# In praise of death : history and poetry in medieval Marwar (South Asia)

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# 6 Pabuji's World

The glorification of the main protagonists of the poems dedicated to Pabuji served to articulate medieval attitudes towards war. Thus the medieval poets gave voice to the warrior ethos of Rajput and, in some instances, Bhil warriors. At the heart of several of the studied poems is the warriors' death in battle portrayed as a worthy way for a warrior to breathe his last. This outlook reflects a reportedly worldwide martial ideal, defining a "good death" in terms of a battle-death, portrayed as a warrior's opportunity to enhance his and his community's reputation by gaining epic fame and thus remain in the minds of his people for ever. In addition, some warriors, like Pabuji, have been ascribed divine status after their self-sacrifice in battle. In this chapter, I will try to account for the differences and similarities between the selected poems, in particular the extent to which the poets attributed miraculous and/or divine qualities to the Rathaur hero. By studying the initial stages of Pabuji's deification in the medieval tradition as a "narrative structuring technique", I aim to answer questions regarding the textual differences contained in the medieval Pabuji tradition and whether these differences can be seen as part of a sequential narrative development as described in the introduction to this study. For this reason, the rationale and outcome of battle as portrayed by the poets will be considered in some detail below, particularly the connection between Pabuji's death and his elevation to (semi) divine status.

Subsequently, in the second part of this chapter (and in chapters 7, 8 and 9) I propose to study the socio-political status of the poets of the Pabuji tradition and the composition of the audiences for which the studied poems dedicated to Pabuji may have been composed. In doing so, I try to account for the concurrent portrayal of the hero as a warrior, a godlike being, an instrument of God, a deified forefather and a hero with semi-divine origins aspiring *avatār* status. Can one assume (even if one left aside the miraculous and devotional aspects of Pabuji's story for a moment) that there ever did exist a warrior chief named Pabuji Dhamdhal Rathaur who lived by his "wits and weapons" (as Smith put it)? By relating the imagery employed by the poets to what is known about Pabuji's world, i.e. the history of Rajput kingdom formation in Marwar, I propose to argue that the warrior Pabuji represents a clear historical type emblematic of the medieval history of Marwar.

### *Warrior-hero and hero-god*

For the purpose of this chapter, I define deification as the symbolic and/or literal ascription of magical or godly qualities to warrior-heroes after their deaths in battle and the worship of deceased warrior-heroes as manifestations of god and/or deified

forefathers. These aspects of deification will be highlighted in the following study of the way in which the poets accorded different roles to Pabuji, varying from martial hero and ascetic warrior, to warrior with supernatural qualities similar or equal to god, deified forefather, and a hero with semi-divine origins, the son of a warrior and a celestial nymph. It will become clear that the ascription of divine qualities to Pabuji was well under way in some but not all of the poems studied here. We can distinguish between poems that clearly point up Pabuji's divinity by linking death and deification, on the one hand, and compositions that emphasize Pabuji's martial role and do not refer to him in any way as a god, even after describing his death, on the other.

As noted in the previous chapter, the martial ideals voiced in *chamd* I were bolstered by means of religious imagery, especially the warlike role attributed to gods and goddesses, which could be read as a secondary theme of this composition. Neither Pabuji's death, nor his deification is mentioned. Instead, the poet presents the outcome of the battle between Pabuji and Jimda in terms of the victory of the former. As already noted in the summary of the poems' narrative content in chapter 3, my interpretation of the last verse-line of *chamd* I does not include Pabuji's death and subsequent ascent to heaven as a common theme of this composition. For, in view of the sentence's word order (*pābu jiṃdarāva suṃ...*), I take verse-line 58 to mean that it is Pabuji who eventually conquers Jimda: "Pabu 'causes' Jimda 'to be killed'".[278] Though the poet of this work does not clearly state the reason for the battle between Pabu and Jimda, it may even so be surmized that it was fought over cattle since the poem's "battle-plot" centers upon the retrieval of a stolen herd, probably belonging to Charani Deval. This can be understood from two references to Jimda's theft of cattle in verse-lines 14 and 15: firstly, in the account of Pabuji's attack on the (cattle) thief Jimda; and secondly, in the allusion to "a woman" who exhorts Pabuji to attack the Khici warrior, if Pabuji feels he is brave enough. As remarked in chapter 3, it appears probable that the woman mentioned stands for the Charani cattle keeper Deval who turns to Pabuji for help in retrieving her stolen cows.

*Chamd* II is largely martial in content for, unlike *chamd* I, it is largely devoid of manifest devotional overtones. The versification of battle is the work's main theme. Its poet dwells upon the preparations to and proceedings of battle in great detail and makes a special effort to evoke the sound of battle by means of alliterative structuring and onomatopoeia. This composition (again as compared with *chamd* I) evokes the battle movements of Rajput and Bhil warriors in some detail. The poet mentions the time of day when the armies move, the direction in which they are heading and the obstacles they meet on the way (cf. chapter 3). The reason for and

[278] *Chamd* I (v. 58): "pābu jiṃdarāva suṃ āya parai(ṃ)". As also argued in chapter 3, a less evident construal of this sentence's meaning would result from reading "parai(ṃ)" as *pa-r-ai(ṃ)*, leading to the interpretation: "Jimda causes Pabu to be killed". In view of the verse-line's word-order (*pābu jiṃdarāva suṃ...*), I feel that the latter construal, though possible, is not appropriate.

outcome of war are clearly identifiable since the protagonists are shown to fight to "satisfy their longing for death" and to enhance their personal heroism by "adding to the fame of their swords". The poet makes apparent that the prime cause for war is the protection of cows and the outcome of battle is also clearly stated: Pabuji and his Bhil archers lay down their life. Pabuji's battle death is cause for the poet to praise Pabuji by comparing him to god or, depending on the reading of the last line, ascribing divine status to the hero:

101. praṇamaṃta meha pābu prasidha, (t)uṃ parasidha pramāṇa paha(ṃ)
101. "*Meha 'salutes' Pabuji('s) glory (saying): "You (have) glory like god"."*

If the above-quoted verse-line is in fact indicative of the Rathaur hero's elevation to divine status, then it seems likely that the poet by recounting Pabuji's deeds aimed to extol God's glory. As noted before, the above verse-line can be construed in several ways which do not all connote Pabuji's deification. Depending on whether one translates *pramāṇa* as "standard", "measure", "authority", or "evidence", the verse-line could also be construed as the poet's portrayal of Pabuji as the "proof of the existence of God", "comparable to God", or as "equal to God". In view of the fact that the poet does not at any other point in the poem ascribe divine or even magical characteristics to Pabuji but portrays him as a warrior throughout, I am inclined to think that the poet intended to portray Pabuji (and his battle death) as "evidence of the existence of God", in that God or divinity becomes manifest or incarnate via Pabuji's deeds. The latter interpretation does not necessarily suggest that the poet intended to portray Pabuji as a full incarnation of God but could, I think, also be understood as a way to depict Pabuji's sacrifice in battle as a glorious deed motivated by human qualities that are divine in their inspiration and are therefore ascribed divine glory by the poet.

If my interpretation of verse-line 101 holds true, the main purpose of *chamd* II, though nowhere clearly stated, was to set standards of heroism. A notable difference between this composition and *chamd* I is that the former not only presents Rajput warriors as paradigms of martial bravery, but Bhil archers as well. The warlike code of both groups of warriors is principally voiced through martial imagery while metaphors connoting religious symbolism are much less pronounced than in *chamd* I. An exception is formed by the portrayal of the hero's demise which is expressly described in terms of ascetic heroism, given that the poet of *chamd* II describes his death in terms of a libation and a renunciation of the world. He does not, however, make apparent whether Pabuji's oblation should be understood as a sacrifice to gods or goddesses, like in *chamd* I. Celestial beings do not figure in *chamd* II, apart from a cursory reference to yoginis who add to the sound of battle by playing the *damru* drum and one allusion to "the gods" in general. The warrior's demise could, even so, be understood as a sacrifice to the goddess. Especially the

last verse-lines of *chamd* II suggest such an interpretation for here it is described that Pabuji battles to satiate the hunger of carrion birds by making "meat" available to them. This "meat" (the warriors' corpses) is furthermore compared to juicy meatballs (*gudāla rasāla*), denoting '*piṃd*', or balls, usually of meal, that are offered to the spirits of ancestors. This imagery may be taken to symbolize a sacrifice to the Goddess: by feeding her creatures, the carrion eaters, one also placates the Goddess.

The narrative content and plots of the different episodes constituting *duha* I give voice to the ideal of sacrificial heroism and protection. The hero is in the first place praised as the protector of cattle, his family and retainers. He is glorified as a destroyer of enemies, a valorous warrior and powerful swordfighter with a fierce reputation among neighbouring kings and sultans. Besides, the Rathaur is also praised as a robber-prince who loots the treasury of Kuvera. The warlike similes of this text are distinctly less graphic and violent, and not nearly as evocative of the hue and cry of war as the imagery of the *chamd*s, despite the fact that Ladhraj does dwell upon the vagaries of battle. In *duha* I, the versification of war appears to be primarily intended to underline the strained familial and marital relations between its protagonists. And, while the battle over cattle is also central to this poem, the reasons for battle are nevertheless couched primarily in terms of hostile kinship ties and problematic marriage relations. The protagonists' actions, war deeds and Pabuji's death are mainly motivated by the longstanding family feuds, dowry negotiations and family honour. The cause of the bad blood between the Rajput protagonists can be traced to the fact that Buro killed Jimda's father and subsequently stole his cows. The Dhamdhal family hopes to atone for this offence by offering Pema in marriage to Jimda. But the latter is not so easily mollified. He demands Pabuji's black mare in dowry to atone for the murder of his father. Thus the enmity between the brotherhoods is intensified, as Pabuji does not accede to his demand. Likewise, Buro assails Jimda because he is under the impression that the latter killed his brother. Jimda, after killing Buro, fears Pabuji's revenge and therefore decides upon a defensive course: to attack the Rathaur hero.

The second battle between Pabuji and Jimda has a clear outcome. Pabuji eventually lays down his life in battle but not before his headless torso has given spirited battle. After Pabuji's torso has been vanquished by supernatural means, the hero is finally vanquished. Thus Pabuji establishes his rule on earth and attains his well-deserved place in Vishnu's heaven. The poet proclaims that Pabuji will gain the praise of mankind "for millions of years in all worlds" and he also declares that God's power has been revealed through Pabuji. This avowal may be read as indicative of the poet's belief that Pabuji was an instrument of god to see good done on earth or as the elevation of Pabuji to divine status. Along these lines, Pabuji's death in battle may be considered the motivating force of his elevation to semi-divine or divine status. There are several reasons to think that Ladhraj intended to deify Pabuji by ascribing divine qualities to him, even though the poet does not plainly state that Pabuji is indeed God or, for that matter, a deified forefather or godling.

The first reason is that Ladhraj appears to strike a devotional cord in verse-lines 5 to 7 when he praises Pabuji as "the lord of the earth" and introduces himself as Pabuji's warrior and servant in support of religion during Kaliyuga.[279] Second, the above quoted reference to Vishnu's heaven could be considered indicative of the narrative link that the poet may have meant to establish between Pabuji and Vishnu in an attempt at *avatār*-linkage by representing Pabuji as an aspect of (or the full embodiment of) Vishnu.[280] Likewise, the above reference to Pabuji's rule on earth can also be understood in the following ways: first, in epic terms of immortality (as when an epic hero lives on in the memory of mankind); second, in terms of the establishment of Pabuji's and, through him, Vishnu's religious sway on earth; third, the hero's semi-divine origin is clearly established in the birth episode, where he is portrayed as the son of a Rajput warrior and a heavenly nymph; and last, the most straightforward indication of the hero's exalted status (the portrayal of Pabuji's death in supernatural terms) directs us to see the warrior's divinization in terms of forefather worship. Keeping in mind Blackburn's description of the different stages of deification that a local warrior-hero may go through (cf. chapter 1), one could assess the different ways in which miraculous and divine characteristics have been ascribed to Pabuji in *duha* I as evidence for a linear development of Pabuji's deification from a role as deified forefather to attempts at *avatār*-linkage with Vishnu within this composition. However, as shall be argued below, rather than as successive stages of development, it is also possible to think of the different aspects of Pabuji's deification in *duha* I as representative of roles that could (and in *duha* I did) exist side-by-side.

Ladhraj's account of the fight put up by Pabuji's headless torso, and the manner in which it collapses after his foe throws an indigo-colored cloth over it, first and foremost, documents forefather worship as manifest in regional Jhumjhari tales.[281] Srivastava's (1997: 74) study of the Jhumjhari tradition makes apparent how the death of a warrior who comes to be revered as a Jumjhar is often portrayed in terms similar to that of *duha* I, especially as regards stories about headless torsos that can only be "pacified" when a mix of water and indigo is sprinkled over them after which the torsos cease to fight.[282] The fact that a warrior continues to fight even after losing his head is explained in miraculous terms: eyes may emerge on a warrior's

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[279] *Duha* I (v. 5-7): "bhala pābū bhūpāla, mala kahai kīrata muṇūṃ. pābū patiyāroha, kaliyuga māṃ thāro kamadha. sevaga juga sāroha, rākhai dhāṃdhala rāva-uta".

[280] See also verse-lines (516-526) of the concluding episode of *duha* I where the poet has Pabuji praise his nephew perhaps from the earlier-assigned place in Vishnu's heaven (chapter 3).

[281] Apart from local forefather worship and Vaishnavite influences, Shaktik influences are in evidence as well: the poet identifies the cowherd Deval as a goddess, even if only once, by referring to her as "Shakti Devalde". And the text refers to Nath religious practices, as can be read from the last episode, in which Jhararo is initiated into the Kanpathi Nath cult of guru Gorakhnath and thus obtains the courage required to beat Jimda (see chapter 9 for a description of contemporary Nath worship of Jhararo).

[282] A headless warrior can also be pacified when women, catching sight of the "bizarre" image that a fighting torso presents, cry out: "Lo! There comes a man without head", upon which the headless torso collapses (Srivastava 1997: 74).

chest, which enables the torso to continue fighting. Another common theme of Rajasthani *Jumjhar* poetry explains that a headless torso can "see" with his heart and is thus able to find his way in battle even after rather literally losing his head.[283]

Pabuji is not the only protagonist who has been accorded divine status in the composition under review. Ladhraj twice refers to Deval as Sakati (Shakti) in verse-lines 289 (*mo gāyāṃ marasīha, suṇi pābū kahatī sakati*) and 376 (*pābū iyuṃ prabhaṇaṃta, sāṃbhali devalade sakati*). And, in verse-line 228, Deval is referred to as "ā-iha", a title that can refer to a woman *and* a goddess (Lalas 1962-1988). In other instances, the poet also identifies Deval as a female Charan (v. 298, *cāraṇi*) and a member of the Charan community (v. 428, *gaṛhavāṛā*). Deval's elevation to the status of Shakti can only be read from *duha* I, since she has not been referred to in other poems or only in a rather vague manner. As I intend to document in chapter 9, Deval's role in Pabuji's tale as recounted in *duha* I relates the hero's worship to the cult of Charani goddesses of whom Deval is one.

A last instance of deification in *duha* I can be read from the ascription of a divine role to Pabuji's mare Kalvi. If my indefinite interpretation holds true, verse-line 212 has Buro explain to Jimda that he cannot have the mare in dowry because Pabuji is very attached to Kalvi since "(she) was (his) mother". From this I construe that Ladhraj meant to portray the mare as an incarnation of Shakti (in this instance Pabuji's nymph-mother), a representation reminiscent of the portrayal of the mare and Pabuji's mother as Shakti incarnate by contemporary Bhil Bhopas.

Battle is only a minor theme in the *parvaro*. Its poet employs mainly religious imagery, and centres his account on the divine help that Pabuji extended to his devotees, among others, the historical Rajput Gamga in warding of his enemies (v. 44-45).[284] It is not clear whether the poet here intended to describe the help extended by the warrior Pabuji or meant to evoke the divine intervention by the godling (*devatā*) Pabuji, or both. The martial title *bhālālā* ("Spearwielder") in verse-line 44 perhaps suggests that the poet intended to portray Pabuji as a warrior. However, in the subsequent verse-lines (46-47), Pabuji is identified as a "jujhāri" (Jumjhar), a deified forefather who immediately comes to the rescue on hearing a cry for help and who several times "wards off the armies, (which) 'attacked' the fort".[285] The latter identification perhaps suggests that the help extended by Pabuji in the previous verse-lines should also be thought of as supernatural help. However this may be, the

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[283] As remarked in the previous chapter, the decapitation of warriors in the Pabuji tradition is also reminiscent of sacrificial myths that represent classical motives like the ritual dismemberment of the first human being by the gods, the king as victim and recipient of ritual sacrifice, or the ritual sacrifice of heads as a way to obtain "a treasure or secret that is the essence of the universe" (Heesterman 1998: 16, 1985: 47). And the act of decapitation can also be compared to the way in which the demon Rahu brings about eclipses by capturing the sun and the moon in his mouth by comparing Pabuji's warriors to Rahu and their enemy's head to the sun and the moon, as has been documented by my (indefinite) reading of the imagery used in *chamd* II (chapter 3).

[284] *Parvaro* (44-45): "gaṃgai hu upagāra, bhālālai kīdho bhalau. muhiyaṛase khomāri, daulatīyo bhāgau durita".

[285] *Parvaro* (v. 46-47): "jhālā suṇi jujhāri, ajagai bi-ūpara karai. ukāre ke vāra, kaṭa kāṃ āgila koṭaṛo".

*parvaro* is first and foremost a devotional poem dedicated to the worship of the godling Pabuji, who intercedes from heaven on behalf of his devotees, and to express devotion to the Goddess.

The purpose attributed to this poem in the text has been expressed in terms of a prayer for protection and blessings. In verse-lines 60 and 63, the poet asks for the hero-god's protection "with folded hands" and prays that the Spear wielder and "Lord of the earth" Pabuji may stand by him in times of trouble.[286] The poet also makes clear that he recites the *parvaro* (and *duha* I) to please Pabuji's neighbour Devi and thus obtain her blessings.[287] The reward for his endeavour becomes clear form verse-lines 64-65 in which Pabuji himself is quoted as saying that the versification of his story by Ladhraj is to his liking and "anyone who reads out or hears this poem will be rewarded with virtuous qualities".[288] Indeed, so pleased is Pabuji with the poet's recitation that he gives him a coin (*dugāṃṇī*) in verse-line 53, an instance that illustrates yet another function of the recitation of poetry dedicated to Pabuji: material reward.

Pabuji's death in battle or ascent to heaven and his subsequent deification are manifestly absent from the *parvaro*. One may perhaps imagine that Pabuji's battle-death is implied since the *parvaro* represents the final outcome of deification: the worship of Pabuji as a deified warrior by his Bhil Bhopa priests and other devotees, including penitent Rajput warriors. In the *parvaro*, the praise of Pabuji as a god includes the description of his protective function in devotional terms, that is: the divine intervention extended by the god and Jumjhar Pabuji. The protection extended by Pabuji in these roles includes the retrieval of a stolen temple-drum, the punishment of wrong-doers, the cure of a Rajput's stomach-ache and the protection of women and trees. Pabuji's medieval Bhopas are, in addition, portrayed as the Dhol-playing priests of a Pabuji cult with temples in Kolu and Sojat.[289] The Bhopas are also presented as healers who, with Pabuji's help, cure people of their stomach ache through a *ūsīcoha* or *sīcau* ritual apparently involving the pouring of clean water to remove impurities and to cure curses.

The shorter compositions dedicated to Pabuji, the *git*s and *duha* II, are expressive of similar concerns as raised in the longer poems discussed above; the varied use of martial and religious imagery, the reasons and outcome of battle, and the different purposes attributed to the texts. In these poems, war is yet again an

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[286] *Parvaro* (v. 60): "e mosū upagāra, kījai kari joṛe kahu", and (v.63): ""bhālālā bhupāla, velā ati paṛīyai vikhama".

[287] *Parvaro* (v. 58-59): "pābū pāṛosīha, devī mīthai hātha de. japīyo tojasa jīha, kamadhaja yuṃ ladharāja kahi".

[288] *Parvaro* (v. 64-65): "kathī ladhā te krītā, mo pyārī pābū muṇai. paṛhai sūṇai supravīta, tiṇa upara karasūṃ turata".

[289] The medieval Pabuji temples are referred to in the *parvaro* as "sojhati maṛha", "kolu maṛhi" and "sojhita thāmpanā", probably referring to small temples or open-air platforms and covered altars like today's *thāmnā* or *manda* dedicated to Jhararo, which is an uncovered hearth on top of a hillock where Jhararo's hero stones are worshipped by different caste-groups from the surrounding villages.

important theme. The reasons for war are most commonly expressed in terms of the protection of cattle. But the accounts of Pabuji's death in battle, and subsequent elevation to divine status, vary considerably. Death and deification are, for example, not themes of *git* I and *duha* II for they have a predominantly martial content. And, though Bamkidas does conclude *git* V with Pabuji's battle-death, the hero's deification does not follow from this. Besides, though one could understand his deification from the allusion to Pabuji's demise in *git* II, when the poet refers to death as a sacrifice to the Goddess, this couplet does not straightforwardly refer to Pabuji's death and it is not clear whether or not the poet meant to imply it. In *git* III, plain references to Pabuji's death in battle lack but the poet's mention of Pabuji's temple in Kolu does suggest that he devoted his poem to the praise of the deified warrior Pabuji, perhaps relating the hero's deification to his death in battle.

Among the shorter compositions with predominantly martial imagery, death and deification are themes that are conspicuous by their absence in the manuscript and printed version of *git* I. The battle, in these songs, is set off by the hero's expedition to loot camels from "the South", not his protection of cattle. Both texts primarily honour the martial hero Pabuji as a valiant robber and warrior and, only in the second instance, as the protector of cattle. *Git* V is a work with a clearly martial theme as well. Bankidas commemorates the fact that Pabuji fought to safeguard the Charans' cows. To do this, he employs martial as well as marital similes, equating combat-rites with wedding-rituals. Thus the warrior-groom Pabuji dies in battle, after embracing the enemy, his bride. The hero's death is not followed by an account of his ascent to heaven or his elevation to divine status but, as already noted, in sacrificial terms by presenting Pabuji's battle as symbolic of the creative aspect of destruction, when the forces released in battle and in sexual union are symbolic of the replenishment of "the ever-vulnerable forces of life", and a sacrifice to the goddess.

The last primarily martial composition discussed here is *duha* II which celebrates war by praising Pabuji as a young horse-rider, still a boy, who protects cows. This boy is also remembered for "taming wild horses" and for his attacks on neighboring enemies, specifically the "Pathans". But the hero chiefly wages war to protect cows and thus earn fame and glory. In this composition, the poet underlines Pabuji's eminence by comparing "the battle of Kolu" to the battle of Kurukshetra, thus equating Marwar's hero and his warriors with the heroes of the *Mahābhārat*. The outcome of the battle of Kolu is expressed in the idiom of fame, protection and glory, not in terms of Pabuji's battle-death or deification.

The predominantly religious imagery of *git*s II and III allows us to speculate whether these two compositions were composed as devotional genres comparable, perhaps, to the *parvaro*. *Git* II was for the most part composed in praise of Pabuji's martial deeds: the hero is depicted as a dutiful Rathaur warrior who is true to his word and rescues stolen cows. The poet's intention to portray the Rathaur's battle death can only be surmized by reading between the lines. The poet describes battle

deaths, in general, as a form of devotion to the Goddess by relating how warriors satiate hungry Yoginis by filling their begging bowls, probably with the blood of warriors. This image seems evocative of the portrayal of sacrificial heroism comparable to similar imagery employed by the poets of the *chamd*s. The poet does straightforwardly define the reason for the battle by articulating Kshatriya *dharma* as the protection of cattle and by subsequently describing how Pabuji adhered to this duty by abandoning his bride at the wedding *maṃḍap* (pavilion) to rescue the cows stolen by Jimda. This *git* contains several other standard similes already known from our reading of the *chamd*s and *duha* I, in particular versifications of the clash of armies, warriors wielding weapons and the way in which headless warriors continue to fight.

The poet of *git* III, finally, leaves no doubt about the reason for battle: Pabuji fights to protect cows. The outcome of Pabuji's fight is less plainly stated given that it has only been described in general terms that battle-death is a warrior's "purpose on earth". After Pabuji's headless torso collapses, it goes up to the realm of the gods. From this description one could infer that Pabuji waged battle and died like a *Jumjhar* and subsequently achieved divinity, if that is how his ascent to the realm of the gods was meant to be interpreted. A more compelling argument for the depiction of Pabuji's deification in this poem can be found in the last verse-lines where the poet speaks of Pabuji's patronage of a temple in Kolu. On the basis of this, it is feasible to imagine that this *git*, like the *parvaro*, was composed to sing the fame of the resident deity of Kolu, Pabuji. If this reading holds true, *git* III can be thought of as a devotional poem with martial overtones that is illustrative of the final outcome of a process of deification.[290]

### *Pabuji's deification*

The above comparison of the texts illustrates the different degrees of narrative importance that the medieval poets attached to death and deification on different occasions. Different forms of deification are manifested as the worship of dead warrior-heroes, the attribution of (semi) divine status to warrior-heroes, indefinite but suggestive instances of *avatār*-linkage and the cultic practices of the Bhopas of medieval Pabuji temples. It has become evident that the ascription of divine qualities and/or divinity was well under way in some but not all of the compositions of the medieval Pabuji tradition. It is now also clear that Pabuji has been indeed worshipped as a Bhomio (Jumjhar) during medieval times. The poets portrayed the Rathaur as a martial hero and ascetic warrior (*chamd* I, *git*s I, II, IV), as a warrior similar or equal to god (*chamd* II), as a god *and* deified forefather (*duha* I, *parvaro*,

[290] As will be discussed in chapter 10, this composition can be compared with the *parvaro* in yet another way for it also establishes a link between Pabuji's cult and the worship of Devi. It appears that the poet also intended to relate Pabuji to Shiva for he wrote that Pabuji's patronage of the Kolu temple adds to the fame of Shiva's temple.

*Some of Pabuji's different iconographic forms at the Kolu temple.*

*git* III) and as a hero with semi-divine origins, the son of a warrior and a celestial nymph and, conceivably, as an *avatār* of Vishnu (*duha* I). If one wants to, these different roles can be seen as successive stages of the medieval process of deification that could be related to the theories of narrative developmental introduced in the first chapter. Correspondingly, Pabuji's deification, according to Blackburn's narrative pattern 1, begins with the adventures of the cow protector, tamer of wild horses and camel rustler (*git* I, *duha* II) and progresses via the narrative of the death of a local hero (*chamd* I, *git* IV) perhaps at village Kolu where Pabuji's temple now stands. In time, the local warrior-hero Pabuji came to be worshipped as a Jumjhar and god (*devatā*) and served by the Bhopa priests of Pabuji cults in Kolu and Sojat (*parvaro*, *git* III).

In particular the ways in which, and narrative moments at which, miraculous and divine characteristics have been ascribed to Pabuji in *duha* I suggest that Pabuji's deification progressed from his role as deified forefather to attempts at *avatār*-linkage with Vishnu within this composition. Keeping in mind Blackburn's idea that magic birth-stories are added to the story of a local hero in a later stage of a tradition, once it spreads geographically, the telling of Pabuji's magical birth-story at the beginning of *duha* I may be appraised as an indication of the medieval spread of Pabuji's story from Kolu village to a regional level, that is, the Jodhpur court where the poet Ladhraj was a scribe at the court of Jaswant Singh. At this stage, the addition of a supernatural birth motif to the hero's tale (*duha* I) may have resulted in his elevation to semi-divine status. In the *parvaro*, this elevation could be read from the poet's inner conflict (arising from divided loyalties to different gods) is perhaps suggestive of the need to establish Pabuji's divine standing vis-à-vis other gods. This need may have inspired the further narrative expansion of the hero's tale in later story-telling traditions eventually giving rise to his portrayal as the embodiment of Lakhsman in modern traditions. As I have noted earlier, the latter stage of deification cannot be read from the medieval tradition, at least not from the works studied by me. But the indeterminate narrative link between Pabuji and Vishnu made in *duha* I could be interpreted as the medieval beginnings of *avatār*-linkage in the present-day Pabuji tradition. This narrative process may also account for the concurrent portrayal of Charani Deval as a horse trader, cattle keeper and goddess in *duha* I, but cannot be read from the poems under review. The medieval sources also do not document the relation established by contemporary poets of the Pabuji tradition between the Bhil heroes, Jimda Khici and Pabuji's Sodhi bride, on the one hand, and the gods and heroes of classical heroic-epic traditions, on the other. *Avatār*-linkage permeates large sections of the narrative of modern-day versions of Pabuji's *paṛ*-epic in which Jimda is portrayed as an incarnation of the demon-king Ravana, while Ravana's sister Surapamkha is thought to be embodied by Pabuji's Sodhi bride. The Rathaur hero's Bhil companions Camda (Camdo), Salaji and Dhembo and the Rebari Harmal are moreover believed to be the personifications of, respectively, the goddesses

Caumunda, Visot, Bhaisand and/or the god Hanuman and his army of monkey warriors (cf. Smith 1991: 271-72 and Hiltebeitel 2001: 91-92).

Apart from the chronological problems which the preceding interpretation presents us with, the above description of the medieval tradition's narrative development also does not really help in accounting for all the differences in content, purpose and sectarian interpolations between the medieval poems dedicated to Pabuji. It now seems apparent that death and deification are not, as Blackburn holds, "twin-themes" that structure the content of all medieval poems especially not of the shorter, martial compositions or of poems with a markedly devotional tone. While the hero's death is evidently an important theme of the tradition in general this does not mean that his demise is a theme of all the poems under review. And, even if the poets do mention Pabuji's death, or imply it, this does not routinely lead to the elevation of the hero to (semi) divine status. The opposite is also true: the poets may attribute miraculous or godly qualities to the hero without explicitly speaking of his death. In addition, it proves difficult to explain with Blackburn's theory in hand how the poets came to portray Pabuji, at times in independent texts but as often in one and the same composition, as a martial *and* divine hero, a *Jumjhar and* a god *and* (possibly) an incarnation of Vishnu. The clearest example of this practice is found in *duha* I, a composition that appears to unite three different aspects of deification: the warrior's elevation to semi-divine status, his worship as a god and deified forefather and possible *avatār*-linkage. It is of course possible to reason that the occurrence of all these roles in one composition suggest that *duha* I represents the one but last stage of narrative development and deification (the straightforward identification of Pabuji as Lakhsman's *avatār*). Accordingly, the different roles ascribed to Pabuji could be considered to represent the different stages of deification as narrated in local multi-story traditions, which have been accumulated in *duha* I through the addition of different story-lines from different shorter compositions constituting the episodes that make up the narrative of *duha* I. This line of reasoning does not, however, help in understanding how poems with different narratives, plots, imagery, length and functions continued to exist side by side.

Also, though one could see "primary process material" (Hiltebeitel) at work in the poets' use of Shaktik or Shaivite similes and allusions to Vishnu, it nevertheless seems apparent that most story-lines, similes and different heroic and/or divine roles cannot be traced to "primary process material" from the *Rāmāyaṇ* or other classical sources alone. This is particularly true, I think, of local Jumjhar imagery and the poets' account of Bhil Bhopa ritual practices in Kolu and Sojat which cannot be explained in terms of the re-emplotment of classical narratives. Nor do the allusions to the hero-gods and battles of classical epic traditions amount to such a re-emplotment in the studied poems given that these allusions serve a different purpose, i.e. the glorification of the bravery and strength of Marwar's heroes by comparing them to classical examples like in *git* III, where the Rathaur hero's might

is compared to the strength of Arjun's bow and in *duha* II, where the battle of Kolu is equated with the battle of Kurukshetra from the *Mahābhārat*.

In addition, the use of Shaktik imagery in the *chamd*s, *duha* I, the *parvaro* and some of the *git*s, which is clearly reminiscent of tales about the Puranic goddess, her Yoginis and her battle with the buffalo-demon Mahisasur, appears to refer to other literary-historical (not necessarily classical) "process material" as well. Charani Deval's indeterminate role as a cattle herder in the *chamd*s and her identification as a horse trader, cattle keeper *and* Shakti or "a goddess" in *duha* I, links the Pabuji tradition to narratives that are part of the medieval and contemporary Charani Shakti tradition. This tradition (which today appears truly "Sanskritized" as Charani Shaktis are now most often presented as part or full incarnations of the classical goddesses Durga and Himglaj) is part of narrative traditions which can be traced till far outside the classical "Hindu belt" to the medieval worship of Charan goddesses in Makran and Baluchistan. As we shall see in the course of this study, the same can be said of the worship of Devi in the *chamd*s, *duha* I, the *parvaro* and some of the *git*s.

Let me conclude this part of the chapter by saying that Pabuji's deification cannot be explained in narrative terms as the result of "deification-by-death" since the ascription of (semi) divine characteristics does not seem to represent a sequential process that could be traced from stories about the death of local heroes to deified forefathers and, lastly, to epic tales about regional gods and supra-regional *avatār*-linkage. As a result, the relation between the narrative development of heroic-epic poetry and geographical expansion also appears to sum up a process that cannot be documented through medieval poetry, at least not in the case of the Pabuji tradition. Then how can I account for the concurrent portrayal of the hero as a warrior, a godlike being, an instrument of God, a *Jumjhar*, a warrior-hero with semi-divine origins or a local and regional godling whose devotees seek to attribute classical *avatār* status to him? I think that possible answers to questions about the medieval and contemporary process of the deification of Pabuji, Charani Deval and (in the contemporary tradition) the Bhil archers and the "demonization" of Jimda Khici and the Sodhi Rajputni are best found by studying the socio-political and religious history of the communities who transmit the stories and histories of the Bhil, Charan and Rajput protagonist of the Pabuji tradition.

As noted in chapter 1, and as I will briefly recuperate here, Blackburn and Hiltebeitel propose that South Asian patterns of storytelling can be understood by studying the social range of the audiences of heroic-epic traditions. Blackburn (1989: 1-32) connects traditions of "pre-epic" stories, songs and poems with local audiences with a limited social range and restricted thematic interests. Accordingly, changes in the narrative content, the length and function of a story are explained by looking at a story's social as well as geographical spread. Blackburn posits a direct relation between the spreading out of a local story to include sub-regional, regional and supra-regional audiences and changes in the narrative content and structure as

well as purpose of a story. For a story to become part of the narrative traditions of regional audiences, it is necessary for poets and performers to thus refurbish their narratives in order to hold the attention of their new, regional audiences made up of different social groups which do not necessarily take an interest in the purely local stories about kinship ties and deified dead. The mythification of local history to appeal to wider audiences is thought to be fully accomplished when the human origins of a local hero are altogether forgotten and historical warriors are exclusively thought of as the embodiment of classical epic heroes and/or gods. In short, Blackburn relates narrative expansion of heroic-epic story-telling traditions to the widening of a story's social base. Hiltebeitel (2001: 30), on the other hand, argues that stories about local heroes hold no interest for broad-based audiences that are not part of the hero's caste group and he proposes that stories can only spread to a larger geographical range and audience as long as the caste identity of a story's hero remains the same. Thus, stories which centre on the martial heroes and traditions of dominant landed castes can be transmitted from one region to another as long as the hero and the audiences of his story remain dominant landed castes.

In the second part of this chapter, I aim to address the social base of the Pabuji tradition further by documenting how the Rathaur hero's adventures represent concerns typical of early and late medieval periods of Marwar's history. The poets' portrayal of their Rajput, Bhil and Charan protagonists will be compared to what is known about Pabuji's world, in particular to what is known about the history of traditional occupational and caste identities of Rajput, Bhil and Charan communities and the way in which these identities were advanced during Rajput kingdom formation in Marwar. Next I intend to assess the social make-up of the audiences for which the studied poems may have been composed. I will consider questions about the portrayal of audiences, poets, priests and historical warriors by the poets of the medieval Pabuji tradition. First, I will ask whether (and if so, in what way) the imagery employed by the poets reflects historical concerns relating the poetic portrayal of Pabuji to what is known of Rajput typology and history in Marwar. Aspects of the history of Bhil warriors, robbers and priests will be sketched in chapter 7. The history of Charan poets and religious cults centred on Charani goddesses is the subject of chapter 8.

### *Early-medieval Rathaur history*

The well-documented typology of early-medieval Rajput warriors from different social backgrounds and their opposite, the "pure blooded" Rajput nobles of the late medieval period, is commonly made to coincide with two different stages of socio-political organization: the early and medieval period of "kingdom formation" in Rajasthan. In what follows an overview is offered of, first, the historical context of Pabuji's story in early-period Marwar from approximately the twelfth century onwards until the second half of the sixteenth century. Second, I will review the late

medieval period of Rajput history dated from approximately the sixteenth century onwards till the establishment of British administrative rule.

Early-medieval kingdom formation in the Thar desert can be seen as a period in Marwar's history when, from the twelfth century onwards, 'new' ruling elites started to establish their hold over the region and competed with each other for authority. It should be kept in mind, however, that the "newness" of the late-medieval elites who ascended to power was relative, as Thapar (1999: 115f) argues, noting that the conventional break between historical (classical or medieval) periods and, consequently, the distinctions made between old and new ruling elites does not do justice to the continuities between historical periods and the history of the peoples involved. The term medieval clearly proves problematic in this context, I do, even so, propose to continue its use for the sake of brevity and clarity. For the purpose of this study, Marwar's early medieval period is thought of as spanning the centuries between the tenth and the sixteenth century, while the late medieval period of Rajput history is dated from round about the beginning of the sixteenth century up to the institution of British colonial rule in Rajasthan.

From the twelfth century onwards, and perhaps even earlier, ruling elites employed socio-political and legendary traditions to claim ascendant martial identities. Available historical data for the most part consist of semi-historical, often legendary (and at times rather confusing) collections of facts and figures, names and different versions of stories, about which there seems to exist little consensus. As several scholars of Rajasthan's history have remarked, dates and names listed in early Rajput genealogies should be regarded with wariness.[291] I will not attempt to sort out all the differing views on the chronology of early Rathaur history. A somewhat coherent, chronological account of early-medieval Rathaur history is hampered by the on-going, till date open-ended discussions about the accuracy of the many different dates associated with this part of their past. More interesting for the purpose of this chapter is a study of the narrative content of the stories about early Rathaur rambles in the areas around Kher, Pali and Maheva which give an idea of the background against which much of the poetry dedicated to Pabuji may have been composed. The prose stories and poems about Pabuji's forefathers and their descendants have been recorded through regional chronicles and genealogical traditions, most importantly in the *Khyāt* and *Vigat* compiled by the seventeenth century chronicler Muhnta Nainsi, minister at the court of Jaswant Singh Rathaur of Marwar (1638-78).[292] Nainsi fulfilled the court position of "home minister" (*divāṃṇa*) from 1658 until 1666 (cf. Peabody 2001: 824). During this period he wrote the *Mārvāṛ rā parganāṃ rī vigat* ("Account of the Districts of Marwar"),

[291] For a discussion of the language of Rajasthani prose chronicles and the value of the contained data for historical research, see: Smith (1991: 77), Henige (1974: *passim*), Peabody (2001: *passim*), Saran (1978: 1-13), (Tessitori 1921: *passim*), Ziegler (1976a: 219-250).

[292] A similar compilation of facts and fictions about Rathaur history, based on nineteenth -century written and oral sources, can be read from Tod's account of the history of Marwar and Bikaner (Tod 1972 II: 1-167).

edited and published by the prolific scholar Narayansimh Bhati (1968, 1969 and 1974). Nainsi' *khyāt*, a compilation of historical prose tales and poetry texts, was edited by Badriprasad Sakariya (1960, 1984, 1993, 1994) and published under the title *Muṃhatā Naiṇasī rī khyāt*.[293]

The beginning of Rathaur history is usually dated to the twelfth-century, when Rao Siha Rathaur is thought to have set foot in Marwar.[294] It is thought that Siha fled to the region after Muhammad Ghori sacked his father's capital, Kannauj (Reu 1938: 18, 45, Tod 1972 II: 9f). Some versions of Siha's story connect him to the Brahmin inhabitants of Pali (south of Jodhpur). It is said that Siha came to the Pallival Brahmin's rescue when they were under attack from Mer "camel robbers", probably tribesmen ruled by Kanha Mer, lord of part of the Pali region. The chronicler Nainsi, whose patron was a Rathaur, describes how Siha fought the Mer overlords of the Pali Brahmins and was subsequently enlisted by the villagers to protect them against further incursions (N. S. Bhati 1968: 9f). D. Sharma (1966: 691f) holds that Siha died in 1273 when he "probably fell fighting while trying to protect [cows]". But Tod (1972 II: 10f) reports that Siha murdered the Pallival Brahmins in order to appropriate their cattle and land. The different versions of stories about Siha's life and his relations with the Pallival Brahmins continue to be the subject of debates centring on the question whether Siha protected, robbed or murdered the Brahmin inhabitants of Pali. Unsurprisingly, chroniclers and historians partial towards the Rathaur lineage interpret the episode in a positive light: Siha maintained law and order in Pali (M. Rathaur 2001: 39, Reu 1938: 135). Stories about Siha's massacre of the Pali Brahmins were noted down by Tod, the 'British Bard' of Sisodiya rule in Mewar, who perhaps mirrored the local dislike for the Rathaur of Marwar after the ruling Sisodiya family of Mewar, said to be the twelfth-century landholders of Pali, were ousted by Siha (Tod 1972 II: 10, G.D. Sharma 1977: 1f). This can also be read from Tod's (1972 II: 11) opinion of Siha's son Asthan who, writes Tod, conquered Kher "by the same species of treachery by which his father attained Pali" (cf. Tambs-Lyche 1997: 63).

Consequently, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the period when Pabuji is thought to have lived, Rathaur kingdom formation got under way in

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[293] Other medieval chronicles and genealogies used for my study of medieval Rathaur history include: the unpublished (RORI) Mss. 9720(11) *vīraṃde rī bāta*, 15649 (1) *raṭhauṛa meṃ khaṃpa dhāṃdhala rī khyāta,* 22554(11) *raṭhauṛaṃ rī pattāvalī rī vā khyāta*, 26110(2) *jodhpura ke rājāoṃ kī vaṃśavalī* and published sources like the *Jodhpur hukumat rī bahī* edited by S. Chandra, S. R. Singh and G.D. Sharma (1976) and the *Rāṭhauḍ vaṃś rī vigat evaṃ rāṭhauḍāṃ rī vaṃśāvalī* edited by Phatesingh (1997). I also consulted genealogies of the Khici warriors as recorded by the *Khīcī vaṃś prakāś*, edited by Khici and Khici (1994) and a Bhati Rajput genealogy published by Hukam Singh Bhati (no date) and titled: *Yaduvaṃś bhāṭiyoṃ kī vaṃśāvalī aur unakā gaurav*.

[294] Siha (also spelled Seeha, Sia or Sheoji), is thought to have been the son of the twelfth-century Gahadvala ruler of Kanauj, Jayachamdra, and the first Rathaur (Rasthrakuta Gahadvala) to establish himself in Marwar, in Kher, near present-day Jodhpur (M. H. Singh 2000: 27, Sakariya 1984: 166-175, Tessitori 1921: 266, 1919a: 31, Westphal-Hellbusch 1976: 106). D. Sharma (1966: 687f, 756), on the other hand, postulates that Siha was the son of Setakamvar, a Rasthrakuta of Gadhipur.

Marwar, but on a rather modest scale. Siha's son Asthan (c. 1273-1291), generally held to be Pabuji's grandfather, conquered villages around Pali and Kher in southern Marwar, wresting these areas from the Dadhi underlings of Gohil or Solanki Rajput lineages (N. Bhati 1968: 12, Sakariya 1984: 279). Asthan's death has been dated to circa 1290 and is thought to have occurred during a battle with Jalaluddin Khilji who, on his way to attack Gujarat, passed through Pali and saw chance to abduct some of the town's women. The partly legendary nature of this story can be read from the description of Asthan's death who, on confronting the Sultanat forces, died in battle together with his "140 warriors" (M. Rathaur 2001: 39).[295] Here, as in other poems, 140 should probably be read as a conventional, symbolic number, denoting "many" warriors, a reading that is also born out by references to Pabuji's "sātavīsai sura" (7 times 20 heroes), that is Pabuji's 140 Bhil warriors (*chamd* II, v. 46). After Asthan's demise, his eldest son, Rao Dhuhad (also spelled Duhur, Dhuhad, Dhuhar), is thought to have ascended the throne of Kher from which he ruled from c.1292-1309 (D. Sharma 1966: 691, 756). Dhuhad is credited with further advancing Rathaur rule over Kher by successfully challenging the competing claims of Chauhan rulers. Dhuhad, who was Pabuji's paternal uncle, is believed to have died a violent death circa 1309 (Sakariya 1993: 29). His death is rather similar to Pabuji's demise, for we read that Dhuhad was killed in the course of pursuing cattle rustlers who had stolen cows from his subjects in Siwana.[296]

In the fourteenth century, Dhuhad's eldest son Raipal ruled over Kher, extending his sway up to Barmer and Kundal in western Rajasthan (D. Sharma 1966: 691). About Dhuhad's younger brother, Pabuji's father, the fourteenth-century warrior Dhamdhal, no tales featuring the protection or robbery of cattle are known to me.[297] One version of his life, noted down by Nainsi, depicts Dhamdhal as a small-time Rajput from Mahevo[298] who managed to extent the sway of his lineage over Kolu by ousting a regional chief named Pamo Goramdhar (Sakariya 1993: 58, N.S. Bhati 1993: 29). It has, however, also been recorded that Dhamdhal ousted the Chauhan chief of the region (Tessitori 1916: 167f). Dhamdhal's main claim to fame

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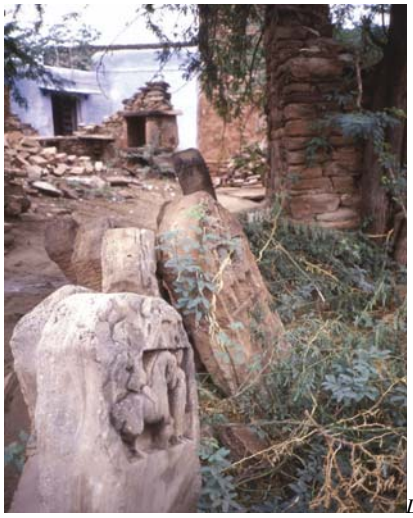
[295] The confusion over the date of Asthan's death also seems to indicate the part legendary character of this tale. For, if Asthan did die in 1292, it is not clear which Khilji campaign above version of his tale intended to commemorate. In all likelihood, written and oral records of the event became more scant in succeeding centuries and in later versions of the story and, as a result, susceptible to factual errors. It is perhaps because of this, that Asthan's death came to converge with references to the attack on Gujarat in 1299 led by the Khilji army generals Ulugh and Nusral Khan, who apparently marched from Sindh to Gujarat, via Jaisalmer and Chittor, a route which, one may imagine, could have taken them through Pali (Chamdra 1999: 87-88). D. Sharma (1966: 691) writes: "The year of Asthan's death is uncertain".

[296] Yet other versions of this story (locating Dhuhad's death at Siwana or Nagana) narrate how the warrior died fighting after joining the Songira Rajput Satal Soma's battle against Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316) (Chamdra 1999: 148).

[297] Shekavat (1968: 212) notes that Pabuji was born in the thirteenth century and died in Samvat 1313 (1256 CE). This suggests that Dhamdhal may have lived in the thirtheenth century.

[298] Mahevo, Smith (1991: 493) writes, may have been a village or town in medieval Pathan or Gujarat.

lies in being the father of Pabuji and Buro.[299] Marwar's chronicles and genealogies provide rather detailed, perhaps semi-historical, information about Pabuji's parentage, all aiming to document that he is Dhamdhal's son.[300] Dhamdhal himself is generally listed as the sixth of Asthan's sons, born from one of his wives, Uchhrandge, mother of Asthan's eldest son Dhudah and his younger brother Chachaga. Dhamdhal died an apparently natural, to Rajput-standards probably unspectacular, death. All that Ladhraj has to say about the event is: "Seeing (that) 'his time' had come, King Dhamdhal dies".[301]



*Dhamdhal warriors' hero stones at Kher (Keru).*

After his father's demise, Dhamdhal's eldest son Buro ascends the Kolu throne while his younger half-brother Pabuji set out on his horse "travelling to unknown regions" to become a powerful swordfighter with a fierce reputation among neighbouring kings and sultans (*duha* I, v. 61-73). In Nainsi's seventeenth-century prose rendition of the story, we read that Pabuji was an approximately five-year old boy at the time of Dhamdhal's demise, a boy, moreover, with magical qualities. Nainsi depicts Pabuji as a young hunter who rode a she-camel and performed miracles

[299] Tessitori noted (1916: 109) that an early twentieth-century oral tradition about Dhamdhal records that Dhamdhal had 15 sons, including Buro, the second son, and Pabuji, the thirteenth son.

[300] (RORI) Ms. 15649 (1) *raṭhauṛa meṃ khaṃpa dhāṃdhala rī khyāta* (3-4), Khici and Khici (1994: 51), Nizami and Kheechi (1990: 47), Phatesingh (1997: 7), M. Rathaur (2001: 40). The contemporary tradition contains several versions of Pabuji's birth, dating it to the thirteenth century and locating his birth in Jhunanagar (district Barmer) or in Kolu (cf. M. Rathaur 2001: 41). Smith (1991: 75) notes that Pabuji is at times also portrayed as Asthan's son in some contemporary, oral versions of his story. Medieval sources document similar views, listing Dhamdhal as Asthan's eldest son (Tessitori 1919a: 31) or the the eighth son of Asot'hama (Asthan) (Tod 1972 II: 11).

[301] *Duha* I (v. 58): "pekhe dina pugeha, rāva dhāṃdhala cisaraṃmīyo".

(Sakariya 1993: 59). In the centuries following the death of Dhamdhal's two sons at the hands of Jimda Khici, the history of the Rathaur sub-clan of Dhamdhal warriors received little attention from the region's chroniclers, except for the history of Viramde, son of the Dhamdhal Rathaur Dhuhad, the sixteenth-century ruler of Merta, who fought a long drawn out war with neighbouring Rathaur ruler Maldev (G.D. Sharma 1977: 8f). And Nizami and Kheechi's (1990: 368) *Survey of Kheechi-Chauhan History* documents that the seventeenth-century Dhamdhal Rathaur and Khici clans were described as "khavās-pāsabān" or personal attendants and arms bearers of the king who were seated behind the throne of the Jodhpur ruler during formal court sessions.[302] However, late-medieval events in the erstwhile Dhamdhal "realm" Kolu appear to have gone largely unrecorded; I only know of Tessitori's comment (1916: 109) about a seventeenth century Marwari chronicle that ostensibly documents the bequest of Kolu to Pabuji's Bhopas by the sixteenth-century Rathaur ruler Gamga.

Though landholders, farmers and priests claiming Dhamdhal Rathaur ancestry continue to live in Kolu and Kher till today, the ruling ambitions of the Dhamdhal branch of Rathaur warriors were apparently nipped in the bud after Jimda killed Pabuji and Buro.[303] The fate of Dhamdhal's sons and grandsons apparently did nothing to change the lineage's decline in later times if it is true, as Tessitori (1919a: 38f) notes, that Dhamdhal's eldest son Nabhala died childless while Dhamdhal's four grandsons were slain.[304] Other descendants of the Rathaur patriarch Asthan did expand Rathaur rule over Marwar, furthering the brotherhood's regional prominence, notably during the reign of Rao Chumda (c. 1383 to 1423), Rao Satta (c. 1419-28) and Rao Rinmall (c. 1428-1438), who took advantage of the weakening Tughluq state. In the last decade of the fourteenth century, Rathaur armies invaded the Sambhar, Nagaur and Ajmer territories of Delhi Sultanate underlords (Chamdra 1997: 221, G.D. Sharma 1977: 4).

During the early phase of kingdom formation in Marwar, Rathaur claims to regional supremacy were time and again met by similar ambitions nurtured by "semi-independent" landholders belonging to several Rathaur and other Rajput brotherhoods. In the period between the twelfth and the fifteenth century, the main challengers to Rathaur power included Rathaur sub-clans like the Mertiya Rathaur from Merta as well as Delhi Sultanat subsidiaries, Mer overlords, and neighbouring Rajput rulers of Bhati, Chauhan, Gaur, Khici and Sodha descent. This period of

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[302] Nizami and Kheechi (1990: 368f) trace this convention to [1] Mughal ceremonial practices *and* [2] to the *Mahābhārat*'s description of armed bodyguard of "trusted heroes, patriotic and devoted to the master", who were seated behind the king. The Kheechis are, in addition, said to have been awarded the privilege of being the keeper of the king's personal weapons during Gaj Singh's rule over Jodhpur (c. 1619-38).

[303] Tessitori (1916: 109) records how in the seventeenth century 210 Thori are thought to have lived in Kolu alongside 300 "Muhammadans", 210 Dhedha, 130 Bania and 20 Rajput.

[304] The landlord of present-day Keru (Kher), who inhabits a mansion there, claims Dhamdhal descent, perhaps traceable to Pabuji's nephew and Dhuhad's eldest son, Raipal. Regrettably, the landlord proved rather reticent about his ancestry, the only time that I met him.

Rathaur history has been documented by Marwar's poets and chroniclers by means of descriptions of full-size battles and minor skirmishes fought either in efforts to expand Rathaur rule at the expense of rival claimants or to defend the brotherhood's territories against incursions.[305]

### *Narrative concerns*

The Pabuji tradition has a number of narrative features in common with early Rathaur historiography. It has become clear that Pabuji's adventures as read from our poetic sources represent often reiterated themes which are also part of the region's prose chronicles. Pabuji's ancestors have been portrayed, like Pabuji, as small-time warriors who spent much of their lives squabbling over cattle, including cows, camels and horses. Several of Pabuji's warrior forefathers were chieftains of parts of fourteenth-century Marwar. They are thought to have died, like Pabuji, during battles while protecting cattle, women and, in a few instances, land. Likewise, Pabuji's probable contemporaries, like his uncle Rao Dhuhad, is also remembered for dying in the course of pursuing cattle rustlers (in one version of his story). But, unlike Pabuji, not one of his forefathers has, as far as I can see, been elevated to semi-divine or divine status. This seems all the more remarkable since the above narrative concerns of the Pabuji tradition are also a common feature of stories about other Rajput heroes and folk gods like Devanarayan, Tejaji and Vachhada Dada. The latter's story repeats many of the narrative concerns of early Rathaur history. In one version of his story, Vachhada Dada is remembered (akin to Bamkidas portrayal of Pabuji in *git* V) as a youthful Rajput bridegroom who, while proceeding towards his bride's house, abandons his *barāt* on hearing shepherds call for help to rescue their cattle from robbers (Mankad 1956: 60). Vachhada Dada dies in the ensuing battle. His story continues with a repetition of the warrior's heroic feat seven times in seven successive lives until he is elevated to the rank of demi-god by the sun-god.[306]

The fact that divinity was accorded to several Rajput heroes who met a violent end but not to early Rathaur warriors like Dhuhad, who died the same way, further underlines that the above described "deification-by-death" does not help in explaining all aspects of Pabuji's deification. Nor does it help in comprehending why other Rathaur heroes have not been partly or wholly deified even though their stories closely resemble the nucleus of the stories (i.e. their death in a battle over cattle) told about Pabuji and other Rajput folk gods. As I hope to show in the next chapter, the answer to this problem can be found by further studying the historical

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[305] See (*passim*): N.S. Bhati (1968, 1969), Sakariya (1960, 1984, 1993, 1994) and Ziegler (1976a, 1976b, 1994, 1998).

[306] Today, Vachhada Dada is worshipped by Rebari, Charan, Ahir and other pastoral-nomadic peoples as a protective deity who helps in retrieving lost buffalos.

context of Pabuji's story and in particular the narrative and historical part accorded to his Bhil companions.

Early Rathaur history can be summed up as recurring stories about fights over the ownership of cattle, in particular cows, camels and horses.[307] The above summary of this history suggests that *if* Pabuji indeed lived in the beginning of the fourteenth century, he hailed from a relatively long line of warriors and cattle protectors or cattle rustlers. Dhamdhal Rathaur history thus allows us to think of Pabuji and his forefathers as typical early-medieval warriors or Rajput, an epithet for warriors that is thought to have covered the segmented identity of many kinds of men, especially young men (*javān*) who combined agricultural occupations with pastoral-nomadic migrations, trade and military undertakings. Kolff (1990: *passim*) describes this type of early Rajputhood as a designation upon which a wide range of people, including migrant labourers, armed peasants, pastoral-nomadic and tribal groups prided themselves. The title Rajput used to include as diverse trades and professions as "horse-soldier", "trooper" or "headman of a village". These geographically and socially mobile young men who travelled north-western India in search of employment formed an "open status group" of warriors on taking service in war bands and regional armies and claimed the rank of Rajput and, in early medieval Marwar, could also claim the title of Afghan (Pathan). These regional soldiering traditions gave rise to a medieval "military labour market" in Hindustan (Kolff 1990: 39, 71-75) and, I would like to suggest, in north-western Rajput kingdoms.

It is against this background, i.e. the history of a parallel diffusion of military labour and the transmission of regional martial oral epics in Hindustan and north-western regions, that the origin and spread of story traditions like the present-day oral epic of Pabuji have been positioned by Hiltebeitel (2001: 463, 492), who describes Pabuji's story as a recollection of the rivalries between imperial overlords and "little kings". In the course of these rivalries, a "little rajputization process" was set in motion and folk traditions became "Rajputized" when people gave new meaning to the Sanskrit epics (Hiltebeitel 2001: 509). In the "hinterland kingdoms" of "little Rajputs" this process is thought to have been inspired by similarities between the epics (specially the *Mahābhārat*'s) allusions to "Vedic Vratya war bands and the lifestyles of earlier medieval "low status Rajputs"" (Hitlebeitel 2001: 441). Hiltebeitel sees many similarities between the lives of epic Kshatriya warriors and antagonistic Vratya warrior bands of the Vedic past, on the one hand, and the lives of medieval "little Rajputs" like Pabuji, on the other.

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[307] Ziegler (1998: 247) notes that instances of horse theft and death resulted from disputes over the ownership of horses can be traced to the 16th century in Marwar. However, Chamdra's (1999: 30) description of horse trade in India and Central Asian suggests that a lively trade has been conducted between these regions since "ancient times". Historical descriptions of the character and martial use of Kathiawari and Marwari horse breeds suggest the same (Hendricks 1995: 251-253, 279-281).

*Late-medieval Rathaur history*

Before further discussing "little rajputization", let me briefly recapitulate what is known about late-medieval Rajput martial culture and kingdom formation in Marwar. The late-medieval phase of Rathaur socio-political organisation is thought to have originated in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Rathaur ruler Jodha Rinmalot established a first foothold in Marwar, about three centuries after Rao Siha came to the region. The right to precedence among Rathaur sub-clans as advanced by Jodha's *khamph* is generally traced to this period in Rathaur kingdom formation, since it is thought that Jodha considerably extended the sway of the Rathaur lineage over large parts of the region thus consolidating Rathaur rule in Marwar towards the end of the fifteenth century. And it was Jodha who chose present-day Jodhpur as the site of a new Rathaur capital around 1455 (Tessitory 1919a: 69).

From the sixteenth century onwards, the history of Rathaur rule in Marwar, especially their political and marital relations with Mughal overlords, has been well documented. Like in the previous centuries, the people of sixteenth-century Marwar witnessed unremitting warfare. Detailed studies record the long-drawn-out struggles between Rathaur rulers and Mughal subsidiaries based in Jodhpur, on the one hand, and competing Rajput brotherhoods in adjoining areas, on the other.[308] I will not dwell upon these particulars of Marwar's warlike history here but limit myself to a review of those aspects of late-medieval Rathaur history that have some bearing on the historical context against which the Pabuji tradition may have developed. For this reason, I will outline the life and times of late-medieval rulers who are thought to have patronized the composers or scribes of some of the medieval poems dedicated to Pabuji: [1] Rao Maldev (Maldeo) who ruled from circa 1532-1562 and who is thought to have been the patron of Vithu Meha; [2] Rao Jaswant Singh, Ladhraj's professed patron, who ruled Marwar from 1638 to 1678; and [3] Raja Man Singh (1803-1843), the recognized benefactor of Jodhpur's court poet Asiya Bamkidas (1781-1833).

Maldev, the son of Rao Gamga, is thought to have ascended the Jodhpur throne in the early 1530s. He is credited with attempts to further increase the prominence of the Rathaur ruling lineage in Marwar in an era when questions of primogeniture had become a matter of fierce struggle among the different Rathaur brotherhoods (N.S. Bhati 1974: 10-13). The fact that many major and minor Rathaur chieftains gained an important say in matters of ascendancy and alliance politics based on marriages between brotherhoods is seen as one of the prime causes of

[308] For a study of late-medieval Rajput politics in Marwar see (*passim*): Bhadra (1998), N.S. Bhati (1991), S. Chamdra (1999); G.D. Sharma (1976), Chattopadhyaya (1994, 1997); Peabody (2001), Saran (1978), Saxena (1989), D. Sharma (1968, 1990), M. Sharma (1977); V. Sharma (2000); D. Singh (1990), Stern (1991) and Ziegler (1976a, 1976b, 1994, 1998). See also Tod (1972 II : 29-167).

many of the late-medieval allegiance wars between Rajput clans and sub-clans.[309] In addition to internal brotherhood struggles, many other causes for strife existed in early sixteenth-century Marwar, like the conflicts between local chiefs of neighbouring Rajput brotherhoods and battles that ensued after Mughal incursions into Rajput desert realms. As a result, the territory of the Rathaur under Rao Gamga (c. 1483-1531), Maldev's father, had become limited to a few Jodhpur districts and some surrounding areas.[310] In the bordering districts which formerly fell under the Jodhpur throne (like Pokaran, Phalodi, Merta and Siwana) semi-independent Rathaur chiefs claimed the upper hand (G.D. Sharma 1977: 9). As noted just now, Maldev tried to re-establish the prominence of his lineage, Jodha's direct descendants, in Marwar by means of long drawn out struggles with "unruly" Rathaur sub-clans, in particular those of neighbouring Merta, ruled by Viramde, son of the Dhamdhal Rathaur Dhuhad (G.D. Sharma 1977: 8f). In the 1540s, Maldev eventually suffered defeat at the hands of Viramde who had sought and obtained military aid from Sher Shah Sur.[311] Though Maldev did continue to rule from Jodhpur after this defeat, the size of his realm and his political power had been rather diminished.[312] Upon Maldev's death, Mughal underlords expanded their political influence in Marwar to such a degree that matters of succession came to be wholly decided by Mughal overlords from the 1560s onwards.[313]

In the second half of the sixteenth century, when Ladhraj is thought to have composed *duha* I, Mughal imperial rulers and their Rathaur underlords established further military and administrative rule in Marwar. This was the time when Rajput identity came to reflect the various ways in which alliances between Rajput subsidiaries and Mughal overlords took shape. As regional power equations came to be defined in Mughal terms of military service and loyalty based on landed rights,

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[309] Tod (1972 II: 25) notes a portrayal of the relations between nineteenth-century ruling houses and "junior branches", quoting the latter as saying: "When our services are acceptable, then he [the ruler] is our lord, when not, we are again his brothers and kin, claimants, and laying claim to the land".

[310] The cause of the annexation wars in Marwar during Maldev's time is commonly traced to his father's rule, when Rao Ganga managed to ascend the Jodhpur throne instead of his elder brother Vikram. This arrangement led to several wars between Ganga and Vikram until the former triumphed and annexed Sojat (G.D. Sharma 1977: 10, Tod 1972 II: 19-23).

[311] G.D. Sharma (1977: 10) dates Maldev's defeat at the hands of Viramde to the battle of Sumel in 1543.

[312] G.D. Sharma (1977: 10-12) lists eastern districts like Sambhar, Didwana, Lalsot, Chatsu, and Mewat as parts of the Rathaur realm lost by Maldev to competing chieftains and Mughal rulers. However, his rule was still considerable, judging from the fact that, from his re-occupation of Jodhpur (1545) till his death in 1562, he claimed control over Jodhpur, Sojat, Jaitaran, Phalodi and Pokaran (near Kolu), Siwana, Jalor, Sanchor and Merta and is known to have occupied Barmer and Kotada in the far-west, and to have made incursions into the territory of Jaisalmeri rulers (cf. N.S. Bhati 1974: 43-4).

[313] The territory of the Mertiya Rathaur had already been divided by Akbar among Viramde's sons, while a portion of the realm came to be administrated by Akbar's imperial servants. In 1574, after Maldev's third son, Candrasen, did not manage to withstand the advance of Mughal troops, Akbar granted Jodhpur to Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner. In time, the power struggles among Maldev's relatives were resolved by Akbar, whose army occupied Jodhpur in 1563, after first invading the territories of Rathaur subsidiaries in Jaitaran and Merta. According to G.D. Sharma (1977: 23, n.92), Jodhpur chronicles date this event to 1565 while Mughal sources date it to 1563 (G.D. Sharma endorses the last mentioned date).

the identity of Rajput landed elites and their identification with and loyalty towards different Mughal rulers led to the re-definition of diverse regional soldierly traditions. This seems to have been the case in particular during the reign of Ladhraj's patron, Jaswant Singh (ruled from 1638 to 1678). His rule is commonly described as a time when Rajput-Mughal relations began to be thought of in terms of incorporation: the merging of Rajput military and administrative culture with Mughal standards. Jaswant, a subsidiary of the Mughal rulers Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, is credited with reorganising Marwar's revenue system, thus far been based on a system of *paṭṭā*s (land grants or leases) in lieu of military services by developing a system founded on Mughal *jāgīr*s (land stipends).[314] Jaswant is thought to have aimed at a redefinition of the power relations between Rathaur royalty and their Marwar subjects. Relations which were traditionally defined in terms of loyalty, patronage and kinship alliances are thought to have been transformed into a ruler-client relationship based on service and exchange. It is, in this regard, good to note, as Ziegler (1998: 259) does, that patron-client relations based on land tenure did exist before Mughal incursions into Marwar. However, loyalty defined in terms of service and exchange apparently only became a customary under Jaswant (cf. G.D. Sharma 1977: 12f).

The wide-ranging impact of Mughal policies on the political and social life of medieval Marwar is a common theme of studies about late-medieval conditions.[315] The notion that the majority of Marwar's Rajput and non-Rajput people came into contact with Mughals only intermittently has been considered less often. Ziegler (1998: 243f) argues that there were considerable variations in relations between successive Mughal and Rathaur office holders. Thus, at the same time as Rajput-Mughal culture flourished at central courts, the majority of Rajput warriors, especially those sub-clans settled in outlying realms (like in the desert-districts of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner) remained far removed from imperial Mughal rule or their subsidiaries who ruled from Jodhpur. A case in point is the unyielding hold of Rathaur sub-clans over far-western Marwar. In these out-of-the-way, difficult to reach desert territories, minor chieftains continued to hold sway who long refused to submit to the authority of the Jodhpur ruler (Ziegler 1998: *passim*). In these desert realms, hostilities and feuds between minor and major Rathaur brotherhoods and

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[314] According to G.N. Sharma (1990: 35, 42, 173), in the eighteenth century, a *paṭṭā* was a written record on the basis of which a holder was entitled to collect land revenue and other taxes from lands earmarked by Rajput rulers. This system seems to have existed in rudimentary form from the time of Rao Maldev onwards, who combined *paṭṭā* grants with older *bhaibāṃdh chakkar* or assignments based on services lasted to him by men from his brotherhood (*bhaibāṃdh*). During the eighteenth century, most Rathaur rulers continued to bestow *paṭṭā*s, granting them against military as well as civil services but the basis of these grants was the Mughal *jāgīr* sytem.

[315] See, for example, Streusand (2001: 362f): "Akbar now dominated Hindustan (…) His relationships with rulers of Amber, Jodhpur, Bikanir, and Jaisalmer eliminated any threat from them and gave him a cut of their revenue and access to their military resources". Compare Richards (1998: 157f).

their retainers continued unabated. In addition, local and regional power struggles ensued among Rathaur and Bhati as well as minor Mughal claimants to revenue.

The assertions of authority and pre-eminence advanced by the Rathaur rulers of central Marwar continued to be challenged by their "subjects" in the outlying districts. This state of affairs appears to have lasted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when successive Mughal rulers tried to grant Pokaran and Phalodi districts to the then rulers of Marwar, Mota Raja Udai Singh and Gaj Singh. However, neither the Mughals nor their Rathaur underlords appear to have been able to establish long-term factual authority over the tracts since they were alternately claimed and re-claimed by rival Rathaur and by Jaisalmer's Bhati rulers. The same can be said of Mota Raja Udai Singh's attempts to make real his appointment as *jāgīrdār* of Pokaran by Akbar given that he never did get a proper hold over the area since his claims continued to be contested by Bhati rulers (Ziegler 1998: 257). And Raja Gaj Singh, who had been granted Phalodi by Akbar, never managed to wholly assert his authority in this region either. Nor was he able to acquire full possession of land granted to him in Phalodi, Merto, Sivano, Jalor, and Samcor at different times during the period between 1620 and 1626 (Ziegler 1998: 258). In sum, the Rathaur subsidiaries of the Mughals did not manage to decisively subjugate competing Rathaur claimants to power, especially not in the far western areas of Marwar like Barmer, but also not in Pokaran and Phalodi, the two cities between which Pabuji's Kolu temple has been located since approximately the latter half of the fifteenth century.

From epigraphic evidence collected from the temple-complex in Kolu, I gather that the Pabuji temple and the surrounding desert area have been among the sites where the rulers of Jodhpur contended for power with underlords and Rathaur sub-clans from Phalodi, Pokharan, Jaisalmer and Bikaner. This can be read from the different rulers and chieftains who through the centuries patronized the Pabuji temple and its priests. Of the two temples situated within the present day temple compound at Kolu, the oldest temple (referred to here as the "red temple") is flanked by a *kīrtistaṃbh* (memorial pillar) which dates its donation, and perhaps the foundations of the red temple itself, to Samvat 1515 (1458 CE). On this *kīrtistaṃbh*, the name of the warrior who donated it to the temple is mentioned: one Dhamdhal Khimamra (or ruler of Khimamra) and one Sohar Nara.[316] I have not found any data about the history of this warrior or his family in the chronicles of Marwar, except Tessitori's (1916: 109) listing of Dhamdhal's "15 sons", which mentions one Sobhata as the father of Sohar among the many names recited to Tessitori (1916: 109) at the beginning of the last century. A list that did not represent an altogether

[316] This part of the inscription reads: "*ohṃ śr̥ ganeśa samavata 1515 varake badawa sudhi 11 budhavāsare maharāva rāṭhauṛa dhāṃdhala sutra maharawatha pabu prāsāda kr̥pita ki(tri) karavitaṃ dhāṃdhala khimamrā soṃ sutta sohara nārā* (...)". Compare Tessitori (1916:108).

*Pabuji's red temple (above) and white temple (below) at Kolu.*

correct view of past Dhamdhal generations, as Tessitori (*ibid*.) also noted.[317]

The inscription on the second face of this *kīrtistaṃbh* indicates that Kolu was part of Phalodi district in 1458, for the memorial pillar appears to have been erected during the reign of Satal, Jodha's eldest son, who apparently established himself in the desert between Pokaran and Phalodi prior to ascending the Jodhpur *gaddī* (throne), as may be concluded from the inscription on the second face of the pillar, reading: "mahāraya jodhā suta rāya śrī sātal vijaya rājye" ("during the reign of King Satal, son of Jodha") (cf. Tessitori 1916: 108, 1919a: 70). Another inscription, found on a *devaḷī* (hero stone), also dates the building of the temple to Samvat 1515 (1458 CE) and mentions Dhamdhal, son of Sohar Nara and Khimamra (or ruler of Khimamra).[318] This hero stone (kept in the chambers of the temple's head priest Tulsi Singh Rathaur at the time of my visits) appears to be the oldest dated *devaḷī* preserved in the temple, and its inscription identifies Pabuji as the son of Dhamdhal, and grandson of Asthan.[319] This hero stone, like most of the other stones kept at the temple, portrays Pabuji while riding a horse.[320]

The second temple within the compound today, the "white temple", is the most recent of the two temple structures. A *kīrtistaṃbh* to the left of the entrance of this building commemorates its founding in 1711 CE (Samvat 1768) during the time of Abhey Singh (son of Ajit Singh) by one Bhopa named Bagachamd.[321] G.N. Sharma (1990: 75) dates Abhey Singh's succession to the Jodhpur throne to 1724, after his father Ajit Singh had been murdered by another of his sons (Bakht Singh).

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[317] Tessitori (1916: 109) listed: (1) Dhamdhal, (2) Ude Simgh, (3) Ram Simgh, (4) Gaj Simgh, (5) Likhamana Simgh, (6) Dev Raj, (7) Khimva Karana, (8) Sobhata, (9) Sohara and Kamo, (10) Godo, (11) Neto, (12) Vagfo, (13) Sami Das, (14) Rupo, (15) Neto, (16) Hara, (17) Maha Simgh, (18) Ano and, lastly, (19) Buro.

[318] "*Samvata 1515 varkhei bhadava sudi 11 vāra (ādīdhavāra) rāṭhauṛa āsthāna sutha dhāmdhala sutha pābū samga devatāna khivara sutha soma soha(d)ra soya prasada po*". A temple priest read the unclear letters, which appeared to represent "sohā(d)ra", as "nāra", suggesting: Sohar Nara. Tessitori (1916: 107) described a similar inscription, which mentions a Dhamdhal Rathaur named Sohar, son of Sobha, identified by Tessitori as the ruler of Khimvara and son of Devathamna, perhaps the sixth Dhamdhal ancestor Deva Raj. However, it seems more probable that *khivara sutha soma soha(d)ra* refers to the ninth Dhamdhal, Sohar, son of Sobhata, son of Khimva Karana, and that the word *deva thamna* signified the platform (*devathān*) as place of worship or a small temple (*devasthāṃn*) alongside which the memorial pillar was erected. It is not clear to me whether the inscription read by me is the same but weathered version of the inscription transcribed by Tessitori or an altogether different record. Tessitori did not mention the location of the stone image of Pabuji or any other particulars of his epigraphic records.

[319] Tessitori (1916: 107-08) transcribed the inscription on an even older stone image of Pabuji dated to Samvat 1483 (1426 CE) set up by a Dhamdhal Pa or Paha (*pā[hā]*) during the reign of one Maharaja Lavakhana. I have not been able to trace this stone image among the *devaḷī*s at today's Kolu temple.

[320] On this *devaḷī*, like on a few other hero stones, Pabuji's face and the head of his horse have been chipped away. According to the priest, this happened during Mughal raids on the temple. No dates appear to be known for such raids in western Rajasthan, neither in the present-day oral tradition, nor in secondary historical sources.

[321] This part of the rather weathered inscription possibly reads: "*Samvata 1768 vāra khe matī phaguna suda 7 sukaravā sare karata kā nakha(satre) śrī pābūjī ra devala (…) rājā dhī rāja maharājā (sarāṃmā) (…) sahāī ka(va)rajī śri ajita siṃghjī śri abheya siṃghjī ri vāra māhai bhope bagachaṃda jata palanī*".

The inscription's reference to 1711 as Abhey Singh's time ("*vāra*") perhaps indicates that Kolu was awarded in tenure by Ajit Singh to Abhey Singh at the beginning of the eighteenth century, perhaps in an attempt of the former to strengthen his hold over district Phalodi awarded to him by the Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah in 1710.[322]

*Oldest hero stone depicting Pabuji kept at the Kolu temple.*

The inscription on the *kīrtistaṃbh* in the middle of the temple courtyard appears to date its establishment to 1710 when it was donated by a devotee named Narottam Nathji, son of Karnidan of village Savarije.[323] This inscription mentions 1710 CE (Samvat 1767) as the time of Maharaja Shardar Singh, perhaps referring to Saradar Singh, son of Vijay Singh, who ascended the Jodhpur throne three years after Abhay

[322] During this year (1710), the position of Ajit Singh as the ruler of Jodhpur appears to have been rather precarious. It was a time when Ajit Singh was engaged in "internal disturbances", aiming to exert his administrative control over Jodhpur and neighbouring areas (G.D. Sharma 1977: 227-231). These disturbances kept him so busy that he failed to heed the summons of the Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah to present himself at his court and be formally recognized as the ruler of Jodhpur. When Ajit Singh finally did present himself at Bahadur Shah's court in 1710, he was granted Jodhpur along with the *parganā*s (districts) of Sojat, Siwana and Phalodi, the latter of which probably included Kolu. This finding tallies with the inscription on a *devaḷī* on the red temple's upper altar which mentions Ajit Singh name and is dated Samvat 1770 ( 1713 CE).

[323] A very weathered inscription which I (with the help of the temple priests) rendered as follows: "*1767 vaisāk sudhī 6 śri pabuji maharāja karnī dānda putra palīwāla jātī dhamatha gāoṃ savarīje narottama nathaji maharaja di raja śri śardāra simghajī re vāra meṃ*".

Singh is said to have died (1749).[324] The fact that the year 1710 is mentioned as the time of Shardar Singh, while 1711 appears to have been the time of Abhay Singh perhaps suggests that the two were engaged in a brotherhood rivalry pending the official grant of Jodhpur and Phalodi district to Ajit Singh in 1710 after which Ajit Singh's son Abhay Singh would have gained the upper hand.

*Kīrtistaṃbh in the middle of the Kolu temple courtyard.*

The side-building of the temple, at present functioning as a *dharamśālā*, was added to the temple complex in the time of (or at the behest of) Bikaner's ruler Gaj Singh. The temple's Rathaur priest dates the construction of the *dharamśālā* to the nineteenth-century. Gaj Singh seems to have been a devotee of Pabuji and donated the *dharamśālā* to demonstrate his piety. This nineteenth-century ruler of Bikaner was certainly a contemporary of Asiya Bamkidas (1781-1833), the composer of the short *gīta pābūjī rau āsiyā bāṃkīdāsa rau kahyau* published by N.S. Bhati (1973: 85). This Charan poet is known to have risen to prominence at the early-nineteenth-century court of the Jodhpur Rathaur Man Singh, who ruled from c. 1803 to 1843. Bamkidas witnessed the waning of Mughal dominion and the advance of the British

[324] Vijay Singh appears to have ruled Jodhpur from circa 1752 to 1793, dates which do not tally well with the dating of the *kīrtistaṃbh* (1710). For if Vijay Singh was the father of a son old enough to administrate districts of Marwar in 1710, he must have been rather aged, when he ascended the throne 32 years later, and vigorous for he ruled for another 43 years. Perhaps the *kīrtistaṃbh* was erected to commemorate Shardar Singh's birth in 1710. It is, of course, also possible that the *kīrtistaṃbh* inscription commemorates yet another person named Shardar Singh, not traced by me.

East India Company's military and political ambitions aimed at administrating large parts of Rajputana, as Rajasthan was then called. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can thus be thought of as yet another era of minor squabbles at the local level and all-out regional warfare shaped by Rajput brotherhood rivalries and continuing challenges to the succession claims and ascendancy of the Rathaur rulers of Jodhpur (cf. G.D. Sharma 1977: 219-241). Apart from Rajput overlords and their feudatories, Maratha and British forces also came to engage in the Rajputana power contest, often on invitation of Rajput rulers or their feudatories, who sought Maratha or British alliances in regional battles against their peers and rivals.

### *Great and little Rajput traditions*

When, from approximately the sixteenth-century onwards, the ruling aspirations of landed Rajput elites gave rise to less inclusive, more stratified, social and religious identities, the open character of Rajput identity, thought of as an "open status" category during the early period of state formation, changed. From then on, ruling elites began to redefine the title Rajput by contrasting early medieval warrior identities with Rajputhood as defined by the landed elites of the region who looked upon themselves as the true aristocratic Rajput warriors and rulers of Marwar. In addition, Rajput identity also came to be perceived as similar or comparable to the legendary Kshatriya warriors of the Vedic past. This shift in the perception of Rajput status needed its own literary form. Complementing the segregation of genealogically orthodox ruling Rajput lineages as opposed to low status Rajput lineages, a literary Rajput "Great Tradition" was conceived, thought of as a courtly tradition of "Great" or "High" culture that encompassed Rajasthani written, literary poetry composed by Charan court poets. These compositions are first and foremost thought to reflect late-medieval images of Rajputhood, creating a link between reigning Rajput lineages of the period and the high-status Kshatriya warriors of Vedic times by blending legendary and/or historical genealogies with myth.

It was through different tellings of the Agnikul myth that medieval Rajput warriors came to be portrayed as a new generation of Kshatriya warriors sprung from the fire lit by the sage Vashista to fight the demons who intended to disrupt the fire-ritual. Thus late-medieval Rajput status came to be defined in Brahminical terms.[325] The chronology of this process appears to be rather uncertain. Chattopadhyaya (1994: 181-185), for instance, holds that the class of upcoming Rajput rulers at first thought of themselves as *Brahmakṣatrā* (*Brāhmaṇ-Kṣatriya)* to legitimize their ritual and political stature. According to him, the link between medieval Rajput warriors, on the one hand, and Brahmin and the Kshatriya rank, on the other, apparently lost its meaning from the tenth century onwards. Once Rajput

[325] Brahmin priests are credited for taking the initiative for this fire-ritual. It is said that they were the ones who (after having ousted the impious Kshatriya warriors of the past) were in charge of the fire-ceremony on Mount Abu to bring to life a new class of Kshatriya warriors (Chattopadhyaya 1994: 186).

lineages established a firmer political foothold in Rajasthan, and surpassed the power and status traditionally accorded to Kshatriya heroes, the upcoming rulers no longer seem to have felt the need to legitimize their ambitions by referring to Kshatriya status and, instead, came to define themselves solely as Rajput. However, Chamdra (1997: 251f), dates the severing of ties between Rajput rulers and Brahmin priests to a later stage, that is the beginning of Sultanate rule in northern India.[326]

In addition, Ziegler (1998: 248) notes that warrior elites only came to refer to themselves as Rajput after the fifteenth century, until which period the ritual Kshatriya status accorded to (and appropriated by) early medieval ruling elites remained of importance. From the sixteenth century onwards, Rajput rulers no longer presented themselves as the embodiment of the "true Kshatriya rulers" of Vedic times even if they did continue to claim ties with Khsatriya ancestors. Late-medieval Marwar's chronicles represent medieval times as a period of *vikhau* (distress), when the "ideal order of things" (construed as Vedic societal order) collapsed, following the demise of the sovereign rule of the Vedic class of Kshatriya warriors. Although late-medieval Rajput rulers no longer presented themselves as the embodiment of the "true Kshatriya rulers" of ancient times, they did not altogether sever their perceived ties with Khsatriya ancestors either, since they came to see themselves as the descendants of the legendary Kshatriya lineages. And though Rajput aristocracy continued to perceive itself as lower in rank than its glorified ancestors, medieval rulers did credit themselves with a comparatively elevated rank in society for their efforts to reassert "Vedic ideals".

Hiltebeitel (2001: 441, 448) dates the political use of the Agnikul myth to the sixteenth century, when versions of this myth apparently gained in importance to define Rajput status in Brahminical terms. According to his view, pre-twelfth-century South-Indian variants of the Agnikul myth inspired regional martial epics in Rajasthan and introduced themes like the birth of Rajput warriors from fire, the manifestation of goddesses as family or clan goddesses, and the defeat of enemies, including Raksa, Daitya, Asura, Danava, Buddhist, Jain and Muslim enemies. The South-Indian variants of the Agnikul myth can apparently be related to regional "folk" *Mahābhārat*s and *Rāmāyaṇ*s which became part of the traditions of hinterland populations and little Rajput kingdoms (Hiltebeitel 2001: 414f). The narrative themes part of this body of South-Indian myths are also part of the Pabuji tradition like, for example, stories which document claims to royal stature and tales about cow theft, retaliatory sacrifice and divine assistance offered by different gods and the socio-political role of goddesses (Hiltebeitel 2001: 415, 453). It appears that the variant Agnikul myths told in Rajasthan from the sixteenth centuries onwards chiefly served to establish links between medieval Rajput rulers and Vedic or epic Kshatriyas (Hiltebeitel 2001: 448). Hiltebeitel (2001: 441) holds that the affinities between medieval Rajput roles and Vedic myth should not be understood as documenting continuity between an ancient heroic age and the sixteenth-century

[326] See also G.N. Sharma (1966: 684).

Rajput great tradition, rather, they direct us (as noted just) to address questions about similarities between the epics, Vedic Vratya war bands and early medieval "low status Rajputs".

The divergent dating of the uses of the Agnikul myth in Rajasthan probably results from a failure to distinguish different types of Rajput men and their ritual as opposed to the socio-political status and/or of a failure to make a distinction between the different uses of Agnikul myths to voice different kinds of identities in different periods of time. It appears to me that the Rathaur rulers' endeavours to acquire a classical background for their lineage (whether in terms of mythical descent from Vedic Kshatriya warriors and/or genealogical succession to the rulers of Kanauj) should be primarily understood in the context of late sixteenth and seventeenth century claims to Rathaur ascendancy vis-à-vis the rulers of other Rajput lineages and, secondly, against the background of Rajput-Mughal politics.[327] However, my main concern here is the professed difference between the literary Rajput great tradition, on the one hand, and oral and written little traditions of non-Rajput, low-status or "little" Rajput communities, on the other. Apparently, the values associated with the early-medieval Rajput world, in later times, continued to be diffused into hinterland Rajput kingdoms through the ongoing transmission of regional martial epics, including Pabuji's story. This transmission gave rise to the aforementioned, late-medieval traditions of "spurious" or "little" Rajput communities, a term which in later times came to include communities from minor Rajput lineages and other social groups, chiefly agrarian castes and pastoral-nomadic or tribal peoples who aspired to forms of Rajputhood that did not always coincide with definitions put forward by aristocratic Rajput lineages. To this typology, Ziegler (1998: 268) adds the Marwar's idiom of *pādrā* Rajput landholders. Based on his study of seventeenth-century Marwar's chronicles and administrative documents, he defines *pādrā* Rajput as the chiefs of small landholdings or "lesser" Rajput chiefs who were also named *caurasī dhānī* (master of 84 villages) and *bhaibaṃdha bhomiyā* (lord of small landholdings). *Thakura* or *rājāvi* were the titles used to refer to landed elites, or *vāḍāghara rā choṛū* (sons of great houses), the Rajput rulers of greater kingdoms.

The interests of Rajput ruling elites have come to be thought of as far removed from the rural world of "little" Rajput communities. In socio-political and literary terms, great and little Rajput communities and their traditions came to represent two different late-medieval spheres: first, the world of ruling Rajput elites

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[327] Illustrative of this thought is Tessitori's (1921: 262f) observation of the "genealatry" prevalent in the late sixteenth century among Bikaner Rathaur and Akbar, i.e.: "[the] extravagant claim which the Rāṭhòṛas had begun to put forward (…) that they are the offspring of rājā Jè Canda of Kanauj and, more remotely, of Rāma Candra himself. The reasons which led the Rāṭhòṛas to put forward this claim are easy enough to understand, and that they should have put this forward at this particular time [1593], is a fact which is easily accounted for by the stimulus which the Rāṭhòṛas in particular and the Rajput in general received from the Court of Akbar. That Akbar was himself a believer in genealatry (…) is conspicuously demonstrated by Abul Fazl himself, who, in the first chapters of his "Nāma", has wasted much ink to trace the descent of this monarch to that common father of mankind, Adam".

asserting their status in terms of genealogical "purity". And, second, the world of small Rajput landholders and tribal, peasant or pastoralist groups of peoples who sought to legitimize their ongoing claims to Rajput status by referring back to early-medieval Rajput history.[328] In Hiltebeitel's (2001: 414f, 492) view, such claims represent a "little-rajputization process" that are supported by regional martial epic story telling traditions, in particular Pabuji's epic. Accordingly, late-medieval claims to Rajput status as advanced by diverse "marginal" groups were aimed at achieving "pure" Rajput status, not by referring to contemporary (that is, late medieval) Rajput courtly traditions but by evoking the initial stages of regional history, when many different kinds of people could still lay claim to the title Rajput. Thus, one can distinguish two processes of Rajputization, both aimed at achieving Rajput status: [1] based on a courtly great tradition and Vedic myth to validate the ambitions of the landed elite; and [2] based on regional and local traditions of subject communities, which referred back to early-medieval Rajputhood in an attempt to support the upwardly mobile aspirations of a variety of minor Rajput lineages and other non-Rajput groups vis-à-vis ruling Rajput families.

Apart from attributed royal allure, late-medieval elite Rajputhood also reflected the various alliances between Rajput subsidiaries and their Mughal overlords. Regional power equations were interpreted according to Mughal ideals of military service and loyalty based on landed rights by phrasing military service in regional and imperial armies in terms of *naukarī* or the "honourable service in a war band" and "retainership of a lord" (Kolff 1990: 20, 76), and resulted in a new "political grammar" aimed at roping in different soldiering traditions by giving voice to the relations between Mughals and the peoples they aimed to control. This late-medieval soldiering tradition came to be articulated through the language of *naukarī*, a military idiom which could be understood by, and appeal to, many different regional parties, including "spurious" as well as elite Rajput warriors.

*Naukarī*, in various regional contexts, encompassed the soldierly traditions of retainers in the (long-distance) service of military entrepreneurs, like Payak (foot soldier), Nayak (chief) and Javan (a young man or soldier): warriors or soldiers of peasant, pastoral-nomadic or tribal origin, which included Afghan and Rajput men. At the same time, a distinct Marwar's political grammar developed. Judging from Ziegler's (1998: 267) study, Rajput rulers, small-time chiefs and patrons were termed Sama (Sami), Dhani and Datar, titles connoting meanings that range from ruler, master and god to husband. These titles reflect political and poetic metaphors that conceive of Rajput rule in terms of a marriage between a king and his land, looked upon as his wife. Kinship metaphors also extended to patron-client relations: a Rajput ruler came to be seen as the parent of military retainers that are usually overseen by the ruler's sons (*beṭā*). Upon rendering military service (*cakrī* or *sevā*), a ruler's retainers became his servants (*cakrā*), who were rewarded with landed

[328] See Blackburn (1989:216-218), Chattopadhyaya (1994: 185), Hiltebeitel (2001: 414, n.2), Kolff (1990: 73, 84).

rights in return for military service, and were also considered to be his wards (*vās*), military retainers who were part of royal Rajput households.[329] As was noted in chapter 5, this kind of idiom defines a Rajput's duty in terms of a symbolic marriage, rendering a Rajput wedded to his land or a "husband of the earth" who is a *datar* ("giver of life") to his female land or kingdom called *dharatī*, a word traced to Sanskrit *dharītrī* ("a female bearer") by Ziegler (1998: 255, 268).

In heroic-epic poetry, the connection between a ruler and his land, and the equation of women with (agricultural) land, or land with the goddess ("mother earth") connotes a rather common set of images, evoking mythical beliefs that render earth the homologic alloform of a warrior's flesh and blood. Such kinship metaphors for political relations might be traced to myths about the creation of the earth, narrating how it was formed of the body (parts) of a primal sacrificial man. It is believed that the world began with the ritual dismemberment of the first human being by the gods who then made use of his different body parts to create the world (Feller Jatavallabhula 1999: 85-88). The poetic connection between a ruler and his land also brings to mind a common set of images inspired by perceptions of an active male principle of creation as opposed to a passive female principle. Accordingly, father heaven (rain, sun) and mother earth are imagined as the archetypal parents of the world (Dange 1971: 34). As noted in chapter 5, the merger of heaven and earth is described as resulting in abundant harvests and thus ensures human life and prosperity. Along these lines, it is also possible to think of the poets portrayal of the life-enhancing aspect of battle death as evoking agricultural productivity and human procreation by portraying warriors as the "givers of life" to the earth and to women. The blood spilled by warriors on the battlefield can be seen as "watering" the earth-mother if we allow that male "blood" can be understood as a symbol of fertility, comparable to rain or semen, ensuring the earth's fecundity. Taken together, such metaphors can be read as indicative of a fertility-centred worldview articulated by portraying war and a warrior's role (including his battle deeds and death) as live-enhancing undertakings.

### *Poetic concerns*

The above outline of Rathaur Rajput history served as an introduction to the way in which customary Rajput typologies are commonly made to coincide with early and late medieval stages of socio-political organization. Our study of the different

[329] *Sagāī*, the bonds of brotherhood through marriage, also existed between Jodha's descendants and moslim Khan rulers of Nagaur (Ziegler 1998: 254). Marwar's idiom for patron-client relations not only defined the relations between Rajput warriors and their leaders but also accommodated Muslim warriors and Mughal rulers, as can be read from the fact that Rajput jati accommodated moslim (Turk) and Hindu warriors. Rajput apparently thought of Mughal rulers, in particular Akbar, as representing the warrior-ideal embodied by Ram, the archetype of Rajput martial ideals. This connection furthered the incorporation of Rajput military culture by the Mughals. As a result, Rajput service for a Mughal emperor came to be thought of as similar to local service to Rajput rulers. See also Saxena (1989: 390f).

versions of tales about early Rathaur has enabled us to judge the narrative significance of certain themes and imagery common to the Pabuji tradition since it has become clear that these features are not only part of narrative poetry but also to Rathaur history. As noted above, Pabuji's adventures represent oft-reiterated themes typical of early-medieval Rathaur history for Pabuji and his ancestors are portrayed as archetypical early-medieval Rajputs: geographically and socially mobile young men who travelled north-western India in search of livelihood and employment, often taking service in military war bands and regional armies. These men, of dissimilar backgrounds and with disparate social ranks, formed an "open status group" of warriors claiming the status of Rajput, and were part of a medieval soldiering tradition that gave rise to military labour markets in northern India. Such labour markets included Rajput warriors from Rajasthan who became part of the Mughal armies of Hindustan and, I think, warriors recruited for the armies of north-western Rajput rulers or for the armed bands of men who owed allegiance to minor chiefs.

Interestingly, the word "Rajput" has not been used in any of the poems under review, even if Pabuji and his allies are portrayed as the archetypical Rajput warriors. As I shall document in more detail below, a range of titles and epithets is offered to denote the warriors according to their local places of origin, their lineage names and their martial roles and ascribed heroic abilities.

The distinction between Rajput great and little traditions appears rather less straightforward and meaningful for literary-historical analysis when we take into account the way in which the medieval poets of the Pabuji tradition portrayed warriors and Rajputhood. The selected poems offer little evidence of a preponderance of later "classical" definitions of Rajputhood in Marwar. As I aim to show below, the poems do not point up the contrast between early-medieval Rajput identities with late-medieval Rajputhood as defined by "pure blooded" Rajput warrior elites with ruling aspirations. The most obvious examples of late-medieval socio-political concerns to be read from the poems under review are, first, the references to Pabuji's kingly status and realm and, second, the changing relations between Rajput warriors, on the one hand, and Bhil warriors, on the other, which can be understood from the different portrayal of Bhil warriors in *chamd* II and of Bhil warriors, thieves, and priests in *duha* I and the *parvaro*.

In what follows, I intend to illustrate how the poets gave voice to Rajputhood by studying the identity ascribed to Pabuji and his warriors. Thus, I hope to be able to assess whether the imagery employed by the poets reflects the above listed historical concerns, i.e. Rajput typologies and the political idioms of early and late medieval Marwar's history. And I will ask what the lack of references to the title Rajput or, for that matter, the very infrequent references to Kshatriyahood, signify? It will be argued that the poets' choice of words adds yet another political and poetic grammar to above described terms of military service and patronage. Before doing this, it should be noted once more, as already remarked in the general introduction to

this study, that the poets' evocation of the past in the poems dedicated to Pabuji is, of course, primarily inspired by poetic conventions, vocabulary and metrical needs, and should not be thought of as representing "hard" historical facts. The poets' choice of words does, however, prove to be of historical interest when studied as a reflection of their view of medieval life and the way in which early and late medieval historical experience was embedded in their compositions. In addition, some of the selected poems also prove to be suggestive of the Rajput-Afghan military culture and Marwar's terms for military service which in some respects resembles the idiom of *naukarī*.

For the purpose of the following literary-historical analysis, early medieval historical concerns are assessed according to the narrative importance given to cattle and the aspirations of warriors who belonged to Rajput and non-Rajput groups. Poetic wordings and imagery relating to these themes will be dealt with as evoking early-medieval pastoral-nomadic themes, suggestive of a world where socio-political identities were not as well-defined as in later medieval society. Late-medieval poetic concerns are defined as wordings and imagery relating to socio-political stratification, patron-client ties, marital relations among Rajputs (as predominantly evoked in *duha* I), Rajput claims to landed rights and, most significantly, references to lineage-based status evocative of Vedic Kshatriyatva and elite Rajputhood.

### *Rava-uta, Rathaur and Kherecau*

Let us begin by looking at the different epithets used for Pabuji and his warriors. The *chamd*s' idiom suggests that Pabuji may have been considered a Kshatriya since the poets included references to the "thirty-six", a phrase that connotes a legendary number of Rajput brotherhoods. The reference to the "thirty-six" must have served to establish a link between the medieval Rajput warriors and ancient Kshatriya warriors.[330] However, the word "Rajput" does not figure in either of the *chamd*s. From this it should not be concluded that the *chamd*s' poets did not mean to portray Pabuji as a Rajput of noble descent for they did portray Pabuji as the son of a king, a *rājaputr*. The poets identify Pabuji as the son of king Dhamdhal by referring to him, though not often, as a warrior of the Dhamdhal lineage ("dhāṃdhalāṃ") who hails from the territory or "country" of the Dhamdhal Rajput warriors ("dhāṃdhala desa").[331] The most common epithet used in referring to Pabuji's lineage is "Kamadh" or "Kamdhaj", the customary honorific for Marwar's warriors of the Rathaur lineage, while Pabuji is only once actually called a Rathaur (*chamd* II).[332]

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[330] The word Kshatriya is not used in the *chamds*, their poets only mention that Pabuji's army is made up of "the" "thirty six" (*chatīsī* and *chatrīsī*).

[331] Compare *chamd* I (v. 13), *chamd* II (v. 23).

[332] Kamadh, Kamadhaj and Kamamda (S. Kabamdha) in the first place denote a Rathaur Kshatriya, and secondly refer to a certain class of demons from the *Rāmāyaṇ* who were buried alive by Ram. Thirdly,

The references to the Dhamdhal lineage and "realm" perhaps reflect that the majority of Rajput warriors prided themselves on royal ancestry even if they did not actually rule or did not rule great kingdoms (Peabody 2003: 37). And I also imagine that the poets thought of Pabuji as a paragon of Ksatriyatva since the name Rathaur[333] can be taken to connote royal status and, perhaps, Ksatriyatva, if its origins can indeed be traced to royal titles like Rashtrakuta and Rastavar.[334]

The poets of the *chamd*s, like the poets of all the other studied poems, combined martial and royal epithets to portray Pabuji, Jimda and their warriors. The martial epithets used most frequently by the poets of all the compositions under review are: *bhaṛa*, *sobhaṭa*, *bharabhīca*, *bhaṭa, vīra, varadāī, bharai, varavīra, jhagajheṭhī*, *aṇabhaṃgo*, *netabaṃdha tribhāṃgaṃ*, connoting honorifics like warrior, hero, warrior-hero, outstanding hero and leader. In addition, the poets also used martial epithets inspired by the various qualities ascribed to warriors by drawing attention to the combatants' protective functions and war feats, for example, when they call Pabuji *pāla* or *pālha* ("Protector"). Other martial honorifics evoke the warriors' bodily qualities like in *bhujāla* ("Long-armed hero") or identify fighting men by their weaponry, like *bhālāla* and *sākaita* ("Spearwielder") or by their mounts (*asavāra* or "Horseman"). In the seventeenth-century *duha* I, "Kamadh" is the preferred title for Pabuji. Ladhraj's chosen epithets more often portray Pabuji in kingly terms than in the *chamd*s for Pabuji is referred to as: the son of a warrior-king (*dhāṃdhala rāva-uta*), a lord and king (*maiha pati*, *nripa*). In *duha* I, Pabuji is moreover identified as a Rathaur warrior (*kamadha, rāṭhavaṛa*, *rāṭhoṛau*) and *kheṛecau* (*khaṛecau*). The latter title is the most notable honorific used in *duha* I since it has not been employed in any of the other poems under review.[335] It would seem that this title serves to link Pabuji to his lineage's place of origin Kher (Keru),

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Rathaur can also mean "dhar" or "torso", perhaps evoking the poetic image of Rathaur warriors' headless torsos which continue to fight (Lalas 1962-1988). Other kingly titles used in the *chamd*s include: *chataradhara* (King) and *ujjālai kula* ("Pride of the dynasty").

[333] The clan name is also spelled "Rathorau", "Rathoda", "Rathada", "Rathur", "Rathav" and "Rathavar".

[334] Lalas (1962-1988) describes the *Rāṭhauṛ* as an old Kshatriya branch with royal Suryavanshi, Yaduvanshi as well as Chamdravanshi origins in different periods of time. The name *Rāṭhauṛ* has been traced to the Gahadvala Rashtrakutas of Kanauj of whom it is thought that the first Rathaur, Siha, sprang. Siha's name is thought to have changed from Rashtrakuta via Rathavar to Rathaur. Reu (1938: 4) traces the meaning of both Rathoda and Rashtrakuta to a combination of the words *ratta* or *raśtra* (kingdom) and *kuta* (lofty), together meaning: "a great kingdom", and further connects the Rathaur to the Rashtrakutas by describing how the name Rashtrakuta was "corrupted" to forms like Rathvara, Rathada and Rathaur. Bingley (1999: 118) writes that Rathaur derives from Rashtrakula, "a royal race". The discussion of the historical and/or mythical roots of Rathaur ancestry and clan names is beyond the scope of this study.

[335] *Kheṛecau*, according to Lalas (1962-1988), derives from S. *khetanam*. In his Rajasthani dictionary, Lalas distinguishes between a Rathaur Rajput (*kheṛecau*) and a Rathaur Ksatriya (*rāṭhavaṛa*). It is not clear to me whether or not any special meaning should be attributed to this usage and whether the title Kherecau, referring to the geographical beginnings of Rathaur rule, was reserved for late-medieval "little Rajputs", while Rathaur (*rāṭhavaṛa*) was the preferred title of late-medieval ruling elites claiming Kshatriya status.

a village near present-day Jodhpur, which is believed to have been the first foothold of the Rathaur in Rajasthan.[336]

The frequent use of the epithet *dhāṃdhala rāva-uta* was clearly more inspired by prosodic than by political motives, since it almost always appears at the end of a verse-line to fulfil alliterative and/or metrical requirements, like in verses 290-95 of *duha* I:

290. tai di narī tirasīhā, rāṃbhai **dhāṃdhala rāva-uta(ṃ)**
291. pāvai jala pyāsīha, khala gāyāṃ khījāṛīyāṃ
292. kohara kālāṃ sīhā, rātī **dhāṃdhala rāva-uta**
293. bhālai(ṃ) bhā(ṃ)lāloha, āyo kohara uparā
294. vasadhā vahāleha, re lī **dhāṃdhala rāva-uta**
295. pābū pāṇī pāya, cāraṇīyāṃ nu caṃdaiyai

The addition of *dhāṃdhala rāva-uta* in the above example probably served to balance the metrical count of the even-numbered and uneven-numbered verse-lines.[337] However, the frequent use of *dhāṃdhala rāva-uta*, taken together with the recurrent choice of other royal epithets (*narapāla*, *bhupāla*, *maiha pati*), does further bolster Pabuji's royal persona. From *duha* I, he emerges as the son of the warrior-king (*kamadha-rāva*) Dhamdhal from the lineage (*kula*) of the ruling lineage of Marwar. The honorifics accorded to the hero's half-brother Buro (who ascended the Kolu throne after Dhamdhal's death) also centre on the lineage's royal stature: *nripa*, *nripati*, *chātrapati*, *pāhī*. And from the fact that the poets describe Buro as the lord of the kingdom (*rāji*) Kolu, it is clear that King Buro made, or is thought to have made, territorial claims. In addition, the poets have Buro rule over a fortified village or fort (*kota*), for Ladhraj speaks of Buro's *kotavāla* ("fort commander"). Apart from royal honorifics, Ladhraj also uses common martial titles to name Pabuji, like warrior and hero (*vīra*, *yekalā*, *siṃha*, *sāhula*), protector (*pāla*) and swordfighter (*trijarāhatha*) and spear wielder (*bhālālo*). The dual use of martial and royal epithets is also common to the *parvaro* in which these honorifics are used side by side with designations like *devatā* (god) and *jūṃjhāra* (deified forefather). But in this devotional composition too, the hero is most often spoken of as a Rathaur

[336] Geographical references often motivate the use of names for Rajput lineages like the Chauhan, Hada, Sisodiya and Kachavaha warriors who are, respectively, also named: Sambhari, Bundichat, Mevaro, Amero or Jaipuriyo. These epithets are comparable to Kherecau for they refer to the link between different Rajput lineages with their territories, signifying a Rajput from Sambhar (Sambhari), Bundi (Bumdichat), Mewar (Mevaro), Am(b)er (Amero) or Jaipur (Jaipuriyo) (N.S. Bhati 1989: 28). Honorifics connoting geographical links are used alongside epithets that refer to the martial status or genealogical status of Rajput warriors like: Madapat (a Bhati warrior from Jaisalmeri) and Jaduvamsi, an epithet that calls to mind the claims forwarded by the Bhatis to royal Yaduvanshi origins.

[337] The occurrence of the rare form *dhāṃdhala rāva-uta**(ṃ)*** (v. 290) seems to suggest, moreover, that this phrase was added to more fully alliterate with *khījāṛīyā**ṃ*** (v. 291).

warrior (*kamadhaja*) in addition to titles like "spear wielding warrior" (*bhālālo subhaṭa*) and "hero" (*vīra*). Royal stature is ascribed with titles like *dhāṃdhala rāva-uta* and "son (descendant) of Jodha Rathaur" (*Jodhā-suta*). And Pabuji is also referred to as a *sāmi*, a title that (as noted just now) denotes a small-time chief.[338]

The ascription of "common" martial epithets alongside royal epithets to Pabuji can also be read from the *git*s and *duha* II. Honorifics which denote heroism and martial prowess are, for example, *varadāī* and *pāti* (*git* I) and *abhiyāmanau*, *bhālālau*, *bharai*, *varavīra, pāla* and *kāmdhalāma*[339] in *git* II. To Pabuji's role of cow protector as projected in the *chamd*s, the poet of *git* I adds Pabuji's role as a tamer of wild horses. And in *duha* I and II, the description of the hero's adventures as a camel rustler portrays him as a quintessential warrior *and* looter, competing with other cattle-rustlers. Interestingly, in *git* II, the only poem to expressly mention Kshatriya dharma, a Kshatriya's duty is defined in terms of the protection of cattle and not in terms of the protection of land or struggles over landed rights, the more common description of Kshatriya dharma. And the poets of the *git*s commemorate Pabuji's Dhamdhal Rathaur ancestry. In *git* I, for example, the hero is portrayed as a warrior of King Sinha's lineage.[340] The use of the epithet "*pāti*" in *git* I sums up the use of marital, martial, royal and religious titles, for it connotes meanings ranging from husband and master to ruler and god (cf. chapter 5).

### *Realms and borders*

Another way of looking at poetic Rajput typology is by considering poetic images related to realms and borders and other allusions to landed rights. Though cattle and not land is at the heart of all poems, and (as remarked just now) *git* II expressly defines a Kshatriya's duty in terms of the protection of cattle and not in terms of the protection of land or struggles over landed rights, most poems, including the *chamd*s, describe Pabuji and his fellow protagonist Jimda as warrior-kings who fought over the ownership of land as well as cattle. Considering the poets' pastoral-nomadic interest in cows, camels and horses, I had expected also to find imagery connected with grazing rights or squabbles over grazing lands in the poems. Apart from pastoral-nomadic interests contained in the versification of battles over cattle and references to watering places in the form of wells, the struggle over grazing rights, however, appears to be almost wholly absent. In *duha* I, the poets' pre-occupation with cattle has been contained in episode 4 with an account of the watering of Deval's cattle and Pabuji's battle with the "demon" that blackens the

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[338] In the *parvaro*, the royal title "chatra dhārī" is reserved for the Rathaur ruler Jaswant Singh (*parvaro*, v.78: "jasavaṃta jodhāṃ ṇaiha(ṃ), chatra dhārī pratapai chato").

[339] "Broad-shouldered hero".

[340] In addition, Pabuji is portrayed as a *dhāṃdhali* ("of the Dhamdhal lineage") *git* III. The poet of *git* II also describes Pabuji's role in royal terms when he speaks of *raja rīta*, the royal rule or rite, which Pabuji followed and by using common epithets like *rāva* and *chataradhara*.

well's water. In most of the poems, however, pastoral-nomadic interests occur alongside the poetic description of Pabuji and Jimda as warrior-kings who fought over the ownership of cattle as well as land. Though we may infer that for the Rajputs of the desert of Marwar (and kingdoms further west) the struggle over land in the first place meant a struggle over the access to grazing lands and not, like in more fertile regions, a struggle for the ownership of agricultural land, this is, however, not a theme made manifest by the poets.

Apart from the above-quoted pastoral-nomadic concerns, the selected poems also record a poetic awareness of kingdom formation since Pabuji's role is also couched in terms of royal reign, portraying him as the protector of "the earth" or his "kingdom", probably best thought of as Dhamdhal territory around Kolu and Kher. In the *chamd*s, for example, the poets evoke "Dhamdhal desa" when describing the battles between the two Rajput lineages and evoking the arrival of Jimda Khici and his forces at the borders of Pabuji's territory (*dhāṃdhala desa*).[341] And the poet of *git* II (v. 36) speaks of the Dhamdhal's kingdom (*dhāṃdhalāṃ chāta*). "Desa" and "chāta" can be taken to mean "realm". Considering the context of the initial period of kingdom formation in and around Kolu (described above) the words are perhaps better thought of as having connoted minor "territories", in particular early-medieval Rajput territories with unstable and frequently contested borders. Or perhaps "desa" and "chāta" were used to connote seasonal access to grazing lands, though the primary meanings of both words, which in the first place connote a land or kingdom, do not really support such an interpretation.

In later medieval times, when the Dhamdhal lineage no longer held any territory of consequence, *desa* may have been mainly used to refer to early-medieval Dhamdhal territory thought of as a kingdom by late-medieval poets. From the fifteenth century onwards, as the above summary of the history of Rathaur kingdom formation illustrates, royal sway was exerted from Jodhpur by Rathaur warrior-kings who claimed direct descent from Jodha. Examples of the ascription of royal status to Pabuji in terms of territorial rights and claims to landed status as increasingly emphasized in the late medieval period can be understood from the seventeenth-century *duha* I. Its imagery involves the ascription of kingly titles to Pabuji and his brother Buro and the claims to realms and forts, lineage and marriage-ties, reminiscent of seventeenth-century royal Rajputhood. The poets' imagery does not reflect the above finding that, in the centuries following the death of Dhamdhal's two sons, the ruling ambitions of the Dhamdhal branch of Rathaur warriors were nipped in the bud and the seventeenth-century Dhamdhal families came to be known as "khavās-pāsabān" or personal attendants and arms bearers of the Rathaur ruler who presided in Jodhpur (Nizami and Kheechi 1990: 368). Accordingly, the

[341] *Chamd* I (v. 15): "pāla trīya āyi puṃṇai praghaṛā, jiṃdarāva upāṛiya desa jaṛā". *Chamd* II (v.23): "jhīṃdarāva caṛai jama rāva(ṃ) jhisai, dala(ṃ) hālai dhāṃdhala desa disau".

ascription of royal stature to the Dhamdhal hero in *duha* I may have primarily reflected a contemporary (seventeenth-century) ascription of kingly status which does not necessarily had any bearing on the real status of the Dhamdhal warriors of that time. But Ladhraj depiction of family relations and marriage ties in *duha* I does relate his poetic concerns to historical Rajput politics, in particular to the key importance ascribed to marriage relations in forming alliances between brotherhoods. For, despite the fact that the main reason for the battle between Pabuji and Jimda is cattle in *duha* I as well as in the other selected poems, Ladhraj usually couches the reasons for battle in terms of kinship and marriage relations. Pabuji is portrayed as the protector who saves "his granddaughters and grandsons from harm" and thus the honour of his lineage.

Ladhraj describes the warrior's prime motivation for battle in terms of longstanding family feuds and dowry negotiations. These events motivate the protagonists' actions and eventually cause Pabuji's death. As can be read from the summary of the narrative content of Ladhraj's poem in chapter 3, Ladhraj evokes the unsuccessful dowry negotiations between the Dhamdhal's and Khici's as the main trigger for war. By marrying his sister Pema to Jimda, Buro intended to atone for the fact that he killed Jimda's father and afterwards stole the Khici's cattle. But Buro's plan backfires when the dowry negotiations turn sour and a dispute arises over the possession of Pabuji's mare. Buro's attempts to mollify Jimda by offering him elephants instead of the mare Kalvi also fail since Jimda continues to insist on receiving the black mare in dowry. Jimda is quoted as saying that he does not need elephants and horses since he has enough of them for cattle is his "trade" (*vaipāra*). The only way that the Dhamdhal family can hope to pacify him is by giving Kalvi in dowry.[342]

The ensuing battle destroys the "relations through marriage" (*chamd* I, v. 10) for in the end Buro thinks of a ruse to help Jimda in obtaining Kalvi. He prompts Jimda to rob Deval of her cows thus challenging Pabuji for a battle. It is the wrangle over dowry which (in the last episode of *duha* I, v. 434-37) gets quoted as the main reason for the brotherhood battles by Pabuji's nephew, Jhararo. Finally, the Rajput warrior code of honour and revenge directs Jhararo to behead his uncle Jimda thus avenging the death of Buro and Pabuji. And this is where the feud between the Dhamdhal and Khici Rajput warriors, as far as the story of *duha* I goes, ends.[343]

Imagery related to the Dhamdhal's realms is not part of the *parvaro* at all, though one does come across references to the early sixteenth-century succession wars between the Rathaur ruler Gamga and his elder-brother Vikram in 1529. Gamga is thought to have ascended the Jodhpur throne instead of Vikram with the

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[342] *Duha* I (v. 122-23): "vadi khīcī tīṇa vāra, ghari ghoṛā hāthī ghaṇa. vita māṃharai vaipāra, kyu na luṃ kālavī".

[343] Till today, some members of Dhamdhal and Khici clans of Jodhpur and surrounding villages speak ill of each other and the Dhamdhal refuse to give their daughters in marriage to the Khici, calling to mind Jimda's "ignoble murder" of his two brothers-in-law.

help of his followers from Rathaur sub-clans. This state of affairs, as discussed under the caption "Late-medieval Rathaur history", led to several annexation wars between Gamga and Vikram and resulted in the usurpation of Sojat by Gamga. The poet lists Gamga's victory as one of Pabuji's miraculous deeds and avers that it was Pabuji's help that rendered Gamga triumphant. Another example of Rathaur territorial rule mentioned in the *parvaro* concerns the seventeenth-century rule of Jaswant Singh. This is, however, a late-medieval concern and is in no way related to Dhamdhal rule in Kolu (or anywhere else). The *parvaro*'s poet in the first place defines Pabuji's supremacy and his role in Rathaur history in terms of divine rule and not in terms of political power or territorial sway.

I think it is noteworthy that a seventeenth-century poet like Ladhraj deals with dowry in terms of cattle in the above-quoted negotiations between the Dhamdhal and Khici families in *duha* I. In addition, Ladhraj also suggests that Pabuji donates she-camels from Sindh, perhaps in dowry to his niece Kelam, the daughter of Buro and Gailavot (*duha* I, verse-lines 70-71).[344] The gift of cattle in dowry and not, as seems to have been more common among Rajput warriors, a gift of clothing and land to establish territorial bonds between brotherhoods (cf. Ziegler 1998: 261) further suggests that the poets of the late-medieval Pabuji tradition like Ladhraj were not interested in agricultural land or agrarian rights as narrative themes but mainly versified themes related to pastoral-nomadic life.[345] The fact that Jimda describes cattle as his trade (*vaipāra*) moreover suggests that Jimda, and perhaps Pabuji, were not only seen as warriors and cattle-thieves but also as cattle-keepers and perhaps traders in seventeenth-century Marwar.

The abiding interest of pastoral-nomadic concerns in seventeenth century poetry need not surprise us even though the late-medieval period is generally described as an era when Rajput kingdom formation led to the establishment of centralized rule, the consequent expansion of an agricultural economy and, as a result, the decrease of the pastoral-nomadic economy of the region. This view has been largely based on the historiography of eastern Rajasthan, which documents the process of kingdom formation in the fertile, rainfed fields of eastern regions like Mewar (Udaipur), Haroti and Ajmer and largely ignores or even glosses over the geographical background of western regions (cf. Chandra 1996: 230, Mukhia 1993: 204-15, Peabody 2003: 91-101). As was noted just now, the history of kingdom formation in the desert surrounding Marwar, Jaisalmer and Bikaner is different from processes elsewhere in Rajasthan. Likewise, the region's economy, unlike the agriculture-based economies of eastern Rajput kingdoms, remained largely pastoral-nomadic, which meant that cattle and trade remained the mainstay of the regional

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[344] *Duha* I (v. 70-71): "sāgara sīṃdha olāṃḍi, viṇa lekhai sāṃḍhī varaga. āṃṇe dai aṇabhaṃga, ramato dhāṃḍhala rāvauta". This event is described in much more detail in the contemporary tradition (cf. Smith 1991: 385-86).

[345] Though cattle, horses and elephants were also given in dowry to arrange courtly Rajput marriages, they were (so to speak) "auxiliary" gifts and did not equal the importance accorded to them in the context of Pabuji's story in which the gift of the horse is pivotal to the dowy negotiations.

economy. In the infertile, rocky and sandy plains of the Thar Desert, agriculture was clearly not a durable survival strategy.

If and when the monsoon reached the vast expanse of sand and sand dunes, agriculture was possible to a limited extend. But for the greater part of the year, the region lived up to its local name "region of death" (Marusthali) since it was an area with dry warm winds, high temperatures and scarce (if any) rainfall. To the west of Jodhpur, towards Kolu and on to Jaisalmer, the yellow sand dunes further increased in volume in medieval times as, indeed, they continue to do today (cf. Tod 1972 I: 605). Late-medieval Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer were oasis among sandy plains where cattle and trade, not agriculture, remained the mainstay of a principally pastoral-nomadic economy.[346] Where wells could provide enough water, meagre harvests of desert crops like barley supplemented the desert inhabitant's diet.[347] However, not agriculture but trade provided the main income of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and smaller desert towns like Barmer or Phalodi. They were situated on important medieval trade routes connecting the South-Asian peninsula to Central Asia and, via Baluchistan, to the Middle East. Chapter 8 offers a further discussion of the pastoral-nomadic economy of the desert and of its chief trade centres.

### *Rajput-Afghan martial culture*

Regardless of the royal allure of the epithets used for Pabuji and despite the mention of Dhamdhal realms and forts, it seems to me that the Rathaur hero was in the first place portrayed as the quintessential early-medieval Rajput. Especially from the *chamd*s, *git* I and *duha* II, Pabuji emerges as an itinerant warrior who waged "wars", best described as small-scale conflicts, during looting expeditions and squabbles over the ownership of cows, horses and camels. The poets' choice of words in the *chamd*s and *duha* I does, however, direct us to imagine such small-scale conflicts, the upshot of encounters between rival groups of cattle-rustlers, in terms of daunting war scenes crowded by vast armies made up of combatants armed to the teeth, to make it appear that the hero was in charge of "armies" of horse-riders. This is particularly true of the portrayal in the *chamd*s of the imposing martial splendour of the rival Dhamdhal and Khici heroes, their armies, armament, armour, horses and elephants. On the whole, the poets' choice of words appears to connote a regular army or sizeable armed force except when in *chamd* I (v. 31) and *chamd* II (v. 68) Pabuji's army is also referred to as a group (*jūṭa*, *samuha*) perhaps referring to the

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[346] See, for example, Bharara (1994: 13), Deloche 1980: 237, Devra (1978: 582), East and Spate (1950: 54), Ludden (1994: 7f), Raychaudhuri and Habib (1982: 1), Tod (1972 I:171, II: 133, 154-158, 236, 500f, 554), Verma (1978: 115).

[347] Blanford (1876: 89) described how in the nineteenth-century Thar Desert "(w)hen rain falls, crops of bájri (Holcus spica) are raised. When rains fail, the population lives principally on the milk of cattle and on imported grain".

early-medieval Rajput-Afghan war band but, more probably, denoting a Rajput-Bhil band of warriors of more modest size and appearance. [348]

Explicit references to Rajput-Afghan aspects of the Marwar's military labor market in the Pabuji tradition could be understood from the poets' use of military terms and titles. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the idiom used to denote Pabuji's enemies. The poet's portrayal centered on Pabuji's army but he also included a description of Jimda and his men. In most of the selected compositions Jimda is referred to as a Rajput and receives several martial epithets that are accorded to Pabuji as well, for instance: *mūkhi* (leader), *jāyala rāva* (ruler of Jayal), *aṇabhaṃgo* (hero) from the Khici lineage (*kula khīcī*).[349] Jimda also figures as a Sambhari, a Chauhan Rajput from Sambhar and a Khici Rajput leader (*khīcīyāṃ nātha*) in *git* II.[350] But, interestingly, titles denoting Jimda's enemy status can also be traced to presumably Persian or shared Sanskrit/ Persian origins, like in *chamd* II where the Khici army is said to have been made up of Lodhi soldiers. Such a wording perhaps reflects Rajput-Afghan military culture, conceivably defining Jimda as a Sultanat Rajput subsidiary in charge of Lodhi soldiers. Judging from the fact that Afghans have been part of Rajput armies, and vice versa, this is not unlikely (cf. Kolff 1990: 57). It is perhaps a poetic instance that illustrates how in medieval times, both the titles Pathan and Rajput did not necessarily represent two mutually exclusive identities. A Muslim could acquire Rajput identity, and Rajput lineages, like the Muslim Qayam Khan Khici Rajput branch could, and did, convert to Islam (Nizami 1990: 315-316).[351] Another instance illustrating the ascription of Muslim identity to Pabuji's enemies is found in *duha* II where Pabuji is said to have fought enemy armies of Pathan (*Pathāṃṇa*), probably from Sindh.[352]

The poets' identification of Pabuji's adversaries should perhaps be read as primarily symbolic and not as literal references, for the poets employed identical "Hindu" titles for Jimda as they did for Pabuji, next to titles that rendered Jimda a Muslim or Pathan warrior. Thus, even though Jimda was at times pictured as a Muslim, a "foreign" (perhaps Lodhi) enemy, he was at the same time thought of as a Rajput warrior and ruler: a Chauhan Rajput from Sambhar as well as a Muslim or Hindu warrior of the Khici lineage and, conceivably, a Lodhi soldier. If the chosen wording can be understood as a reflection on Rajput-Afghan military culture in Marwar then (taking into account the other, differing epithets used for Khici) this

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[348] Words to describe the assembled forces in *chamd* I (verse-lines 20, 47, 48, 54, 58) like *tuṃga*, *sena* and *ghaṛa* seem to refer to regular armies. In *chamd* II (verse-lines 13, 26, 29, 61, 64, 66, 71, 83) such usage includes: *kaṭaka*, *dala*, *pauha*, *ghāṭa* and *thāṭa*.

[349] See: *duha* I (v. 89, 501), *chamd* I (v. 5,8, 11), *chamd* II (v. 3).

[350] *Git* II (v. 24-25): "jaṭhai paga thobhīyā saṃbharī jīmda. hāka suṇa khīcīyāṃ nātha naha hāliyau".

[351] As Thapar (1999: 78-80) has noted, the historical meaning of ethnic, geographical or cultural monikers for "foreigners", like (respectively) Turuksha, Yavana and Mleccha, varies according to the context in which they were used, thus reflecting a diversity of perceptions and not clearly delimited geographical, political and/or religious identities.

[352] *Duha* II (v.10): "pābū pāṛi paṭhāṃṇa, pāsi kamala paṛīyā pachau".

kind of word use seems to chiefly elucidate that it was not the enemy's Muslim or Afghan identity that set him apart but his outsider status. This status, seen from the perspective of the Dhamdhal Rathaur, apparently included Pathan and/or Lodhi soldiers, Chauhan Rajput and Sambhari Khici. The fact that neither Pabuji nor his army is ever in any of the studied poems included in the ranks of Muslim warriors suggests that, from the poets' point of view, there was a clear difference between Dhamdhal Rathaur "insiders" and all other warriors, including Pathan or Afghan outsiders.

As far as I can see, most poets appear to have employed chiefly Sanskritic and Marwari martial and military terms, at times used side-by-side with (presumably) Persian idiom.[353] Terms for military service reminiscent of the idiom of *naukarī* are mostly found in references to Pabuji's Bhil archers in *chamd* II where they are identified as Payak (Paik).[354] Payak denotes a servant but also refers to Naukar, (armed) foot soldiers, heroes and warriors. While Lalas (1961) traces Payak to Sanskrit *padāti* (foot soldier), McGregor (1993), on the other hand, cites Persian *paika* (footman, armed attendant, message bearer). The historical use of Payak perhaps reflects that it is possible to trace this martial title to Sanskrit as well as Persian origins for the title was in use during pre-Mughal and Mughal times as suggested by, for example, Bhadra (1998: 473-490) who distinguishes several classes termed Paik, like the Kandi Paik (archer) whose name can apparently be traced to *kandi* or *kar* ("arrow" in the north-eastern dialect of Kamrup). Bhadra (*ibid.*) also notes that the Paiks of kingdoms in north-eastern regions of the subcontinent served as archers and footmen after (but maybe also prior to) the seventeenth-century Mughal invasion of the region.[355]

In the *chamd*s, identical honorifics have been accorded to Bhil and Rajput warriors, in particular the honorific "Bhat", which denotes a hero and (foot) soldier and according to Lalas (1962-1988) is synonymous with the title Naukar. But only Bhils are referred to with the honorific "Payak" and this title is only used in *chamd* II. The words used in *chamd* II to describe arms and armoury are also noteworthy in this regard. Compared with the phrasings in the other studied poems, the poet of *chamd* II appears to have employed a distinct idiom particularly suggestive of a

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[353] It appears that terms for weaponry and armour change over time as they are used by different kinds of people and become part of the martial culture of different communities (Bhakari 1981: 92-121). It has proved difficult to establish whether words like *guraja* (mace or club) should be traced to Pharsi or Arabic *garz* (Lalas 1962-1988) or Hindi *garaja* (thunder) (McGregor 1993), or both. Similarly, *sāra*, which is translated as "*talavāra*" (sword) by Lalas and ascribed Sanskrit origins (*śara*), can also be traced to Persian *sara* (head, top, tip, arrow) by McGregor. Bhakari (1981: 96) notes that bows made of (S.) *śara* or "reed" were also known to the authors of the *Mahābhārat*.

[354] *Chamd* II (v. 49): "bhaṛa hekā heka vasekha bhaṛaṃ, pāradhī pāyaka pālha taṇa(ṃ)" and (v. 54): "[pāika āghaga] milai praghalaṃ, pāradhī lodhī ghāsa palaṃ". Other epithets employed for the Bhil will be discussed in the next chapter.

[355] Bhadra (1998: 473-490) also lists the Gharduwari Paik who combined archery with the occupation of elephant drivers. In addition, a distinction is made between low-class bowmen, the Karis Paiks of Kacch and Ahom, who were seen as lesser archers than the local, high-status Chamua archers.

Rajput-Afghan context.[356] Several words used in *chamd* II can ostensibly be traced to Arabic or Persian martial idioms, for example: *hukama, jarada*, *kamāna, khurasāṇī*, *phauja*.[357] The name Khurasani (*khurasāṇī*) accorded to blacksmiths who sharpened Pabuji's sword at the onset of battle apparently derives from the blacksmiths' place of origin Khorasan in eastern Iran. It is likely that the poet meant to refer to the Lohani Afghans of the same area who carried on trade between Kabul, Multan and north-western India since Babur's time and probably even earlier (Chetan Singh 1998: 437-39).[358] Though this subject clearly needs further study, it does seem to me that the vocabulary of *chamd* II (more than the idiom used by other poets) is indicative of the existence of a distinct, possibly Rajput-Afghan war vocabulary reminiscent of the idiom of *naukarī*. An impression which is bolstered by comparing the "mixed vocabulary" used in *chamd* II with the predominant use of Sanskritic, Avadhi and/or distinctive Marwari martial idiom in the other selected poems (*dala, chakarau*, *dhanaura, kataka, sanāha*, *sena*, and so forth).

### *Political and poetic grammars*

Upon studying the imagery employed by the poets, and relating this to what we know of early and late medieval history of Marwar, it has become clear that the warrior Pabuji represents a clear historical type, well-known from early and late medieval Marwari poetic and prose sources, i.e. a small-time warrior and cattle rustler. The poets' imagery documents several historical concerns, in particular martial warrior roles and the different political idioms used in early and late medieval Marwar. As we saw, the poets employ terms for martial and military service which are at times reminiscent of the idiom of *naukarī*. In particular the idiom used in *chamd* II proves to be suggestive of aspects of Rajput-Afghan military culture.

The above consideration of the poets' choice of words is interesting since it illustrates that the poets of the Pabuji tradition did not use martial epithets, political titles, and ethnic or geographical designations to represent unchangeable or fixed definitions of identity. It has become clear that, even in the late-medieval period, when Rajput and other identities are thought to have become more rigid, the roles

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[356] A few words of ostensible Persian origin have also been used by Ladhraj, like: *jalām*, *phauja* and *hukamī*. On the whole, however, Ladhraj (like most other poets whose work is reviewed here) appears to have used words for armies and battle equipment, which are for the most part traceable to Sanskritic, Avadhi and *deśi* ("desaj") origins.

[357] A linguistic analysis of the above-quoted word origins was not undertaken for this study, which is based solely on the dictionaries compiled by Lalas (1962-1988) and Mc. Gregor (1983) and descriptions of arms and armour by Bhakari (1981: 92-111), Sarkar (1984: 111-142) and Saxena (1989: 256-66).

[358] Interestingly, Khurasani has acquired a multiplicity of meanings in Marwari, many of which indicate people, animals and arms connected with warfare and hailing from Khorasan. For apart from smith, Khurasani has also come to mean: "sword", "foreigner", "Muslim", "horse", "arrow", bow", "army" and "Badshah" (Lalas 1962-1988).

and ranks ascribed to Pabuji and his companions continue to reflect a wide range of meanings and (self) perceptions, comparable to the way in which early-medieval ascribed Rajput status is described by Kolff (1990: *passim*) and Thapar (1999: 80). A noteworthy finding of my study of the *chamd*s, *duha*s and *git*s is that the word "Rajput" does not figure in any of these compositions. This does not imply, however, that the poets did not think of Pabuji as a Rajput, that is, a scion of the ruling Rathaur lineage since he is portrayed as a "prince" (*rāva-uta*), the son of King Dhamdhal and the offspring of one of the ruling lineages of Marwar, the Kherecau or Rathaur.[359] The absence of references to the title Rajput indicates that local definitions of warriorhood for Rajput warriors like Pabuji remained the primary poetic frame of reference. In this way, the poets' idiom adds yet other political and poetic grammars to existing terms, that is, a clearly local vocabulary, the use of which highlights that Marwar's warriors could be defined in several ways. This was done, most significantly, by references to their place of origin, lineage, realm, as can be read from titles like *khaṛecau, dhāṃdhala rāva-uta, kamadhaja*, *rāṭhavaṛa*. Second, Pabuji and his fellow protagonists were also ascribed titles, highlighting their martial prowess and war feats (*bhālāla, subhaṭa, vīra*, *pāla*, and so forth).

In the late medieval period the lack of references to Kshatriyahood becomes all the more significant if we consider the above-described theories about the use of the Agnikul myth to define Rajputhood in Brahminical terms. As we saw, the poets did not directly refer to the heroes as Kshatriya, or use Kshatriyahood as a frame of reference, except in *git* II, where Kshatriya *dharma* is straightforwardly defined as the protection of cattle. Considering the extent to which pastoral-nomadic concerns inform most selected poems, we may imagine that the poets commonly defined Kshatriyatva in terms of the protection of cattle and not in terms of agricultural land or the protection of realms.

The poetic data do not give a clear idea of the above-documented typology of the late-medieval "pure blooded" Rajput noble. The lack of references to Kshatriyahood and stories like the birth of Rajput warriors from the sage Vashista's fire, in an attempt to redefine late-medieval Rajput status in Brahminical terms, indicates that the Agnikul myth was not a major source of inspiration for the poets of the Pabuji tradition (cf. Brockington 1998: 427). This finding perhaps also accounts for the fact that Brahmin protagonists have no role to play in the medieval Pabuji tradition. The poets remain completely silent on this subject. One neither reads about Brahmin protagonists, nor does one come across any references to the socially privileged position of Brahmin communities in the medieval society of Mawar. This is not to say that Brahmin traditions had no part to play in the history of the region, but it does mean that the poets of Pabuji's poems accorded no (narrative) importance to them. A finding which (as shall be discussed further in

[359] The literal meaning of *rāva uta* does, of course, correspond to the literal meaning of *rāja putra* (Rajput). Both titles signify "son (of) (a) king", i.e. a prince.

chapter 8 on Charan history) is not surprising considering that the roles Charan poets ascribed to themselves included roles claimed by Brahmin courtiers.

Late-medieval concerns can be read from the poems' references to the Dhamdhal's kingly status and realm and, secondly, from their portrayal of the changing relations between Rajput warriors and Bhil warriors. As noted just now, references to Pabuji's royal stature do not appear to include invocations of the Agnikul myth and seldom refer to the Kshatriya status. The variable roles ascribed to Pabuji's Bhil companions are documented by comparing the Bhil martial roles as evoked in *chamd* II and the portrayal of Bhil warriors, thieves *and* priests in *duha* I and the *parvaro*. Especially, the conflicts between the Bhil priests of Pabuji's temples and "impious" Rajput warriors as evoked in the *parvaro* underline the changing relations between Rajput warriors and their former allies, the Bhil archers (as evoked in *chamd* II). These sixteenth or seventeenth century circumstances do appear to offer an example of less open and more stratified socio-political identities which could illustrate that the relations between "little Rajputs" and Rajputizing classes, on the one hand, and the upper echelons of ruling Rajput elites, on the other, were strained. In the next chapter (7), the socio-political identity and status of Pabuji's Bhil warriors will be studied in more detail.

*Memorial stone dedicated to Pabuji's Bhil archers at the Kolu temple.*