

# **THE MAKING OF BUNDELKHAND**

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**CERTIFICATE**

Certified that this dissertation entitled '**The Making of Bundelkhand**', submitted by **Ms. Namrita Sharma** is an original work. It has not been submitted previously by her for any degree to this or any other University. We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
SUPERVISOR

  
CHAIRPERSON

**To, papa  
for being more than a father to us...**

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## Abbreviations

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<i>A.M.T.</i>	<i>Arkan-i-Maasir-i-Taimuriya</i>
<i>Al.</i>	<i>Alamgirnama</i>
<i>Ain</i>	<i>Ain-i-Akabari</i>
<i>Akh.</i>	<i>Akhabarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla</i>
<i>C.I.I</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i>
<i>Dilkusha</i>	<i>Nushkha-i-Dilkusha</i>
<i>E.I.</i>	<i>Epigraphia Indica</i>
<i>Hyd.</i>	<i>Andhrapradesh Archives, Hyderabad</i>
<i>I.A.</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
<i>I.H.C.</i>	<i>Indian History Congress</i>
<i>J.A.S.B</i>	<i>Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
<i>J.E.S.H.O.</i>	<i>Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>J.R.A.S.</i>	<i>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>Lahori</i>	<i>Badshahnama of Abdul Hamid Lahori</i>
<i>M.A.</i>	<i>Maasir-i-Alamgiri</i>
<i>Mamuri</i>	<i>Tarikh-i-Auranzeb</i>
<i>P.I.H.C.</i>	<i>Proceedings of Indian History Congress</i>
<i>S.D.A.</i>	<i>Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign</i>
<i>Salih</i>	<i>Amal-i-Salih</i>
<i>Tuzuk</i>	<i>Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri</i>

## Acknowledgements

It has been a difficult exercise. In working on an area, which has not been fully worked upon, the lack of sources, perhaps, becomes the most distressing aspect. I too began on a discouraging note. But if the dissertation, in any way, contributes to the historical understanding of Bundelkhand, I must submit my survival through the research was because of a number of encouraging voices of some people around me: some I have known for a long time, some appeared by the way.

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## Introduction

This dissertation is a study of Bundelkhand's emergence as a strategically significant region during the Mughal period. With a focus upon the trajectory of circumstances and other factors, which made this region an indispensable element in not only the Mughal but the pre-Mughal polity as well, this dissertation attempts to situate the region within the broader historical stream of the medieval India.

The conventional history has tended to look at the entire gamut of the Mughal empire. It is evident from extensive works done in the forms of monographs of almost all the Mughal emperors and important nobles. Nor is there a dearth of books either on administration or social and cultural aspects of Mughals. However, with newer shifts in the historiography of the Medieval period in recent years, the regional studies have become important. The significance of regional history is now a widely recognised fact in the historiography of South Asia. However, in the context of Mughal history, the regional studies have remained confined to either Rajasthan<sup>1</sup> or to a Mughal province.<sup>2</sup> Despite an expressed shift in

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<sup>1</sup> For Rajasthan, see S.P.Gupta, *The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Delhi, 1986. Also see Dilbagh Singh, *The State, Landlord and Peasants in Rajasthan in the Eighteenth Century*, Delhi, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> See Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of the Empire in the Mughal North India: Awadh and the*

their approach towards understanding of the regional variations, these studies have not been able to go beyond the overarching frame of the Mughal empire. They fail to decipher as to what trajectory of circumstances and factors go into the making of a region as such.<sup>3</sup>

To begin with the major parts of the territory now known as the Bundelkhand were shown as parts of Mughal *suba* of Agra and Malwa in Mughal records. In the Mughal records of Akbar's period, Bundelkhand is referred to as a small territory ruled by Bundela chief with Orchha as its seat of governance.<sup>4</sup> However, history of Bundelkhand shows that by the middle of the seventeenth century, the region had emerged as an entity not only in terms of its extensive territorial boundaries, but in terms of resource potential as well. By this time, Bundela Rajputs appear to have occupied a premier position. This is reflected in rapid promotions and the high *mansab* of Bundela chief Bir Singh Deo during Jahangir's reign. Such a high *mansab* was significantly awarded to only four Hindu

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*Punjab, 1707-1748*, Delhi, 1986; Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire, Panjab in the Seventeenth Century*, Delhi 1991. Also see, K.K. Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba, 1580-1707*, Pune, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> K. K. Trivedi, however, in his work *Agra* has attempted to study the "formation of the *suba*" of Agra and of the "logic and intentions" that went into its arrangements, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Irfan Habib in his *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, reprint 1986, Sheet 8B, has indicated Bundela territory, however, he has not stated his source. Apparently he has based his understanding on the demarcations given in *Imperial Gazetteer* Vol. IX reprint of 1907, p. 74 which again is unexplained.

nobles out of total of sixteen *mansabdars* of this rank during this period. Bir Singh Deo was also one of the five *mansabdars* who held the rank of 5000 *sawar*.<sup>5</sup> The title of "Maharaja" was bestowed on him in 1622-23.<sup>6</sup> Another special favour shown to Bir Singh was the entitlement of his revenue.<sup>7</sup> The bestowal of such high *mansabs* continued during Jahangir's successors as well. However, as the Bundelas began to grow in power and prominence over this period of time, the bestowal of *mansab* became an easy instrument for the Mughal rulers to instigate clan factionalism among the Bundelas. This was done by distributing the *mansab* among a number of Bundela Rajputs, thus trying to gain a political mileage over them. However, despite this policy of the Mughal rulers, the territorial hold and thereby the total revenue of the Bundelas increased many folds by the time of Aurangzeb.

The Bundela relations with the Mughals clearly highlight the contradictions inherent in the position occupied by them as they entered the Mughal apparatus. For Mughal empire was perhaps content with harmonising the more obvious differences

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<sup>5</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and H. Beveridge, Delhi reprint 1989, p. 251.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>7</sup> A list of *parganas* and territories which were in possession of Bir Singh Deo, presumably both in *zamindari* and *jagir* is given in *Muhta Nainsy Khayat*, which has also given the *jama*. The total comes to 15,28,00,000 *dams*, which is substantially higher than the *jama* recorded for the same *pargana* of the *Ain-I-Akbari*.

between itself and the region in order to prevent the emergence of political polarities. The region Bundelkhand, on the other hand, while recognising the overarching supremacy of the Mughals retained its independence to a considerable extent, and registered a many facet territorial growth. By bestowing the *masabs* upon the Bundela rajput chiefs, the Mughals sought to establish a kind of tributary relation with them. Though Bundelas accepted these imperial appointments, their primary intention remained not to serve the empire, rather the pursuit of their personal power. And Bundelas emerged out as a dominant force. The extent of their dominance is evident from the fact that no chieftaincy could give their clans name to their own territory, but Bundelas' was a different case. Region of their influence could not be called anything but Bundelkahnd after their name.

Despite their prominence, the Bundelas and the region they belonged to, has not attracted the attention of the historians to any great extent. They find a cursory reference in the conventional historiography. And the recent attempts also have not been able to carve out a holistic place for the region in the overall frame of the medieval Indian history.

*History of Boondelas*<sup>8</sup> by W.R. Pogson is considered as a

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<sup>8</sup> W.R.Pogson, History of the Boondelas, Varanasi reprint 1974.

detailed account and a pioneering work on Bundela clan of Rajput. However, by admissions of Pogson himself, his work is based on what he describes as, "an ancient manuscript termed the *Kshutr Prakash*, written in verse by a bard named Lal, recording the wars, celebrity and succession of the ancient Rajas and the valour, intrepidity and heroism of war-like Boondelas". A closure reading of this text reveals that it is a mere translation of Lal Kavi's *Chhatra Prakash* written during the reign of Chhatrasal. Like the original work this translation too is divided into twenty six parts. Thus claims of pioneering an area are dissolved.

Despite dealing with a period when the Mughals were confronting a major resistance from the Bundela chief Madhukar Shah, Vincent A. Smith in his biography of Akbar nowhere mentions him.<sup>9</sup> This is, despite the fact that, it was the period when for the first time the Bundela chief came in conflict with the Mughals, and punitive expeditions were also sent against him.

A sketchy reference to the Bundelas is made in the *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar* by A.R. Khan.<sup>10</sup> A. R. Khan places Bundelas in two different categories of chieftains, at two different times. Firstly in the category of chiefs who

<sup>9</sup> V.A. Smith, *Akbar, the Great Mughal*, Delhi, 1958.

<sup>10</sup> A.R. Khan, *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar*, Simla, 1977.

were not given *mansab* but were required to render military service to the Mughals. The second class comprised of chiefs who after their submission to Mughals were granted *mansabs* and were thus absorbed in the Mughal governing class. Madhukar Shah in the scheme of A. R. Khan represented the first category of the chieftains and Ram Chandra, the second. He adopts what could be termed as a Mughal-centric approach in studying various chieftains, and, Bundelas, form a part of his larger study of the chieftains. Although he mentions four attempts of Akbar to subdue Madhukar Shah, yet he fails to offer an adequate explanation for why Bundelas were so powerful.

Beni Prasad in his *History of Jahangir* refers to the relations between Bir Singh Deo Bundela and Jahangir.<sup>11</sup> He tries to explain the prominent place of Bundelas in the larger Mughal polity in terms of their “sturdy physique and a restless spirit of adventure and enterprise”, combined with their “*gorrilla* tactics of warfare.” Beni Prasad acknowledges the importance of geographical factors in shielding the Bundelas from Mughals. However, he does not reflect upon other political and economic equations between these two. Questions like why Bir Singh Bundela was allotted a high

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<sup>11</sup> Beni Prasad, *History of Jahangir*, Allahabad, 1962.

*jagir* much beyond his salary entitlement by Jahangir, remain unanswered.

B.P. Saxena in his *History of Shahjahan of Dihli* refers to the prominence of Bundelas during the time of Shah Jahan.<sup>12</sup> To him, it was the strategic location of the region on the road leading to Deccan that made it the attraction of the Mughal rulers. However his analysis of the internal dynamics of the region is cursory. He tends to presume the givenness of the prominence of region and does not explore the numerous factors which contributed to its emergence as such.

With his focus upon the reign of Aurangzeb, Jadunath Sarkar in his *History of Aurangzeb* though gives some informative insights into the chronological developments in the region during this period, however he does not dwell on the precedence and complexities of the relationship between the Bundelas and the Mughals.<sup>13</sup>

B.D. Gupta's book *Life and Times of Maharaja Chhattarsal Bundela* has its exclusive focus on the history of the region.<sup>14</sup> His is a political biography of Chhattarsal. Gupta's attempt is to "rehabilitate Chhattarsal as a historical figure shorn of legends

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<sup>12</sup> B.P. saxena, *History of Shah Jahan of Dihli*, Allahabad, 1958.

<sup>13</sup> Jadunath sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. I, II., Calcutta, 1928.

and half truths". His whole account of Chhattarsal is heavily informed by the narratives of Lal Kavi, and Gupta has not tried to critically scrutinize the other sources. The region as such does not figure much in his work. His whole narrative remains an eulogy of Chhattarsal as a political hero. Region as such appears to have a secondary reference in his text.

Of recent writings on Bundelas, the *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy* by Dirk H.A. Kolff gives another dimension to the understanding of the history of region and its people.<sup>15</sup> Kolff makes a fundamental break from the conventional narratives of war and campaigns as the subjects of study, and focuses upon the fact of man-power as a source of power. He brings the Bundelas out of the domain of the political, and tries to explain how a large part of the claim to fame of Bundelas during this period lay in their role as brokers in the military market of the Hindustan.

However, Kolff's arguments suffer from some fundamental problems. By locating the source of Bundela power only in their military potentials, he tends to overlook various other geographical, economic and historical aspects of the region. Kolff's whole argument is based on the gazetteers, and collections of folk-tales.

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<sup>14</sup> B.D. Gupta, *Life and times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*, New Delhi, 1980.

<sup>15</sup> Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of Military Labour Market*



While these sources are important for a study of the region, Kolff has completely overlooked the numerous contemporary sources which give a rather complex picture of the region. Thus his whole study remains deprived of a major input that the contemporary sources would provide.

Going beyond these approaches, I propose to study Bundelkhand from the point of view of its geographical location, its resource potential, and a distinct historical lineage. Right from the pre-Mughal period, the territory remained as one of the central points in the discourses of the state. During Sultanate period, the Chandellas of the region, attracted the attention of the Delhi sultans, and shared a complex relationship of reciprocity. In the Mughal political formations, as well from the reign of Babur onward, Bundelkhand formed an important part of the political, economic and strategic discourses of them. Babur invaded Chanderi. Shershah died in an effort to capture the Kalinjar fort. And from the time of Akbar onward the prominence of Bundelas is evident in the numerous references in the contemporary records, which cover wider areas of relationship between the two.

Within the larger frame of the medieval polity, this

dissertation tries to explore those variety of factors that led to the emergence of Bundelkhand as an indispensable region during the sixteenth-seventeenth century. For this I have tried to see the importance of geography, economy and resources in the making of the region. Through a study of these factors, an attempt is made in the chapters to relocate the region and its people. A range of questions like the identity formation of Bundelas as an independent region within the Mughal empire, their effort to garner the inherent resources of the region to create a distinct space for themselves, and the trajectory of their complex relations with the Mughals during this period have been addressed.

In a thematic division of history of the region, the Chapter I of the dissertation focusses upon the geographical determinism in the context of Bundelkhand. It tries to study the contemporary geographical setting of the region and explores, how it contributed in the making of Bundelkhand.

Chapter II, discusses the political formations of the Bundelas. It tries to understand how local potentates emerged as the potential factors in the politics of the region, how were they accommodated in the Mughal political system, and what kind of

significance they had in it.

Chapter III tries to explore the factors that contributed to the prosperity and the indispensibility of the Bundelas in the contemporary Mughal polity; it highlights the features like agricultural productivity, the location of trade routes and the context of the role of Bundelas in the contemporary military markets, and situates them within the wider frame of significance of the Bundelakhand as a prominent region during this period.

Despite the importance of Bundelas during the seventeenth century, Bundelkhand is not an area particularly rich in contemporary source material. Given the lack of regional sources, the known Persian chronicles and memoirs of the Mughal emperors available to us in translated forms have been used as the main primary sources. Notable among these are, *Babumama*, *Akbarnama*, *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha*, *Selected Documents of Shahjahan's Reign* among many others. Information has also been obtained from surviving accounts of the European travellers. For Chandella period almost all the data used in this dissertation is compiled from epigraphic records collected, edited and translated in various issues of different journals. I have, however, also consulted unpublished Bundela inscriptions kept in Tikamgarh Darbar library.

Of literary works *Keshav Granthawali* Vol. III of Keshav Das, a contemporary poet attached to the court of Bir Singh Deo Bundela, and *Chhatra Prakash* by Lal Kavi contemporary of Chhatrasal Bundela, provides some significant historical insights into the larger political and cultural processes of the period. Their interpretations of these processes have important historical value. No less important is the Jain literature of the region. They give prolific account of the life and times of the people in the region and thus provide with a kaleidoscopic account of the region.

Though fragmentary in their nature, many of the narratives in the contemporary sources are supported by the monographs of the nineteenth century. Despite the considerable time gap, the observations in these later works on the climatic, physiographical and agricultural peculiarities of Bundelkhand tend to show a continuity during these centuries.

## Chapter I

### **Geographical Determinism and Bundelkhand**

In central India a distinctive way of life involving specific peoples, cultures and environment has been evolving for about three hundred years and it has been defined in broadest of terms by dominating influences of Bundela polity and society. The way of life overtime has come to be closely identified with lands of Vindhyan mountains and deep ravines of river Chambal encompassed by portions of present states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The general outlines of this region first emerged in medieval times and its underlying historical and cultural unity was recognised in its subsequent organization as Bundelkhand under Mughals, a region which was neither a fully independent system nor typically Mughal.

Few concepts in social sciences have received so much attention, yet at the same time generated so little consensus as that of a region. Norton Ginsbergs remarked "there is no universally accepted definition of a region except as it refers to some portion on

the surface of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> Apart from this rather simplistic definition of Griensberg, the concept of region has been problematized and defined by many scholars, with specific references to the disciplinary attributes (viz. history, geography, anthropology etc.) in a variety of ways, and thus there would seem to be as many definitions as there are disciplines of social science. Region, to a number of scholars, appears as a prior and self-evident entity, existing as such and a debate on the subject is meaningless.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars see region as a spatial unit distinct from the wider space that surrounds it.<sup>3</sup> Geographers on the other hand hold region as not an object, either self-determined or nature given. Rather region becomes a subject of study - an intellectual concept and an entity created by him through a process of selection of certain features that are relevant to the Aerial interest of problems.<sup>4</sup> In this region does not appear as pre-given, it is created and defined in the course of the attempt of understanding specific problems of the discipline.

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<sup>1</sup> Norton Ginsberg, “The Regional Concept and Planning of Regions in Asia and Far East”, prepared for *UN Seminar on Regional Planning in Asia and Far East*, Tokyo, 1958, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Douglask Fleming, “The Regionalising Ritual”, in *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, as cited in K. Schomer ed. *The Idea of Rajasthan, explorations in regional Identity*, Vol. 1, Delhi, 1994, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Odiom and Harry E. Moore ed., *American Regionalism: A Cultural Historical Approach to National Integration*, New York, 1938, pp. 79-81.

<sup>4</sup> D. Whittlesey, *The Regional Concept and the Regional Method: In American Geography, Inventory and Prospect*, Preston, 1954, pp. 19-68.

Despite lack of consensus however regional studies have come to occupy a very important area of research in the recent years. And this shift is also becoming prominent in the context of India and Indian culture, and a range of studies have been done in these years which spread over different periods of Indian history and through their micro-approach in exploring the problematic they have contributed immensely to the discipline of Indian history.

The territories of the region today demarcated as Bundelkhand are, to begin with, essentially based on the efforts of the geographers, who for the last fifty years have been developing techniques for the definition and analysis of various kinds of geographic regions. And given the interrelationship between geography and history and their mutually complementary role in the making of Bundelkhand that this chapter purports to deal in, it becomes pertinent to draw out the disciplinary and conceptual boundaries, their confluences, the distinctions involved, which would then situate a proper geographical-historical frame for us in approaching the region.

Geographers of region, primarily look upon it as a space, involving relationships between human as well as physical conditions. Thus basic to their ideas would be a natural region, which

would incorporate only the physical basis.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, the common economic-geographic and communication variables for defining and characterizing a region have become fashionable among the social scientists studying the regions of India. Given these recent trends, Bundelkhand as a region has also found its place in the mathematical-statistical scheme of demarcation, however these pure mathematical-statistical approaches of the scholars though instructive of many significant points, are not of much help in locating the region in the broader historical perspective. They at best point to certain structural relations that may have cut across the historical period.

Contrary to this approach in studying a region, Bernard S. Cohn emphasises upon the non-physical phenomenon in the constitution of a region.<sup>6</sup> This he sees in terms of historical, linguistic, cultural, social-structural or the inter- relations among these kind of variables. Although this notion of Cohn negating physical phenomenon has a problem, as he attaches an overwhelming

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<sup>5</sup> Among the most reliable attempts to work out geographic region in India are O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth eds., *India and Pakistan : A General and Regional Geography*, 1967; and R. L. Singh ed., *India : A Regional Geography*, Varanasi reprint 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, " Region Subjective and Objective : Their Relation to the study of Modern Indian History and Society" in Robert Crane ed. *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies*, Duke University, 1967, P. 6, also see R. Minshull, *Regional Geography*, London, 1967.



importance to the human effort in redefining and reshaping the physicality of a region. In fact a more plausible way of studying a region can not overlook the pre-givenness upon which then human efforts are directed and attempted at. Geographical locations, in other words, with their pre-given attributes play a significant role in structuring a region. However, Cohn's arguments make a plausible point of departure by creating a wide spectrum of other than physical variables. And in many ways they also facilitate the way for going beyond them.

It is surprising that inspite of being situated in the heartland of India, Bundelkhand has not attracted attention of anthropologists and therefore we have no relevant information about the criteria which can be used to establish Bundelkhand as a cultural region marked out in terms of differences in religious sects, architecture (house-type), physical appearance (race), subsistence base etc. The lack of these kinds of studies makes a holistic study of Bundelkhand as a cultural and structural region all the more difficult.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Although R.K.Jain in his articles "Kingship, Territory and Property in Pre-British Bundelkhand", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XV, June 1979, pp. 946-950 & "Bundela Geneology and Legends; the pasr of an indegenous ruling group of central India", in J.H.M.Beattic and R.G.Lienhardt ed. Studies in Scoial Anthropolgy, Oxford, 1975, pp.238-272 ; has attempted to look at Bundelkhand, but these studies are primarily historical in nature.

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Despite these lacunas, however, Bundelkhand has been studied by a number of scholars as a linguistic, and a historical region. The concept of linguistic region, since the time of Grierson<sup>8</sup> (who was one of the first to study the dialect of this region called Bundeli), has proved to be a highly useful tool for understanding the internal cultural specificities of a region. In the classificatory scheme of Grierson, once having established the principal criteria of which level of language was being used within the boundaries of particular regions, it is assumed the regions thus established are comparable. However the use of linguistic criteria to establish a regional classification, which Grierson does, becomes a mixed linguistic and social construct. Therefore the distribution of language alone does not necessarily establish a tightly bordered or circumscribed region. Apart from this, this concept ignores several central issues, such as the difference between the literary and vernacular standards and their differential distribution between urban and rural areas, the presence of significant number of speakers other than the dominant language within the circumscribed area.

Another problem in establishing a region linguistically is that of time or what can be called as historical factor. If we were

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<sup>8</sup> Grierson, *The Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol.IX, Part I, Delhi reprint 1968, pp. 86-92.

establishing the linguistic classification in seventeenth or eighteenth century for any region, the boundaries would certainly emerge much differently than that of Grierson's. This problem may be, partially explained in terms of shift of population, if any, which may cause an imbalance in the linguistic boundaries of the region. Besides this, to what extent the dialect of a region may be taken as the principal criteria for classification, is to be properly drawn out in case of specific regions. In the case of Bundeli, one of the four forms of the western Hindi<sup>9</sup>, which also figures in the name of the region, one can demarcate a distinct linguistic region in today's context. But in contextualizing its absolute importance in the making of the region during sixteenth-seventeenth century, the whole idea requires a careful consideration. For beyond the association of name of the region with the dialect Bundeli, the contributions of the dialect in giving the region a distinct identity is not properly known. This may be read in the facts, such as, though great laureates like Keshav Das, Lal Kavi, Bihari, Bhushan were born in and around Bundelkhand they never adopted Bundeli as their medium. And the langauges viz. Braj and Awadhi that they used, which we now know as mere dialects, were at the zenith of their glory during this period.

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<sup>9</sup> The other three dialects being *Khari Boli* , *Braj* and *Kannauji* .

In her study, Iravati Karve writes that, "Bundelkhand, the south-western portion of the present state of Uttar Pradesh (the districts of Jhansi, Jalaun, and Lalitpur), which geographically differs from the Gangetic portion of Uttar Pradesh and has a historical connection with a ruling caste, the Bundela Rajputs, who claimed and to some extent exercised suzerainty over the region, all of which to residents and outsiders gave Bundelkhand its historical identity."<sup>10</sup> The historicization of the region by Karve is taken on by Cohn, who defines a historical region as one in which there are secret myths and symbols, held by significant groups within the areas, regarding the relationship of people to their "past" and geographical entity.<sup>11</sup> However even when accepting Bundelkhand as a historical region, one needs to problematize it by looking at the basic changes in the distribution pattern or boundary conditions of the region. As it would be shown there was a drastic change in the boundaries of Bundelkhand during seventeenth century. And the region's identity conformed to only two criteria established by Cohn, viz. shatter zone or route area and *cul de sac* or a region of relative isolation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Iravati Karve, *Kinship Organization in India*, Pune, 1953, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Cohn, "Region Subjective and Objective", pp. 12-16.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Cohn discusses three types of historical regions: the perennial or nuclear regions, shatter zones or route areas and the region of relative isolation or *cul de sacs*. According to Cohn, the a perennial or nuclear region are the principal river basins which are also major agriculture areas, such as Indus, Ganga, Godavari basin. These areas always

Bundelkhand in medieval period had an eventful history. As we have numerous contemporary reference of the route connecting Delhi/Agra-Deccan-Gujarat passing through Bundelkhand<sup>13</sup>, whereas the march of Babur to Chanderi from Agra via Kalpi-Erach points to the existence of another route passing through the region<sup>14</sup> and connecting the most vibrant routes of the time: one going to eastern coast of Bengal, and the other to the western coast of Gujarat and Deccan.

Of relative isolation of the region in the Cohn's frame, the topography and ecology of the region comprising of rough and rugged terrains, hilly mountains, deep ravines, dense forests put this region in the concrete position of what he characterizes as *cul de sac*. Cohn's arguments suffer from certain inherent contradictions. For example, while Cohn in the beginning denies any primary role of geography in shaping a historical region, yet in his tripartite division

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attracted conquerors as they tended to maintain an independent identity through time, since they had the basic ecological, agricultural pre-requisites for fairly large scale state formation; shatter zones or route areas are the traditional regions through which large number of people passed through either in military or peaceful invasions. The final type of a historical region is the region of relative isolation or the *cul de sac*, these are regions which because of their geographic, ecological characteristics, which prevent easy access, have tended to be bypassed by processes and events which have affected the nuclear or route zones.

<sup>13</sup> For contemporary trade routes see, Irfan Habib: *An Atlas of Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 1996, Sheet 8B.

<sup>14</sup> Babur, *Baburnama*, trans. A.S. Beveridge, Delhi reprint 1970, pp. 590-592.

of these regions, often geography appears to be the main driving force in the making of what he considers as a 'historical region'.

It is, therefore, apt to agree to the suggestion of interrelationship between history and geography across the historical traditions: "all history must be viewed in the context of its geographical locations and that every geographical area has its own history."<sup>15</sup>

This chapter, therefore, focussing upon the interface between history and geography in the context of Bundelkhand region uses it as a tool for better understanding of the processes, and nature of interaction and acculturation in the region. It problematizes the influence of geographical factors in making of the community of Bundelas and tries to see how it helped in the emergence of Bundelkhand- the territory dominated by them from sixteenth century onwards.

A study of this nature, however, is obstructed by the paucity of contemporary sources and thus a cry of despair as neither Bundelas wrote history of their own, nor did they produce *khyats* like those of principalities of Rajputana to give their version, which might have served as supplements to Persian sources that referred to

Bundelkhand in general. Given these limitations in studying the region we have to heavily rely upon the contemporary Persian sources, which along with the inscriptions of Chandella dynasty<sup>16</sup> and modern geographic studies, give some crucial insights into its geographical conditions.

Equally important are the geological features of Bundelkhand. Despite the fact that the contemporary sources do not explicitly give any information on the geological conditions of the region, yet their closer study reveals a wide variety of information regarding the diversity inherent in the region, which was probably even more obvious in the sixteenth -seventeenth centuries on account of the absence of modern irrigational facilities. The geological diversity provided Bundelkhand a different kind of regional dynamism. Lying within the folds of Vindhyan range the topography of Bundelkhand presents a contrast of plains, hills, rivers and forests. Despite these heterogeneous physical attributes, however, Bundelkhand maintains its distinction as a geographical region.

The keystone of Bundelkhand topography is its smooth and undulating character to which Spate gives the term "senile

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<sup>15</sup> Herodotus, in the words of Erich Von Doniken, *In the Eyes of the Sphinx*, New York, 1996, p. 70.

topography".<sup>17</sup> R.L.Singh however treating the constitution and structure along with physical forces affecting the development and appearance of earth in Bundelkhand divides it into four distinct zones.<sup>18</sup> The *Achaean system*, represented by compact group of mountain peaks largely composed of crystalline igneous and metamorphic rocks with granite and gneiss both conspicuous in the region, where the former is considered to be next to or even contemporaneous with the oldest Aravali schists. The *Transitional system* appearing in northern part of Datia and Chhatrapur district are formed in the post-Aravali or pre-Vindhyan period- both the areas represent sedimentary strata of sand-stone and lime-stone in which lava intrusions had later penetrated and thus present a contorted arrangement of very hard and soft rocks. The *Vindhyan system* however forms a griddle around Bundelkhand granites in a semi-circular fashion except in the north. In the region the Vindhyan system forms a series of posing escarpments of massive sandstone and limestone, which were originally deposited in a shallow but extensive basin. As a result of isostatic adjustments in the southern part, and tectonic movements in the western part, massive

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<sup>16</sup> On the assumption that the Chandella kingdom corresponded with the 19th century Bundelkhand the inscriptions have been used. See. Alexander Cuningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 406.



escarpments of the Vindhyan sediments rose up to somewhat isolate the country of Bundelkhand from the south and southwest. No wonder, these escarpments became the traditional socio-cultural boundary between north and south India and played an exceedingly important role in shaping the subcontinent's history. Recent deposits in Bundelkhand are represented by large-scale alluvial deposits in the form of an embayment into the granite country. These alluvial sediments are of fluvial and subaerial formations of sand, silt and clay. The texture of these deposits however becomes more and more refined as one proceeds towards river Yamuna from south-central granite country. In the south the surface is strewn with granite boulders and stony waste. In Bundelkhand, it is chiefly the lower Vindhyan which are found in the form of Bhandar, Rewa and Kaimur series and while shells are best developed, sandstones are deposited along the borders. In the north-west and north-east the system is covered by thin Ganga-Yamuna alluvium and in the south-west by Deccan trap. The diversity of the region becomes more evident as the southern marginal areas still retain the features of a dissected plateau, the entire region is marked by subdued topography that tends to grade into a perfect level plain towards the north. The

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<sup>17</sup> O.H.K. Spate, *India and Pakistan*, p. 627.

northern one-third of the plain area is monotonously flat, and stands in strong contrast with the Vindhyan tableland, which rises, in well-marked escarpments. But when an attempt is made to highlight the sub-regional variation required for a study, Bundelkhand can be easily sub-divided into two distinct physical units: the comparatively leveled low lying and fertile track called the Bundelkhand plains, often termed as Trans-Yamuna plains<sup>19</sup>, the Yamuna marking its northern base, secondly the outline scarps of Vindhyas and gnesisic hills to its south, where the terrain is more elevated and rocky called the Bundelkhand upland<sup>20</sup>, which stands in strong contrast to the plains. These two distinct physical units although give an exaggerated picture of regional diversity, yet the difference is only superficial. This leads to the assumption that the northern Bundelkhand plains probably provided the food, and the upland plateau region supplemented and complemented it with minerals, timber and a defence line through their difficult terrains. Therefore Bundelkhand on the one hand remained for long a bulwark for the Mughals, while on the other the regional authority of Bundelas could

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<sup>18</sup> R.L. Singh, *India*, pp. 599-600.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 615.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 618.

maintain their hegemony over the whole track lying between the Yamuna in the north and Vindhyan plateau in the south.

Bundelkhand as pointed out is a mass of rounded hummocky hills.<sup>21</sup> These numerous isolated hills rise abruptly from a common level and are generally pyramidal in form and granitoid in substance. They extend from south west of Banda district of Uttar Pradesh across river Ken into Mahoba and Jaitpur of Hamirpur district and appear again in north and west of Jhansi district. These hills, numerous in number from their steep and nearly inaccessible scraps, form sites of strongholds which enabled the warriors of the region to successfully put a defiance against the great powers of the subcontinent, especially located in the north. Thus, the numerous forts scattered all over the region belonging to different potentates in different periods formed major bulwark for their defence. And in instances of struggle, whosoever exercised control over these forts, had a better going in the struggle and a greater influence over the other centres of the region. We have evidence from Chandella history, who preceded the Bundelas, that the possession and capture of strategic forts in the region helped them emerge as independent

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<sup>21</sup> O.H.K. Spate, *India and Pakistan*, p.627.

power of central India<sup>22</sup>. Possibly the Bundelas took possession of these forts in stages and emerged as the potentates of the region. The rocky crests of the hills are bare and exposed in the region, but their sides are generally clad with bushes and thick forest clusters round their bases. A fort on such a hilltop baffled any attempt to storm it. Here it can also be assumed that the ammunitions of a garrison in the region with artillery and firearms consisted of huge block of stones and rocks easily available, suspended and poised on the embankments surrounding the fort. And perhaps, these were equally, if not more, effective in defence than were the artillery or firearms.

Of eight forts ascribed to Chandellas, Kalinjar, ninety miles south-west-south of Allahabad, is most important and believed to have been the military centre of the kingdom.<sup>23</sup> A bulwark, the fort in A.D.1023 withstood the army of Mahmud of Ghazni.<sup>24</sup> In A.D.1545 it was held out against Shershah and was not captured until the besiegers had been roused to fury when the king had been mortally wounded by the bursting of shell in the trenches. This super human effort of Shershah for a period of seven months, a longer period than

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<sup>22</sup> *Epigraphia Indica* (E.I.), Vol. I, p. 122, Verse. 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Indian Antiquary* (I.A.), Vol. XXXVII, p. 134.

<sup>24</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 199-204.

it took him to subdue the whole of Mewar clearly points to the obstinate nature of the garrison. As the fort stands on an isolated flat-topped hill of the Vindhyan range which here rises to high of eight hundred feet above the plain. The lower part of the ascent is however tolerably easy, but the middle portion is very steep, while the upper part is nearly perpendicular and quite inaccessible.<sup>25</sup> Similar was the case with the fortress of Ajaygarh situated the just twenty miles by road to the south-west of Kalinjar. This too like Kalinjar stands on a lofty, flat-topped spur of Vindhya hills with another barricade of river Ken which is only eight miles distant. It is about the same height as Kalinjar. Here the lower part of the hill which is of granite is not very steep, but the upper part which consist of raddish sandstone is very abrupt and inaccessible. The size of the fort, however, is much underestimated, as only being about one mile in circuit, whereas it is only a little smaller than the Kalinjar fort already mentioned.<sup>26</sup> These two forts were very strategic to Chandellas along with the fort of Mahoba, being located like the other two in the central segment of Bundelkhand. This fort built by Chandella king Paramardi was again on the top of a fortified hill, whose remains are still noticeable,

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<sup>25</sup> A. Cuningham, *Reports of Town in Bundelkhand and Rewa in 1883-84 and tour in Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gwalior in 1884-85*. Vol. XXI, part I., Varanasi, 1969, pp. 20-33.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

although later turned into a mosque.<sup>27</sup> Barring Garh and Maihar, which are near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Chandella forts are situated in the central sector, between the rivers Dhasan and Ken, and played no less significant role. Barigarh, Maniagarh, Marpha and Maura are other forts ascribed to Chandels. Barigarhis in Charkhari about ten miles from Mahoba, Maniagarh is a large fort on the banks of river Ken, again on a hill top overlooking the town of Raigrah in the former Chhatarpur state. Marpha in the Banda district is twelve miles to the north-east of Kalinjar.<sup>28</sup> And Maudha is in the north eastern corner of Hamirpur district.

The review of the forts of the Chandellas points to the fact that the region of Bundelkhand was strewn with hill forts in the midst of jungle fastness. These strategic forts at one of the time or the other came under the control of Bundelas, and it seems fortifying the area by adorning the land with forts continued during the Bundela ascendancy as well. This fortification was very important for the maintenance of domination over the region and the edge that Bundelas exercised over the Mughal state. Over and above that the contemporary sources attest the existence of various forts built by Bundelas who had perhaps deeply realised the importance of

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<sup>27</sup> I.A. Vol. XXXVII, p.134.

fortification of the area. As regards Orchha the seat of their authority and power it has been said that "fortification of Orchha are about four imperial course in extent and are build up with huge block of stones."<sup>29</sup>

Apart from already existing fort of Chanderi<sup>30</sup> we have references of forts built by Bundelas in Jhansi, Erach, Dhamoni etc. The fort of Erach lying in the eastern portion of Bundela country was especially known for its strong fortified walls and gates<sup>31</sup>, whereas the fort of Garh Kunder looms out of black granite rocks and lofty structure. Remarkable and austere, imposing and ominous in its silence, this fort stands even today on its hill, telling us tales of glory and splendour. It commands, like the rest of the forts of the region, an all round view of the surrounding areas. It is interesting that from a distance the fort is clearly visible but as one approaches it, with turn or a dip in the road, it gets hidden completely and uncanonly and can confuse the enemy.

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<sup>28</sup> *Archeological Survey of India, Reports by Alexander Cuningham, Vol. XXI, p. 18.*

<sup>29</sup> Inayat Khan, *Shahjahannama*, ed. and trans.by, W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai, Delhi, 1990, p.161.

<sup>30</sup> *Babumama*, p. 590, Sajan Rai, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*. Also see, Mohammad Saleh Kamboh, *Amal-i-Saleh* as cited by Mohammad Azhar Ansari, *Geographical Glimpses of Medieval India* Vol. III, Delhi, 1989, pp. 16, 70.

<sup>31</sup> *Shahjahannama*, p.29. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, tr. H. S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1949, pp. 212-214.

The fortification of the area was accelerated by the availability of building material in the region. It is important to point here that the base of the hills rests on gnessis<sup>32</sup> while the hills themselves are made up of sandstone and limestone. The numerous quarries of the region must have supplied stone, which appears to have been used to a considerable extent. Even today the Vindhyan sandstone is used extensively as an excellent building material. The fine to medium, grained, hard and compact granites, gnessis, quartzites are good source of building material along with the dolerite dykes and quartz riffs. The fine remains of Chandella as well as Bundela masonry are built of local stone. Babur, whose observation on geographical features of India are often self witnessed and thus are reliable to minute details, too attests the use of local sandstone in the region. He has stated, "all houses in Chanderi whether of high or low are built of stone, those of chiefs being laboriously carved, those of the lower classes are also of stone but are not carved. They are covered with stone slabs instead of earthen tiles."<sup>33</sup> As regards Chanderi Abul Fazl informs us that it was "one of the largest of ancient cities. It contains 14,000 stone houses, 384 markets, 360

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<sup>32</sup> R.L. Singh, *India*, p. 618.

<sup>33</sup> *Baburnama*, pp. 590-592.



spacious caravan serais and 12,000 mosques.”<sup>34</sup> The availability of stones gave the region undoubtedly an advantage as regards the fortification, the figures of *Ain-i-Akbari* mention a fort especially in Chaderi region where at least one fort is attached to each *mahal*.<sup>35</sup> Thus we see availability of building material added by the terrain of the region helped in strong fortification of the territory of Bundelas which added to the difficulties for Mughals, during the period of confrontations.<sup>36</sup>

The inaccessibility of Bundelkhand was further helped by the fact that the region was surrounded by impenetrable jungles. To begin with, it can be suggested that the extent of forested or uncultivated territory was considerable in Mughal period.<sup>37</sup> Bundelkhand was no exception. Irfan Habib in his *Atlas* on the basis of contemporary sources shows a long continuous stretch of forests in this period starting from areas adjoining Agra crossing the river

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<sup>34</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 207.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 212-214.

<sup>36</sup> This is especially true when Shahjahan sent his forces to subdue Jujhar Singh. “ A large army consisting of 10,000 horsemen, 2,000 musketeers and 500 sappers was despatched from Agra under the general command of Mahabat Khan. To moderate his impetuosity the emperor associated with him Islam Khan. Moreover, orders were issued to Khan Jahan to march from Malwa towards Orchha with his 8,000 troops. He was asked to take with him Raja Bharat Bundela the rival claimant to the Bundela *gaddi*. A third army under the command of Abdulla Khan and Bahadur Khan Rohilla was ordered to converge on Orchha from the east.” Amin Qazwini, *Badshahnama*, f. 169, Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara* Vol. II, pp. 212-214. As cited by B.P.Saxena in *History of Shahjahan of Dihli*, Allahabad, 1958, p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> K.K.Trivedi, “Estimating Forest, Waste and Fields, c. 1600”, *Studies in History*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1998, pp. 301-311.

Chambal extending into the territories of Narwar, Shivpuri upto Dhamoni. Such a long stretch and a densely forested region constituted one of the favourite hunting grounds of Mughal emperors.<sup>38</sup> From there we have numerous references of elephant hunts being successfully carried out. Even Bhimsen mentions a construction of a huge and massive building by Bir Singh Deo Bundela at Datiya which "served as headquarters for hunting grounds."<sup>39</sup> There are references to the fact that Mughals had to contend with thick jungles and inhospitable countryside during the course of their expeditions against the Bundelas. In the region of Chanderi, Babur's artillery was preceded by "active overseers and mass of spademen to level the road and cut the jungles down..."<sup>40</sup> Later during the time of Akbar in the campaign against Raja Madhukar the Mughals advanced towards Orchha in a similar fashion. As regards "the inaccessibility of the territory" of Madhukar shah, Abul Fazl informs us that "owing to the difficulties of the ground, the troops could not keep their order."<sup>41</sup> We are also informed about the surrounding areas by Babur "the country was forest and marching of army difficult, they cut down the trees one day

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<sup>38</sup> For forest cover see, Irfan Habib, *The Atlas*, Sheet 8B.

<sup>39</sup> Bhimsen, *Tarikh-i-Dilkasa*, Eng. trans by B.G.Khobarakar, Bombay, 1972, in Sir Jadudanth Sarkar Centenary Commemorative Volume, p. 4.

and marched the next"<sup>42</sup> Even during subsequent reigns the military campaigns in the region were conducted the same way.<sup>43</sup>

The location of the forts in these impenetrable jungles may have been a part of the strategy of the rulers of the region. Regarding the fort of Jhansi, one of the strongholds of the region built by Raja Bir Singh Deo, we are told "this fort is situated on an ambience in the middle of the forest."<sup>44</sup> Thus while advancing on the forts, the Mughals not only had to cut down the forest to reach it, these were gainfully used by the local forces for their defence and harassment of the enemy. As evident from *Shahjahannama*, "relying on the formidable obstacles presented by the forest, which he considered an excellent safeguard for himself, Jujhar had accordingly resolved upon opposing the royalist force. Therefore, he used constantly to send out detachments of horse and foot with instructions to take cover among the forest trees and open a destructive fire on the advancing columns."<sup>45</sup>

The general notion about the region in the terms of its agricultural is considered backward due to unfavourable physical

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<sup>40</sup> *Babumama*, p.572.

<sup>41</sup> Abul Fazi, *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, Delhi reprint 1972, pp. 324-325.

<sup>42</sup> *Babumama*, p.572.

<sup>43</sup> Abdul Hamid Lahori: *Badshahnama*, in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. VII, p.48. for the campaigns against Jujhar Singh Bundela at Chauragarh in 1634.

<sup>44</sup> *Shahjahannama*;

attributes of the region. However, it is important to keep in mind that the characteristics of any land in respect of soil, climate, drainage and natural vegetation presents varied possibilities which is determined according to the level of technical skill and knowledge, settlers' attempts to exploit, and so was the case with Bundelkhand where agriculture remained the predominant features inspite of all the hardships. Despite all structural hindrances, the nature has bestowed her bounties on Bundelkhand so as to allow the region to sustain itself.

Bundelkhand is drained by Yamuna system. Yamuna is the biggest river and Betwa, Baghain and Ken are its main tributaries. From the hills of the region numerous streams flow north and north-east towards Yamuna, the important among which are Pahuj, Dhasan, Barma and Pasuni. However, barring a few exceptions majority of rivers go dry even before the summer sets in and the seasonal fluctuations are abnormal as most of the streams are fed by innumerable seasonal torrents, thus presenting a sharp contrast to the rivers of Gangetic plains. The water table of Bundelkhand is comparatively low because the rivers of the region are rainfed, otherwise the region receives the same amount of rain,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.155.

that is between 25-45 inches rainfall, as in Ganga-Yamuna *doab*.<sup>46</sup> Irrigation from well is equally difficult owing to low spring level in the region.<sup>47</sup> Moreover the massive granite rocks are found at a depth of 4-6 meters in the region.<sup>48</sup> The possibility of water bearing strata is therefore remote and underground water is available only at a considerable depth. Thus the geography of the area ensured total dependence of its agriculture on rainfall and lack of irrigation would have hampered the production yield. The Chandellas therefore set upon themselves the task of building innumerable embankments and excavating tanks in the region, as evident from a considerable number of inscripational references regarding the irrigation works undertaken by them. Since these lakes and tanks were the only source of water during greater part of a year, labour and resources of the authorities in the region was turned to conservation of water. Earlier it was Chandellas but by the sixteenth century this task was taken up by the local potentates of the region -the Bundelas. To us have come down a number of tanks of considerable size particularly from Baldevarh, Lidhawra, Jatara etc. The chief lakes of the region

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<sup>46</sup> R.L.Singh, *India*, p. 602.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 618.

<sup>48</sup> N.P. Pandey ed. *Gazeteer of India: Madhya Pradesh (Tikamgarh)*, Bhopal, 1995, p. 6.

are at Urjat, Bir sagar, Yadnya Sagar and Madan sagar along with many others.<sup>49</sup>

In fact a study of Chandella dams clearly points out that terrain and water resource situation were very scientifically harnessed to meet the challenges imposed by the nature.<sup>50</sup> A Chandella dam in village Mirzapur clearly indicates that proper care was taken in choosing the sites of water work as the river Chandraprabha flows mainly in the northern direction through a hilly tract following a rocky basin. It then passes through a gorge seven miles in length, the top of which is on a level with the plateau and is nowhere capable of ascending. Soon after it leaves the gorge it surplus water is impounded by the dam at village Muzaffarpur. The construction of dam in this manner indicates that it was apparently planned for providing irrigation to tract, as evident from a number of canals that are taken out from the reservoir. From the five channels, three flow from the eastern embankments, while the other two come from western embankments. The weir checking the flow of rivulet has three sluices of equal width, which obviously were meant for the outflow of excess water from the reservoir. The seven projections

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<sup>49</sup> R. L. Singh, *India*, p. 601.

<sup>50</sup> Vinod Kumar Singh, "A Chandella Dam: A Study of its Location and Structure", Presented at the *Indian History Congress*, 1990 (Memeographed).

which were seemingly provided for placing capstans were used for lifting lids covering the sluices. A lake is however created at this spot by the weir and the mud embankments extending southward on its eastern and western sides. In the eastern embankment there are three masonry sluices for releasing water into the three channels originating on this side, and confirm to the traditional Indian technique of providing outlets across embankments which involved a construction of a masonry tank or a well between the lake and the channel carrying water to the other side of the embankment.<sup>51</sup> The outlet in the eastern embankment do not contain any masonry work, these outlets are created simply by cutting the mud embankment at two points from where the two channels of this side originate. The absence of masonry sluices on the western side might explain in the form of the bed of the lake being inclined towards the east. As the flood waters coming to the lake would mainly be pressing against the eastern embankments, on that side it was necessary to have sluices which should not only be strong but also capable of regulating the release of the water into the channel throughout the year. The opening in the eastern embankment on the other hand were possibly

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<sup>51</sup> Another example of such pre-modern outlet sluices is of those found in the Mansagar dam (Amber), See Iqtidar Alam Khan and Ravinder Kumar, "The Mansagar Dam of Amber", in Anirudh Roy and S.K. Bagchi ed. *Technology in Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi, 1986, pp.30-33.

meant for taking out water from the lake only when it would be overfilled during and immediately after the rainy season. This study of the dam indicates high achievements of Chandel engineers who undertook the task of building this dam.

The numerous tanks and dams built earlier survived and Babur witnessed them on his march to Chanderi: "Kachwa is a shut-in place having lavish hills all around it, a dam has been thrown across between hill on the south east of it, and thus a large lake made, perhaps five or six kurohs round. This lake enclosed Kachwa on three sides; on the north west a space of ground is kept dry, here therefore is its gate. On the lake are great many small boats able to hold three or four persons in these. The inhabitants go out on the lake if they have to flee. There are two other lakes before Kachwa is reached, smaller than this one and like that, made by throwing a dam across between hills."<sup>52</sup>

The description of Babur not only discloses numerous lakes existing all over the region but also the fact that these dams might also have acted as a means of defence in times of invasion in the country as an army could be deprived of its source of water and encampment swept off clean overnight by destroying few of these

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<sup>52</sup> *Baburnama*, p. 591.



dams. Fuhrer as late as 1885 while preparing the classified list of the monumental antiquities and inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh witnessed in this region as least either a lake or a tank in every village.<sup>53</sup>

Bundelkhand soil may be conveniently grouped into four categories: upland soil (rocky soil), lowland black soil (*mar* and *kabar*), red and yellow soil (*parwa*, *rankar*), riverine soil (*kachhar*). *Mar* is the well known black cotton soil, rich dark and containing large number of minute Kankar nodules, and high proportion of organic matter, good for agriculture. *Kabar* is stiff impracticable soil, drying and caking quick. What hardships the peasants had suffered in ploughing it through ages become evident in the native proverb '*kabar* is too wet to plough one morning and to dry to plough the next'. *Rakar* however is a soil effected by erosion with large *kankar* nodules. *parwa* is light sandy soil fertile only when manured, worked and irrigated. Thus, compared to Malwa or western part of central India, the soil of Bundelkhand is poor, being sandy and often strewn with boulders. Even comparatively fertile portions of the land requires artificial irrigation. The level of alluvial soil in the region is low as compared to Ganga-Yamuna doab, thus superior variety of food

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<sup>53</sup> A. Fuhrer, The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions, in the North-Western

grains are less suited to the soil than the coarse grains. And thus the region of Bundelkhand is characterized by low productivity. However, the easy availability of iron must have made plough with a heavier iron sheet easily accessible, for the hard ground of the region requires deeper ploughing. It is pertinent to point out here that N.K. Mukherjee, in the early twentieth century, noted that the plough in hardy Bundelkhand soil required three and a half mounds of iron as against Bengal where iron was used merely to scrap the extremely fertile soil.<sup>54</sup> Moreover the use of iron plough possibly retained the necessary moisture for proper germination of seeds and growth of plants, which was an important feature of agricultural ecology of ancient and medieval India.<sup>55</sup>

Apart from the rich fauna and flora of the region, Bundelkhand has rich mineral resource. *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* gives references of iron mines at Gwalior and Kalinjar.<sup>56</sup> The epigraphic evidence of Chandel period also mentions the existence of iron ores in the region. Availability is further attested by the fact that as late as 1874 there were fifty three iron furnaces at work in the Jhansi district

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Provinces and Oudh, Varanasi, reprint 1969, pp. 114, 116, 118 -126, 151.

<sup>54</sup> N.K.Mukharjee, *Handbook of Indian Agriculture*, Calcutta, 1915, pp. 93-95.

<sup>55</sup> Harbans Mukhia, *Perspectives of Medieval History*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 221.

<sup>56</sup> *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* , as cited by Mohammad Azhar Ansari, *Geographical Glimpses* Vol. III, p. 70.

alone.<sup>57</sup> Apart from iron, the region had access to copper ores as late as 1866.<sup>58</sup>

The influence of geography can be positively ascertained in the positioning of Orchha in sixteenth-seventeenth century, which emerged as a power centre, or *gaddi* of Bundela chieftains. According to local memory, Orchha, the capital town of Bundela potentates was founded in 1531 by Rudra Pratap. The name Orchha, according to tradition, is derived from scoffing remarks of the Rajput chief who on visiting the site selected it for the capital town.<sup>59</sup> A close study of the location clearly shows that it was the strategic location and inaccessibility of the city due to which this site was selected to act as headquarters by the Bundela house.

The town of Orchha stands on the banks of river Betwa. The Betwa enters the district 19 kilometers south of the township and flows for about 32 kilometers along the north -western boundaries giving it a natural defence from the invaders;<sup>60</sup> the defence potential is further added by the breaking of Betwa into several channels around the township. The turbulent nature of Betwa is attested by the contemporary Persian chronicle *Shahjahanama* which states“ they

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<sup>57</sup> Drake Brockman ed., *Jhansi: A Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1929, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

next crossed the river of Betwa which flows by the town of Orchha, the passage of which is extremely hazardous, owing to the force of the current and number of large rocks in it."<sup>61</sup> As regards the difficult terrain of Orchha the same source attests, "notwithstanding the denseness of forest and difficult and rugged nature of the roads leading to Orchha, not to mention the numerous streams, ravines and narrow passes all rounded it..."<sup>62</sup>

Apart from natural defence adequate man-made measures were also taken to render Orchha difficult to access. The old town was surrounded by a battle-mented wall and the fort, on a hill top, could be approached only by a causeway over a fine bridge of fourteen arches, ruins of which can be witnessed even today, though now in dilapidated state.

It is equally important to point out that Bundelkhand was strategically located in terms of its accessibility from the traditional centres of major political authorities namely, Delhi-Agra, Malwa, Jaunpur-Allahabad. The region was situated at a considerable distance from these power centres, which added by its rough physical terrain made its accessibility difficult. The bad lands of

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<sup>59</sup> N.P. Pandey, ed. *Gazeteer of India- Madhya Pradesh (Tikamgarh)*, Bhopal, 1995, p. 230.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.230.

<sup>61</sup> *Shahjahanama*, p.156.

Chambal was a difficult exercise to cross along with the dense forest of the region rich in wild life of various kinds. Distance from major power centres alongwith not very friendly disposition of local potentates towards them and difficult approach in a great measure made information to travel at a very slow pace. It is, therefore, not surprising that Alauddin took full advantage of inaccessibility of the region and marched to Deogir through it, both ways, without the Sultan at Delhi getting any inkling of it.<sup>63</sup> This inaccessibility of the region suited the local potentates who at times exploited it to their advantage to act independent of central authority; it also favoured continuous emergence of ambitious people in the region. This possibly could have been one of the reasons why Sultan Sikandar Shah moved his headquarters from Delhi to a more centrally located site at Agra in 1506 and the reason why Akbar retained Agra as the capital on completion of reorganization of administrative divisions in 1580, i.e. to restrain and constrain the local potentates of the region and have a better control over them.<sup>64</sup>

Thus it seems that the “vacuum” which might have existed in the region due to overwhelming defeat of Medini Rao by Babur in

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.156.

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A.D. 1528, and weak successors of Sher Shah as well as Akbar's problems during early years of his reign due to the familiarity of the region some Bundelas, from a position of feudatory chief like *Ranak* or *Rawat*, succeeded in establishing power centre in this region at Orchha leading to the emergence of Bundela chieftancy.<sup>65</sup>

Emergence of Bundelas during that period of "vacuum" was nothing new to this region. Chandellas too in all probability started from a humble beginning but ultimately succeeded in founding and organising an independent kingdom, seizing every opportunity to extend their frontiers and spreading their reputation far and wide by daring military expeditions. They initially reached a feudatory status owing allegiance to imperial Pratiharas and at a later period, at a critical moment by rendering effective assistance to Ksitipala Deva who had been humiliated by his powerful antagonist, earned a distinction.<sup>66</sup> And as the hour of break-up of the Pratihara's drew nearer, the Chandellas went on increasing their strength by enlarging their dominion especially by the capture of Kalinjar and

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<sup>64</sup> K. K. Trivedi, "The Emergence of Agra as a Capital and a City : A Note on its Spatial and Historical Background", *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. XXXVII, 1994, pp. 147-70.

<sup>65</sup> K.K.Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba, 1580-1707*, Pune, 1998, p.106.

<sup>66</sup> *E.I.*, Vol.I, p.122. verse 10.

Gwalior, ultimately emerging as independent power centre of central India.<sup>67</sup>

Along with these evidences an inscription belonging to the reign of Vikramsimha who was a member of Debkund branch of the Kachchhapaghata dynasty, mentions him as Maharajadhiraj-thus indicating that he was then enjoying the status of an independent ruler.<sup>68</sup> In view of this statement it appears possible that when Chandella Kirtivarman was busy restoring the fame of his house which had been temporarily eclipsed by the Kalachuris of Tripuri, Vikramsimha may have succeeded in throwing of Chandella yoke to whom his house had been paying obeisance.<sup>69</sup> From the Deogadh inscription dated A.D.1098 we know that sometime previously the Chandella ruler's attention was occupied towards Betwa valley and this may have given an opportunity to Vikramsimha to declare independence<sup>70</sup> and thus further supporting the "vacuum" theory of the region.

Thus one can argue that the geography of Bundelkhand - that rugged country of Betwa and Chambal ravines, despite all its structural problems time and again held power centres to emerge

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.129, verse 45.

<sup>68</sup> H.V. Trivedi ed. "Inscriptions of Chandellas, Kachhapaghatas and Two Minor Dynasties", in *Corpus Inscriptanum Indicarum*, Vol. VII, Part III, New Delhi, 1989, p. 531.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

from within. The success of the Bundela warriors, at times, over large Mughal armies was largely due to their familiarity with the terrain of the region especially ravines and the hills.

Therefore it was the configuration of the region, the contours of its low hills and above all the dense jungles that clothed their slopes and valleys, which gave Bundelas the advantage in emerging out as the power of the region- called after them the Bundelkhand. And they were able to harass the Mughal rulers time and again. And it is not strange that not only Mughal rulers but Shershah too found the task of subjugating such a country and defeating such people pretty stiff and costly.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. 530-31.



## Chapter II

### Defining Bundelkhand

The name of the region Bundelkhand is recent in origin and is taken after the dominant clan of local potentates - the Bundelas. The Bundelas made their appearance towards the middle of the sixteenth century and since then have continued to remain a dominant political force in the region, for more than two centuries, inspite of their periodic clashes with the most powerful state of the sub-continent, the Mughals. Later, the British too recognised princely states of the Bundelas and the fact that the name is taken after the most important clan inhabiting the region.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that the British period records make frequent use of the term Bundelkhand for the region and this apparently has given this impression that the expression was given by the British Raj<sup>2</sup>, yet a

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<sup>1</sup> W. R. Pogson, *History of Boondelas*, New Delhi reprint 1974, p. 8. For Bundela princely states see *Imperial Gazeteer*, Vol. IX reprint of 1907, p. 65. The states were orchha, Datiya, Panna, Charkhari, Ajaigarh, Bijawar, Chhatarpur, Banka Pahari, Beri, Garrauli.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent A. Smith writing as late as 1908 wrote that, " the use of word Bundelkhand is vague and indefinite, the only official recognition of it being the application of collective term ' Bundelkhand Agency' to a group of petty native states..."; "The history and coinage of Chandel dynasty of Bundelkhand from 831-1203 A.D.", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1908, p. 130.

survey of earlier sources clearly shows that the expression Bundelkhand assigned to the territory is much older and can be dated back to the period of Mughal hegemony.

The sources of seventeenth century provide us ample information about the region, the services rendered by Bundela chieftains to the Mughals and its nomenclature. Most prominent and important amongst these is *Nuskha-i-Dilkasha* (also *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*) by Bhimsen <sup>3</sup>, who not only belonged to Bundela territory but was also in the service of Dalpat Rai Bundela and had accompanied him in the Aurangzeb's Deccan campaigns. Bhimsen has primarily written about his master and the Bundelas in general. In the pages of his work one can find the identification of the region, perhaps for the first time, as Bundelkhand.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it appears that by the close of the seventeenth century the name had gained currency in the political and administrative circles. Thus, during eighteenth century when Marathas had moved towards the north, and had acquired the authority to collect revenue in the northern regions

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<sup>3</sup> Bhimsen in 1689 became secretary to Dalpat Rai Bundela, the Raja of Datia. Following the death of Dalpat Rai in a battlefield in the Deccan campaign of Aurangzeb, Bhimsen returned in 1707 and stayed at Datia and Gwalior. It was during his stay in these places that he wrote his memoirs and called it *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha* (A Pleasant story). See *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, Eng. trans. B.G. Khobrakar ed., Bombay, 1972 in Sir Jadunath Sarkar Centenary Commemoration Volume.

<sup>4</sup> " Rai Dalpat, the son of Subhakaran, the grandson of Bhagwan Rai, the son of Raja Nar Singh Deo Bundela, the exalted and renowned landlord ( *zamindar* ) of the territory

<sup>5</sup>, their records too identified the territory of the region as Bundelkhand.<sup>6</sup>

Like other Rajputs, Bundelas too have origin myth. Their rise to prominence is traced to have flown from supernatural blessings. According to, *Chhatra Prakash*, a poetic work of great historical value,<sup>7</sup> and Pogson's *History of Boondelas*,<sup>8</sup> which is somewhat inaccurate translation of the former, when the brothers of Pancham ousted him from the throne, he visited the shrine of Vindhyavasini Devi (located at a distance of five miles from the modern day Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh) and devoted himself to most severe asceticism. After seven days he decided to offer his own head to the deity, but before the consummation of sacrifice, it is said, the Devi appeared, held his hand and promised a kingdom to him. However, a drop of blood or *boond* had oozed out of the wound that Pancham had inflicted upon his head. And it was from that drop that the descendance of Pancham acquired the name Bundela and the

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of *Bundelkhand* had come to Khedgarh and settled there though his native place was Kashi...": *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, p. 3. Bundelkhand occurs on pages 34, 70, and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> Letters of Chhtrasal written in Bundelkhandi dialect preserved in micro-film form under the title "Manuscripts from Jhansi" are kept in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Also see B.D.Gupta, *Mastani- Baji Rao Aur Unke Vanshaj Banda Ke Nabab*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Selection from Peshwa Daftar* ( New Series), ed. P.M. Joshi, Bombay, 1957, Letter No. 70. p. 52; Letter No. 75, p. 55; Letter No. 72, p.53; Letter No.87,p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> It was composed by Gorelal Purohit, better known as Lal Kavi in Samvat. 1771(A.D. 1714) at the instance of Chhtrasal Bundela, as cited by B.D. Gupta *Life and Times of Maharaja Chhtrasal Bundela*, New Delhi. 1980, p.113.

<sup>8</sup> Pogson, *The History of Boondelaas*, p. 8.

territory acquired and dominated by them was called Bundelkhand. In another account, Tod, traces the origin of Bundelas to "some grand sacrificial rites" performed at Vindhyavasini by one Jassonda Gaharwar of Kashi. He further adds, "the original country of the Gherwal is the ancient kingdom of Cassi."<sup>9</sup> Bhimsen too has traced their origin and migration from Kashi.<sup>10</sup> Shaikh Jalal Hisari, on the other hand, traces the origin from Bundi and states that on account of their association with Bundi they were called Bundelas.<sup>11</sup> However, no other source supports or refers to this theory. 1

From the above study it seems most probable that the Bundela clan is an offshoot, apparently, of the Gaharwars of Benaras, themselves a branch of Kannauj dynasty. They became a ruling family in the sixteenth century and gave their name to the tract, in which they lived and dominated. They formed with the Panwars represented by Chhatrapur and Dhanderas, a branch of Chauhans, a local endogamous group intermarrying only among them.<sup>12</sup> Irrespective of the belief in mythical origin of Bundelas it is apparent

<sup>9</sup> " Then placing her hand on his head, she said, in commemoration of the drop of blood, thy descendance shall be called Boondelas." Ibid. P. 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Tarikh-i-Dilkusha*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Bal Krishna Brahman: *Gwaliornama*. British Museum. Ms. No.16859; ff 138 a-b. as cited by Abha Singh in " Jujhar Singh's Rebellion: A Reappraisal", *Indian History Congress*. 1990, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Major C.E. Luard, *The Ruling Families and Persons of Note in the Central India Agency*. Calcutta, 1911, p. 10.

that the ancestors of Madhukar Shah of Orchha had migrated from the eastern region of Uttar Pradesh. While the memory of immigration from the east remained intact, which finds its place in various sources, their association with the Gaharwar rulers of Kannauj in a subordinate position has been suppressed when, in the later period, aspired to gain legitimacy for their upward political movement.<sup>13</sup> It is very difficult to clear the obscurity hanging over the origin of Gaharwars. While none of their charters connects them with any of the well known lineage claiming temporal relationship with sun or moon, yet their splendour is poetically linked to the both.<sup>14</sup> They expressly mention the name of the family and call themselves *Kshatriyas*.<sup>15</sup> According to Crooke, their modern representatives are the Gaharwars of the United Provinces and the family bards of the head of the sept - the Raja of Kantit in Mirzapur district, narrates a legend to explain this designation<sup>16</sup> where we are told that in the line of Yayatis' youngest son, in whose favour the father had abdicated, there was born after many generations one named Devdasa, who ruled over the Banaras region. He incurred the wrath of the malignant deity *Sani* or saturn by his virtuous deeds so much so that the deity

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<sup>13</sup> R.S.Tripathi, *History of Kannauj to the Moslim Conquest*, Delhi, 1964, pp. 296-300.

<sup>14</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XV, pp. 7-8,10.

<sup>15</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, Vol.XIV, p. 103.

tried to mislead him, but the king resisted all influences, thus gaining the title *Grahvara* or, overcomer of the planet, which afterwards became corrupted into Gaharwar.

Apparently disagreeing with the immigration of the Bundela clan from the eastern region, some scholars believe in the local origin of the Bundelas. However they have not said so in clear words and instead have made their suggestions without any supportive contemporary or later evidence. Since their suggestions have a bearing on the origin of the name of the region, a brief discussion on their views is called for. According to Gorelal Tiwari<sup>17</sup> the name Bundelkhand of the region originated from "Vindheylkhand" after Vindhya ranges of the region, while B. P. Tripathi based the origin of the term to philological laws and traced the root of term Bundela from the ancient tribe of "Pulindas" who inhabited the region and thus leading to an assumption that Bundelkhand was originally named after "Pulindas". He further says that the "Pulindas" had come to be known as "Bollind" in course of time what ultimately gave birth to the present term Bundela.<sup>18</sup> Both these suggestions seem doubtful. The term "Vindheylkhand" was hardly ever current in common parlance or

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<sup>16</sup> William Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of North West Province and Oudh*, Vol. II, Delhi reprint 1974, pp. 371-72.

<sup>17</sup> Gorelal Tiwari, *Bundelakhanda Ka Sanchhipt Itihas*, Prayag, 1933, p.1.

in available contemporary records. The other, the "Pulindas" disappeared in the thirteenth century, therefore it appears quite far fetched to relate them with someone after a long gap of around three hundred years simply on the basis of philological law.

Moreover in earlier times the region and its dominant political groups were known by totally unassociated nomenclature. The earliest among the appellation with which area was christened is "Cedi".<sup>19</sup> When exactly the word "Cedi" went into disuse is difficult to ascertain. Under imperial Guptas the area does not appear to have any official appellation.<sup>20</sup> The *Chih-Chi-To* or *Chi-Ki-To* of Chinese pilgrim Huien-Tsang has been taken by Cunningham to stand for Bundelkhand.<sup>21</sup> With the passing out of the Chandellas at the close of thirteenth century, goes out the use of *Jejaka Bhukti* - a name they are believed to have given to this region.<sup>22</sup> However when Prince Jeja had already named the region, we find one of his near successors being referred as a ruler of *Citrakuta Bhupala* by a

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<sup>18</sup> B.P. Tripathi, *Bundelakhanda Ki Prachinta*, Varanasi, 1965. pp. 7-9.

<sup>19</sup> B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1984. p. 313.

<sup>20</sup> Gupta period records refer to their frontier on the basis of natural boundaries, thus this region is identified simply as land between the rivers, Kalindi ( Yamuna) in the north and Narmada in the south. See *Corpus Inscriptanum Indicarum*, Vol.3, p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 405.

<sup>22</sup> Jaje was an early Chandella prince who is claimed to have christened the region and most of the modern historians accept this. See. R.K. Dikshit, *Chandellas of JajakaBukti*, New Delhi, 1977; and Shishir Kumar Mitra *The Early Rulers of Khajuraho*, Delhi 1977.

contemporary neighbouring ruler.<sup>23</sup> The Persian chronicles never called it *Jejaka Bhukti*, instead the region was mostly referred after the capital Khajuraho.<sup>24</sup> Other name assigned to the region were *Pitasail Visaya*<sup>25</sup>, *Vindhyadesha*<sup>26</sup>, *Yuddhadesha*.<sup>27</sup>

It would appear from the above discussion that the region remained in prominence under different periods and it was recognised by various names, yet none of these seems to come close to Bundelkhand. There are thus reasons to believe that origin of Bundelkhand was directly influenced by the rising fortunes of Bundela clan. However, neither the sources of later Sultanate period, nor Babur who marched to Chanderi travelling over extensive part of this territory mention the Bundelas as local potentates of any consequence.<sup>28</sup> During early phase of expansion of Mughal territory by Akbar there is no mention of any kind of contact between the

<sup>23</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. II, pp. 301-304.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn-ul-Athir for instance tells us that the country of Vida was named as Khajuraho. See. Ibn-ul-Athir, *Al-Tarikh-ul-Kamil* Eng.trans. Buluk. 1874 vol. IX, pp. 115-116.

<sup>25</sup> The *Rakar* ( yellow soil) between Jhansi and Lalitpur was the origin of the name. *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. I, pp. 333-336; Verse 9.

<sup>26</sup> R.K.Dikshit, *Chandellas*, p. 72, has cited the *Dvasraya Mahakavya* for this information and characterization.

<sup>27</sup> According to *Vishnudharmottara Puran* the region between the river Yamuna and Narmada was known as *Yudhdesha*. *Corpus Inscriptanum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 89.

<sup>28</sup> Babur, *Baburnama*, Eng. trans. A.S. Beveridge, Delhi reprint 1970, pp. 590-91. Babur travelled on Yamuna from Agra to reach Kalpi, from Kalpi he moved via Erachh to reach Chanderi. See also Mohibbul Hasan, *Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India*, Delhi, 1985, p. 97. Also before the Lodhis captured power at Delhi, the Sharqi Sultans had made several attempts to control this territory by moving against the Sultan of Kalpi. During this struggle or even later the contemporary sources do not make any mention of the Bundelas as local potentates. See Bihamad Khan, *Tarikh-i-Mohammadi*, Eng. trans.



Mughals and the Bundelas, though in the same period the Mughals were successful in subduing Raja Ram Chand of Bhatta (Rewa) from trans-Yamuna region.<sup>29</sup> One plausible reason appears that Orchha ruler was considered inconsequential both territorially and in the prestige and hierarchy of Rajput chiefs.<sup>30</sup>

Yet, it is interesting to note that there is a wide gap between the positions the Bundela held in the region in the middle of sixteenth century to what they came to hold in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Both from the point of view of their hold over revenue claimed against their *mansab* (rank) and territory under control thus emerging as dominant political force. The comparative situation is well represented in Appendix I, II.

Near contemporary evidence mentions Rudra Pratap as the founder of Bundela chieftaincy. However recorded history of his exploits are hard to come. So is the case with his successors till we come to Madhukar Shah, who clashed with the Mughal forces in

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Muhammad Zaki, Bombay, 1972; K.K. Trivedi, Emergence of Agra as a Capital and a city, J.E.S.H.O., Vol. XXXVII, pp. 154-156.

<sup>29</sup> Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility under Akbar and Development of His Religious Policy 1560-1580", *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1968, pp. 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to subscribe to the views of some scholars who mention extensive areas under the domination of the Bundelas during this period. Not only that these scholars base their statements on the evidence of doubtful veracity, the Bundela *Zamindari* area were extremely small compared to this domination. See Gore Lal Tiwari, *Bundelkhand ka Sachhipt Itihas*, Varanasi, 1937; B.D. Gupta, *Life and Times of Maharaja Chhatrasal Bundela*, Delhi, 1980. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, pp. 198-200, 212, for territories with Bundela *zamindars*.

1573 for the first time <sup>31</sup> and after whom the leading Bundela state would be called. Prior to this date, as mentioned earlier, no mention about the Bundela exploits is known. Madhukar Shah's ancestors, however, appear to have taken advantage of the vacuum created as a result of the extinction of the Sultanate of Kalpi by the Lodhis and the destruction of the power centre of Chanderi by Babur in early 1528 <sup>32</sup> and thus Bundela chieftancy was founded who expanded their influence over the territories around Orchha from this time onwards.

From a review of Akbar's action against Rajput chieftancies it appears that Orchha principality was spared apparently because it had not assumed a status similar to Mewar or Gwalior as also that it was located at such a distance that it was not causing the Mughals any obstruction in their plans of expansion and consolidation. However, the importance of the territory was soon realised as Mughals successfully annexed the Gujarat region. Since the reasons given by Abul Fazl, wherein he states that Raja Madhukar was "infatuated" and "presumptuous" further stating that "accordingly as at this time the aforesaid *zamindar* had, owing to the extent of his country, the number of evil and daring dependence, the

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<sup>31</sup> Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama* Eng. trans.H. Beveridge, Delhi reprint 1989. p. 108.

<sup>32</sup> *Baburnama* , pp. 590-191. See also K.K.Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba 1580-1707*, Pune, 1998, pp. 106-109.

unaccessibility of his territory, the want of wisdom and the friendship of flatterers deserted the highway of obedience and became a traverser of the desert of destruction"<sup>33</sup> appears to be inadequate. Possible reasons could be explained in the following manner.

Recent studies have shown that during seventeenth century Agra had emerged as the most important exchange centre of northern India acting as a convergence point for routes from all directions. The noted Dutch traveller Pelsaert stated about the centrality of the city of Agra, " all goods must pass this way, as from Gujarat, Tatta, (or sindh); from Kabul, Kandhar, or Multan, to the deccan from the Deccan or Burhanpur to these places or to Lahore; and from Bengal and the whole of east country; there are no practicable alternative routes and the roads carry indescribable quantities of merchandise, especially cotton goods."<sup>34</sup> With political authority located at Delhi it had not succeeded in diverting the major part of the flow of commercial traffic which continued through the traditional routes traversing through territory south of Yamuna. It thus deprived Delhi of substantial income from transit duties on merchandise. A large volume of goods transported between the

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<sup>33</sup> Abul Fazl. *Akbarnama.*, Vol. III pp. 294-295.

<sup>34</sup> Francisco Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, c. 1626, tr. W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl as *Jahangir's India*, Delhi reprint 1972. Also see, K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, pp. 106.

Bengal region and the coast of Gujarat either followed the Kalpi-Erachh- Chanderi route, or after reaching Mathura by river or land transport, journeyed via Ajmer or along the Narwar- Shivpuri route. The loss of Delhi sultan in terms of transit dues was the gain for the local potentates. One can perhaps suggest that the shift of capital to Agra had the attraction of attaining control over trade duties as well. The pull that Agra started to exercise did not go unnoticed. A major development was that the important roads connecting Peshawar with Sonargaon, repaired and reconstructed by Shershah became secondary in importance by the early years of the seventeenth century. However, more important fact for our study is that this pull also shifted trade from the Kalpi-Erachh -Chanderi route. At the cost of these two routes, a new route running along the Yamuna: Agra - Etawah-Ghatampur-Allahabad emerged as the most important connecting links.<sup>35</sup> One can perhaps trace the genesis of Bundela rebellion in the Erachh -Chanderi region, first noticed in 1573, in terms of loss of income from transit duties, suffered by Bundela chieftain through their territories. Thus, it was Akbar's attempt and success in diverting the East-West trade to Agra which might have

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<sup>35</sup> K. K. Trivedi, "Emergence of Agra as a Capital and a City: A Note on its Spatial and Historical Background", *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. XXXVII, 1984, pp. 147-70.

affected the fortunes of Bundela chief who tried to compensate it through military expansion and thus came in conflict with the Mughals.<sup>36</sup>

Around this time, contrary to the local believes and understanding of some scholars,<sup>37</sup> Bundelas do not appear to have enjoyed control over large areas. Based on evidences from the *Ain* and other references of the period, Irfan Habib has shown the area under the direct control of the Orchha chief.<sup>38</sup> It covered a small area of 1,444 square kilometers. Over and above this territory, the *Ain-i-Akbari* also refers to Bundelas as *zamindars* in the *parganas*, *Paranchah*, *Badnun*, *Khand bajrah* ( *sarkar* Payanwan, *suba* Agra) and *parganas Eran* and *Bara* (*sarkar* Chanderi, *suba* Malwa )<sup>39</sup>.

However, we do not know the volume of revenue generated in the Orchha territory; *parganas* that formed part of Mughal territory only 10,60,169 *dams* (Rs.26,504) was the size of assessed revenue. The claim of Bundelas over the revenues from these *parganas* would have been just Rs. 7,951.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, if the area<sup>41</sup> of these

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pp. 154-156 and 102.

<sup>37</sup> Gorelal Tiwari, *Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipt Itihas*, B.D.Gupta, *Life and Times of Maharaja Chattarsal Bundela*. William Irvin, *Later Mughals*, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 216-219.

<sup>38</sup> Irfan Habib. *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, Reprint 1986, Sheet 8B.

<sup>39</sup> *Ain*, Vol.II, pp. 198-200, 212.

<sup>40</sup> Taking total *jama* of the *parganas* as Rs. 26,504, being 1/3rd of the volume of production, we have calculated the claim of the *zamindars* at the rate of 10 per cent of

*parganas* is added to the area of Orchha territory the total hold of Bundelas would still be very small and in no way comparable to the region known as Bundelkhand.

British period records however have entered an area of 9,852 square miles, or 25,516.68 square kilometers for a region that they called Bundelkhand agency located between 23° 49' and 26° 18' N. and, 78° 11' and 81° 3' E. as shown in map 2.1.<sup>42</sup> As the figures stand, between c.1600 and the middle of the nineteenth century (when the *Imperial Gazetteer* was compiled), the Bundela territory expanded by more than seventeen times. However, this includes the period of decline of Mughal political authority and, therefore, this comparison can not be accepted, in absolute terms, as an index of Bundela growth. Yet a comparison is not without its value.

There is yet another way to ascertain Bundela growth in the seventeenth century. It is interesting to note that though Bundela chieftaincy was, in all likelihood of a recent origin, its chief Madhukar

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the total produce to obtain the above figure. For the share of *zamindars* see Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707*, Bombay, 1963, p.146; Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire, c. 1595: A Statistical Study*, Delhi, 1987, pp.174-191, however calculates it at a much higher rate.

<sup>41</sup> Agreeing with a suggestion that measured area statistics of *Ain* represent jurisdictional area of *parganas* and *sarkars* ( See K.K.Trivedi, "Estimating Forest, Waste and Fields c. 1600 in *Studies in History*, Vol. 14, No.2. n.s. (1998), pp.301-311), it is possible to estimate the approximate area of these *parganas*. In our case total area of the *parganas* held by Bundelas as *zamindaris* would come to approximately 334 square kilometers. This does not include *parganas* Badnun, for which statistics are not available. *Ain* , Vol. II, pp.198-200, 212.

Shah is addressed as Raja in the Mughal chronicles.<sup>43</sup> After a number of encounters the Bundelas accepted Mughal authority and Ram Chandra, Raja Madhukar's son, joined the Mughal service. However he was given an insignificant *mansab* of 500 ( *zat*) only<sup>44</sup> which perhaps did not increase even after his own accession at Orchha. One is not very certain about the containment of the Bundela ambition in such a placement in the Mughal hierarchy. Perhaps, a section was not happy. Led by Madhukar Shah's another son, Bir Singh Deo, they appear to have watched the developments at the Mughal court. Bir Singh Deo came close to Prince Salim during the time the latter was posted at Allahabad and was, perhaps, getting impatient to occupy the Mughal throne. At the behest of Prince Salim, Bir Singh Deo supervised the murder of Abul Fazl, which in some manner smoothed Salim's path to the supreme authority. In return for his services Bir Singh Deo was not only enthroned at Orchha, he was also enrolled in the Mughal service and was awarded a *mansab*, much higher and respectable to that of Ram Chandra.

Thus the break in the Bundela fortunes came with Jahangir's accession. Soon Bir Singh was awarded the high *mansab*

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<sup>42</sup> Reproduced from *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IX, reprint of 1907, p.74.

<sup>43</sup> *Akbarnama*, Vol. III, p. 803; Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Eng. trans. W.H. Lowe, Delhi reprint, 1973, Vol.II, p.391.

of 5000/5000. During Akbar's time even if extraordinary favour was shown to a person, promotions to high *mansab* were granted purely on merit, and in recognition of services primarily during military campaigns. In case of Bir Singh Deo, Jahangir showed exceptional latitude. Though Bir Singh Deo is not noticed participating and proving his mettle in any military campaign, he continued to rise in the hierarchy as could be seen from the awards of *mansabs*, and later the title of Maharaja to him, as shown in the Table 1 below:

**Table I**  
**MANSAB GRANTS AND TITLES OF RAJA BIR SINGH DEO**  
**BUNDELA BY JAHANGIR**

Year	Previous Rank		Present Rank		Title	Source
	Zat	Sawar	Zat	Sawar		
1606-1607	None	None	3,000	2,000	Raja	<i>Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri</i> , trans. & ed. Rodgers and H. Beveridge, p. 24.
1611-1612	3,000	2,000	4,000	2,000	Raja	Ibid, p. 204.
1612-1613	4,000	2,000	4,000	2,200	Raja	Ibid, p. 231.
1615-1616	4,000	2,200	4,000	2,900	Raja	Ibid, p. 281.
1619-1620	4,000	2,900	5,000	5,000	Raja	Ibid, p. 159.
1622-1623	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	Maharaja	Ibid, p. 253.

<sup>44</sup> Kewal Ram, *Tazkirat-ul-Umara*, British Mus. Add.16703 f. 151a, as cited by K.K.Trivedi *Agra*, op. Cit. p.107.



Jahangir's favour elevated the chieftain of Orchha to the level of select few Rajput chiefs. If award of *mansab* and bestowing of title of Maharaja raised Bir Singh's political and social status similar favour is evident from the grant of *jagir* to him. *Muhta Nainsi*<sup>45</sup> has provided the list of *parganas* and their *jama* which belonged to the *jagir* of Bir Singh as shown in Map No. 2.2.<sup>46</sup>

The salary claim of Bir Singh, against his *mansab* 5000/5000, stood at Rs.14,60,000. however, the assessed revenue from the assigned territory stood at Rs.38,20,000, which was more than 2.6 times of his entitlement. However no evidence is available to explain the high level of this disparity. What appears to be strange here is that even post-Jahangir period sources are silent on the special dispensation noticed above. One can perhaps suggest that favours received by Bir Singh percolated down to the members of the Orchha house in one or the other form. By the time of his death several of his family members might have gained experience and some kind of influence over the territories (*parganas*) where they had acted as Bir Singh's deputy.

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<sup>45</sup> *Munhata Nainsi ri Khyat*, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jodhpur, 1984, Vol I, pp.127-128.

<sup>46</sup> Reproduced from K.K. Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 108.

Bir Singh certainly enjoyed special position with Jahangir, but it emerges as a fact that by the time of his death, Orchha chieftain had emerged as an important power centre. His successor Jujhar Singh started his career in the Mughal imperial service with a *mansab* of 2000/1000 which was soon raised to 4000/4000.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of the awards and rise of *mansab* during Shahjahan's early years, differences between the Mughal ruler and Bundela chief Jujhar Singh have found more than a cursory reference in Persian chronicles. It can be suggested that these differences arose out of Bundela ambition and expansion in Gond territories, which would have given him an effective control over the route going towards Deccan through Central India.<sup>48</sup> In order to curtail his ambitious plans, a very strong force was despatched against him which was joined by the rival claimant of Orchha *gaddi* Bharat, grandson of Ram Chandra. Jujhar Singh could not stand against the Mughal might and sued for peace. However, he had to surrender some of his territories, which were assigned to Abdulla Khan, Saiyyid Muzaffar Barha, Raja

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<sup>47</sup> Lahori, *Badshahnama*, I, 182, as cited by K.K. Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 107.

<sup>48</sup> B.P.Saxena, *History of Shah Jahan of Dilli*, Allahabad, 1958, pp. 88-89.

Pahar Singh and Khan Jahan Lodhi.<sup>49</sup> Shahjahan's policy of countering influence of the Orchha chieftain through stationing of outside elements could not prove very effective. Jujhar Singh was once again found acting in an unfriendly and insubordinate manner. In the final stages, the Mughal forces worked for his total rout and physical removal. He, however, could not give up the traditional ambitions of the Bundelas. His seizure of Gond capital of Chauragarh and his refusal of the imperial order to disgorge his gains, involved him in a fatal struggle with the Mughals, and he was killed alongwith his eldest son Vikramajit.<sup>50</sup>

*Zakhirat-ul-Khawanin*<sup>51</sup> states that Jujhar Singh tried to get rid of his close relations, therefore they did not help him in his struggles with the Mughals. On the basis of the grant of *mansabs* to a number of members of his family it has been suggested that these were rewards given by Shahjahan for their role at this stage.<sup>52</sup> Even if one accepts this suggestion of collaboration of the family members of the Bundela chieftain with the Mughal forces, the fact remains that they had grown into a position to be able to take part with their retainers, in such military exercises. This in other words, indicates the growth in

<sup>49</sup> Qazwini, *Badshahnama* f. 172a, Lahori, *Badshahnama*. 11, 225, as cited by Abha Singh in Jujhar Singh's rebellion, *IHC*, 1990, p. 235.

<sup>50</sup> Lahori, *Badshahnama*, 1i, 294, as cited by K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p.109.

the influence of the family much beyond the small Orchha principality. A look at the names and numbers of *mansabdars* in the service of Shahjahan further attests the fact.<sup>53</sup> After the death of Jujhar Singh, one notices that from a single representative ( at best two for a short time) in the imperial services as *mansabdars* from the Orchha house the number increased to 6-7 in different phases.<sup>54</sup> Along with this one also comes across two or three names, at a given period of time, with the honorific titles of Raja. Such references occur in Persian chronicles associated, in one or the other way, with the Mughals. It appears that the Mughal administration had attempted to lower the status of Orchha centre by encouraging and raising the status of other members of family to the same level. The policy of containment and accommodation followed by the Mughals succeeded in restricting the influence of Orchha. It appears that the attempts at expansion of territorial hold, some of which at times were successful, were not easily ignored by the Mughals. In this context our sources inform us that Pahar Singh in order to expand his territories in the second half of seventeenth century attacked

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<sup>51</sup> Zakhirat, f. 128b. As cited by K.K.Trivedi. *Agra*, p.109.

<sup>52</sup> Lahori 1, pp. 248,255, as cited by K.K.Trivedi, *Agra*, p.109.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix 2.2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. .

Chauragarh and captured Raisen and Ginner Garh.<sup>55</sup> His attacks are attested by the establishment of small township of Paharsinghpur after his name in the Gondwana region and also through an inscription which mentions that Pahar Singh undertook and completed the task of building a water tank ( Bawari) in the village Hira Nagar of the same region. The Mughals could not keep a blind eye towards his growing ambitions. We have Aurangzeb's letter to his son Prince Muhammad Azam Shah Bahadur as an evidence that Pahar Singh was "suitably" punished for his ambitions. The excerpts of the letter of Aurangzeb to his son clearly point, "that the blind minded Pahar Singh through his great pride and haughtiness, became the source of sedition and rebellion and raised the standard of rebellion against (us); but he was killed by Taluk Chand, the assistant to (my) dear and fortunate son's ( i.e. Azam) minister and entered hell... For this I congratulate you and send you a necklace of pearls worth Rs.50,000. As this Hindu (i.e. Taluk Chand) had verified the proverb that this sparrow ( Taluk Chand being a Marwari) has bravely killed the hawk (i.e. Pahar Singh being a Rajput) I exalt him by giving a personal title

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<sup>55</sup> This reference was given to me by Sri Hari Vishnu Awasthi, as cited in Orchha Darbar records. Register No. 13, Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh.

of Pan Sadi, a hundred cavaliers, a (Hindu) title of Rao, a robe of honour, a sword and a horse...<sup>56</sup>

Aurangzeb on ascending the throne however continued the policy of Shahjahan, where he gave, as his predecessor, patronage to a number of Bundelas.<sup>57</sup> Possibly he too realised the power of Bundelas and therefore used the clan factionalism purposely to keep them divided as he too must have realised that if united Bundelas could prove to be a potential threat to the Mughal empire. From the appendix 2.1 it is evident that Aurangzeb had maximum number of Bundelas as *mansabdars* in his service. Yet, possibly to keep the Bundelas at a distance from their own territory a means and measure was designed by Aurangzeb in order to further render them weak and contain them from emerging out as the power of the region.<sup>58</sup>

However, an analysis of ranks and consequent to that control over revenue, as a salary claim would show that in different

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<sup>56</sup> *Rukaat -i-Alamgiri*. Letter to Prince Muhammad Azam Shah Bahadur, Letter No. XVIII, pp. 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix 2.2.

<sup>58</sup> *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha* refers to Dalpat Rai and his father Subhakaran Bundela who served under Aurangzeb as his General. About Dalpat Rai we come to know that he was present at the siege of *Ginji* (1694-98) and helped Nusrat Jang. He was also present at the siege of *Vakingadh* (1706) and was killed by a canon shot in the battle between Azam and Muazzam. (1707) .

periods throughout the seventeenth century, the Bundelas continued to improve their position, as shown in Table II below.

**Table II**

**SALARY CLAIM OF BUNDELA CHIEFS IN THE YEARS C.1595, 1619-23, 1629-30, 1657-58, 1675-78, 1705-07**

Year	Name of Bundela Chief	Mansab (Rank)		Salary Claim (Rs.)		Total Salary (Rs. p.a.)	Index
		zat	sawar	zat	sawar		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1595	Ram Chandra	500	x	2300 <sup>59</sup>	x	27,600	100
1619-23	Bir Singh Deo	5,000	5,000	3,60,000 <sup>60</sup>	1,10,000 <sup>61</sup>	14,60,000	5289.85
1629-30	Jujhar Singh	5,000	5,000	2,50,000 <sup>62</sup>	10,00,000 <sup>63</sup>	12,50,000	
	Raja Bharat	3,000	3,000	1,50,000	6,00,000	7,50,000	
	Vikramajit	1,000	1,000	50,000	2,00,000	2,50,000	
	Chandraman	1,000	600	50,000	1,20,000	1,70,000	
	Bhagwan Das	1,000	600	50,000	1,20,000	1,70,000	
					Total	25,90,000	9384
1657-58	Champat	500	500	25,000 <sup>64</sup>	1,00,000 <sup>65</sup>	1,25,000	
	Pahar Singh	4,000	3,500 (2-3h)	2,00,000	14,00,000	16,00,000	

<sup>59</sup> Though it has been suggested that for maintenance of animal additional allowance was given ( See Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of Mughal Empire c. 1595: A Statistical Study*, Delhi, 1987) it does not find support in the sources. For a view that maintenance of war animals was met out of zat salary see K.K.Trivedi, *Indian Economic and Social Historical Review*, Vol.XXIV, No. 4 (1987), pp.411-422.

<sup>60</sup> The pay scales at the accession of Jahangir were on the whole very close to those of c.1595 that is given in *Ain-i-Akbari* remained largely in force till the reign of Shahjahan. Irfan Habib, "The Mansab System" (1595-1637) in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Patiala, 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Payment on sawar rank was made at a standard rate which was 8,800 dams per sawar after 1615, See, Irfan Habib, "The Mansab System", P.I.H.C., Patiala, 1967.

<sup>62</sup> Salary schedule against both the ranks is based on *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, Yusuf Hussain Khan (ed.), Hyderabad, 1950, p.80, See also Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, Bombay, reprint 1970, pp. 71-73.

<sup>63</sup> Payment on sawar rank was made at a standard rate which was 8,000 dams per sawar in the year 1657-58, Irfan Habib, *Ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> As in footnote No.4 above.

<sup>65</sup> As in footnote No.5 above.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Devi Singh	2,000	2,000	1,00,000	4,00,000	5,00,000	
	Sujan Singh	2,500	2,500	1,25,000	5,00,000	6,25,000	
	Subh Karan	1,500	1,400	75,000	2,80,000	3,55,000	
	Indraman	500	500	25,000	1,00,000	1,25,000	
					Total	33,30,000	12065.2 1
1675-78	Champat	5,000	x	2,50,000 <sup>66</sup>	x	2,50,000	
	Devi Singh	2,500	2,300 (500x 2-3h)	1,25,000	5,60,000 <sup>67</sup>	6,85,000	
	Subhkaran	2,500	2,200	1,25,000	4,40,000	5,65,000	
	Indraman	1,500	1,200	75,000	2,40,000	3,15,000	
	Jaswant Singh	1,500	1,000 (2-3h)	75,000	4,00,000	4,75,000	
	Puran Mal	1,500	1,500	75,000	3,00,000	3,75,000	
	Dalpat Rai	500	500 (2-3h)	25,000	2,00,000	2,25,000	
					Total	28,90,000	10471.0 1
1705-07	Chhatrasal	4,000	x	2,00,000 <sup>68</sup>	x	2,00,000	
	Devi Singh	2,500	2,500	1,25,000	5,00,000 <sup>69</sup>	6,25,000	
	Rao Ram Chand	2,000	2,000	1,20,000	4,00,000	5,00,000	
	Dalpat Rai	3,000	3,000	1,50,000	6,00,000	7,50,000	
	Hridey Shah	1,500	1,000	75,000	2,00,000	2,75,000	
	Padam Singh	1,500	500	75,000	1,00,000	1,75,000	
	Bihari Chandra	1,500	1,000	75,000	2,00,000	2,75,000	
					Total	28,00,000	10,144. 92

Around c.1595 the sole Bundela *mansabdar*, Ram Chandra, was entitled for a salary claim of Rs. 27,600 per annum this amount

<sup>66</sup> *Zat* ranks in this case is calculated according to *Dastur-ul-Amal-i-Alamgiri* of Aurangzeb's reign. As cited in Table showing the pay to *zat* rank by Athar Ali: Ibid. pp.71-73

<sup>67</sup> salary for a *sawar* continued at the rate of 8,000 *dams*, Aurangzeb; See Irfan Habib: *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> As in footnote No. 8 above.

<sup>69</sup> As in footnote No. 9 above.



was adjusted, apparently, against his ancestral land as *watan-jagir*. Alongwith this one can add Rs. 26,504<sup>70</sup> being the *zamindari* commission out of those *parganas* where Bundelas are entered as *zamindars* in the *Ain*<sup>71</sup>.

In effect all the Bundelas could claim a total of Rs. 54,104 per year. Soon one notices that fortune started to move upwards, and within a period of about twenty years the salary of the Bundela chieftains shot up by more than 5,000 times to reach Rs. 14,60,000. This rise was exceptional as we have pointed out earlier. However, if after the death of an individual, in this case Bir Singh, his successors were not allowed privileged ranks, one would, perhaps have accepted that earlier situation was extraordinary. However, during Shahjahan's time the Bundelas continued to receive high *mansabs* and important postings in military expeditions. Around 1630, from a single member during Akbar and Jahangir's time, the number of Bundela *mansabdars* increased to five. More than that the salary claim stood at Rs. 46,30,000 per annum. If with Rs. 38,20,000 worth of *jagir* Bir Singh controlled such extensive territories as have been shown in Map 2. One can rightly speculate that by 1630 the size of territories under the Bundela *mansabdars* would have been

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<sup>70</sup> See Appendix 2.1.

increased by another twenty per cent. For next fifty years remained almost same and similar to the situation noted for 1630. In other words, once Bir Singh had gained a privileged position, his successors, irrespective of the fact that they were sometimes not well disposed. As each other, continued to consolidate themselves in the region, that too of a much larger area.

Thus, we see, because of favourably changing fortunes of Bundelas in a very limited period of time consolidated their hold over a territory which was much more extensive than the original area as well as from which they were able to claim many times higher revenue. It is no surprise if the Bundelas had succeeded to improve upon their hold during the period of Mughal heydays, there was little possibility of decline in their position in the later period when Mughal authority itself had taken a downward slide.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. .

## Appendix 2.1

## BUNDELA ZAMINDARS, c. 1595

S. No.	NAME OF PARGANA	ASSESSED REVENUE ( DAMS)	ARMED RETAINERS			REMARKS
			Infantry	Cavalry	Elephants	
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
<b>SUBA MALWA SARKAR CHANDERI</b>						
1.	Eran	1,759	100	10	—	Sole zamindars
2.	Bara and c	3,17,750	250	2500	—	(a) Shared zamindari with the Kayasthas (b) Each pargana had a fort; four made of stone and one brick fort.
<b>SUBA AGRA SARKAR PAYANWAN</b>						
3.	Paranchah (Paraich)	3,96,193	500	20	—	Sole zamindars
4.	Badnun (Bardun)	2,75,000	200	10	—	-do-
5.	Khand Bajrah, the greater	69,467	150	13	—	Shared zamindari with Jats
<b>Total</b>		10,60,169	1,200	2,553	—	

**Assessed revenue in Rs. 26,504.**

Source: *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Jarrette, Vol. II, pp. 198-200, 212. Where *Ain-i-Akbari* records

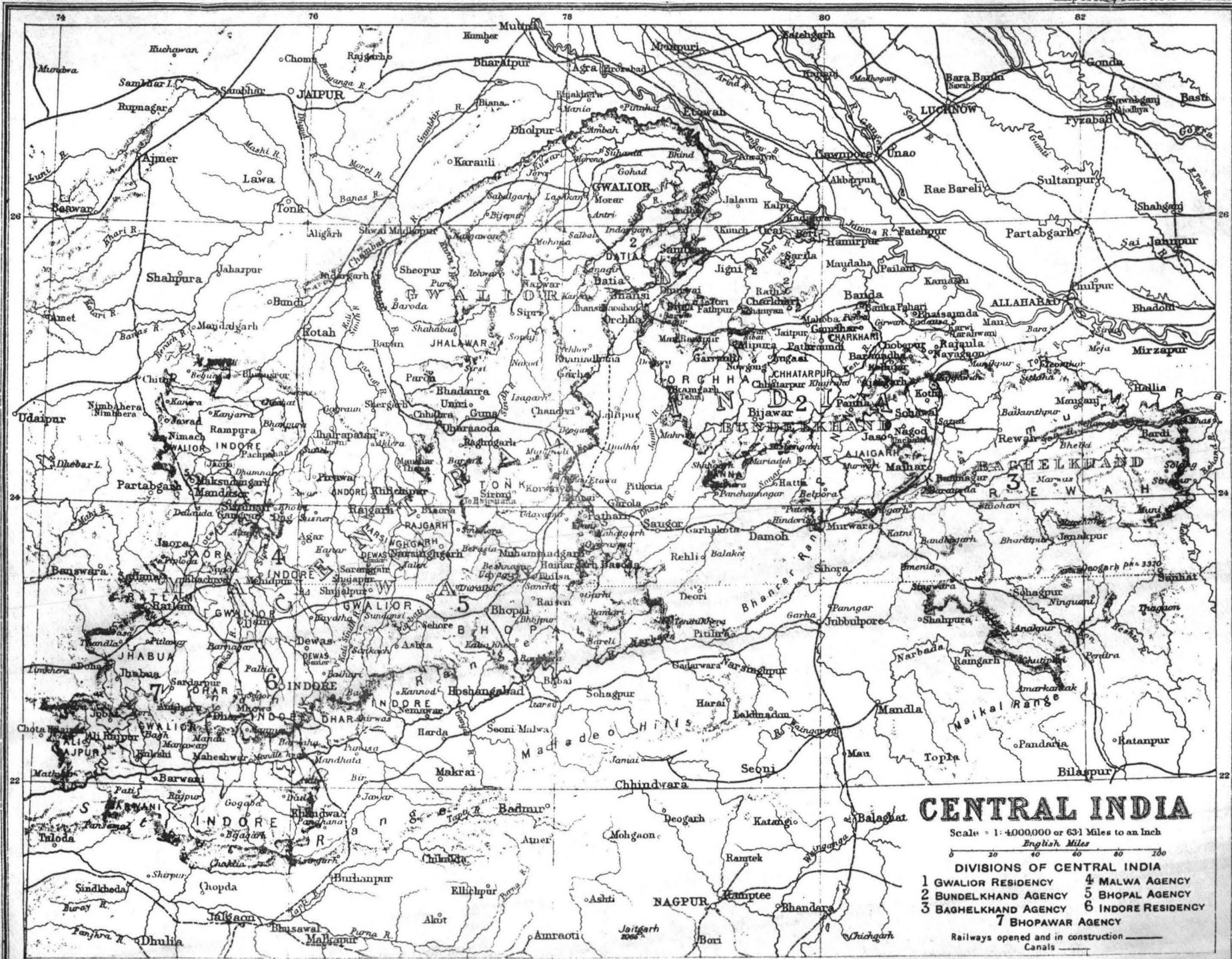
two zamindar castes in a pargana we have divided the assessed revenue by two to get the share of one caste/clan (here Bundela).

## Appendix 2.2

### List of Bundela Mansabdars under Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan, Aurangzeb

S.No.	Name of Bundela Mansabdar	Rank		Sources
		3	4	
1	2	3	4	5
<b>AKBAR</b>		<b>zat</b>	<b>sawar</b>	
1	Ram Chandra	500	x	<i>Ain</i> , I, p., 328.
<b>JAHANGIR</b>				
1.	Raja Bir Singh Deo	5,000	5,000	<i>Tuzuk</i> , II, p. 159,
<b>SHAHJAHAN</b>				
1.	Raja Bharat	4,000	3,500	Lahori, 1,302, as cited in Athar Ali, <i>The Apparatus of Empire</i> , Delhi, 1985: Ibid. p.108
2.	Pahar Singh	3,000	2,000	Ibid.
3.	Jujhar Singh Bundela	5,000	5,000	(Lahori, 1, 296,) Ibid. p.107.
4.	Vikramajit	2,000	2,000	(Lahori, 1, 339), Ibid. P. 100.
5.	Nar Har Das	500	200	(Lahori, 1, 196,), Ibid,p.102.
6.	Bhagwan Das	1,000	600	(Lahori, I, 205), Ibid,p.103.
7.	Beni Das	500	200	(Lahori I(b), 324), Ibid, p. 154.
8	Chandra Man	1,500	800	(Lahori I, 372), Ibid., p. 147.
9	Devi Singh	2,500	2,000	(Silih III, 457), Ibid., p. 145.
10	Subha Karan	1,500	1,400	(Hyd. 170), Ibid., p. 179.
11	Dalpat Rai	250	80	Ibid. .
<b>AURANGZEB</b>				
1.	Champat	5,000	x	Dilkusha, 15,b, as citd by Athar Ali, <i>The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb</i> , Bombay, 1970, p. 179.
2	Sujan Singh	3,500	3,000(50 0x2-3h)	(A-I, 342, 486,908, A.M.T., 124b), Ibid., p. 183.
3.	Mitrasen Budela	1,500	1,200	(A.M.T.,132b), Ibid., 198.
4	Raja Chhatrasal	4,000	x	(Dilkusha, 157b,158a), Ibid., p. 227.
5	Raja Udat Singh	3,500	1,600	(Akh.25th, Rabi I,38th R.Y.), Ibid., p. 229.
6	Udai Singh	3,500	1,200	(M.A.,473), Ibid., p. 230.
7	Dalpat Rao	3,000	3,000	(Dilkusha,157a), Ibid., p. 231.
8	Raja Devi Singh	2,500	2,500(50 0x2-3h)	(Mamuri 154a),Ibid., p. 238.
9	Subh Karan	2,500	2,200	(A.M.T.131a),Ibid., p 239.

1	2	3	4	5
10	Rao Ram Chandra	2,000	2,000(1000x2-3h)	(Akh.27th Muharram, 44th R.Y., A.M.T., 127b), Ibid., p. 242.
11	Raja Jaswant Singh	1,500	1,000(2-3h)	(Mamuri, 165a), Ibid., p. 250.(
12	Bihari Chand	1,500	1,000	(Azam-al-Harb, 168), Ibid., p. 252.
13	Hridey Shah	1,500	1,000	(B.D.Gupta), Ibid., p. 253.
14	Padam Singh	1,500	500	(Akh.1st Jan., 1707A.D. as cited by B.D.Gupta), Ibid., p. 256.
15	Inderman	1,000	700	(Daftar-i-Diwani, No.2983), Ibid., p. 263.
16	Raja Bhagwant Singh	1,000	500	(Dilkusha, 96a), Ibid., p. 264.



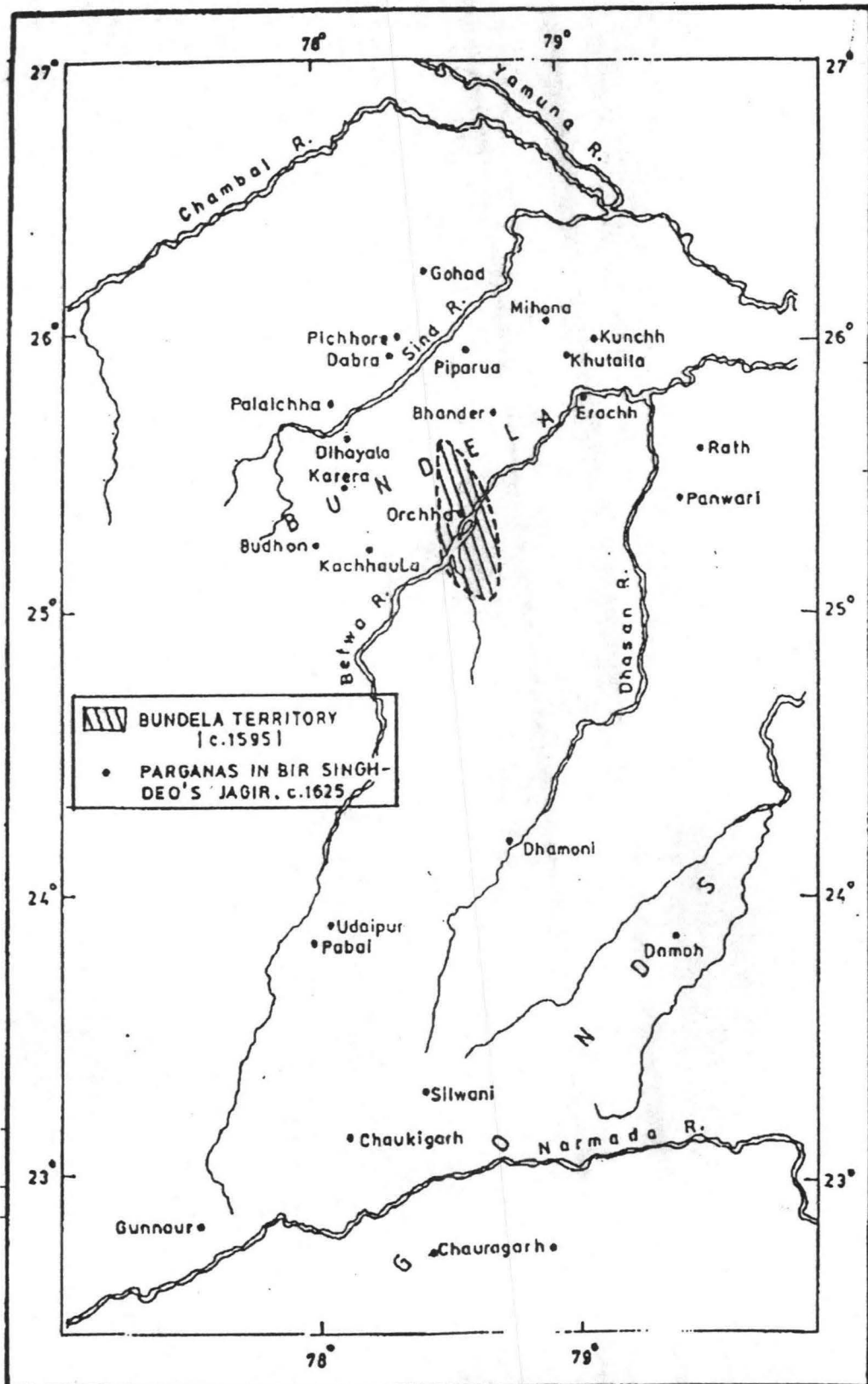
MAP  
2.1

# CENTRAL INDIA

Scale: 1:4,000,000 or 631 Miles to an Inch  
English Miles  
0 20 40 60 80 100

- DIVISIONS OF CENTRAL INDIA**
- 1 GWALIOR RESIDENCY
  - 2 BUNDELKHAND AGENCY
  - 3 BAGHELKHAND AGENCY
  - 4 MALWA AGENCY
  - 5 BHOPAL AGENCY
  - 6 INDORE RESIDENCY
  - 7 BHOPAWAR AGENCY
- Railways opened and in construction ———  
Canals ———

MAP 2.2



### Chapter III

## Potentialities of the Region

The prosperous life of Bundelas is a widely recognised fact in the historiography of the Mughal period. However these assumptions often appear to be based more on hearsay than on actual evidential proofs. Very few, if at all, studies have so far been done which could tell about what lay underneath those grand architectural remains of the region - the edifices which exhilarate a sense of romance even today. Illustrating the prosperity of the Bundelas, Dirk Kolff writes:

It was recorded in the memory of the clan that Bir Singh Deo was a mighty builder who not only built the great palace forts at Orchha and Datiya, the latter at a cost of 36,90,980 rupees, but also many others edifices 'within and without the limits of central India ...' one tradition has it that on a Sunday in December 1618, the foundation of fifty two buildings were laid, whereas the other accounts say that he built the famous tanks of Bir Sagar, and Barwa Sagar, fifty two in all. A greater achievement of his perhaps was the building, at a cost of thirty-three lakhs of rupees of the Keshavadas temple, devoted to Krishna.<sup>1</sup>

This illustrative account of Kolff however is still limited, as there are sufficient evidences in the contemporary records to establish that many more temples and Bir Singh Deo constructed

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<sup>1</sup> Dirk H.A. Kolff, Naukar, *Rajput and Sepoy: The ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 129.



buildings at various places. Bhimsen informs us that Bir Singh Deo laid foundation of ten buildings at one time and cost of each house came to about nine to ten lakh of rupees and all the buildings were completed within a short span of time, giving the description of the buildings in the following manner: "The Devala (temple) of Bishvanath in Kashi, the passages and gangways in Dwarka; another building on the bank of river Son; the temple of Kesorai in Matura, the steps upto the waters of river Jamuna. There was huge and a massive building in Datia which worked as the headquarters for the hunting grounds. Rao Dalpat changed it into a residential building. Opposite to this building, a fortress, a *haweli* and the gardens were erected. The building named Jahangirnagar in Orchha and a tank nearby were built. The forts of Jhansi, Dhamoni and the fort of Karhara were built by him."<sup>2</sup> Large number of these edifices and the nature of building material used are evidences which sufficiently show that huge volume of money was spent in constructing these buildings. Added to these are, the tales of charity by Bir Singh Deo who is said to have gone to Mathura in 1614 on a pilgrimage and have weighed himself against an amount of gold which together with an additional 81 *mans* of gold was distributed in

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<sup>2</sup> Bhimsen, *Tarikh-i-Dilkasa*, tr. B.G. Khobarakar, Bombay, 1972 in Jadunath Sarkar Centenary Commemorative Volume, p. 4.

charity.<sup>3</sup> The 81 *mans* gold are said to have represented the 81 *parganas* that supposedly constituted Bir Singh Deo's realm.<sup>4</sup> These lavish styles of Bir Singh Deo Bundela present a strong contrast against the "inhospitable" and "unproductive" tracts of Bundelkhand and baffle one's minds as to what could have been the source of money which were so magnanimously spent in these enterprises. And thereby emerges the larger question of exploring the potentialities of the region- a theme, which is the central focus of this chapter.

Money spent on private and public works takes one to look for sources of accumulation. It assumes more importance when one knows that Bir Singh Deo had not secured any assignment, especially a *jagir*, outside the region known as Bundelkhand, an area, which at least today, is considered poor in productivity and growth.

There appear to be at least three factors, which may have significantly contributed to the prosperity of the region. Contrary to the conventional notions a close look at the Chandella sources

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<sup>3</sup> Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, p. 130. The ceremony of weighing one's body and then giving away its equivalent in grain, silver or gold is called *Tuladan*. *Tarikh-i-Dilkasa* informs "He wore all the military paraphernalia on his body and got himself weighed according to Hindu tradition and each time he weighed nine mounds and thus he distributed the equal weight in gold to the people.", p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, p.130.

unerringly presents a positive picture of agricultural productivity during their time. And given a continuity in the geographical boundaries of the region and other measures for raising agricultural productivity, one may, with a great amount of certainty assume that the Bundelas too enjoyed the agricultural prosperity. Besides agriculture, one analyses the prosperity of the Bundelas, in terms of their role as the brokers in the military market of the Mughals. The brokering in the military market was one of solid sources of financial gain during this period, and Bundela excelled in it.<sup>5</sup> The most important of these however was the situation of the region on the major trade routes of the period, which possibly gave the Bundelas the required financial base to stand stable. A thematic study of these features may plausibly lead to the reconstruction of the rudimentary images of the region.

Apart from these factors, another significant index of the inherent potential of the region is its centrality in the political discourse of the time. Right from Subuktigin - the first Ghaznavid ruler to invade India, this region time and again compelled nearly all the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate with the exception of one or two to bring it under their control. These overtures essentially point to the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. .

strategic significance of the region in the scheme of medieval empires, and to us become a marker, and an important informant towards an understanding of the potentialities of the region. There appears to be a relationship of complementarity between the wider strategic needs of these medieval empires and the enlarging of space for the Bundelas in the medieval polity. The political context of the region entails a great deal on the indispensability of the region in the pre-Mughal as well as Mughal polity.

Qutubuddin Aibak in the year A.H. 599 (A.D.1202) marched against Kalinjar where he defeated the 'Raja of the Country' laid siege to the fort.<sup>6</sup> According to Ferishta, "the 'Raja' seeing himself hard-pressed, offered Qutubuddin Aibak the same tributes and presents, which his ancestors had formerly paid to Sultan Mahmud."<sup>7</sup> (It is pertinent to mention that Mahmud of Ghazni too invaded the region twice in A.H. 410 i.e. A.D. 1019, and A.H. 413 i.e. A.D.1022.) After capturing Kalinjar, Aibak marched to Mahoba as well, which was the capital of the principality of Kalpi.<sup>8</sup> Next it was Iltutmish whose attention was attracted towards the region. In A.D. 1232, he captured Gwalior and left Malik Nusrat-ud-din in charge of

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<sup>6</sup> Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, tr. J. Briggs as *History of the Rise of Mohammadan Power*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1910, p.111.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

the region.<sup>9</sup> Nasir-ud-din Mahmud too sieged Narwar in A.D.1250, from where he marched to Chanderi, Malwa and after subduing he appointed an officer to govern them.<sup>10</sup> Balban, who in A.D.1251, laid a strong army through the districts east of Kalinjar, followed him.<sup>11</sup> Alauddin however started his chain of conquests by attacking Chanderi. The contemporary sources inform us that the wealth of Devgiri had fired his imagination for a conquest. After the victory at Bhilsa with revenue of Awadh added to those of Kara, he asked for another favour, "Chanderi and its neighbourhood are free from payment of revenue and are ignorant of the army of Delhi. If it be your pleasure, I shall employ new troops and retainers with the revenue of my *Iqta*, so as to attack these places and bring countless booty and deposit everything in the imperial treasury."<sup>12</sup> This statement of Alauddin points to the imagined richness of the region during this period. And perhaps it was ambitious Alauddin's piercing eyes that found a passage and pretext for the conquest of Deogir, which till now was protected by the Vindhya on the north and had remained outside the operational sphere of the foreign invaders who had come to northern India from the eighth to the thirteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Minhaz Siraz, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, tr. H.G. Raverty, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1897, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, p.131.

<sup>11</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Amir Khusraw, *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, tr. S.H. Haidvala in *Studies in Indo-Islamic History*,

The Kadahawa inscription of Guna district tells us that one ascetic Bhuteshwar “practiced austere penance then the whole earth was overrun by the Malechhas”, and it appears that by A.D.1310 Alauddin had conquered the whole of this area.<sup>13</sup>

Possibly during the reign of Mohammad bin Tughlaq, the region was governed from Chanderi, which had become the headquarters of a large province.<sup>14</sup> Most probably, Chanderi remained a part of Delhi Sultanate during the reign of Firoz Tughlaq. We are informed when Firoz Tughlaq laid siege to the fort of Thatta (in Sind); the troops of Erich and Chanderi were requisitioned to reinforce his army.<sup>15</sup> The Lodhis too time and again tried to have a hold over the region. We have references of attempts by Bahlul Lodhi who tried and was successful in bringing Kalpi under his authority.<sup>16</sup> He in his attempts was followed by his successor Sikandar Lodhi in the year A.D. 1498, who marched as far as Panna

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Bombay, 1933, p. 220.

<sup>13</sup> Pushpa Prasad, “Historical Material of Khalji and Tughlaq Period in the Sanskrit Inscriptions of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat”, presented at Indian History Congress, 1990, pp. 243-260. (mimeographed)

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Batuta, *Rehala*, tr. H.A.R. Gibbs as *Travels in Asia and Africa*, London, 1929, p. 270.

<sup>15</sup> “The Sultan in consultation with his officers sent Imadul-ul-Mulk to Delhi for bringing fresh reinforcements. Accordingly he went to Delhi where he received a warm reception from the *vazir* Khan Jahan, who within short time, organised a large army from Badaon, Chanderi, Kannauj, Sandila, Oudh, Jaunpur, Bihar, Tirhul, Mahoba, Iraj.” Shams Shiraj Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi.*, as cited by J.M. Banerjee, *History of Firozshah*, Delhi, 1967, pp. 237-238.

<sup>16</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, p. 335.

and sacked the region as far as Banda.<sup>17</sup>

Through a study of the contemporary Persian chronicles, and the large number of Chandella inscriptions which are available to us, and are the most informative source on this region, one can approach the problem in a fresh manner. In the wider spectrum of extant sources, however, the Chandella inscriptions appear more significant, because the sources of post -Chandella period covering upto the Babur's invasion in Indian territories are totally Delhi-centric. Part of the reason may perhaps be explained in terms of the overwhelming dominance of the Delhi Sultanate (the period before the emergence of Bundelas), thus the sources tending to relegate the nitty-gritties of the region in the background. Bundelkhand in the inscriptions of this period, as a region, emerges as totally inactive, as if the hold of the centre over these territories was so strong that the local elements were rendered powerless and insignificant. And so to understand the dynamics of the region per se, before the emergence of Bundelas, the Chandella records are more plausible. These provide with a perspective, which is around and about the region. They do not draw their reference from the Delhi Sultanate, and are most useful giving us a background against which to form the story

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 335-338.

of Bundela's emergence. This is further corroborated by a possible similarity in the extent of Chandellas boundaries, which these sources demarcate, and that of the Bundelas. The extent of Chandella kingdom as mentioned in the Khajuraho Inscription of v.s. 1011 A.D. was marked by the turn of Bhasvat on the river Malava (i.e. Bhilsa on Betwa) on the west, Yamuna on the north with Gwalior in the north-east. The southern frontiers may have been Kaimur hills on river Narmada.<sup>18</sup> These limits of Chandella kingdom are generally supported by the references to the district or *visyas* owned by them found in their land grants and inscriptions. The area indicated approximately coincides with Bundelkhand comprising in the wider extent to all the country south of river Yamuna, from Betwa river on the west to the temple of Vindhyavasini (south Mirzapur) on the east, including districts of Chanderi, Saugar and Bilhari, near the sources of Narmada on the south<sup>19</sup>. These territories also more or less coincide with the territories marked by Smith, who includes the districts of Hamirpur, Banda, Lalitpur with parts of Allahabad and Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, Saugar and Damoh districts in central provinces (M.P.) and a large intermediate space which under British

<sup>18</sup> *Epigraphia Indica* (E.I.), Vol. I, p. 122, Verse. 6.

<sup>19</sup> A. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 552.



rule was occupied by a number of native states.<sup>20</sup>

Agriculture constituted the mainstay of the medieval Indian societies and provided the surplus upon which the non-producing societies thrived, and Bundelkhand was no exception to it.<sup>21</sup> Although due to physiological diversities of the region only some areas were amenable for cultivation, and even these did not constitute a continuous stretch, but in Bundelkhand nature's bounty and human effort worked together and created zones conducive to widespread agriculture.

However, given the uneven distribution of the natural and environmental resources, the geography of the area as already described in the Chapter I highlighted the total dependence of its agriculture on rainfall. The geography of Bundelkhand is marked by ill-fed rivers. The Chandellas made an effort to overcome the deficiency and seem to have succeeded a good deal. The entire area is interspersed with numerous tanks and temples which tradition ascribes to 'Chandel raj'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, much before Bundelas came on the scene, in the sixteenth century, the Chandellas had

<sup>20</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 130

<sup>21</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, Bombay, 1963; also see, Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: Society, Jagirdari Crisis and the Villages*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 166-183.

<sup>22</sup> P.C. Mukharjee, *Reports on the Antiquities in the Districts of Lalitpur, North Western Provinces of India*, Varanasi, reprint 1972, p. 13.

already set upon the tremendous task of building innumerable embankments and excavating tanks to tackle the water problem- a legacy, which Bundelas inherited. The study of location and structure of these water reservoirs represent the traditional Indian know-how in the field of hydrolic engineering as adapted to the terrain and water resource situation of the region.<sup>23</sup> The growing importance of the water reservoirs in this period essentially signified the anxiety of the propel to raise the fertility of the soil.

The use of these water sources for agricultural needs gets reflected in the sources as they often attribute their constructions for the benefit of the peasantry.<sup>24</sup> Expressions like *nala* (canal), *pushkarni* (tanks) and *bhiti* (embankments) are met with in different Chandella records. These were usually located near the cultivable areas apparently to supply water to the field. A Chandella inscription from Khajuraho mentions of a large tank dug during the reign of king Yasovarman.<sup>25</sup> Another Khajuraho inscription of Kokalla refers to Ahyasobala of Grahapati family who built tanks full of water in which "lotuses shone with the loveliness of the spreading rays of

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<sup>23</sup> V.K. Singh, "A Chandella Dam: A study of its location and structure", presented at the Indian History Congress, 1990, pp. 373-377. (mimeographed)

<sup>24</sup> For example the Khajuraho inscription of v.s. 1011 refers to the construction of embankments to divert the course of river for the benefit of the peasantry. *E.I.*, Vol. I, p. 122. verse 26.

<sup>25</sup> *E.I.* Vol. I, p.138.

bright-lustered moon”<sup>26</sup> In Jhansi stone inscription of Sallaskanasimha, we are informed of a tank having been dug and a grove planted.<sup>27</sup> Mau-Chandella inscription mentions more than one tank built by the ministers figuring on it; verse 47 refers to Gandhara getting a tank excavated near village Deddu with its masonry of many broad stones. Verse 48, though a broken one makes a clear reference to another tank of good water in the proximity of a village known as Kendi.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of fact the memory of some Chandella kings has been preserved simply by large tanks excavated by them and is, therefore, named after them. Kiratsagar and Madansagar lakes near Mahoba have carried the names of Kirtivarman and Madanavarman down the corridors of time.<sup>29</sup> Semra copper plates of Paramardeva refer to Ajaysagar tank.<sup>30</sup> Such was the magnitude of water problem that even the queens did not lag behind in attending to it and came forward to finance the building of wells. In Ajaygarh rock inscription, Viravarman’s queen, Kalyanidevi is recorded to have caused excavation of a tank, “resembling ocean and built a well called *nirjara* (never failing) just out of compassion

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. P. 215.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 206-207.

<sup>29</sup> I.A., Vol. XXXVIII, p.134.

<sup>30</sup> E.I., Vol. IV, p. 155.

and to sustain life."<sup>31</sup> The very expressions accompanying the purpose are enough to bring home the importance of the act. Thus the combined efforts of the kings, queens, and nobles during these centuries resulted in the construction of large number of tanks, wells and the step wells for the physical and agricultural needs of the people in the region. What nature deprived, human efforts tried to overcome it, and therefore excavation of a well or a *vapi* acquired religious dimensions earning the highest merit to persons financing it.<sup>32</sup>

The Bundelas not only inherited but also made their own contribution by undertaking the task of construction of various tanks and reservoirs, and like Chandellas, made an effort to overcome the deficiency and seem to have succeeded a great deal. And this suggests that the whole region was being irrigated on a very large scale and it might have facilitated double cropping in the region, resulting in increased agricultural production for trade as well as consumption.<sup>33</sup> However this is just an assumption for evidences are still to come our way.

It has been suggested that during medieval period in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 325-330, 337.

<sup>33</sup> V.K.Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India (A.D. 1000-1300)*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 33.

the absence of modern farming techniques it was the extent (quantity) of land under cultivation rather than practice of intensive (quality) agriculture that contributed more to increasing production.<sup>34</sup> Given the continued importance of irrigational innovations, one can argue that the Bundelas, alongwith the assured means of irrigation in the region, must have inherited a considerable extent of cultivable land from Chandellas. The extent of cultivable land during the Chandella period may be read in the increased number of land grants that were doled out to different people in this period. The fact of distributing land grants implies the use of land for the purpose of cultivation. What is very pertinent is that the land grants of this period contained of well-demarcated areas. The demarcation of donated areas implies that more and more people were being accommodated on the available land, and in order to avoid any conflict that might arise among the donees the boundaries were clearly laid down. It must have led to smaller holdings and thus intensive cultivation and might have brought fresh areas under cultivation.<sup>35</sup>

The emergence and rise of *Kayasthas*, who had crystallized into a caste concerned mainly with writing out charters

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<sup>34</sup> Though the Mughal state constantly attempted to bring about qualitative changes in agriculture, the primary means of increasing agrarian production remained the extension of area under cultivation. See Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System*, pp. 249-256, Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 166-183 .

and record keeping, in this region during this period may be taken to symbolize the growing importance of the system of land grants, and have an indirect bearing on the growth of agricultural operation in the region. Under Chandellas the *Kayasthas* rose to highly responsible positions. In the Ajaygarh rock inscription of Subhata, a scion of *Vastavy Kayastha* family, a pure *prasasti* as good as that of any king, containing a long genealogy, proclaims that he was not only *Kosohikaraohipati* of King Bhojvarman but a *saciva* as well placed at the head of his affairs. This record further reports that the family of Subhata had been associated with the ruling dynasty since the days of King Ganda.<sup>36</sup> Another official of the Kayastha caste to achieve such eminence was Nana.<sup>37</sup>

From Chandella inscriptions it can be safely concluded that agriculture must have been one of the principal occupation of the region and we have no reason to doubt that it continued to be so till the period of our study i.e. sixteenth -seventeenth century.

Agriculture was the predominant activity during Chandella period is also evident from the number of references to *hala* or plough as a prominent instrument of cultivation and the fact that land was measured according to number of ploughs used in cultivating

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<sup>35</sup> V.K.Jain, *Trade and Traders*, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. I, No. 38, Verse, 30-31.

it.<sup>38</sup> The system of measuring the land on the basis of its seeds' capacity was in vogue. From various inscriptions we can deduce the equation between *hala* measure and the measure based on the seeds' capacity. These systems of measurement because of their accuracy show a distinct kind of scientific understanding, which can emerge only from an extensive agricultural base. The scheme of measurement followed in this manner: 7 1/2 *drones* of land were identical to 10 *halas*.<sup>39</sup> The *drone* was a kind of dry measure of weightment of agricultural products and each drone contained 16 *prasthas*. The inscriptions show that it was usual that 1 *prastha* of seed was to be sown on each *vadha* of land. *Vadha* evidently was the unit of measurement of land surface. Hence 7 1/2 *dronas* of seeds meant 120 *prasthas* cultivable by 10 *halas*, i.e. 12 *prasthas* or 3/4th of *drona* of a seed for each *hala* of land.<sup>40</sup>

*Khulasat-ut- Tawarikh* <sup>41</sup> informs us that sweets of Kalpi were very famous so does Abul fazl who mentions that sugar candy manufactured at Kalpi was of excellent quality<sup>42</sup>, thereby suggesting that Kalpi be situated very close to sugarcane producing hinterlands.

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<sup>37</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 19.

<sup>38</sup> *I.A.*, Vol. XVI, p. 202.

<sup>39</sup> *E.I.*, Vol. X, p. 48, Verse, 8.

<sup>40</sup> *E.I.*, XVI, p. 12, verse 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> Sajan Rai, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, as cited by Muhammad Azhar Ansari in *Geographical Glimpses of Medieval India*, Vol. III, Delhi, 1989, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vo. II, tr. H.S. Jarrett, Calcutta, 1948, p. 92.

We have numerous references as to sugarcane plantations in the region of our study during Chandella period.<sup>43</sup> It is important to point here that Indian sugar of various kinds served as commonman's chief sweetmeat and formed an important commodity of trade.<sup>44</sup> We have no reason to doubt inspite of silence of contemporary sources that sugarcane plantation must have continued in the period of our study and artificial irrigational facilities must have contributed to its further growth - a fact attested by the presence of stone presses and *kohluas* in the region. A nineteenth century gazateer also suggests the existence of these '*kolhuas*' in this region from the former times and thereby attesting the production of sugercane.<sup>45</sup>

Manucci has written that "it ought to be remembered that whole of the merchandise which is exported from Mughal kingdom comes from four kinds of plants - that is to say, the shrub that produces the cotton, from which a large quantity of clothes, coarse and fine is made..."<sup>46</sup> Manucci's reference to cotton with three other crops, opium, indigo and malberry, shows that it was one of the prime products of the time. Numerous references of the cotton

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<sup>43</sup> "no one should obstruct him, its houses and sorrounding walks with its ingress and egress, with its trees and plants such as sugarcane, cotton, kusum, hemp..." *E.I.*, Vol. XVI, p. 272. Also see, *I.A.*, Vol., XVI, p. 209, Verse 15.

<sup>44</sup> V.K.Jain, *Trade and Traders*, p. 58.

<sup>45</sup> " The existence of stone-presses, kolhus, lying scattered about over the district suggest that sugarcane was very much more extensively grown in the former times than it is now." Drake Brochman ed., *Jhansi: A Gazetteer*, Allahabad, 1926, p. 45.



production in the Chandella grants also inform us that cotton was widely produced in the region.<sup>47</sup> This is corroborated by the fact that spinning was universal phenomenon in the Indian village life during medieval period.<sup>48</sup> More importantly, the quality and variety of cotton produced in the Bundelkhand region was of much better variety. Writing in early 19th century George Watt attests the quality of cotton produced in this area "to a particularly fine cotton called *barareea*, cultivated near Chanderi and employed in manufacturing the fine cloth called *mahumdi* ,<sup>49</sup> as he writes, "should a cessation of the rains occurs, then an artificial irrigation is twice or thrice resorted to in September and -October. Each *bigha* requires four people to hoe and do other requisite labour. The result on the same land is by no means equal- some *khets* are five times gathered and some seven times. The cotton fit *mahmudi* is never collected oftener than three times, the remainder is common."<sup>50</sup> The care with which cotton was produced in the region leads one to believe that the production of fine muslins in seventeenth century<sup>51</sup> known as *mahmudi* <sup>52</sup>, *sarisaf*

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<sup>46</sup> Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor* Vol. II, tr. William Irvin, Calcutta, 1965, p. 393.

<sup>47</sup> *I.A.*, Vol. XVI, p. 209, verse 15, also see *E.I.*, Vol. XVI, p. 272, verses 12-14.

<sup>48</sup> Rajiv Sharma, "Cotton textile Weavers- Some Aspects of the Social and Economic Life", *Indian History Congress*, 1982.

<sup>49</sup> G. Watt, *A Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, Delhi reprint 1972, p. 98

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> Saqi Mustaid Khan, *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, tr. Jadunath Sarker, Calcutta reprint 1990, p. 100, informs us of the *karkhana* of extremely fine muslin *dodami* at Chanderi.

<sup>52</sup> *Mahmudi* was a kind of muslin generally a white cloth excellently woven. As cited by

<sup>53</sup>lead to the emergence of Chanderi as an important trading centre “thronged with market places”. Another 19th century source informs us that Bundelkhand cotton formed the staple commodity in the Kalpi market of the region, which emerged as another important trading centre in the this period.<sup>54</sup>

There importance of cotton production can also be inferred from the importance given to the cultivation of *Al* plant which was highly prized for its beautiful and permanent dye and played an important part in the manufacture of *kharwa* cloth.<sup>55</sup> *Al* used to be sown in the best soil only, usually *mar*. In the second year the plant produced its seeds and in third the roots were gathered. The latter were dug up most carefully, the slenderest shoots called *bara* which struck deepest affording the best dye. These were cleared of earth, bound up in small bundles or chopped up in pieces and then sold. The connection of the *Al* plant with the cotton production suggests the profitability of the this cash crop of the region.<sup>56</sup>

Apart from these crops, the dense forests of the region

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Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of Mughal Empire*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 70.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70. *Sarisaf* was high priced cotton cloth used as veil by women thus was a kind of muslin.

<sup>54</sup> *Proceedings of the sadar Board of revenue of the North- Western Provinces*, 28th January, 1845. Cons. No. 2.

<sup>55</sup> By 1908 the *Al* crop was extinct in the region but Brochman holds that it was once a very valuable crop. Brochman, *Jhansi*, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> *Proceedings of the sadar Board of revenue of the North- Western Provinces*, 28th January, 1845. Cons. No. 2.

provided with immense scope of marketable commodities. The export of forest products from Bundelkhand is corroborated by the contemporary sources dealing with other centres in India.<sup>57</sup> In many of the typically Mughal agrarian areas, growing commercialization and the extension of cultivation combined with the growth of urban centres put a strain on locally accessible material. This led to higher demands for the forest products like wood, herbs, grasses etc. As the peripheral regions of the empire had these commodities in plenty, they provided such resources to the empire.<sup>58</sup> Within this frame, Bundelkhand possibly played a leading role as a peripheral supplier to the Mughal, from where apart from collection of woods, herbs, grasses etc., wild cows and elephants were also captured from its forests.<sup>59</sup>

The Chanella inscription often mentions the *Madhuka* tree found in abundance in the forests of the region. The specific mention of certain trees like *Madhuka* in the sources suggests some kind of individual ownership over the trees, because of their commercial value. This is also reflected in the fact that in the land grants these

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<sup>57</sup> For the existence in medieval terms of a market of Himalayan forest products, See. Chetan Singh's "Humans and Forests : The Himalaya and the Terai during Medieval Period", in A.S.Rawat ed. *History of Forestry in India*, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 171-172

<sup>58</sup> Chetan Singh: *Forests, Pastoralists and Agrarian Societies*, in David Arnold and Ramchandra Guha ed. *Nature, Culture and Imperialism*, Delhi, 1996, p. 46.

<sup>59</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 207. Also see Surendra Nath Sen ed., *The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Cariri*, New Delhi, 1949, pp. 66-67.

trees were specifically mentioned.<sup>60</sup> Babur also mentions of Mahua, which was used in the most of houses of Hidustan as a building material<sup>61</sup>, apart from being used in making of wine during sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.<sup>62</sup> One can perhaps also see an interrelation between these trees of the region with two *hottikas* of Gopagiri where oil millers (*talukas*) lived, because the flower of this tree is not only used in making wine, rather its seeds *Guli* are used for extracting oil called *Gulia tail* as well.<sup>63</sup>

Besides the cash crops, the references to iron mines during the Chandella period at Gwalior, Kalinjar and Narwar are significant pointers of the region's prosperity.<sup>64</sup> Because, like other periods of Indian history, iron had a great functional utility during this period as well, and was used for making a wide variety of tools such as, swords, arrows, spears; many agricultural tools like ploughs, hoes; house hold articles like, needles, razors, knives etc. Among these however sword was perhaps the most significant iron product during this period and was in high demand. Al Idrsi points to a number

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<sup>60</sup> Here we may perhaps assume that *Madhuka* tree was same as *Mahua* now, which is found in abundance in the region.

<sup>61</sup> Babur, *Baburnama*, tr. A.S. Beveridge, Delhi reprint 1970, p. 505.

<sup>62</sup> Finch, *Early Travels*, p. 143, as cited in Irfan Habib, *An Atlas*, p. 38.

<sup>63</sup> B.D.Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 136-137.

<sup>64</sup> Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh, Vol. III, p. 70. Also see, Irfan Habib, *An Atlas*, p. 321 and K.K. Trivedi, *Agra: Economic and Political Profile of a Mughal Suba, 1580-1707*, Pune, 1998, p. 138.

of workshops, "where swords are manufactured"<sup>65</sup>

The availability of iron ores in the close proximity of Bundelkhand, it can be argued, may not only have helped in increasing the agricultural productivity of the region, but also have given the Bundelas an advantage over the others in the military market of Hindustan, thereby facilitating their emergence as important and influential power-brokers in the contemporary Mughal polity.

The relationship of iron with the military potentiality of Bundela has been descriptively accounted by Manucci, as he writes, "there is much iron, which is used for swords, lances and other weapons. With respect to the weapons of this country there happened a comical adventure to king Shahjahan. This Prince said one day to Raja Chhattar Sal Rai that he should like to pay him a visit in his country. The Raja replied that the very next day he would show him all he wanted to see. Next morning at sunrise Chhattar Sal Rai brought out a division of cavalry twenty thousand strong, all provided with swords and holding their lances in their hands. He posted them before the royal palace on the river bank. Then he set

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<sup>65</sup> "Indians are very good in making various compounds of mixture of substance with the help of which they melt the malleable iron, it then turns into Indian iron and is called after India... No iron is comparable to the Indian one in sharpness. This is a well known fact and no one can deny its superiority." Al Idrisi, in Elliot and Dowson ed., *History of India as*

round them a number of infantry, also with spears. On beholding this the king seemed astonished.”<sup>66</sup>

This account of Manucci may be taken to denote the grandness of the military establishment of the Bundelas, and their specialization as one of the foremost military employers of the Mughal empire. Given the fabulous amount of wealth that attracted the military labour market of the time, the Bundela Rajput chiefs' families struggled on to serve the empire, actively recruiting soldiers in north India and leading them into war to the Mughals till the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>67</sup> The large military establishments thus, apart from the purposes of self defence also contributed to the Bundelas' prosperity.

It is interesting to note that a large proportion of military labour force in Mughal India i.e. the total number of fighting men, remained either permanently or temporarily beyond the purview of state and the states not only had to leave the recruitment of troopers largely to middlemen, but also, notwithstanding the impressive size of their army camps, they could never come anywhere near to engaging, whether directly or indirectly, all those in north India who had taken up arms for a living, let alone who were skilled in the use

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*told by its own Historians*, Vol. I, London, 1866-77, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Manucci, *Storia*, Vol. III, p. 406.

of arms.

In this context, role of Bundelas in the military market of the seventeenth century needs a special mention. A late seventeenth century manuscript enumerating the divisions of the Mughal imperial army, sums up its infantry in a phrase called "Baksariyahs and Bundelahs" which points to the prominence of the Bundelas in the Mughal army. However there can be little doubt that Bundela infantrymen as a rule were not Bundelas in the geneological sense of term, they were only engaged by commanders and *jamadars* who were members of these clans; specializing as military employers.<sup>68</sup>

It was however the genius of Bir Singh Deo that set in motion the Bundela tradition of military entrepreneurship and imperial *naukari* . There can not be any doubt that he managed to put numerous Rajput contingents at the disposal of Jahangir without ever having to relinquish his personal command over them. In doing this, one can assume, that he followed the footsteps of Man Singh Kachhwaha, who was perhaps the first to demonstrate the wonderful openings to Rajput soldiering offered by the Mughal state.

The special favours given to Bir Singh Deo like regular

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<sup>67</sup> Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 116-158.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

and continuous increase in his *mansab* ranks,<sup>69</sup> permission to go to his own country "directing that he should present himself at court at stated periods"<sup>70</sup>, maintenance of palace on the Yamuna, situated to the south of the fort next to Man Singh's mansion- probably had an answer in the important position occupied, perhaps, due to his role as the power broker in the military market.

As regards the quality of the army of Bir Singh Deo we have references of Jahangir in his memoirs, that in 1623, when Khurram rebelled, Bir Singh was summoned to the presence and he in turn reported himself at Thanesar in the Punjab with an army that "elicited great praise" and within a few weeks he received even greater honour by Jahangir.<sup>71</sup> As Jahangir wrote, "I dignified Raja Bir Singh Deo, than whom in the Rajput caste there is no greater Amir, with the title of Maharaja."<sup>72</sup>

The power which Bundela chiefs wielded over the recruited infantry from their own region is evident from the fact that some of these Rajas virtually spent their lives campaigning for the Mughal empire as was the case with Subha Karan (1656-83), and Dalpat Rao (1683-1707), both of Datiya, and Pahar Singh (1641-53) of

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<sup>69</sup> Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, tr. Rogers and H. Beveridge, Delhi reprint, 1989, pp. 204-231.

<sup>70</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. 1, p. 281.

<sup>71</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 247, 250.



Orchha. The completeness of Subh Karan's service is expressed in the tradition that he fought twenty-two battles for the emperor. Dalpat Rao likewise took a leading campaigns of his time. Even by the end of Aurangzeb's reign, when the proceeds of imperial campaigning were diminishing at a fast rate, and thus military service for the empire was increasingly becoming unprofitable as compared to agrarian and town based entrepreneurship, the commanders who were also the chiefs of regionally dominant clans ran the risk of running their concerns at home in order to preserve their honour as *amirs* of the empire. The contemporary evidences inform us that "at this time only three men have homes viz. Rao Dalpat and Ram Singh Hada in Nusrat Jung's army and Raja Jai Singh Kachwaha... a subordinate of Prince Bidar Bakht. They maintain their contingents to preserve their honour. Besides these three men with homes, nobody looks to keeping troops. None of the other captains in the army had *watans* or homes."<sup>73</sup>

The significance of Bundelkhand region during this period in terms of its strategies location if further reinforced by the major trade routes of the subcontinent that passed through it.<sup>74</sup> These trade routes played an very important role in the making of Bundelas as a powerful

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<sup>72</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, p. 253.

<sup>73</sup> *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, pp, 232-233.

regional potentate. The significance of trade routes during medieval period lay not only in facilitating the long distance transportation, rather they were also significant profit making devices for the regions through which they passed.

If we take Agra as a reference point for trade routes going towards Surat and Deccan in the late sixteenth century, then we have two major linking land routes: one which led to Surat port through Rajasthan via Ajmer, whereas the other crossed central India via Bundelkhand and branched into two, one headed to Burhanpur then to Surat and Deccan, and the other to Ujjain from where it possibly went to Gujarat coast. And through these routes very large part of India's overseas trade was conducted.<sup>75</sup> It is pertinent to point here that this route from Agra was connected further north with Delhi from where the route proceeded to Lahore and other parts of the Punjab region. It then went further north-west towards central Asia and Persia.<sup>76</sup> Thus this route which passed through Bundelkhand carried trade and connected central Asia with Gujarat as well.

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<sup>74</sup> Irfan Habib, *An Atlas*, Sheet 8B.

<sup>75</sup> Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640-1667* Vol. I, tr. V. Ball, New Delhi reprint 1977, pp. 37-48, Finch in *Early Travels in India*, p. 170. Also see, K.K. Trivedi, *Agra*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia*, Vol. II.; *Travels in Asia, 1630-64*, ed. R.C. Temple, London, 1914, p. 83; also see F. Bernier, *Travels in Mughal Empire, 1656-68*, tr. A. Constable, London, 1891, p. 284.

The region acted as a gateway between the north and the south, and remained a sort of corridor, for invading armies, trading caravans, wanting political expansion, and commercial penetration respectively, in their march to trans-Vindhyan territories or vice-versa. In fact some historians have suggested it, and rightly so, that Shahjahan attacked ambitious Jujhar Singh time and again for it was dangerous to leave an ambitious Raja on the edge of Deccan road.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Shaikh Farid Bhakkhari who claims to have gained the information during his visit to Bundela headquarters informs that Jujhar Singh had a standing army of 12,000 horses and 15,000 foot-soldiers. One may thus infer that after being aware of the potential threat of the powerful Bundela chieftain, Shahjahan launched his Deccan campaign in 1636 only after he had firmly dealt with the turbulent Bundelas.<sup>78</sup> Numerous contemporary records of Akbar's reign onward inform us of the frequent use of this route. Jahangir in his memoirs informs us that Abul Fazl was killed by Bir Singh Deo while passing through the region on his way back from Deccan.<sup>79</sup> And since the route from the Deccan was via Bundelkhand it was easy for Bir Singh to kill him. In Shahjahan's period Inayat Khan informs us that because of the letters of Prince Muhammad

<sup>77</sup> B.P. Saxena, *History of Shah Jahan of Dihli*, Allahabad, 1958, pp. 88-89.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89; also see K.K. Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 125.

Aurangzeb Bahadur which contained, "many vivid descriptions of the beauty, fertility and vast extent of the territory of Bundelas, with its charming stream, lakes and waterfalls and its luxurious meadows and forests teeming with game"<sup>80</sup>, Shahjahan though bound for Deccan from Gwalior turned east and entered Bundelkhand for as he wrote, "one can also reach Daulatabad by this route and the difference of distance between it and the ordinary road is not more than four or five marches. Manucci<sup>81</sup>, Bernier<sup>82</sup> and Bhimsen<sup>83</sup> inform us that this route was taken by Aurangzeb from Deccan to meet the forces of Dara Shukoh at Dholpur. According to *Nuska-i-Dilkasa*, Champat, the Bundela chief was awarded the *mansab* of 5000/5000 by Aurangzeb as reward for having helped him cross the river Chambal from an unknown place where it was not so deep and even undertook to be his guide, "through forests and over mountains which perhaps were considered impracticable by Dara."<sup>84</sup>

Alongwith this dynamic route another vibrant and possibly more profitable route in terms of transit duties, passed through Bundelkhand through which goods produced in the east

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<sup>79</sup> *Tuzuk-i-Zahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 25.

<sup>80</sup> *Shahjahanama*, p. 159.

<sup>81</sup> Manucci, *Storia*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>82</sup> Berniers, *Travels*, p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha*, p. 20.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

(Bengal) were transported to Gujarat coast or the Deccan market and vice-versa. This was Allahabad-Kalpi-Chanderi-Malwa region route.<sup>85</sup> The possible advantage with this route was that it was far south of Delhi and was difficult, if not impossible, to manage from the seat of the central authority.<sup>86</sup> This distance was of an advantage to Bundelas who possibly gained transit dues from the routes levied on the merchandise.

There are number of references about the use of this route even prior to sixteenth century. Alauddin Khalji is mentioned as to have used this route in his military expedition to Deogir.<sup>87</sup> Again in 1309 on his march to Deccan Malik Kafur, Alauddin's General stayed at Erach thereby suggesting that he too took the same route.<sup>88</sup> At a later date *Babumama* informs us that Babur rather than going via Gwalior marched to Chanderi via Kalpi and Eracch.<sup>89</sup> Shershah's attempt to gain control over Kalinjar fort situated in the east of Kalpi was apparently guided by the desire to control this route.<sup>90</sup> Bahadur Khan Uzbek who fearing action by Akbar fled from Malwa to join his kinsmen at Jaunpur perhaps used the same route. Sometime later

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<sup>85</sup> K.K. Trivedi, "Emergence of Agra as a Capital and a City", *JESHO*, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 147-70.

<sup>86</sup> K.K. Trivedi, *Agra*, p. 145.

<sup>87</sup> *Khazain-ul- Futuh*, p. 220.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

<sup>89</sup> *Babumama*, pp. 590-592.

<sup>90</sup> *Tabaqat*, Vol. II, p. 106.

the Uzbek leaders had planned their escape to Malwa via Kalpi after their rebellion was crushed. However, they died fighting Akbar's forces on the banks of river Ganga.<sup>91</sup>

Similar routes passed through the region not only in Sultanate but pre-Sultanate period as well. The presence of Gujjarra Minor Rock edict of the Mauryan king Ashok, located near Jhansi in Datia district, appears to have been on one of a rather more important routes from the Ganga valley to the West Coast, which possibly went to Broach via Ujjain.<sup>92</sup> Similarly Shivaji G. Bajpai has shown a similar route passing through Eracch during the period.<sup>93</sup> The economic importance of the region during the pre-Sultanate period gets reflected in the springing and flourishing of urban centres along these routes.

Siyadoni near Lalitpur in Bundelkhand had all the characteristics of an urban centre during the early medieval period.<sup>94</sup> The records date it back to Gurjara-Pratihara period (i.e. between A.D. 907 and 968).<sup>95</sup> It was a *pattana* intersected by a variety of

<sup>91</sup> Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, tr. W.H. Lowe, Delhi reprint 1973, p. 97.

<sup>92</sup> Romila Thapar, *Ashoka and the Decline of Mauryas*, Delhi reprint 1963, p. 231.

<sup>93</sup> Shiva G. Bajpai, "Mathura, Trade Routes, Commerce and Communications; Patterns from Post-Mauryan Period", in D. N. Srinivasan (ed.), *Mathura, The Cultural Heritage*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 46-58.

<sup>94</sup> B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, pp. 130-154.

<sup>95</sup> F. Kielhorn, "Siyadoni Stone Inscription", *E.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 162-179.

roads, *Rathyahya*, *Hattarathya* etc.<sup>96</sup> These roads apparently performed different functions. The residential sites included *aparasarka* (houses with porch vestibule), *avasanika* (dwellings) and *grhabhitti* (a house site) owned by different communities.<sup>97</sup> The spatial dimensions of the town were of considerable size given the number of market centres it had. Five of them figure in the records: *Dosihatta*, *Prasannahatta*, *Chaturhatta*, *Kallapalanamsatkahatta* and *Vasantanahattakahatta*.<sup>98</sup> *Vithis* or shops owned by merchants and manufacturers of different categories constituted the nucleus of a *hatta* (a market place).<sup>99</sup>

Siyadoni was however primarily a commercial centre as it is suggested not only by the number of *hattas* but also by a custom house attached to it (*Siyadoniisatkamandapika*).<sup>100</sup> A mint also seems to have been located there.<sup>101</sup> The concentration of a number of *hattas* at Siyadoni can lead one to an assumption that before emerging as fully developed urban centre this site was a central point in local commerce.<sup>102</sup> Moreover at Siyadoni two types of shops are mentioned: one, *pitrpitamahoparjita* and the other, *svoparjita*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 6,7,9, 10.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 3,6,7,14.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos., 6,7,8,27.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos., 2,11,27.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2.

<sup>102</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, p. 139.

While the later category suggests an expansion of activities by town merchants, the former testifies the antiquity of commerce at the hattas carried down the family lines. The records at Siyadoni are concern more with merchants and artisans. One gets numerous references like that of *nemakavanik* (salt-merchants), *kumbhakara* (potters), *kallapala* (distillers of liquor), *tambulika* (betel-leaf traders), *tailika* (oil-millers), *silakuta* (stonecutters), *lohawana* (blacksmiths), thereby suggesting a flourishing commerce. Besides the reference to *manadapika* (exchange centres) in the context of Siyadoni may be taken to imply outside trade contacts.<sup>103</sup>

Though not very close to Siyadoni, yet in the same geographical region was Gopagiri (Gwalior) which appears to have been a dynamic commercial centre. Here *shresthis* and *sarthvahas* were counted among its residents and as members of a local council.<sup>104</sup> The merchant community of Gopagiri included *sarthavahas* who may be assumed to have headed long -distance commercial ventures.<sup>105</sup>

These centres continued to be of equal commercial importance across the centuries, and Chanderi emerged as not only

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>104</sup> E. Hultzsch, "The Two Inscriptions of Vaillabhattachasvamin temple at Gwalior", *E.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 154-162.

<sup>105</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, p. 137.



an administrative centre acting as a gateway to Malwa, it also performed equally important economic functions and productive centre. *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that there were 14,000 stone houses, 384 markets, 360 *caravan sarais* at Chanderi.<sup>106</sup> The existence of trade routes in the region must have contributed to the line of continuity, and presence of such large settlements in towns like Chanderi.

Sources refer to a Mughal *karkhana* being located at Chanderi where fine *dodami muslin* was being produced to satisfy the exclusivity of the Mughal elite.<sup>107</sup> The economic vibrancy of the place emerges out clearly from a *hukum* of Noorjahan where she grants the post of *kanungo* of *sarkar* Chanderi to Jagjivan Das whose father Mathura Das had constructed *Katra* Noorganj in *kasba* Sironj. The edict states that the "task of making the said *katra* populous has been entrusted to Jagjivan Das." Further it says that, "it is incumbent upon the *jagirdars* and the *raesidents* of the said *kasba* to allow the traders and bring and deal in *kathari* goods in the said *katra* with perfect peace of mind."<sup>108</sup>

The evidences of these urban centres in the region of

<sup>106</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 456.

<sup>107</sup> *Massir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 100; also see Munshi Nand Ram, *Siyaknama*, as cited by Irfan Habib, *An Atlas*, p. 30.

<sup>108</sup> "Hukum of Nurjahan", (Edicts of Queen Consorts) in S.A.I. Tirmizi ed., *Edicts from*

Bundelkhand can not but be interpreted in terms of brisk and dynamic economy which might have helped in rearing the region as a centre of conquest and power. Another index of brisk trade being carried out in the region was the presence of the banjaras who even today dominate the Uttar Pradesh- Madhya Pradesh border. Banjaras were itinerant merchants who moved in large *caravans* or *tandas* carrying goods on the back of their bullocks, sometimes consisting of 23,000 animals during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.<sup>109</sup> They enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the transport of food grains, salt and sugar. Contemporary sources inform that they carried grain and butter to Balaghat and Burhanpur and kept them well stocked so that the large armies of the Mughals stationed in that barren area never experienced any scarcity of provisions.<sup>110</sup> In February 1656 an agreement was held between the English factors at Agra and Deccan banjaras who were going back to Burhanpur to transport saltpetre from Agra to Surat. The English according to it agreed to pay the road dues. According to the farman, the road dues could not be claimed in imperial territories however they were

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*Mughal Harem*, Dilli, 1979, p. 30.

<sup>109</sup> Mundy, *The Travels*, Vol. II, p. 98; also see, Travenier, *Travels in India*; Vol. I, pp. 32-33.

<sup>110</sup> Aslam Ali, "Role of Banjaras in Indian Trade during Seventeenth Century", History Seminar Series, No. 2, Centre for Advanced Studies, Aligarh, 1984, p. 7.

collected in territories controlled by semi-independent chiefs.<sup>111</sup> If we assume that the banjaras took the route via central India, Bundelas must have gained from it. The presence as well as importance of the banjaras in the region can be traced back to the period of Sikandar Lodhi. Ferishta informs us (which is also the first reference that we have about this useful class in the medieval period) that when Sikandar Lodhi marched to Gwalior in A.D.1498, the supplies of his camp failed, and "suddenly, owing to the free intercourse with banjaras being cut off." These problems must have aggravated into a crisis leading to alternate arrangements as Ferishta states, "he detached Azim Hoomayoon, Ahmad Khan and Mujahid Khan with their divisions, to afford these merchant convoys."<sup>112</sup>

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The commercial vibrance of the place is also attested by the presence of Jainas who are primarily a trading community. Their presence can be traced back to Chandella period attested not only in the magnanimous architectural remains all over the region<sup>113</sup> but also through epigraphic records. These records are primarily religious and not commercial in nature and are works of benefaction undertaken by an individual merchant or his family. Thus there is

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, p. 338.

<sup>113</sup> A. Fuhrer, *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North Western Provinces and Oudh*, Varanasi, 1969, pp. 119-126.

virtually no mention of the trading activities of their patron. However one can assume that the Jain merchants were the prime movers and beneficiaries of the economic expansion which occurred in the region and this can be located in the influence they exercised in Chandella court.<sup>114</sup> The development of this community possibly owed its rise to agrarian expansion and inland trade is quite evident from the rise and presence of these merchant lineages in the centres of exchange located along the trade route in the region.

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<sup>114</sup> The Khjuraho Jain Temple Inscription of v.s. 1011 describes one Pahila of the Grahapati family as held in high honour by King Dhanga, E.I., Vol. I, p. 136; also see Darbat Santinath, Image Inscription of V.S. 1132, which refers to Sresthis Pahila and Jiju as hereditary ministers of king Kirtivarman, in *Indian History Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, pp. 183-185.

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