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

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10 By Way of Conclusion

In praising the battle deaths of warriors, the poets of the Pabuji tradition sought to portray the life-enhancing aspect of the warriors' deaths by evoking their sacrifice as a way to ensure the continuation of cosmic and societal orders. The poets evoked the sacrifice of one's life to safeguard collective ideals as a way to achieve worldly and spiritual goals. Among worldly goals, the protection of cattle and the continuation of warrior lineages were prominent, while the maintenance of the equilibrium between the worlds of men and gods inspired spiritual goals. The poets of Charani Sagati traditions were also inspired by sacrifial ideals, in particular the (threats) of self-mutilation or self-inflicted death by Charan women and men. In both the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions, Shaktik ideals were important sources of inspiration, for the poetic ideals of sacrifice found expression in depictions of death as an oblation to one of the many forms of the Goddess, including Mother Earth, her scavenging creatures, Shakti, Durga, battle-loving Yoginis, Rupanis and Charani Sagatis like Deval.

Ideals of sacrificial heroism are at the heart of the medieval poets' descriptions of Pabuji's battles over cattle, his death and (when mentioned) his deification in most of the studied poems. However, the medieval poets evoked these narrative themes (battle over cattle, death and deification) in dissimilar ways, and the themes do not occur in all poems in the order listed just now. It has become apparent that death and deification do not always represent twin themes in poetry dedicated to Pabuji and I have argued that Pabuji's deification should not be thought of as the result of a sequential development of narrative as has been summarized in this study's introduction. My study of the different poems dedicated to Pabuji does not give reason to think that narratives about the hero's deification, which did begin with local stories about the death of this small-time Rathaur hero, subsequently developed into tales about a deified forefather. Nor have I found evidence to suggest that tales about forefathers evolved to become regional tales of epic stature by accentuating Pabuji's divinity and (on a supra-regional level) his classical *avatār* status that links him to Lakshman. The study of the narrative content of medieval and contemporary poetry about Pabuji's divinization suggests that the ascription of divinity is a process that does not necessarily follow a sequential order beginning with the glorification of a historical warrior and steadily progressing via the worship of forefathers and the elevation to the status of local godling to the regional recognition of a warrior-hero like Pabuji as the incarnation of a classical hero-god or of Vishnu.

This study documents that Pabuji has been delineated as a martial *and* divine hero, a deified forefather *and* a godling *and* (possibly) an incarnation of Vishnu in different texts from different periods of time but *also* in one and the same

composition. Another reason why I do not think of Pabuji's deification as the result of a sequential process represented as a narrative pattern of the "violation-death-deification-revenge" type is that Dhamdhal Rathaur history indicates that not all warriors, who die in the course of protecting cattle, are subsequently deified. Unlike Pabuji, his forefathers and contemporaries have not been ascribed divinity or even semi-divine qualities, although they are believed to have died a similar death as did Pabuji. A further indication that deification is not always the result of a sequential narrative process is Charani Deval's indeterminate role as a cattle keeper *and* horse trader *and* Shakti *and* Charani Sagati *and* an unnamed goddess in *duha* I.

The clearest example of the non-sequential or inclusive way in which Pabuji has been accorded divinity can be found in *duha* I and the medieval *parvaro* in which three different aspects of deification have been united; first, the warrior's elevation to semi-divine status; second, his worship as a deified forefather and godling; and third, the suggestion of the medieval beginnings of *avatār*-linkage as can be read (though rather inconclusively) from the narrative link made between Pabuji and Vishnu in *duha* I. The parallel occurrence of these different forms of deification can also be understood from the roles ascribed to Pabuji's Bhil companions or to Charan women like Deval. The study of today's worship practices at the Pabuji temple in Kolu further exemplifies that different forms of deification do not necessarily progress in a sequential manner, but can exist side by side as is shown by the contemporary worship of Pabuji's Bhil comrades-in-arms that includes forefather worship and *avatār*-linkage with classical gods through the depiction of the Bhil warriors Camda and Dhembo as (respectively) Ram's younger brothers Bharat and Shatrughan.

The deification of the medieval Bhil archers has not been recorded in the medieval sources studied by me and I am not sure whether *avatār*-linkage between the brothers Camda-Dhembo and Bharat-Shatrughan should be seen as a relatively recent occurrence or whether this kind of identification also occurred in medieval times. Either way, it is clear that both forms of deification can exist alongside each other in the contemporary and medieval tradition and that forefather worship is not a form of deification that inevitably precedes *avatār*-linkage as an earlier stage. Put differently, even if forefather worship can be shown to be earlier in time than *avatār*-linkage, this does not mean that one form of deification arises from another, nor does it rule out the continued, parallel existence of other forms of deification.

In addition, I have also not come across reasons to imagine that different stages of deification are "effected" (in narrative terms) through different genres acquiring distinct forms as a local battle-death story gains a wider geographical spread. The medieval manuscript poems studied here do not substantiate the idea that shorter compositions were part of an earlier tradition of heroic or praise poetry from which longer "truly epic" genres developed. This study does show that the medieval manuscript tradition contained poems with different narratives, plots,

imagery, length and functions that were preserved (and continue to exist) alongside each other just as different forms of deification did (and do).

Changes in the narrative content of poetry dedicated to Pabuji and Charani Sagatis are best understood, as I hope to have shown in the second part of this thesis (chapters 6 to 9), by studying the socio-political and religious history of the Charan and Bhil communities who transmit poems and stories about Pabuji and Charani Sagatis and not as the result of poets changing their stories to appeal to regionally larger and socially more diversified audiences (as Blackburn put forward) nor (as Hiltebeitel proposes) because a story about the hero of a particular caste community can travel as long as his caste identity remains the same (cf. chapter 1). While it is evident that stories do indeed "travel", it seems to me that such journeys do not represent phases in time or refer to geographical travels of "caste" communities, in that the stories' journeys did not start at clearly marked beginnings to arrive at easily identifiable destinations. As I shall argue in more detail below, the journeys of medieval story-telling communities did not stick to "straight and narrow roads", and neither did the history of their identities or the literary history of the poetic and prose genres that are part of their narrative traditions.

Desert tradition

The Rajput and Bhil protagonist of the studied poems bring to mind the quintessential early-medieval warrior: the itinerant young man on a horse armed with a spear, sword and/or bow-and-arrows and waging "wars" best described as small-scale battles set off by cattle looting expeditions that resulted in battles over the possession of cows, horses and camels. Early medieval history makes clear that this kind of men was not only the protagonist of heroic-epic poetry, but also figured in recurring semi-historical prose stories about fights over the ownership of cattle, in particular cows, camels and horses. The poets of the Pabuji tradition spoke to their medieval audiences of a very local, at times regional martial tradition of Rathaur, Khici and Bhil warriors. This was not a rural tradition of armed peasant classes which made up the greater part of regional war bands and armies in medieval North India. The studied compositions bring to mind yet another, comparable tradition, one which I have come to think of as a "desert tradition", part of the world of pastoral-nomadic peoples of the Great Indian Desert, including graziers, warriors, poets and traders. An important concern of these peoples was the protection of their "mobile wealth", the cows, camels and horses, and this is also the foremost narrative concern of the selected poems. The main cause for the conflict between the Dhamdhal and Khici lineages was the theft of cattle.

The poets gave voice to the identity and ideals of medieval warriors who prided themselves on the achieved (rather than ascribed) status of Rajput, an enterprise which, I feel, was based on the politics and martial ethics inspired by the worldview and survival strategy of mobile peoples even in late-medieval times when

Rajput history is more commonly depicted in terms landed rights, agricultural produce and revenue, irrigation and the gift of land in dowry to seal territorial bonds between Rajput brotherhoods. In this respect, the studied poetic sources and my overview of what little is known about the history of the three major communities bound up in Pabuji's story (Bhil, Charan and Rajput protagonists) highlight a not often recognized aspect of the history of the western desert regions. Though it is evident that the poets also saw Pabuji and some of his fellow-protagonists as noble warriors and kings (the protectors of the earth), poetic references to territorial rights are scant. Pabuji, his Bhil and Rajput warriors (and Charani Sagatis too) are primarily portrayed as engaged in pastoral-nomadic concerns: the protection (and theft) of cattle.

The selected poetic *and* the consulted prose sources pertaining to Dhamdhal Rathaur, Bhil and Charan history remain rather silent on subjects that could be thought of as typical of the lives of settled farmer communities (agricultural revenue, farm products and animals, and irrigation). Even the occurrence of a well in *duha* I, one of the few instances that could be understood as resulting from an agricultural concern with the irrigation of land and the growing of crops in the desert, also refers to a pastoral-nomadic setting: it is mentioned in the context of Deval's demand upon Pabuji to water her thirsting cows. Cattle as a narrative theme also underlies the depiction of the troublesome kinship and marriage relations in the seventeenth-century *duha* I. It is the battle over cattle that gives rise to family feuds and the breakdown of dowry negotiations. The enmity between the Dhamdhal and Khici warriors in *duha* I, for example, are related to Buro's theft of Khici cattle and Pabuji's refusal to gift his horse in dowry. Moreover, the one time that a poet expressly speaks of "Kshatriya dharma" (in *git* I) he defines it in terms of the protection of cattle and not as a warrior's struggle over landed rights or the protection of a kingdom.

Medieval identity politics

Pastoral-nomadic interests form a thematic thread binding together all the studied poems. It is probably the shared pastoral-nomadic history of variegated desert communities that best explains why open, achieved warrior identities have long remained (and to a certain extent still remain) at the heart of not only Rajput identity but also of Charan and Bhil identity in medieval Marwar and (to a more limited extent) in contemporary Marwar too. Even in late medieval times, when Rajput identity is thought to have become less open (i.e. more clearly delimited as to who could call himself a Rajput), even during this period, the roles 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 Rajput status was ascribed. I feel that it is this aspect of the historical and poetic identities of the people who transmit Pabuji's story and traditions about Charani Sagatis like Deval

that is most evocative when it comes to answering a few of the historical and literary-historical questions posed.

My review of the history of the socio-political and religious backgrounds, and of the geographic scope of Bhil and Charan identities, suggests that these used to resemble early-medieval Rajputhood in that they also may be thought of as open identities which could be achieved by people from different backgrounds engaged in a variety of pastoral-nomadic trades and occupations. The many different tales of geographical and mythical origins, myth-histories and readings connected with Bhil, Charan and Rajput identities united communities with different backgrounds, including different religious backgrounds (Hindu and Muslim Charan clans) and martial, commercial, poetic and occupations like warrior, poet, protector of cattle (and cattle rustler), cattle and wool trader, graziers, caravan guides, messengers, visionaries and religious gurus as well as other ritual specialist.

The poets' portrayal of the religious roles accorded to Charan, Rajput and Bhil devotees of Pabuji and the goddess in the first place served to negotiate socio-political power relations, in particular the relation between Rajput warriors, Bhil warriors and retainers, and Charan keepers of herds. As discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8, power relations in medieval Marwar have been most commonly portrayed in terms of competing claims to ritual and socio-political superiority leading to assertions of dominance and conflicting communal identities. A process that has in many instances led to the criminalisation of communities who did not accept assertions of pre-eminence and authority as forwarded by courtly Charan poets, Rajput ruling lineages, Mughal sovereigns or British colonial administrators. My study of the claims and counter-claims which constituted medieval "identity politics" also indicates that assertions of elite Rajput and Charan identities as forwarded by royal Rajput lineages and Charan court poets did serve as a touchstone of status in medieval times, i.e. as a way to appraise the status of individuals and communities and gauge their eminence vis-à-vis other communities and their consigned place in the medieval hierarchy.

The studied identities did not, however, function solely to define "in-groups" versus "out-groups" or the relative status of a community vis-à-vis another community. Yet another, to my mind, key aspect of Bhil, Charan and Rajput identities are the metaphorical kinship relations voiced through poetry and myth-history that bound together different communities. The poetry and stories dedicated to Pabuji and Charani Sagatis indicate that fictive kinship ties may have been as important an aspect of medieval identity politics as were factual kinship relations. The Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions bring together a plethora of peoples including Ahir, Charan, Rajput, Rebari, Bharvad, Bhil, Khati, Nath, Baniya, Meghwal, Dedh, Gosain, Muslim and Sufi devotees. In symbolic terms, kinship terminology served to integrate (but not assimilate) different peoples from different places and with different occupational identities into a loosely unified collectivity or "desert community" bound together primarily by the worship of deified forefathers

(Jumjhars), symbolic fathers (Rajput warriors and rulers) and mothers (nymphs, different forms of Shakti, Charani Sagatis and Kuladevis).

The extension of kinship terminology to socio-political and economic relations of dependency among communities defined these relations in terms of parental and sibling roles, maternal and paternal connections or marital bonds. Sagatis were worshipped as the "foremothers" of several Charan lineages and Charani Sagati worship also inspired the shared origin tales of many other desert communities, thus symbolically binding together different stock-rearing and grazier communities as well, in particular the Ahir, Bharvad, Kathi and Rebari. By tracing back their lineages to the offspring of two Charan men who are believed to have been created by Parvati, these communities came to conceive of each other as mythical siblings. The Ahir and Kathi, the grazier communities that are considered the oldest among the different desert inhabitants, are at times also thought of as the offspring of Sagati Avar's father or brother, and are therefore looked upon as the uncles ("Mama" or mother's brother) of some Charan communities. Rajput-Charan interaction is also defined in terms of metaphoric sibling relations, for Charan women were thought to be the sisters of Rajput men. And Charani Sagatis who became the Kuladevis of royal Rajput lineages fulfilled a protective motherly role which, interestingly, was also a martial role: one that evoked the warlike aspect of the nurturing role ascribed to mothers by showing up the Sagatis' warlike qualities and their willingness to give their lives in battle to protect their "children".

The study of the medieval Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions suggests that it is the inclusiveness of their stories which best explains their medieval and continuing appeal to many different audiences since their tales take account of the myths and histories of a broad spectrum of communities and their diverse religious affiliations. I do not mean to suggest that metaphoric kinship ruled out conflicts and rival interpretations of the past or rival claims to pre-eminence forwarded by different groups. We have seen that kinship ties not only stand for interpersonal relations of dependency and protection but, similar to actual kith and kin relations, also prompted arguments over one's position in relation to other family members, as when sons aim to outshine their fathers, a mother's preference triggers sibling rivalry or the loyalty of wives to their own family is construed as treason (like in *duha* I). In spite of the problematic character that relations of dependency and protection may have had, these relations were (and continue to be) the other main reason for the appeal engendered by the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions. The metaphoric family ties which these traditions spawn give voice to reciprocal relations of dependency between the different communities who need each other to survive in the harsh desert environment especially when journeying along desert routes, facing cattle robbers and war, oppressive taxes and, during times of drought, thirst and hunger, fodder scarcity, cattle diseases, human illnesses and death. This mutual dependence can be read from tales about Pabuji's protection of Charan cattle. It can also be read from the Charani Sagati traditions, in particular from stories

which recount how Charan men and women helped caravans and armies to survive in the desert by offering guidance and protection against robbers and by miraculously making food and water available. As we have seen, Pabuji has also been credited with providing water. The poet of the medieval *parvaro* describes how Pabuji subjugated a demon in a well to water Deval's cows.

Charan and Brahmin

The story-telling traditions of the various communities which were part of the above-described "identity building project" included different gods, goddesses and worship practices centred around local and regional traditions, and did not necessarily include classical (in the sense of Puranic or Brahminical) perceptions of the divine, the forms it can take and the socio-religious roles it inspires. The poets' choice of words studied in chapter 6 indicates that there existed a Marwari "poetic and political grammar" that did not even include the word "Rajput", even though the poets did clearly think of Pabuji as a Rajput or "prince" (the son of King Dhamdhal). Yet, the poets described Pabuji and other warrior protagonist first and foremost in terms evocative of local history, that is, as the scion of the ruling Rathaur or Kherecau lineage. Similarly, the portrayal of the Bhil warriors as Paradhi, Samvala, Thori, and so forth also indicates that local definitions of warriorhood were the poets' primary frame of reference. Likewise, the poets of the Pabuji tradition also did not seem to have felt the need to refer to Rajput warrior as Kshatriya. As I have tried to document, the poets did not use Kshatriyahood as a frame of reference for describing warriors (except in *git* II, defining Kshatriya *dharma* in terms of the protection of cattle). The lack of references to Kshatriyahood seems all the more significant in the context of theories about the use of the Agnikul myth to define Rajput claims to royal blood and landed status in Brahminical terms.

I have interpreted the relative lack of this kind of poetic references as an indication that the Agnikul myth was not a major source of inspiration for the poets of the Pabuji tradition. This does not imply, of course, that classical or Brahminical values had no part to play in the history of the region. The themes which are part of different versions of the Agnikul myth (like the defeat of enemies, cow theft, retaliatory sacrifice and divine assistance offered by different gods) can be read from the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions, in particular from references to the Goddess's Puranic form and to Charani goddesses as the personifications of Durga. Themes shared with Agnikul myths are also apparent from the way in which Charani goddesses came to be seen as Rajput clan goddesses and the protectors of Rajput realms. Such narrative concerns suggest a literary-historical relation with the Agnikul myth. It has, on the other hand, also become clear that such themes were not a primary concern of the studied story-telling traditions since they figured as one of many different concerns, which did not all represent classical themes traceable to pre-twelfth century South Indian versions of the Agnikul myth. Apart from Charan

and Rajput myth-histories, the religiously inspired imagery of the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions also accommodates the mythical histories of the Baluchi, Bhil, Nath and Sufi pastoral-nomadic communities of western Rajasthan, Kacch, Sindh and Baluchistan. Thus, the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions accommodate stories from regions like Baluchistan (and perhaps further west) that were far beyond the reach of classical Hindu traditions.

Narrative development

Along with the many different communities, stories indeed did travel. In trying to trace the paths story-telling traditions may have taken in medieval Marwar and in trying to see the way in which these stories continue upon different journeys in contemporary Rajasthan, I feel that "travel" indeed serves as an evocative metaphor to understand the narrative development of Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions. One of the central themes of the history of the different kinds of warriors, poets, graziers and traders of the Great Indian Desert consists, after all, of their travels. The history of the development of the different story-telling traditions, including prose and narrative poetry, reflects the different journeys people undertook. However, the stories' journeys should not be represented as an orderly, straightforward development or route fitting chronological frameworks or developmental "paths" represented in terms of a linear journey from A to B; from one village or region to another. Like the travels of mobile communities of the Great Indian Desert, medieval narrative development may be thought of as a flexible, interweaving and crisscrossing process through which stories changed in content and form as they moved along straight or circular migratory routes between Baluchistan, Sindh, Gujarat and Marwar and perhaps further on journeys to South India, Central Asia and eastern regions. Other stories may have followed linear routes to and from Marwar travelling with communities during seasonal journeys or permanent migrations to the more fertile Indus delta in the west in search of fodder for their animals. Yet other stories may have returned to their point of departure unaltered. And who knows how many stories or story elements fell along the roadside or were lost among the sand dunes or crossed a point of no return, perhaps continuing west beyond Baluchistan.

Along the desert routes, many different kinds of travelers met, journeyed together for a while, parted ways, settled down in new regions for shorter or longer periods of time, traded with each other, grazed and watered their cattle, and engaged in battles. On their various ways, some traveller's progress was thwarted by bands of warriors and thieves, while others perished of thirst trying to reach their destination and yet others took detours to find alternative routes. It is in the course of these travels that legendary and historical details were added to stories, story-lines altered and new story-lines invented including protagonists with different social and religious backgrounds and from different geographical regions. Such an appraisal of

the narrative development of story-telling traditions in the desert also makes it somewhat easier to perceive why so many different poetic forms have become part of the Pabuji tradition, and why different historical functions, including religious, ritual and martial functions, can be ascribed to them. Like narrative variations, differences in prosodic form may also be seen as the result of the mobile lifestyle of pastoral-nomadic poets inspiring distinct genres that existed side by side. The study of the Pabuji tradition suggests as much in that the medieval manuscript versions of the poems represent different prosodic structures that all became part of Marwar's manuscript tradition and continue to inspire contemporary poems dedicated to Pabuji. The ongoing diffusion of Pabuji's story clearly bears out how different oral and written genres continue to be juxtaposed and exist side-by-side like *mātā* and *paṛ* epic performances, short and long compositions of narrative poetry, devotional songs, explanatory prose stories, modern plays and poems, and so forth.

My assessment of the mobile aspect of the history of Charan, Bhil and (to some extent) Rajput communities also enables us to look afresh at some aspects of Pabuji's divinization. It is because so many different communities became part of what I think was a "desert community", that the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions came to accommodate many different themes including narrative elements traceable to local Jumjhar cults, Bhil Bhopa devotional practices, Shakti, Shaiva, Vaishnava and Charani Sagati worship and stories about the Nath guru Gorakhnath and Sufi pilgrimage to Hinglaj's shrine. Several of the men and women (Pabuji, his Bhil archers and Charani Deval) to whom divine status was ascribed in the studied poetic sources were thought of as fathers and mothers, like the deified warriors who have been cast in a protective, fatherly role or in the role of husbands of the earth. Charani women like Deval were commonly portrayed as the legendary or historical foremothers to whom different communities trace their origins. It is this aspect of the Pabuji and Charani traditions which, I would like to suggest, may have served as the main source of inspiration for the different ways in which divinity was ascribed to Pabuji and Charani Sagatis. The clearest instance of this purpose of deification is of course the portrayal in the contemporary *byāva rau paravāṛau* of the Bhil archers Camda and Dhembo as the embodiment of Bharat and Shatrughan, rendering them Pabuji-Lakhsman's mythical blood relations.

Caste

Metaphoric kinship ties enabled various desert communities to give shape to relations of socio-political, religious and economic dependence in terms of interpersonal relations. This finding is of special interest if seen in the context of the confusion that arises when communal identities are described primarily in terms of caste and conceived of as fixed, ascribed and exclusive identities. As this study illustrates, thinking of Bhil, Charan and Rajput identities in terms of caste proves to be a considerable barrier in trying to come to a more even-handed interpretation of

their past since it inspires a dichotomous understanding of identities conceived of as excluding or even negating each other. It is this way of viewing medieval pastoral-nomadic identities that gives rise to questions as to whether Charan status resembled the rank of Brahmin or Rajput; whether warriors can be priests; whether poets can perform ritual tasks; whether graziers can compose poetry; and whether heroes can be robbers (or vice versa, whether robbers can be heroes). In order not to complicate the issues at hand, I have consciously avoided the use of the term "caste" and instead referred to group, community or occupational identities. But it is, of course, not possible to really steer clear of the five-letter word when writing about the history of Hindu communities.

Caste was an important tenet of socio-political organisation in medieval Marwar and continues to be important (apparently becoming more and more so) in the region today. However, by not using caste as an explanatory tool, it has become possible to reflect on several aspects of medieval identity politics that did not refer primarily to exclusive caste-like identities. The poets of the Pabuji and Charani Sagati traditions praised their protagonists and versified their deeds without referring to issues traditionally associated with caste like ritual purity and impurity, endogamy, the eminence attributed to Brahmin communities and the classification of Rajput identity as a caste of warriors (Kshatriya). In again emphasizing this aspect of the traditions, I do not mean to imply that Bhil, Charan and Rajput identities were at no stage of the described histories commensurate with caste. It does, on the other hand, seem to me that this study highlights that caste was not as important a framework as constructions of royal Rajput caste status would have us believe. The same can be remarked about descriptions of Bhil, Charan and Rajput caste identities in administrative colonial sources, including the travelogues consulted by me and written by British, French and other European travellers on yet other journeys through the western desert regions.

To conclude this final chapter, I would like to briefly consider another question which has presented itself in the course of writing this thesis, i.e. whose voice, among all those voices recorded, should one ascribe most importance to? Which claims to being heard do we honour, to which self-perceptions do we ascribe historical significance or "truth"? It seems to me that the studied stories represent "best" and "right" interpretations of the past in different contexts. For, as the priest of the Kolu temple, Tulsi Singh Rathaur, has been quoted as saying in chapter 9: the Pabuji tradition has room for tales reflecting different interpretations of their shared past by different communities. Such interpretations should be evaluated according to who tells a story and the different (not necessarily defined as oppositional) truths individuals and communities would like to forward. Against this background, I imagine that the mythical Kshatriya status ascribed to ruling Rajput lineages was forwarded in very specific contexts, i.e. when a ruler felt the need to enhance his position vis-à-vis Rajput men of equal rank or when brotherhoods aimed at countering competing assertions to status by other royal Rajput lineages or Mughal

and British competitors to regional power. In relation to Mughal and British constructs to legitimize their sway, Rajput rulers must have found it effective to communicate their claims to status by presenting themselves as noble warriors, descendants of an ancient lineage of Kshatriya warriors. However, the achieved, inclusive identities described in this study would have been more effective in altogether different settings: when Bhil, Charan, Rajput and other desert communities attempted to define power relations amongst themselves by calling upon symbolic or real kinship ties. It seems to me that this is the reason why inclusive identities remained important throughout the medieval period (and to a certain extent, up to the present day) in particular in the desert areas where the different communities long remained dependent upon each other for survival. The history of royal Rajput patronage of Pabuji's temple in Kolu and tales about Charani Sagatis suggest that Rajput royalty also aimed to justify its ruling aspirations by referring to the achieved, inclusive identities lionized in poems dedicated to Pabuji and Charani goddesses. This must have amounted to a sound political strategy since local Rajput rulers would have been able to garner much more popular support by building temples to local warrior-gods like Pabuji and by adopting Charani goddesses as their guardian deities than by summoning Kshatriya status and classical traditions to authenticate their rule.