

Origin Myths, Clans, Conflicting *Vamsavalis* and State Formation in Rajasthan

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The study of pre-modern state formation has emerged in recent decades an important area of research among historians, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists. Various 'models' have been suggested by scholars belonging to different schools of thought. Among the most important models are: 'oriental despotism', 'traditional polity' 'Indian feudalism', 'segmentary' and 'patrimonial'. Nandini Sinha Kapur's study of the *State Formation in Rajasthan* does not fall in any of these categories referred to above. She has followed B. D. Chattopadhyaya's 'evolutionary' or 'processural' or perhaps an 'integrative model'. This model suggests that state cannot be studied as a given entity but it has emerged after a series of processes. Among these processes include 'an extension of the agrarian society through peasantization of tribal groups; the improvement of trading networks; an expansion of caste society. . . ; the emergence of spatial expanding of ruling lineages by processes called "Kshatriyaization" . . . or "Rajputization" . . . ; and never ending though rarely successful attempts to centralize administrative functions. . . .¹

The introductory chapter begins with a brief discussion on the state formation. She provides an analysis of those works published in the 1980s and 1990s. Section VII of this chapter discusses the geographical divisions of Mewar into (i) Mewar Hills and (ii) the Upper Banas Plains. The major concentration of tribal population of the Bhils was in the Bhorat plateau of

Mewar hills. The upper Banas plain provided fertile land for extensive agricultural activity. The famous settlement of Nagari, the capital town of the Sibi *janapada* was also located in this area. However, what is surprising is that at the initial stage the two families of the Guhilas emerged not in the fertile plains of Banas, but in the Mewar hills. The last section of this chapter is devoted to the emergence of Guhilas families at Nagda-Ahada and Kiskindha in the Mewar hills, and a third family at Dhod. With the emergence of an administrative-and-military apparatus in the seventh century the three Guhila families established their firm base in Mewar. In the subsequent period the Guhilas emerged as a major power in western India.

Consolidation of the Guhila power in Mewar between the tenth and thirteenth centuries has been discussed in chapter II. After the disappearance of the Guhila families of Kiskindha and Dhod after the eighth-century AD, some families continued to survive up to the twelfth century AD. Location of these families is shown by Sinha Kapur in map 3 (p. 55). Nandini Sinha Kapur thinks that the Guhilas of Chatsu had been integrated into the kingdom of the Cahamanas of Sakambhari, whereas those of Unstra and Nadol became subordinates of the Cahamanas of Nadol. The Guhilas of Mangrol were perhaps integrated into the Caulukyian polity. How the family of the Guhilas of Bagodia disappeared, however, remains unexplained. It was the Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada which

controlled entire Mewar and shifted its territorial and political base from Nagda-Ahada to Chittaur in the thirteenth century.

Sections B, C and D of this chapter are devoted to questions such as the resource base of the Mewar state, administrative and military apparatus, and the use of political and religious symbols for consolidating their power. It is argued that Mewar was an important region of trade networks of western India. Major trade routes to western and central India passed through Mewar. The Guhilas of Nagda-Ahada built their power on a strong rural base in the seventh century; however, from the tenth century onwards new settlements emerged primarily on the trade routes, and the trade traffic increased substantially in the subsequent period. Inscriptional sources indicate that the administrative and military apparatus of the Guhilas had not emerged as strong as those of the Paramaras, Rastrakutas, Caulukyias, Cahamanas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas. This becomes evident from the use of a very few administrative terms in the Guhila inscriptions (pp. 70-4). The use of the political and religious symbols for legitimization of power for the first time appeared in an inscription from Atapura, dated AD 977. It claims Guhadatta as a son of brahmana family from Anandapura in Gujarat. The myth of migration was changed in the thirteenth century when Guhilas occupied Chittaurgarh. The Chittaurgarh inscription (AD 1274) and Achalesvara inscription (AD 1285)

State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar During the Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries
by Nandini Sinha Kapur
Manohar, New Delhi
2002, p. 308, Rs. 650.

claimed Bappaka, not Guhadatta, as the founder of the Guhilas of Medapata. The above mentioned inscriptions claimed the bestowal of the state of Mewar on Bappa by the Pashupata sage, named Haritarasi. The status of the brahmana family now changed to brahma-ksatriya. As yet the process of 'ksatriyiazation' was incomplete. The emergence of the new families of the Guhilas did not disrupt the process of state formation. This question needs to be probed further. Was it not possible that the fissiparous tendencies caused Guhilas to suffer defeat at the hands of the Khaljis and Tughlaqs in the first half of the fourteenth century?

It seems plausible that the political and strategic expediency forced the Guhilas to forge alliances with contemporary powers. The Jainas (a non-violent social group), non-Rajputs, non-Jainas, the Bhils and other groups were incorporated into the state structure. These policies helped the Guhilas to defend Medapata and its stronghold Chittaurgarh in the fifteenth century. The incorporation of Bhils into the political structure paved the way for the 'Rajputization', and peasantisation of the core areas of this tribe.

Administrative and military apparatus of Mewar between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries is discussed in chapter IV. To curb the centrifugal tendencies, and to become more acceptable to a diverse sections of the Mewari society the Guhilas distributed prominent offices to non-Rajputs, and also created new offices such as *pradhana*, *mahamatya* and *talarakasa*. The office of *mahamatya* became hereditary by the fifteenth century AD. Extension of agricultural activities into the tribal areas and an increasing list of taxes recorded in the Guhila inscriptions tend to suggest that the state has spread its tentacles over

the resources. Several taxes were collected by the state. These taxes include the traditional *bhaga-bhoga*, *gocara*, *raja-kara*, *mapa*, *mandavi*, *khariyata*, *patasutriya* and *acandrak* (pilgrim's tax) etc.

The transfer of the capital from Nagda-Ahada region to Chittaurgarh forced the Guhilas to construct a number of forts to defend its territories from the possible seizure by the neighbouring powers. Map 11 (p. 175) shows how Maharana Kumbha built a chain of fortresses for the defense of Mewar. *Sutradhara* Mandana composed his *Rajavallabhamandana* in the fifteenth century AD. This work contains detailed injunctions for the construction of forts, horse and elephant stables. Whether these injunctions were carried out or not, Nandini Sinha Kapur is silent about it.

The processes and strategies of legitimization, discussed in chapter V, make interesting reading. The fabrication of genealogical lists by the brahmanas to the satisfaction of the ruling dynasty had made it possible for many local families to rise to the status of the ksatriyas, claiming descent from either Suryavamsi or Candravamsi lineages. This is amply clear from the upward mobility of the Guhilas. The earliest inscriptional record of the Guhilas, dated AD 646 refers to them as *guhilanvaya* (belonging to the lineage of the Guhila), but the Atapura inscription (AD 977) has raised their status to the family of a brahmana. By the thirteenth century they rose to the status of *brahma-ksatra*. They claimed the ksatriya status in the fifteenth century, and became Suryavamsi by AD 1500.

The Guhilas also patronized several gods, goddesses and local cults. The climax of this process was reached in the fifteenth century when Maharana Kumbha assumed the titles such as *ekalinganijasevaka* (the personal servant

of Ekalinga) and *yasyaikalinganijasevaka* (Ekalinga's personal servant). The surrender of the royal umbrella to Ekalinga made that deity the *de jure* ruler of Mewar.

The nineteenth century perception of the Guhila state with those of the earlier periods, (i.e. from thirteenth to seventeenth centuries) has been done in chapter VI. The process of origin myths and creating new genealogical progenitors continued unabated in Mewar. The bardic literature composed in the post-seventeenth century created new progenitors such as Hammira, Rahap and Mahap. However, the story of Mewar generally revolved around three legendary personalities: Bappa, Guhadatta and Hammira.

Several stages in the emergence of a regional state of Mewar from the seventh to fifteenth centuries have been clearly delineated with the help of inscriptional sources. Nandini Sinha Kapur has successfully retrieved useful historical material for the study of state formation in Rajasthan from fanciful folklores, *kavyams*, *khyaats*, *mahatmyams*, *prasastis* and conflicting *vamsavalis*. There are a few spelling mistakes, wrong bibliographic entries and faulty footnotes; for example, R. C. Majumdar is shown as the author of *Caulukyias of Gujarat* (p. 43); 'Peasant State and Society...' is wrongly ascribed to D. R. Bhandarkar (p. 297); contributions of R. Thapar, Aloka Parashar and C. Talbot cited in fn. 11 (p. 269) are omitted in the bibliography; D.C. Sricar's *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* is wrongly titled as *Glossary of Indian Epigraphy* (p. 269, fn. 12); Suvira Jaiswal's article published in *Indian Historical Review* (p. 230, fn 87) is wrongly cited, and an abbreviation CPSI is never used in the text.

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