.

### *Trade Routes*

The geographical position of the Bagad was such that it joined the Gangetic plains to West, Central India to West, and West to North India. All the invaders came from the western side to Delhi and further through Bagad only as it surrounded Delhi from the Western side. The eleventh century Jain records show that trade routes from Gujarat towards Delhi and

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<sup>331</sup> G.S.L. Devra, "Formation and Growth of Mandis and Chowkis in Western Rajasthan, AD 1700-1830", 251.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

Kashmir passed through Bagad. The traffic from Delhi to Sindh, Multan and further to Central Asia also passed through it. When the old long routes of trade were revived in the eighteenth century Bagad again became a region of prime importance. There were several trade routes which passed through the region. Some of the important ones are following:

#### Internal Trade Routes

- ❖ Bikaner to Kota: Bikaner-Churu-Jaipur-Tonk-Deoli-Bundi-Kota
- ❖ Bikaner to Jaipur: Bikaner-Churu-Sikar-Jaipur
- ❖ Rajgarh to Pali: Rajgarh-Churu-Nawalgarh-Didwana-Nagaur-Pali
- ❖ Rajgarh to Jaisalmer: Rajgarh-Rini-Ratangarh-Phalodi-Pokaran-Jaisalmer
- ❖ Jaisalmer to Churu- Jaisalmer-Pokaran-Phalodi-Bap-Sodawa-Churu
- ❖ Nagaur to Nohar: Nagaur-Hardesar-Nohar
- ❖ Jhunjhunu to Pali: Jhunjhunu-Fatehpur-Ladnu-Didwana-Nagaur-Pali
- ❖ Phalodi-Pugal: Phalodi-Bap-Bikaner-Pugal
- ❖ Nagaur to Pugal: Nagaur-Bikaner-Pugal
- ❖ Bikaner to Anupgarh: Bikaner-Mahajan-Anupgarh
- ❖ Ajmer to Anupgarh: Ajmer-Merta-Nagaur-Bikaner-Mahajan-Anupgarh
- ❖ Chidawa to Kota: Chidawa-Pander-Jahazpur-Bilata-Thun-Bundi-Kota
- ❖ Bikaner to Bahawalpur: Bikaner-Pugal-Bahawalpur
- ❖ Ajmer to Bhiwani: Sambhar-Didwana-Sujangarh-Rajgarh-Bhiwani<sup>333</sup>

#### External Trade Routes

- ❖ Multan to Kota: Multan-Bahawalpur-Pugal-Bikaner-Churu-Jaipur-Tonk-Deoli-Bundi-Kota

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<sup>333</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan* (Jaipur: Jaipur Publishing House, 1987), 130-31.; Girijashankar, *Marwadi Vyapari* (Bikaner: Vikas Prakashan, 2017), 20.



- ❖ Indore to Lahore: Indore-Ujjain-Jhalara Patan-Kota-Bundi-Tonk-Jaipur-Sikar-Churu-Bhadra-Sirsa-Bathinda-Lahore
- ❖ Jodhpur to Kashmir: Jodhpur-Nagaur-Hardesar-Nohar-Bhatinda-Amritsar-Kashmir
- ❖ Multan to Bikaner: Multan-Dunyapur-Kahrar-Mis-Kota-Marot-Pugal-Sobasar-Bikaner
- ❖ Bikaner to Delhi: Bikaner-Churu-Rajgarh-Bhiwani-Delhi
- ❖ Multan to Jaipur: Multan-Bahawalpur-Pugal-Bikaner-Churu-Sikar-Jaipur
- ❖ Multan to Jodhpur: Multan-Bahawalpur-Pugal-Bikaner-Nagaur-Jodhpur
- ❖ Multan to Delhi: Multan-Bahawalpur-Pugal-Rajaldesar-Churu-Rajgarh-Bhiwani-Delhi<sup>334</sup>
- ❖ Multan to Delhi: Multan-Bahawalpur-Anupgarh-Suratgarh-Bhatner-Sirsa-Hisar-Rohtak-Delhi
- ❖ Shikarpur to Bikaner: Shikarpur-Sakhar-Jaisalmer-Bap-Kolayat-Bikaner
- ❖ Shikarpur to Karauli: Shikarpur-Sakhar-Jaisalmer-Jaisalmer-Bikaner-Churu-Jaipur-Karauli
- ❖ Delhi to Bahawalpur: Delhi-Jaipur-Churu-Bikaner-Pugal-Bahawalpur
- ❖ Delhi to Ahmedabad: Delhi-Bhiwani-Rajgarh-Churu-Ladnu-Nagaur-Jodhpur-Jalore-Sirohi-Palanpur-Ahmedabad
- ❖ Agra to Khairpur: Agra-Delhi-Churu-Bikaner-Pugal-Jaisalmer-Khairpur

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<sup>334</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan* (Jaipur: Jaipur Publishing House, 1987), 133-35.

*Insecurity and Loot on the Trade Routes*

The land of Bagad was full of soil and sand dunes with very less rainfall per year, therefore the aridity and scarcity of water made camels as the ideal animal to carry load and transporting people. The long caravan of camels was called as *Katar* and the owner of the *Katar* was called as *Kataria*. The Banjaras were expert in carrying and transporting the goods from outside of Rajputana whereas, in Rajputana other castes and communities were also involved in the business of transportation in large numbers such as Raika, Raibari, Charan, Gusain, Jat, Kyamkhani and Bhat.<sup>335</sup> The transportation through bullock carts was called as *Balad* but in Bagad camels were overwhelmingly used for being more effective and practical transportation option.

As the transportation through the Bagad became frequent, the local Rajputs became active in looting the load. The powerful states tried to concentrate the money into its hands therefore they made the laws in such a manner that the local *pattadars* and *jagirdars* of the state did not get their share from the trade passing through their territory. Especially, in Bagad the problem of looting the caravans had become a serious problem that became a menace and headache for the traders and Bikaner state. The Thikanedars of Churu, Bhadra, Bhukarka, Bidasar, Rawatsar, Ajitpura, Kunbhana<sup>336</sup> and Shekhawati were illicitly involved in looting the caravans acting against Bikaner and Sikar due to the tussle over rights to collect the Jagat taxes that formed an important source of income in the Desert where agricultural revenue was very low. The Shekhawat duo of Dungji and Jawaharji of Sikar were proverbial in defying the state authority and looting the caravans regularly. They are considered as the Robin Hood of Rajasthan who looted the rich and distributed the wealth among the needy poor. Their relations in the society at large along with the rage against the state made their group so effective that

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<sup>335</sup> Girijashankar, *Marwadi Vyapari* (Bikaner: Vikas Prakashan, 2017), 24.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

people of villages around Churu and Ramgarh supported them against the state forces. The famous Mirzamal Poddar of Churu also had cordial relations with them. He even paid them to loot other traders' load. The local nexus of Rajputs and villagers worked effectively against the state forces in looting and selling the caravans including the camels. The Thikanedars provided haven to the dacoits and dhadwi who shared the loot with them. The Rajputs had also employed the Meenas to loot the caravans going through neighbouring areas. The Rathes and Johiyas were especially notorious for their fierceness and expertise in looting the *katars* near the area of Sirsa, Bhatner, Hisar, Bhadra, Rajgarh and Nohar. Later, the state of Bikaner gave them the responsibility to secure the trading routes from the eastern border of the state till Bikaner.

The Dhadvi or the dacoits had a network of espionage that informed them about the movement of the caravans that enabled them to loot the load easily. To counter the loot by the Dhadhvi groups the state gave protection to the caravans by providing armed men along with the *katar*. The Seths employed their personal security guards that carried arms and surrounded the *katar* from all sides. The Charans and Bhats were considered as holy persons who should not be killed at all. Therefore, the Baniyas employed them in large numbers to protect their load. They were positioned on the outer sides of the caravan and wore white clothes as a distinguishing factor so that the Dhadwi see them from distance. In case of attack they shouted to the looters that they are Charans and killing them would be a disgrace on their part. If at all they loot their caravan he would stab himself and the murder would be on their head. The Charans used to stab themselves in case of failing to protect the caravan.<sup>337</sup> If the looters were identified by the spies then the Charans would go in front of the house of the leader of the dacoits and blackmail him to return the looted goods or pay in cash, otherwise he would kill himself in front of his house proclaiming that he had looted the caravan and the name of the

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<sup>337</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan*, 139.

dacoit would be disgraced forever. Suicide of Charan was considered as a sinful act that was known as *Chandni*.<sup>338</sup>

An example from the *Bidawato ki Khyat* as cited by Govind Agarwal would suffice to summarise and understand the transportation of goods, security measures employed thereby and how the attacks by the *Dhadwis* used to take place. Once, goods of the Sahukars (money lenders, Seths) of Bidasar<sup>339</sup> was coming from Bhiwani. The dacoits were following the caravan from Bhiwani itself. The *kataria* from Bhiwani reached Fatehpur with safety and went back to Bhiwani as per the contract. The merchants from Fatehpur informed by writing letter to the owners of the load Beenjram Wangani and Sekhani etc. that the coming month has *Saha* (auspicious marriage days), therefore, they should hurriedly bring the goods to Bidasar. The Sahukars approached the Thakur Umaid Singh Rathore of Bidasar to bring the goods from Fatehpur safely and quickly. Thakur Umaid Singh agreed upon taking the duty, sent the Ladkhanis (branch of Shekhawat Rajputs) of Bidasar, Ghenawat and Jindrasar villages with 64 camels and 2 armed men with guns per camel, a total of 129 men towards Fatehpur. They reached Fatehpur quickly and loaded the goods and started their journey back. When they reached at their first halting point bad omens (*apshakun*) started happening. The *apshakuns* happened three times that convinced the security men that murder and destruction is bound to happen, however they continued further. They had just begun their journey saw Ladkhani Thakur of Bochi with 300 marauders in the way. The camels were instructed to sit quickly and exchange of fire started thereafter. Two fast camel riders went towards the villages Bothwas and Jindrasar to ask for help. The battle continued till the sunset wherein many people from

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<sup>338</sup> G.S.L Devra, "Formation and Growth of Mandis and Chowkis in Western Rajasthan, AD 1700-1830" in *Cities in Medieval India*, 246.

<sup>339</sup> Bidasar is a small town near Chhapar in Churu, Rajasthan.

both the sides got injured, however, nobody won the battle. The *Dhadetis* (raiders) returned back unsuccessfully and the security men continued forward with the load.

They were plying forward on their way towards Bidasar but suddenly 400 men wearing *langot* and carrying large *handis* (utensil) surrounded them. They told them that they had gathered here in anticipation on hearing the voice of gunshots that this *katar* would get looted and goods would get scattered. But, the goods did not get looted and they are now dying with hunger. Those people were so gaunt and distressed that it was not appropriate to fire gunshots to scatter them away. So, eventually the *katar* had to run away from them quickly to move further towards their destination. At last, the *katar* reached Jindrasar village at night where the Sahukars came as well. They rested the injured persons and gave jaggery and grains for them from the goods of the *katar* itself. They paid cash for buying ghee for the injured and asked them to come to Bidasar after becoming healthy again. The Sahukars took the load of the *katar* along with the other injured security men of Ghenawat village to Bidasar where they arranged for the food for the injured. The Sahukars paid 17 rupees per camel.<sup>340</sup>

### *The Trading Commodities*

The local traders supplied the daily consumables, grocery and other goods to the towns and villages of Bagad. The shopkeepers had retail shops in towns and big villages that catered the villagers. Some shopkeepers did not own a proper shop but put their products on the pavement in the market. These pavement and footpath shopkeepers were known as *pattiwals*. They sold the commodities at competitive prices such as clothes, groceries, grains, ironware etc.<sup>341</sup> The people who supplied these commodities to villages and *dhanis* were known as

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<sup>340</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas*, 480-81.

<sup>341</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan*, 78.

*pheriwals* who carried their load on camels, pony or on their back. They sold in retail catering to consumers' special demands as well. They sold ghee, edible oil, salt, sugar, *gud*, grains, spices etc. The villagers mostly paid them in kind in exchange of these items. Other than these, *Gadiya Luhar* stayed at villages to repair the iron ware and agricultural implements in exchange of grains. The *Gawariyas*, *Maniharas* also served the ladies of the villages selling items such as bangles, clothes and cosmetic products.

The commodities that came into Bagad were meant for both internal consumption and transit trade. The increasing urbanisation in the eighteenth century in the forms of *mandis* and *chowkis* increased the demand for consumption of commodities. The *chowkis* and *Mandis* had a concentrated population of bureaucrats, Baniyas and soldiers who could spend generously for their living that induced demand for various types of consumables and artefacts. As the income of the state increased the demand for internal consumption of commodities also increased. The expenditure on the *kamdari* (state employees) and *silehposh* (soldiers) had increased in the *mandis*.<sup>342</sup> The Baniyas had indulged in living luxury lifestyle that created a demand for ultra-expensive valuables such as jewellery, precious stones, expensive clothes etc.

The network of *mandis* enabled the peasant of a village to sell his grain in the market. The commercialisation had reached the rural economy as well where a simple Jat tried to save and accumulate products which could fetch him some cash by selling directly in the *mandi*. There are examples of Jats from various villages selling the extra grains in market of Ratangarh. The local Baniyas of villages were involved in buying the crop locally from the villagers and selling them at Ratangarh market.<sup>343</sup> Similarly products like milk, ghee, fodder, fresh fruits were sold by the peasants in the market of Fatehpur. The buying and selling of the livestock

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<sup>342</sup> G.S.L Devra, "Formation and Growth of Mandis and Chowkis in Western Rajasthan, AD 1700-1830" in *Cities in Medieval India*, 251.

<sup>343</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan*, 79.

was another important source of income for the peasants. There were fairs organised specially for cattle selling and buying. The fair of Guga Medhi near Nohar was one of the biggest of its kind in which people from entire Rajputana, Punjab and Haryana came. The fair was of religious nature at first because it is a pilgrimage centre of Bagad where *dargah* of Guga was constructed. Gradually, the annual religious fair acquired a commercial purpose because it was a meeting point of large number of worshippers from Haryana, Bagad, Punjab and Himachal as well. Therefore, the fair became the main commercial market fair for cattle selling. The Punjabi merchants were the main buyers who came here to buy the famous Bagadi camels, Nagauri bullocks and other animals.

The articles were mostly imported from outside into Bagad because it was a resource poor region that did not develop any speciality in production of artefacts unlike some of the other centres of production in Rajputana like Sanganer, Jodhpur, Kota and Nagaur. There is very less information on the production of artisanal products in the cities and towns of Bagad that were worth exporting outside. However, Reni was famous for manufacturing *Chhagal* which were leather bags to carry water. These were manufactured in large number and exported outside as well. *Hukkah* and *Beenti*, *Kuppa* and *Chamadposh* were also manufactured in large numbers for export purpose.<sup>344</sup> Sujangarh was famous for export of cloth and leather products. Every town had shops selling swords, Katar, Hathiya phal, Barchhe, Bhale etc. The East India Company restricted the manufacturing of the arms and ended it gradually to exterminate danger against itself that resulted in dying of the art of *silehkhana* (armoury) and metallurgy. Churu was particularly known for casting of high quality cannons.<sup>345</sup>

The items of export from the Bikaner state to Jaipur were wool, woollen fabric, dry fruits, camel, Sindh salt, alum and sugar candy. Similarly, the products sent from Bikaner state

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<sup>344</sup> Govind Agarwal, *Churu Mandal ka Shodhpurn Itihas*, 475.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

to Marwad were dry fruits, camels, *sajji*, woollen fabric, alum, Sindh-salt, lac, paper, aniseed, nutmeg, asafoetida, *harde*, dry ginger. The items sent from Bikaner state to Kota were *sajji* (fuller's earth), camels, horses, woollen clothes, dry fruit, and borax. Items sent to Mewar were camels and horses. Commodities transported from Bikaner to Jaisalmer were sugar, *gud*, cotton clothes, lac, indigo, iron, dry ginger, silk, *navsadar* and sugar candy.<sup>346</sup> Some other products of export were sesame, lac bangles, *multani mitti*, *bajra*, *moth* and salt.<sup>347</sup>

The items and valuables that were sent from rest of the Rajputana towards Bikaner were wheat, gram, opium, indigo, iron implements, silk, fine clothes, *kalabattu*, *piplamul*, bullocks, wooden furniture, chilly, turbans, scarves for women, wool, lead, unwashed fabric, *bhodol*, *kasumba*, zinc, borax, *asgandh*, *roli*, ivory, coconuts, catechu, salt, *khar*, dry fruits, alum, *gugal*, antimony, asafoetida, green chili, gallnut and woollen clothes.<sup>348</sup>

The valuable commodities imported into Bikaner by different parts of India were also in large quantities. Multan exported dry fruits, chintz, tobacco, perfumes, paints and horses. Sindh sent the items of betel-nuts, turmeric, asafoetida, alum, horses, gum, *khar*, *gugal*, rice etc. Gujarat exported clothes, black pepper, ivory, silk, dates, spices, gum-arabic, sandalwood, pearls, camphor, *doda* and musk. From Malwa Bikaner received opium, tobacco, turbans, sulphur, *gud*, clothes etc. Kashmir's pashmina and shawls had special demand among Bikaner elites. Kabul sent horses and dry fruits to Bikaner state. Bhiwani supplied *gud*, sugar, rice and wheat, whereas, Delhi exported paper and turbans.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan*, 86-7.

<sup>347</sup> Munshi Sohanlal, *Tawarikh Raj Sri Bikaner* (n.d.), 71-2.

<sup>348</sup> B.L.Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan* (Jaipur: Jaipur Publishing House, 1987), 85-87.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-1.



## Agricultural Economy

Different political powers ruled over parts of Bagad during the medieval period that impacted its agricultural economy differently in each part as the land revenue assessment and taxes was different. The Bikaner state had the sway over biggest part of Bagad. Some of it was the *watan jagir* and some was *tankhwah jagir* given by the Mughals. The *watan jagir* area was divided into *chiras*<sup>350</sup> which were the revenue circles made by the Bikaner state whereas, the *tankhwah jagir* was divided into *parganas*. The most fertile areas situated on the eastern border along with the *Khalisa* areas of the Mughals were the *Tankhwah jagir* areas of *pargana* Puniya, Beniwal, Bhatner, Sheoran.<sup>351</sup> The Bikaner state captured these Mughal *parganas* after the decline of the Mughlas, however Bikaner state had to buy some of the portion from the East India Company as well.

The other portion was directly under the Mughal *Khalisa* land near Hisar city and the rest of the area was under the Kyamkhani and Nagad Nawabs. The land revenue records of only the Bikaner state has survived therefore it wouldn't be possible to study the aspects of agricultural economy under the Nawabs.

Before delving into the tax system other than the above mentioned trade related taxes, it is important to look into the administrative and societal organisation which was the basis for taxing people. Here we would discuss only about the area of Bagad under the Bikaner state because we do not have any records regarding other areas.

The climate and geography of Bagad was adverse to the agriculture. Full-fledged agriculture was not possible due to lack of irrigation facilities in the entire Bagad from Sirsa in

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<sup>350</sup> Chira means a portion or piece.

<sup>351</sup> G.S.L Devra, *Rajasthan ki Prashasanik Vyavastha (1574 to 1818 A.D.): Bikaner Sambhag ke Sandarb Mein* (Gangashahar: Dharti Prakashan, 1981), 131.

the north to Didwana in the south. Majority of the population lived in small villages and *dhanis* that practised a mixed form of agriculture and pastoralism so that they could survive in the harsh climate. The agricultural produce was not enough for consumption for whole year so the dependence on livestock raising was very high. The agricultural activities were limited to the rainy season or *kharif* crops only. The agricultural economy was for sustenance of the people rather than surplus production. The *kharif* crops grown in Bagad were Bajra, Moth, Gwar, Jwar and Moong. Rabi was grown in a very small portion near Sirsa and Bhatner but it was not regularly grown. The *rabi* crops were wheat, *sarson* and *chana*.

The peasant under the Bikaner state was fairly heterogeneous category divided into many sub categories based on the superior rights over the land which was based on several factors out of which caste was the biggest determining factor. A normal peasant was known as *Asami*. The region of Bagad was settled by big Jat clans who ruled their respective areas whose leaders were called Chaudhary and Grasiya. The Rathores under the Rao Bika did a compromise and agreement with these powerful Jat clan leaders that they would get special rights and concessions over their areas of influence, so those villages which were there before the coming of Rathores had certain special privileges over other peasants. These Chaudharies had the right to settle new families in the village and received a tax called Malba from other simple peasants of the village. The rights of the Chaudhary could not be suppressed even by the Rajputs of the area. The Chaudhary had the duty of helping the state employees such as *huwaldars* in realising the land revenue from his village. He was considered as the middle man between the *raiyyat* and the state.<sup>352</sup>

An *Asami* could sell and give his land on rent because he was considered as the owner of the land. The *Asami* was provided with a *patta* of his land by the state as an

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 221.

acknowledgement of his rights over the land. Other type of peasant was called '*Mukati*' who took land on rent. The peasants who were newly settled were called as '*nawa*' and worked as Mukatis on the rented land. A contract was done generally for three years in which the Mukati had to pay '*malba*' and '*mukata*' as the rent money to the actual land owner.

The castes such as Teli, Suthar, Sunar, Kumhar, Meghwals etc. were involved in both agriculture and producing artefacts. They were known as 'Chakri Asamiyan'. The other group was of 'Raiyat,' who did not own land or very less land and worked on the lands of other land owning peasants. The Chaudhary gave these professional castes some land in lieu of providing their services to the villagers which was known as 'Kabza Kaminan'. Rajputs, Brahmans, Baniyas and Charans were also known as Asami but they enjoyed several exemptions and discounts on the taxes in comparison to the other castes.<sup>353</sup>

The land revenue was called as '*Hasal*' and the agricultural taxes were known as '*Bhog*,' also known as '*Mal*' and miscellaneous taxes were called as '*Rokad*.' The earliest and basic land assessment system was *Kunta* which was assessed by the state workers by assessing the standing crop. The land revenue tax was 1/5<sup>th</sup> or 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the total produce generally. The peasant had to give additional miscellaneous taxes that were realised in both cash and kind. Some of these taxes were *nali* levied on sesame crop, *siran* for food of the land revenue collection officials, *khunta* for food of officials' animals, *hujdar* was for food of officials' accompanying men, *Thakur ji* was for worshipping God and *dera kharch* was levied for staying arrangements of the officials etc.<sup>354</sup>

Another form of land assessment was known as *Dejhali* in which the land revenue was assessed according to the plough or *hal* of the peasant. The peasants who enjoyed some concession on the plough tax were called as *Pasaiti* and the tax was called *halgat*. Another

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 224.

popular way of land revenue assessment was '*Beeghedi*' that required measurement of the fields of the peasant every three years. The tax was collected in cash only which was called as *Beeghedi*. Land revenue under *Beeghedi* was six rupees per *bigha* of land.<sup>355</sup> The rate of taxes changed from time to time and were not fixed. There were different kinds of land revenue assessment modes were implemented in the state as per the suitability.

### *Taxation*

The taxes were known as *Bhachh* in local administrative language. The land revenue or *hasal* had three groups of taxes namely *Bhog* (agricultural tax), *Rokad Rakam* (additional taxes) and *Beeja Rakam* (miscellaneous taxes). It is important to understand the nature of the taxes levied by the Bikaner state described the distinctness of the Bagad's economy and resources which were weaker than the other states of Rajputana except Jaisalmer. The *hasal* or land revenue tax of other states like Jaipur and Jodhpur were much more than Bikaner because the larger part of it was full of sand dunes and sandy soil. So, Bikaner state had unique taxes such as *Dhuan Bhacch* to increase the income of the state. The taxation system was so repressive that each and every material thing the common man possessed was accountable for a separate tax. The state also levied bizarre taxes on head gears, death feast, widow remarriage, royal marriage, construction and repair of fort and religious worship. The list of taxes other than the commercial taxes were more than fifty and the nature of taxes suggest that the state kept a watch and control on every aspect of personal and social life of its subject.

The most important tax was the *Dhuan Bhachh* which was a house tax that was levied on the smoke coming out of the *chulha* or the cooking stove. It is strange to notice that this tax

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 228.

was not counted as per the hut or house but on the cooking stove unlike other regions of Rajputana. The reason was that the nature of settlements, be it villages or *dhanis* was not permanent. The typical geography of Bagad did not allowed the people to settle at one place for longer period of time, therefore people used to move about in search of better resources such as water and pastures. The state had a problem in tracing and keep a count of the mobile population that did not possessed hut or house therefore, the administrative representatives levied taxes on the *chulha* because it was assumed that every family unit prepared food on their separate stove. It was one rupee per house.

Some of the representative taxes are following:

*Dej*- on ploughs of peasant

*Desprath*- on settling down in a village. It was one rupee one anna per house.

*Mukata*- agricultural tax on rent of land

*Chaudhar Bab*- levied on the Chaudhary of the village

*Patawari Bab*- levied on Patwari

*Anga*- on livestock

*Thakurji*- religious

*Gosaiji*- religious

*Mela Padkhati*- sale in fair

*Sukhda*- It was levied as the transportation rent of the revenue collected in kind. It was two rupees per two *mans* of grains.

*Kuntay ri Kambal*- maintenance charges of the land revenue officials

*Malbo*- agricultural tax

*Ghode ro ghas*- maintenance charges of the land revenue officials' horses

*Ghore ri Khurak*- maintenance charges of the land revenue officials' horses

*Bhog ro Bhado*- maintenance charges of the land revenue officials

*Kunwarari Talab*- maintenance charges of the Princes

*Gayan ri Ghiyayi*- pasture tax

*Dhan ri Chauthai*- agricultural tax

*Pagh*- on headgear

*Sahane ri Diwali*- gift for the land revenue official

*Korad*- pasture tax

*Kasoor*- punishment

*Mukata*- agricultural tax

*Bhuraj*- pasture tax

*Ghas Chara*- pasture tax

*Khed Kharch*- maintenance of army

*Jagat*- commercial tax including excise and custom charges

*Baheliyan ri Khel*- pasture tax

*Ghoda Rekh*- maintenance of horses of the state officials

*Oothan ri Bhachh*- tax on keeping camels

*Lekhniyo ro Lajmo*- tax on writers

*Hajuriyon ri Bhachh*- tax on personal servants

*Kamdaran ri Bhachh*- Tax on state officials

*Pokhan*- on mining

*Singoti*- pasture tax on sheep

*Pan charai*- pasture tax

*Munga*- pasture tax

*Loon*- on sale of salt

*Brahmana ri Bhachh*- tax given by Brahmans

*Ang Bhachh*- on cattle. It was one rupee per cow, on rupee two *annas* per bullock, three rupees and three *annas* per camel and one rupee three *annas* per bullock cart.

*Nyota*- for royal marriage

*Mela*- on special occasions such as festivals

*Gaiwal*- unclaimed property

*Reeth*<sup>356</sup> - on widow remarriage

### **Ramgarh and Khatu Crop Production**

Dr. Jibraeil has worked on the economy of urban Rajasthan that captures data of some of the towns of Bagad. Before reading his findings, it is important to remember that the towns had a population of Malis who were professional in growing vegetables and cash crops. They generally lived in the town where the number of wells were larger because of the wealthy residents of the towns. Therefore, the data and figures cannot be extrapolated for the rest of the Bagad of eighteenth century. First look at the data of Ramgarh town which is situated between Churu and Fatehpur. The kharif crops grown in Ramgarh in 1759 AD were Bajra, Moth, Moong, Gwar, Makka and Vani (cotton). The rabi crops were Jau, wheat and Mandao also in year 1763. The total amount of the kharif crops in Ramgarh in 1759 AD was 1131 rupees whereas it was rupees 740 in 1760. After that it remained under rupees 300 for about ten years. The total amount of rabi in Ramgarh in the year 1759 AD was 1943 rupees and 801 in 1760 AD. The land revenue mode for assessing the food crops was *batai jinsi* and it was *zabti* for that of cash crops. *Torai* and carrots were grown as vegetables whereas, maize, vani and *mandavo* were also grown as cash crops. *Torai* was grown in 4 *bighas* of land, carrot was grown

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<sup>356</sup> Rajasthan State Archives Bikaner, *A Descriptive List of Bikaner Bahis (From 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Preface, iv-v; G.S.L Devra, *Rajasthan ki Prashasanik Vyavastha (1574 to 1818 A.D.): Bikaner Sambhag ke Sandarbh Mein*, 163-4.

in 4 *bighas*, maize was grown in 9 *bighas*, *mandavo* was grown in 16 *bighas*, vani was grown in 9 *bighas* of land from the year 1759 to 1763 A.D.<sup>357</sup>

The town of Khatu had grown bajra, moth, Moong, gwar, chola, maize, vani, mandao crops in the year of 1759. The crops were of rupees 550 in total value in kharif season whereas, the rabi crops of year 1723 was of 3770 rupees, Rs. 924 in 1724, Rs. 2602 in 1759 and Rs. 18 in year 1771 A.D. The area under cultivation for maize was 51 *bigha*, 5 *bigha* for mandao, 1 *bigha* for chola, 2 *bigha* for torai and 3 *bigha* for carrot in the year 1759 AD.<sup>358</sup>

These figures show that the towns of Bagad had an agrarian base with agricultural fields around them where Malis were producing food and cash crops. The availability of irrigation water through the wells enabled the peasants to grow cash crops and rabi crops in a limited quantity. The residents of the town were generally wealthy who could afford buying the vegetables and fine food staples like wheat therefore the demand for such crops remained in vogue in towns. However, these trends cannot be extrapolated on a larger scale because the Bagad lacked the irrigation facilities and quality of water which is required in growing the rabi, cash crops and vegetables. The millet was by far the most popular crop to be grown in entire Bagad.

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<sup>357</sup> Jibraeil, *Economy and Demographic Profile of the Urban Rajasthan: Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2018), 62-74.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

The thesis has been able to answer the basic enquiry of finding the historicity of the Bagad region which had survived in the peoples' memories with a vague idea of the spatiality of the region. Starting from Haryana, people would tell that they are not Bagadi but people residing in their west direction are the Bagadis. One of the reason for this was that nobody knew the exact location of Bagad and also because of the stigma of inferior culture attached to it that people did not admit to be Bagadis themselves. Once the historicity of Bagad have been found out, the second task of the research work has been to identify the spatial expanse of the Bagad. The regions of medieval India did not have the fixed limits with a neat and clear idea of the boundaries but a vague sense of space existed based on the geographical and cultural markers. A political map is prepared that delineate the region of Bagad based on the various textual sources. The map is made by combining the sheets of Punjab and Rajasthan political maps from Irfan Habib's *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*.<sup>359</sup> It marks the boundaries of Bagad with important historical cities and towns.

The term Bagad is loaded with negative connotations; the lexical meanings of Bagad is that it is a desert, desolated, unproductive, coarse, infertile, fearful etc.<sup>360</sup> As the term Bagad

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<sup>359</sup> Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (Delhi: OUP, 1982).

<sup>360</sup> These meanings are noted from various dictionaries such as Rajasthani Sabad Kosh, ed. by Sitaram Lalas; Rajasthani Hindi Shabd Kosh, Edited by Badriprasad Sakaria and Bhupatiram Sakaria (Jaipur: Panchsheel Prakashan, 1982); Brihat Hindi Kosh, Edited by Kalika Prasad (Varanasi: Gyanmandal, 2007); The Panjabi Dictionary, Ed. by Maya Singh (New Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1982); Haryanavi-Hindi Kosh, ed. Jainarayan Kaushik (Chandigarh: Haryana Sahitya Academy, 1985).

denotes a particular geography popular among the people, the geographers have used this local term to describe the physiographical zones of Rajasthan and Haryana. The Bagad of Haryana is described as “Sand dunes of various shapes and sizes form a thirsty land clothes by steppe vegetation in the southwestern parts of Haryana. These lies in the parts of Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Tosham, Loharu, Dadri and Jhajjar tehsils where they cover about 9820 square kilometres of area, i.e. 22.81 per cent of the total area of Haryana. Of great significance is a great amount of wind-blown sand which is piled up several metres high above the local flats or *Tals* and stretches for kilometers in length forming a continuous strip of significant concentration of sandy billows covering 4859 square kilometers adjacent to Rajasthan Desert, i.e. about 11.23 per cent of the total area of the state. Sand dunes are found on a massive scale in this belt which extends from the southeast of Sirsa tehsil along Rajasthan border of Hisar district, gradually widening through the Bhiwani district and extending towards the central part of Rohtak district, i.e. Jhajjar tehsil. The region resembles the treeless undulating deserts and is locally known as Bagad.”<sup>361</sup> The Rajasthan’s physiographical division’s name that defines Bagad’s region is Bagad Plain or Semi-Arid Transitional Plain.<sup>362</sup>

The research on Bagad show that the historical region of Bagad almost coincides with the geographic area defined by the geographers of Rajasthan and Haryana. Thus the analogous area deduced by two separate disciplines of history and geography is a proof to the assertion that Bagad was essentially a geographic region with its peculiar ecology where a similar kind of culture developed. As we have seen in the chapters of the thesis that the similar kind of flora, fauna defined the relation of humans with the nature. The nature shaped the life of humans to a large extent. The natural factors such as availability of water, rainfall, soil type, weather, flora

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<sup>361</sup> Singh, Jasbir, *An Agricultural Geography of Haryana* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications, 1976), 41.

<sup>362</sup> V.C. Misra, *Geography of Rajasthan, India-The Land and People* (New Delhi: National Book Trust India, 1967), 23-5.

and fauna had direct impact upon the economy and culture of the people. Therefore, it can be said that the material basis of the Bagadi culture was the result of the human-nature relationship developed in a geographical landscape. This is probably true for most of the regions of India, more so with regions that are difficult to live in.<sup>363</sup> The rainfall and soil type decide the extent of agricultural production of Bagad. As the agriculture was not sufficient for survival throughout the year agriculture was supplemented with pastoralism. The environment, local fruits, vegetables and crops define the cuisine of Bagad that used very less water. Any eatable shrub and fruits were judiciously dried in the sun and stored to be used for the months of summer when the crops were not available. The psyche of the entire population of Bagad was trained to save and store bracing for the uncertain difficult times ahead. The question of survival was paramount in the psyche of the Bagadis who had adapted to survive in conditions where every third year was a drought year. The continuous failing of monsoon for two-three years created famines which enforced the migrations out of Bagad towards Haryana. The common material culture, lifestyle, cuisine, psyche defined the Bagadi culture. Another very important marker of the unique Bagadi identity was the language that had its own grammar and structure. The scholars have recognized it as a separate language.<sup>364</sup>

The first evidence of Bagad region comes from an important inscription of Harshnath temple situated at a hillock in Sikar district which confirms that it had become a region in tenth century. The Jain sources belonging to eleventh to fifteenth century makes it very clear that

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<sup>363</sup> The study done by Chetan Singh on the Western Himalayas have reached to a similar conclusion that the human and nature interaction defines the society and culture of the people residing in it. However, the study of Himalayan regions and Desert of Bagad are completely different but the similarity of the conclusions hints towards the similarity in the historical processes that take place in formation of culture and society in terrains that are tough to live in. Chetan Singh, *Natural Premises: Ecology and Peasant Life in the Western Himalaya, 1800-1950* (New Delhi: OUP, 1998).

<sup>364</sup> Linguistic Survey of India, vol. IX, Indo Aryan Family Central Group, part 2, Specimens of Rajasthani and Gujarati, ed. G.A. Grierson (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1908), 147-159; Lakhan Gosain, *A descriptive Grammar of Bagri*, Unpublished Thesis (Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1999).

Bagad was popular region which had deep cultural, political and economic ties with the region of Marwar, Haryana and Delhi. The pilgrimage literature of the Khartargachh branch of Shwetambar Jainism has pinpointed the cities and towns of Bagad of that time. These towns were Kanyanayan, Pallu, Rini, Pungal, Singhana, Jhunjhunu, Gadana, Khatu, Didwana, Chidawa, Bhatner and Narhad. The first mention in Persian sources comes from Taj-ul Maasir of Hasan Nizami. It notes that when Qutub-ud din Aibek was fiercely pursuing the rebellious chieftain, Jatwan of Hansi, “The soldiers of Islam came up to the army of the Hind on the borders of Bagar...<sup>365</sup> This narration of the geographical location leaves no doubt that the attackers on fort of Hansi were Chauhans of Bagad who were returning back to their base on finding tough resistance from the Turks. These Chauhans most probably belonged to Dadrewa which was the stronghold of the Chauhans and is situated on the borders of Bagad near Hansi. The textual sources written in a mixed language of Bagadi and Braj during the Kyamkhanis’ reign show that Fatehpur was considered as the capital and paramount city of Bagad. The Kyamkhanis proclaimed themselves as the *Bagadpati*, the masters of the Bagad land.<sup>366</sup> The Kyamkhanis used Bagadi epithet as a symbol of their proud identity.<sup>367</sup> Another example from *Daulat Vinodsaar*, an Ayurvedic text written by Nawab Daulat Khan in seventeenth century shows the use of title ‘*Bagad Deshadhipati*’ (‘बागड़ देशधिपति’- the master of Bagad country).<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Tajud din Hasan Nizami, *Taj ul Ma’ Athir*, trans. Bhagwat Swaroop (Delhi: Saud Ahmad Dehalvi, 1998), 100; Hasan Nizami. “Taj-ul Maasir” in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, vol.2 (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1979), 218; Alexander Cunningham, *Report of A Tour in the Punjab in 1878-79*, (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1970), 81; Dashrath Sharma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages*, vol.1(Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1966), 301; Major K.D. Erskine, *Rajputana Gazetteers: The Western Rajputana States Residency and Bikaner Agency*, vol. III A (Allahabad: The Pioneer Press, 1909), 314.

<sup>366</sup> रूप उजागर बागड़ को पति , लागत है दिन ही दिन नीको। Niyamat Khan ‘Jaan’, *Kyamkhan Rasa*, trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Kyamkhani Shodh Sansthan, 2007), 175-76.

<sup>367</sup> Niyamat Khan mentions in *Kyamkhan Rasa* that Nawab Nahar Khan had openly challenged Jajmal Panwar, the faujdar of Ajmer to fight him declaring that he is Nahar Khan ‘Bagadi’ and cannot compromise on his Rajput chivalry. Niyamat Khan ‘Jaan’, *Kyamkhan Rasa*, ed. Jinvijay Muni, Agarchand Nahta, Dashrath Sharma et.al., trans. Ratanlal Mishra (Jodhpur: Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, 1996), 51.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 38. इति श्री ‘बागड़ देशधिपति’ श्री अलिफखॉ नंदन श्री दौलतीखान विरचित श्री दौलति विनोद सार संग्रह षोडश ज्वराधिकारः।

The historicity of the region has been discussed in detail in the chapters that establishes the fact that it was a region of consequence during the medieval period.

One of the important inference is that the regions were not fixed but were a loose entity that changed its shape and size depending upon several historical processes working simultaneously. The towns of Bagad that were prominent during the eleventh to fourteenth century as described in the Jain sources such as Kanyanayan and Pungal were not considered as parts of Bagad in the Mughal period. The establishment of Bikaner state on the cost of Bhatias of Pungal resulted in reduction of its importance in the local politics. Bikaner was a centre of Marwari culture exerted culture influences in the region that created a Marwari culture zone in the Bagad region and eroded the Bagadi language and culture from the places like Pungal. Similarly, the Kanyanayan or Kanana of Haryana came under the influence of Narnaul which was a *sarkar* under the Mughal period. It lost its touch with the Bagad because the new political power of Amber state arose between Kanana and Narnaul that cut out the direct contact with the core of the Bagad. So, it tells that the ever changing political formations change and influence the structures, culture and administration of a region. Many of the prominent towns had declined during the course of time and were reduced to villages such as Nua and Tain of Sikar district. Some places of importance such as Rini were destroyed by the famines and droughts. It took many centuries for the rise of Rini again under a new political dynasty of Dahlia Rajputs.

The route from Delhi to Multan which crossed through Bagad was abandoned by the traders to a large extent due to increasing desertification and destruction of the cities by Timur in the fourteenth century. The fifteenth century saw the rise of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu houses of the Kyamkhani Rajputs that had changed the face of Bagad by establishing the core of the region that represented its culture, language, demography and ecology to a great extent. So, we

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see that Bagad was not a remote independent space but a landscape that changed its face and form continuously throughout the medieval period.

The establishment of Bikaner state had carved out its own cultural sphere out of Bagad. The Bikaner state represented the Marwari culture which had its roots in Jodhpur state. So, the areas that were counted as Bagad in the Jain sources of earlier period were transformed gradually. The area in which the Bikaner state was established was called as Jangladesh after which the Bikaner ruler was hailed as 'Jai Jangaldhar Padshah.' The boundary of Jangladesh and Bagad would be somewhere near the Napasar. The towns of Nokha, Lunkaransar, Bikaner, Pungal were part of the Marwar whereas, the area east to Napasar can be taken as part of Bagad as people of Sri Dungargarh town still remember themselves being called as Bagadi in the olden days.

Bagad came under the *subas* of Ajmer and Dilli. Under *suba* Ajmer, *sarkar* Nagor, Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu<sup>369</sup> were the main *parganas* whereas most of the *Bagad* was under *suba* Dilli, *sarkar* Hisar-i Firuza. The *parganas* of Bagad region in *sarkar* Hisar-i Firuza were Sirsa, Beniwal, Siwani, Puniya, Sheoran, Sidhmukh, Tosham, Bhiwani, Nohar, Bhatner, Hisar-i Firuza and Fatehabad.<sup>370</sup> Bagad was not a homogeneous area as it had different sub-regions which had their own local ecology, demography and slightly different dialects. First and the most important was the Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu sub-region which included the areas of Narhad, Khatu, Chhapar and Didwana in addition to the area under the Kyamkhani rule. The second sub-region was the Bhatner-Sirsa region which included the Fatehabad, Nohar, Bhadra, Beniwal and the adjoining areas. The third sub-region included the areas of Puniya, Sheoran, Dadrewa, Rini and Siwani.

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<sup>369</sup> Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i Akbari* vol.2 trans. Col. H.S. Jarrett (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2010), 280.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-300.

The focus of the study has been Fatehpur due to its prime importance in the history of Bagad. The availability of sources on Fatehpur is also one of the reasons to explore the history of Fatehpur in detail. There were mainly two major political powers ruling over Bagad one was the Rathores of Bikaner state and second were the Kyamkhanis of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. As we have already discussed above that Bikaner state despite being ruling over much of the Bagad region it did not resemble the native Bagadi cultural values, but the Kyamkhanis of the Fatehpur had their routes in the region since tenth century. Their ancestor Rana Ghangh Chauhan had settled his *thikana* at Ghanghu near Churu in tenth century after which his descendants scattered around the entire Bagad. The Kyamkhanis hailed from Dadrewa which remained an important town of Bagad in the early medieval period from where they prospered into important military power and established their rule over Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu. The native Kyamkhanis celebrated their Bagadi identity with confidence with titles as ‘*Bagadpati*.’ They were even known as the Bagadis among the elite community of Rajputs.<sup>371</sup> So, the Kyamkhanis and the sub-regional state of Fatehpur represented the core cultural sphere of Bagad.

Guga is the most popular deity of the Bagad region whose popularity had reached till Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. Gugamerhi and Dadrewa are hugely popular pilgrimage centres of Bagad where people come by foot to show respect and dedication to the deity. There are a number of scholarly thesis, books and research papers on Guga but it is not discussed in this thesis because there is no contemporary source on Guga that can tell us about the phenomenon of Guga. Even the Niyamat Khan ‘Jaan’ who had widely written about the belief system of Kyamkhanis does not write anything about him other than including him in the family tree of the Dadrewa branch of Chauhans. The manuscripts

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<sup>371</sup> अलफखान बागड़ी कोट हिसार सु गाजै,  
सरसा पट्टनि मुहिम पर औदक पुर भाजे ।

There are many references in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that call the Kyamkhanis by the name of Bagadi. Harinam Upadhyay, *Kesari Singh Gun Raso*, ed. Gopal Narayan Bahura and Raghunath Prasad Tiwadi ‘Umang’ (Jaipur: Madanlal Pareek Shodh Sansthan, 1999), 14.

celebrating Guga Chauhan were written during the late eighteenth century and later which is out of purview of the time period of the thesis. There can be a possibility that Guga was popular among the common folks of Bagad whose popularity increased in the nineteenth century but it is impossible to prove and retrieve the oral history of Guga many centuries later in 2020. Therefore, without any contemporary source and silence of the Niyamat Khan 'Jaan,' writing on Guga could be anachronistic and misleading.

The past has answers to many of our questions and conundrums of the present. The research on Bagad has answers to some of the very pertinent and poignant issues of Shekhawati. Our research has shown that a region's identity is not permanent as it changes its form and identity. The society accepts new identities, consciousness and make a collective memory as in the case of Bagad which became Shekhawati in nineteenth century. The new identity of Shekhawati was based on a branch of Kachhawaha Rajputs who defeated the Kyamkhanis who were the symbol of Bagadi identity and culture. So, we see a change in identity of the region which was based on a geographic feature to the ethnic term. The new identity of Shekhawati consisted of various historical events such as coming up of various new towns which were famous for the grand *havelis* of the merchants; the takeover of Vaishnavism over the Nirgun Bhakti tradition of Bagad. So, we see a new veneer of a new identity in the multi-layered identity of the region and people of Bagad. This process raised new questions in front of the society as to what is their language is called? After the independence of India and formation of Rajasthan state, a new language was created by the name of Rajasthani which is actually no language at all. In a diverse state like Rajasthan, Marwari language has been pushed as the standard language of Rajasthan and named it as Rajasthani whereas, the other diverse tongues and cultures were categorised as the dialects of the main Rajasthani language. Shekhawati has also been popularised as the language of Shekhawati region but a term that denotes a specific identity could never be called as the dialect of a region where the majority of the speakers



belonged to other castes and communities. Therefore, unlike the written texts of Rajasthan, there is much confusion among the masses of Shekhawati who are unable to name and identify their own language. Some people say that it is Marwari but of a different kind, some understand that their language is closer to Haryanavi, some think that they speak Rajasthani or a mixed sort of language. As the people have now forgotten their medieval past they do not realise that their language is called as Bagadi which stands separate from Marwari and Haryanavi. The scribes, bureaucrats, poets and writers of texts, letters, and inscriptions used Bagadi extensively. The language of the letter was enough to recognise the native place of the writer.<sup>372</sup> This thesis tells very clearly that during the formation of new identities, overlap of the identities happen in which some core values and cultural aspects remain intact and continue. A synthesis of old and new stick together as in the case of Bagad.

Interestingly, the sub-regions of Bagad that were part of the Bikaner state and some in Haryana that came under the East India Company's charge did not lose their character and identity. The transformation in the identity did not take place in these sub-regions therefore, there is no confusion among the people of these sub-regions as they still call themselves and their language as Bagadi. Even the large population of Bagadis that migrated in the newly settled areas of Haryana have kept their Bagadi identity intact to this day.

Another poignant issue that is relevant for the people of Churu has the answer in this thesis. It is popularly held belief that Shekhawati is consisted of three districts of Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu.<sup>373</sup> However, the people of Churu claim that they are not part of

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<sup>372</sup> Govind Agrawal, *Potedar Sangrah ke Farsi Kaghzat* (Churu, 1978), 10-11.

<sup>373</sup> "Shekhawati," Wikipedia, accessed on September 10, 2020. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shekhawati>. ; "Districts and Cities," Oh my Rajasthan, accessed on September 10, 2020. <https://www.ohmyrajasthan.com/districts-and-cities-shekhawati>. ; "Shekhawati," Rajasthan Tourism, accessed on September 10, 2020. <http://www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/shekhawati.html>. ; Sachin, "Shekhawati ke Teen Zilon mein ab hogi Mahilaon ki Sarkar", Patrika epaper, accessed on September, 2020. <https://www.patrika.com/sikar-news/women-will-now-have-govt-power-in-all-three-districts-of-shekhawati-5540039/>.

Shekhawati as they were never ruled by the Shekhawats. Such an impression about Churu is made because the language and culture of Churu district is completely same as the Shekhawati. Secondly, the Shekhawati is famous for its havelis that have fresco paintings drawn over their walls. Many towns of Churu including Churu city also have exactly same tradition of *haveli* architecture that is present in Shekhawati. The Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu sub-region of Bagad had major parts of the present Churu district that bind the people of all these places with same language and culture including *haveli* architecture because of the availability of local limestone in this sub-region. The breakage of the old Bagadi identity was not overlapped completely by the Shekhawati because Bagad was much larger, but it created the questions of confused identities among the society. The correct explanation for the people is that the entire region of Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu were part of the same Bagadi culture during the medieval period that is why they are similar in every aspect. Didwana and Khatu of Nagaur district also faces the same conundrum wherein they culturally belong to the Shekhawati region but administratively they are parts of Nagaur district. The people of Khatu and Didwana marry into Shekhawati rather than other parts of Nagaur district.

Chapter 2 Understanding the Region: Historicity, Notions and Perceptions of Bagad has proved that Bagad was a well-recognised historical region that had its root in early medieval period. There are a number of textual references to the region of Bagad starting from eleventh century Jain texts to sixteenth century Bhakti poetry to nineteenth century history text. The second part of the chapter deals with the notions and perceptions of various kinds of people regarding Bagad. The usual way to study the notions about spaces is to look it from the binary of insider and outsider but the research on Bagad has clearly shown that the perception of a space is much complex phenomena that changes according to the standpoint of the observer. The women gender has based its perception on grounds of daily struggles and hard work she has to put up to live in Bagad. The peasant also see Bagad as a place where famines grow from

the soil and it is wise to migrate from such a place. Even the rulers of Bagad, the Kyamkhanis consider the Baagdi people as rustic who lack the ability understand refined language and literature. It also tells that there was a sense of hierarchy among the languages and dialects in the medieval north India wherein the languages like Bagadi were considered lower to Sanskrit and Braj. The perception about the Bagad region were based on purely pragmatic and materialistic considerations whether it be the insiders of outsiders. The overall image of Bagad was quite negative.

The third chapter 'State Formation in the Region' has traced the linkage of Bagad with the centre of powers such as Hansi and Shakambhari in early medieval period and then Delhi for rest of the medieval period to the early modern period. Bagad's close geographic location to Delhi defined its political fate wherein the sternness of the Delhi's power kept a control over its political activities and weakness gave space for rise of new local states. The reign of Firuz Shah proved to be fateful for Bagad as Firuz founded new towns and forts in Bagad. Firuz was the nephew of Bhati Rajputs of Abohar that gave him an acquaintance with the local Rajputs and landed elites of the region. He devised a strategy to incorporate these landed elements into his administration as slaves by converting them into Islam. These neo converted Muslim Rajputs attained powerful independent status after the weakening of the Tughlaq dynasty. These powerful Muslim Rajputs were called as the Khanzadas. The Bhatias, Kyamkhanis and Dandani Khanzadas of Nagaur carved out their own independent states in the fifteenth century. A network of these neo converted Muslim Rajputs Firuzi slaves was developed wherein they intermarried and helped each other in times of need. The Kyamkhanis founded the states of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu which was the first expansive and strong local state of Bagad. In the meantime the Rathores had started establishing themselves at Marwar from where they entered into the land of Bagad under the leadership of Rao Bika. The Rathores firmly founded the state of Bikaner by wresting land from Bhatias, Sankhlas, Jats and Kyamkhanis. The Mughals in

sixteenth century rose as the mightiest power that regulated the power politics of entire Rajputana including the Bagad. The Bikaner state and Kyamkhanis entered into the service of the Mughals and received different areas of Bagad as Tankhwah Jagirs. The Kyamkhanis benefitted from the Mughal *mansabdari* that brought fame and prosperity to the cities of Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu that became the prominent cities of Bagad. The Kyamkhanis being a smaller power amidst large and powerful states of Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaipur depended on the Mughals to keep afloat their kingdoms. However, as the Mughals became weaker the neighbouring state of Jaipur annexed the Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu states of Kyamkhanis. The new masters of the land were Shekhawats who were interested in founding their own towns which led to decay of Fatehpur in a few years' time. The southern Bagad shed its old identity of Bagad and became Shekhawati soon afterwards. The Bikaner state also annexed large areas of Mughal land and assimilated them into its own state. Delhi soon got new masters in the form of East India Company that again exerted its control over Bagad.

Ramya Sreenivasan in her paper "Faith and Allegiance in the Mughal Era: Perspectives from Rajasthan" has studied the case of Kyamkhanis in order to find whether being Muslims they gave any special privilege, favour or treatment to the Kyamkhanis in the Mughal era. She concluded that "the political benefits of being a Muslim Rajput or becoming one during the Mughal period remained contested."<sup>374</sup> However, the episodes of Amar Singh Rathore's murder, Rathore rebellion of Jodhpur and the cooperation of Syed brothers with Kyamkhanis clearly annuls her conclusion because our research shows that Kyamkhanis were preferred over other Rajputs especially because they belonged to Islam religion. The Kyamkhanis regularly progressed under the Mughals by getting decent Mansabs.

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<sup>374</sup> Ramya Sreenivasan, "Faith and Allegiance in the Mughal Era: Perspectives from Rajasthan" in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Munis D. Faruqui (New Delhi: OUP, 2014), 188.

The fourth chapter 'The Rise of Fatehpur in the Desert of Bagad: Nagar Fatehpur Nagaran Naagar' has uncovered the historical process founding of a new town in medieval Rajputana. The first part of the chapter has description of the political conditions responsible for moving the Kyamkhanis into Bagad from Hisar. The role of Sufis in converting the Rajputs is elucidated further that takes into account the political factors and conscious decision making by the Hindu Rajputs. The case of Kyamkhani evidently demonstrates that the decision to convert was politically motivated rather than a spiritual decision in favour of Islam. Firuz Shah and the Sufis of his favour seemed to be keen on converting the natives who could also become military slaves. The perks of converting to Islam was thus an important factor behind these conversions. Karamchand Chauhan became Kyamkhan after accepting Islam which led to mass conversions of Chauhans of Bagad that took place at Hansi. The Chishti Sufis of Hansi thus attained the status akin to *kul devta* of the Hindu Rajputs. The *khanqah* of the Hansi Sufis became the pilgrimage centre for the Kyamkhanis that was frequently visited by them.

Hansi had the reputation of being the holy city of Chahar Qutub Sufis. These Sufis' had a very large area from Sirsa to Delhi under their *Vilayat* wherein people of every religion had huge respect for them. The Kyamkhanis invited them to settle down in Fatehpur and Jhunjhunu which was an attempt at using their acceptance and legitimacy among the traders and other communities. The Kyamkhanis used the aura of the Sufis in assuring the Baniya community to fund their endeavour of building a new city that would be safe, secure and profitable under the holy benediction of the Sufis of Hansi.

Likewise, the Kyamkhanis took support of the local Nathpanthis. The math of Tain and Nua near Jhunjhunu were very old and established centres of Nathpanthis who had ample domination over the area spiritually as well as militarily. The Kyamkhanis accommodated the Nathpanthis in their newly built town of Fatehpur by constructing a *math* at Fatehpur for them

and using their armed strength when required. Similarly, the Kyamkhanis provided space and *sasan* grants for maintenance Jain and Laxminath temple.

The Kyamkhanis were personally closer to the Sufism branch of Islam along with deep faith in Nirgun Bhakti. Fatehpur exemplifies the assimilation of both these philosophies under the Kyamkhanis who openly patronised the Dadupanthi Sants and Chisti Sufis. They deliberately chose to distance themselves from the Vaishnavism and Brahmanism which was fast becoming the preferred choice of the rest of the Rajput dynasties. It can be inferred that being Muslims they felt comfortable with Nirgun Bhakti strain, Sufism and Nathpanth. The writings of Niyamat Khan 'Jaan' put his thoughts perspicuously.

Fatehpur had become a centre where hues of different Non-Brahmanic communities and sects established branches. It had become a prominent place of north India for exchanges, discussions and intellectual discourse among the non-Brahmanical religious traditions such as Sikhism, Dadupanth, Nathpanth and Niranjani etc. The Dadudwara of Fatehpur was second only to the Naraina dham, where a series of illustrious Dadupanth Sants chose to reside. Sant Sundardas was settled at Fatehpur *math* after completing education at Banaras. It was a trend in those days in Bagad where Brahmans and Baniyas went to Banaras for getting education. Fatehpur had also become a centre of education and learning which produced a number of scribes and writers who had great demand for writing texts.

Fatehpur is known for a prestigious collection of old manuscripts which are called as the "Fatehpur manuscripts" because they contain the oldest available verses of Surdas, Kabir, Meera and many other medieval Bhakti Sants. Some of the oldest copies of Chandayan and rare Jain texts were written in Fatehpur. A number of manuscripts found from different parts of Rajputana were written in Fatehpur which is a testimony to the reputation of Fatehpur as the centre of education, learning and spirituality. The Brahmans of Fatehpur had produced large number of manuscripts related to diverse literary, educational, didactic, religious and medicinal

topics. Thus Fatehpur had become an important centre of the manuscript culture and network of north India. It had produced intellections, Sants, litterateurs, scribes, bureaucrats and merchants of repute.

The participation of the Baniya community was very active that played a prominent role in disseminating these religious philosophies through their networks of trade and commerce.<sup>375</sup> They patronised and supported these Nirgun sants especially when they belonged to their own community. Pragdas Bihani and Sant Sundardas Dhusar are prime examples of Sants belonging to Baniya community who utilised their social capital in furthering their cause of Dadupanth. They created a network of Dadudwaras in the main trading towns and cities of Rajputana which was supported by the local Baniya community. Fatehpur was the main Dadudwara from where a few *gaddis*' management was overseen. The Baniyas were educated and trained in skills like accounts and letter writing which put them in a privileged position in the society. The wealth and the skills of the Baniya community helped in putting up a robust structure of Dadudwaras in Bagad, Marwar and Dhundhar.

Some scholars have described the Kyamkhanis as 'Shaikhzadas' based on the assumption that the native Muslim converts were known by this generic term in the Mughal period.<sup>376</sup> However, our research has found that the Kyamkhanis were known as Khanzadas instead of Shaikhzadas. The conversion of Kyamkhanis happened much earlier in fourteenth century along with many Rajputs such as Jadons of Mewat, Bhatias of Abohar and Khatri Tanks of Thanesar who all called themselves as Khanzadas. The chapter has provided many historic proofs in support of the argument that the Kyamkhanis use Khanzada title instead of Shaikhzada.

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<sup>375</sup> Tyler W. Williams, *Sacred Sounds and Sacred Books: A History of Writing in Hindi*, Unpublished Thesis (Columbia University, 2014), 199-210.

<sup>376</sup> Sunita Budhwar, "The Qayamkhani Shaikhzada Family Of Fatehpur—Jhunjhunu." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 39 (1978): 412-25.

The next chapter 'The Bagad of the Common People' starts with the description of peculiar geography, physiography and ecology of Bagad. The study of the flora, fauna and ecology of Bagad is of utmost importance because it is the geography of Bagad that gives it the defining character to its identity. The reading of the geographical features of Bagad forms a nuanced understanding of the minute differences of soil type, minerals, fertility of soil, crop production, rain etc. between the sub-regions of Bagad that are hard to observe by plain eyes. The minerals in the soil directly effects the quality of foliage and fodder that in turn would have impact over the overall health of the livestock. These small differences make huge differences between the sub-regions because as the example of Jhunjhunu tells that their better livestock would create demand for sale and purchase in other parts of the region making it a speciality of the place. Likewise, a small amount of rain becomes the dividing factor between Arid and semi-Arid parts of Bagad in geographical terms. It is needless to say that the sole factor of rain has overarching effect over the ecology and economy of the place. The more fertile soil and relative availability of more water in the easternmost parts of the Bagad such as Beniwal and Puniya *parganas* marks them apart from rest of Bagad which becomes a distinguishing factor in making them a separate sub-region.

The humans of Bagad had adapted to the local conditions by utilising whatever was available in the vicinity. The relationship between the humans and geography is explored further in the chapter. The common men's daily struggles and hardships are explained to know about the lives of common people instead of the elite class. The beed of Fatehpur-Jhunjhunu were a salient feature for the sub-region as the lives of people revolved around it. The beed had various kinds of grasses, shrubs, herbs and trees that were prime source of pasture and fodder for the livestock of rural people. The fruits grown on the trees and shrubs were collected by them which they used for self-consumption and selling them in the towns. The tree of Jaant or Janti was the backbone of the rural economy as it provided wood for fuel, fodder for livestock,



fruits used as vegetables, shade for peasants and passengers. It was considered as holy which was worshipped by the ladies on special occasions of marriage and festivals. Guga's place of worship was also made under this tree giving it a religious status as well. It was strictly prohibited to cut this tree. Similarly, the properties and uses of the local flora has been explored in detail to understand that utilisation of local resources in the lives of common men of Bagad.

The second part of the chapter elucidates the social profile of the towns and villages of Bagad. It is found that the population in all three sub-regions was diverse and heterogeneous. The Jats were the most numerous caste group in Bagad who was agro-pastoralist by profession. It maintained the livestock of goat, sheep, camel and cow that provided the dairy products for self-consumption and selling in the market. The camel was also used for transportation and ploughing. The leather, milk, ghee, wool was sold to merchants and local artisans who used leather and wool to make products.

Similarly, the third part of the chapter discusses the settlement patterns of Bagad which was based on *dhanis* and villages. The villages and *dhanis* were settled on the lands called *tals* which was a plain land between high sand dunes. The rain water would normally collect at these *tals* sliding from the sand dunes making water available for at least few months of the year. A village was settled around these naturally made water bodies called *johad* and a village which had *johda* had the suffix 'sar' after its name. The relevance of water was such that the name of the village was named after a water body in Bagad. The lifestyle of the Bagadis was very simple without much property and articles because they remained at a place as long as water is available at the place. They were mobile and travelled light in search of a favourable place that would give them sources to live for few days. In such a society, *beed* provides respite from a lot of trouble giving them a permanent resource on which their livestock could survive even if the rains failed. The system of drawing water out of well and its supply to the villagers and townsmen was also unique in the region.

The fourth part displays the uniqueness of the Bagadi culture and society. The fairs, festivals, folk songs, popular sayings, folk deities, superstitions, dresses, cuisine, diet, psychology, diseases and treatments are discussed in detail. The survival tactics in famine, the societal solution to a natural calamity is also discussed in the chapter. The fourth part brings out the life experience of the Bagad men.

The sixth chapter 'The Economic Patterns of Bagad' starts with providing a background of trade centres of Bagad during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries. All the sizeable towns with markets were situated on the eastern border of Bagad where the Desert is less severe. The social history of the Jain Baniyas has been studied in detail that gives a glimpse of the life of the wealthy community who played a big role in funding the construction of infrastructure in the new towns and foundation of markets. The social history of Baniya suggests that Bagad was a well-connected region with other regions through land routes from Gujarat to Delhi and beyond. The Jain sources are particularly valuable in providing the earliest interaction between the Muslims who had come from outside and the native population. A few examples of Bagad show that there was a mistrust among the Jain merchants and the Muslims. However, these incidents should not be used to conclude a generalised understanding.

The social history of Bagadi merchants is useful to know their origin and patterns of migration in and outside Bagad because they mostly attach the place of their origin to their names such as Jhunjhunwala, Khandelwal, Hisariya, Fatehpuriya, Kajariya, Kanodiya etc. The Baniyas of Bagad cultivated a strong sense of belongingness with Bagad as can be observed by their surnames Bagadi and Bagadiya. The Baniya community of Hisar had a big role in founding Fatehpur because they funded the construction and established it as an important trading town of north India. The increasing prosperity attracted the Baniyas from other towns and villages of Bagad and Haryana to settle down in Fatehpur during the seventeenth century. The Kyamkhanis employed these talented traders for managing the finances of their state

whose income had swelled considerably in seventeenth and eighteenth century by earning through large Mughal *Tankhwah Jagirs* and tax collection from brisk trade of Fatehpur.

After the defeat of the Kyamkhanis at the hands of Jaipur state, Fatehpur saw a steady decline politically and economically. The Baniyas left Fatehpur to avoid the oppression of the Shekhawat rulers of Sikar who extorted huge amounts of money from them. The memory of this oppression remained in their minds for long time as the Baniyas of Fatehpur still hold the Kyamkhanis rulers in high esteem, whereas they despise the Shekhawats as dacoits and looters. The Baniyas left Fatehpur very soon afterwards the Kyamkhani defeat as can be studied by the illustrious example of the Potedar family of Fatehpur who were the treasurers of the Kyamkhanis. The Poterdar family left Fatehpur to start business in Bathinda where they quickly rose to heights by amassing huge profits in a short span of time.

The Baniyas were also highly mobile community who had a sense of observing the business opportunities. We see multiple times the migration and immigration of the Baniyas through the Jain sources. We again see this trend of immigration into Bagad from Hisar, Haryana at the time of foundation of Fatehpur and then in seventeenth century in large numbers. After the decline of Fatehpur city, they migrated to other places and newly settling towns of Bagad. However, during the Colonial period they migrated outside Bagad to places like Myanmar, Bombay and Kolkata. There they acquired a new identity as Marwaris because the earliest Baniyas to migrate out of Rajputana were Marwaris who had popularised this term already. The famous traders and industrialists mostly belonged to different villages and towns of Bagad but they lost their identity thousand miles away from home.

The third part of chapter is the study of the setting up of the *mandis* and *chowkis* in eighteenth century Bagad. The changed situation after the Mughal decline ushered a wave of prosperity in Bagad wherein a number of new market towns were developed along the borders

of Bikaner and Sikar states. These new towns were Ratangarh, Mukundgarh, Ramgarh, Churu, Nohar, Bhadra, Rajgarh, Rini etc.

The geographical position of the Bagad was such that it joined the Gangetic plains to West, Central India to West, and West to North India. So, large volumes of trading goods and articles passed through Bagad on which the state levied various kinds of transit taxes known as Jagat. The Jagat taxes soon became the main source of income for the agriculturally poor and barren states of Bikaner and Sikar. They constructed a network of *chowkis* who collected these taxes at the borders. These *chowkis* and *mandis* developed into market towns very quickly. So, the rich Baniyas of Fatehpur who held the largest amount of wealth in the region settled into these new towns. The Bikaner and Sikar states invited them to settle in these towns on friendly terms by giving them land at concessional rates. So, eighteenth and nineteenth century was the time which saw immense economic growth in the region.

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<sup>377</sup> The Braj language was the medium of literature in Bagad. The Braj literature produced in Bagad has influence of Bagadi language which the scholars has written as Rajasthani. However, there was no "Rajasthani" language in medieval period, hence terming it Bagadi is more appropriate.

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