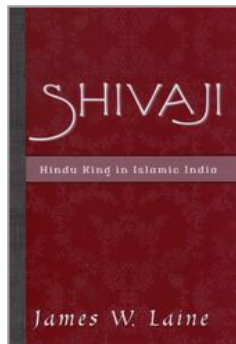


SHIVAJI

Hindu King in Islamic India

James W. Laine

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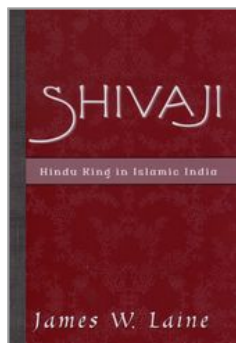
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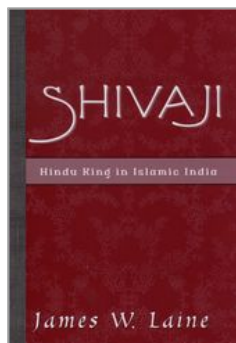
Dedication

(p.v) For My Mother,

Marie Whitwell Laine **(p.vi)**



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(p.vii) Acknowledgements

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Macalester College has been my academic home since 1985, and I received important support for my work on this and related projects, including several Wallace research and travel grants. Thanks to Bob Gavin, and to Calvin Roetzel, who bailed me out more times than I like to remember. I have also benefited from my engagement with Macalester's uniquely curious and cosmopolitan students, some of whom have traveled to India with the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) India Studies Program, which I was fortunate to work with over the years. I have learned much informally from my work with ACM colleagues both in India and the States. Thanks to Elizabeth Hayford, Suneeta Nene, Maxine Berntsen, Philip Engblom, Paul Axelrod and Michelle Fuerch. Mike Youngblood, Dan Jasper and Christian Novetzke, all graduates of ACM, are now my colleagues and I am grateful to them for our many enlightening conversations in America and India. I must also thank colleagues at Macalester, especially Joy Lane, who convened a faculty seminar to discuss narrative, and whose ideas have clearly worked their way into this book. Norm and Emily Rosenberg, Paul Solon, David Itzkowitz, Paula Cooley, Clay Steinman **(p.viii)** Andy Overman, and John Haiman all helped me grapple with issues of narrative construction.

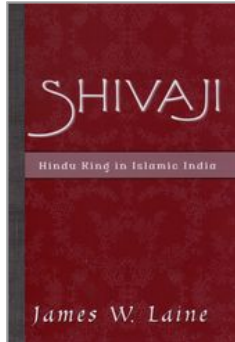
In India, my scholarly home has been the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune, and there I profited from the advice and assistance of the senior librarian, V. L. Manjul. I read texts and learned informally a great deal about Marathi literature and Maharashtrian culture from S. S. Bahulkar, Sucheta Paranjpe, ? B. Damle, Rekha Damle, Bhaskar Chandavarkar, and Meena Chandavarkar. Thanks to the American Institute of Indian Studies and Madhav Bhandare, I was able to spend three productive periods of research in Pune. I also want to thank Asghar Ali Engineer for his assistance in Mumbai.

At meetings of the International Conference on Maharashtra in Heidelberg, Tempe, Mumbai, Moscow, Sydney and Saint Paul, I was able to discuss my work with an unusually congenial group of Maharashtra specialists. For their comments, criticisms, and encouragement, I thank especially Anne Feldhaus, Meera Kosambi, Jim Masselos, Irina Glushkova, A. R. Kulkarni, Rajendra Vora, Narendra Wagle, Jayant Lele, Dilip Chitre, Eleanor Zelliot, Lynn Zastoupil, Stewart Gordon, and Lee Schlesinger. Like most scholars in Maharashtrian studies, I am indebted to the work of the late G.-D. Sontheimer. I am grateful to Kevin Reinhart, Carl Ernst, and Bruce Lawrence for all they have taught me in Islamic studies, and to Philip Lutgendorf, Roland Jansen, and Jim Benson for helpful comments on my work. Allison Busch provided me with translations of important Hindi texts.

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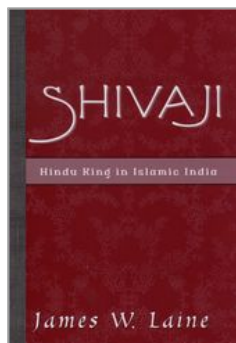
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(p.1) Shivaji **(p.2)**



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Introduction

James W. Laine

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

The legend of Shivaji contains several narratives on his victories, raids, and escapes that always showcase his nobility and virtue. These stories are well known in Maharashtra, and they seem to point out how Shivaji is to be seen as an epitome as he possesses the region's utmost ideals. Shivaji is seen not just a man with profound courage and bravery but also as an administrator, someone who advocates social reform, a patriotic, and even as a mystic. This book attempts to understand the kind of hero Shivaji was in a Maharashtrian setting, and look into how the growth of this legend can be associated with Maharashtrian Hindu identity by examining the narrative of the legend, identifying clues of how Shivaji became an epic hero, and looking at the challenges that such a narrative may encounter.

Keywords: Shivaji, Maharashtrian culture, ideals, hero, warrior, legend, Hindu identity

Many times, I have taken the Deccan Queen from Bombay to Pune. Leaving Victoria Terminus Station in the late afternoon, one is aware of the humidity and the crowds. Half a dozen languages fill the air—among them Gujarati, Tamil, Malayalam, and English—but the hawkers and hustlers and taxi drivers call out in the lingua franca of Bombay Hindi. The train pulls out, and the many workers who live in Pune but work in Bombay settle into the second-class cars to drink tea, play cards, or read newspapers on the four-hour trip home. Rumbling through the seemingly endless neighborhoods of this great port city of fifteen million, the train takes an hour to reach the countryside, the green paddy fields of the coastal plain.

Then the air cools and freshens as the train begins to climb into the Western Ghats, the ridge of beautiful mountains known in this part of India as the Sahyadris. They may be green, lush from

coastal monsoon rains, and there is a palpable relief to be free of the city. The multi-lingualism gives over to Marathi as the train enters the heartland of Maharashtra, land of Marathi speakers. Here, across the mountains is the dry, upland plateau known simply as the *desh* (*des*), “the country”; then the train enters Pune, the Marathas' eighteenth-century capital, the old center of Maharashtrian culture, and now a prosperous city of universities and high-tech industries.

At every station along the way, newspaper stands bear signs above them with the image of a tiger and the words “Shiv Sena” (Shiva's army). This Hindu political party is named not for the well-known god who **(p.4)** dances atop the Hindu pantheon but for Shivaji, the great hero of the seventeenth century who, in resisting the Mughals and other Muslim sultans of that time, was able to establish an independent Maratha state and have himself crowned as king, as *chatrapati*, “Lord of the Umbrella.” The recent renaming of Victoria Terminus as Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus was part of the Shiv Sena's attempt to reassert the centrality of the Hindu Maratha heritage not only in the Maharashtrian heartland but even in that most cosmopolitan of cities, Bombay (or Mumbai, to use the Marathi name now official). Who is this Shivaji who inspires not only the Shiv Sena but also Maharashtrian Hindus of almost every political and religious persuasion? Or perhaps the better question would be, what are the great stories about Shivaji that enliven the imaginations of the Hindu children of Maharashtra, ensuring that Shivaji's name and heroic feats will never be forgotten?

To his enemy Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal emperors, Shivaji was a “mountain rat,” an unruly guerrilla of the hills, and it is to these hills that we must turn to begin to comprehend the power of Shivaji's legend. For every year, at the time of Dasara, a fall festival originally associated with the beginning of military campaigns and the blessing of weapons, children all over Maharashtra shape small mounds of mud into the hill forts of Shivaji and populate them with toy figures of Maratha warriors, their horses, and elephants. It was in such a hill fort that Shivaji was born, and from such forts that he sallied forth on campaigns. It is said that when his mother Jijabai was pregnant with him, she had none of the usual cravings of pregnant women but rather the inexplicable desire to see elephants and touch swords. The young prince was born in the hill fort of Shivneri, surrounded by war, and he would know war all his life.

When Jijabai was married as a young girl, both her natal kin and the kin of her husband were vassal lords to the empire of the Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar, one of five Muslim sultans vying for power in the Deccan. By the time of Shivaji's birth, Jijabai's father and other male relatives had deserted the Nizam Shah in favor of alliance with the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.¹ Her husband Shahji had not followed them, and was thus their military opponent. Within a few years, he too would desert the Nizam, but would ally with the Adil Shah of Bijapur. There in the south, he took a second wife and was installed as governor of Bangalore, never to live in Maharashtra again. So when Shivaji opened his eyes on the world, he was nurtured by a mother who had been deserted by her husband and left to give birth in a hill fortress sixty kilometers north of Pune, at the dangerous frontier of **(p.5)** Mughal and Adil Shahi competition for the remains of the Nizam Shahi state. Her father was soon to be assassinated by Nizami nobles. Her older son Sambhaji was to live with her husband in the south. She had already lost several other children in infancy. It was a year of famine. Huddled in the hill fort of Shivneri, she named her infant for the protective local goddess Shiva, and herself yearned to protect and nurture this last son, the

son who would against all odds become the region's greatest hero, the founder of a dynasty that would endure until the nineteenth century.

Jijabai was born into the clan of Jadhavs, or Yadavas, an aristocratic family who traced their lineage back to the great Yadava dynasty of Deogiri, a dynasty that fell in 1308 to Ala-ud-din Khilji, the first of the Muslim invaders. She might have claimed a Yadava heritage that went even further back, to the mythic Yadava clan of Lord Krishna himself. She was perhaps the first to tell her terribly mortal son that though born at night under a waning moon, he could aspire to legendary heroism as the maharaja of a revived Solar dynasty.² It would be independent of both Mughals and Adil Shahis, and thus become the inspiration of poets and balladeers.³ For as unlikely as that prospect seemed in 1630, that is what Shivaji would become—a legendary hero.

It is easy to get swept up by the romance of Shivaji's legend. There are his great victories, daring raids, and narrow escapes, all complemented by tales of his virtue and nobility. In Maharashtra, these stories are so well known, and are knit into such a seamless narrative, that it is difficult to imagine Shivaji as anything but an exemplar of the region's highest ideals. He is, of course, seen as a man of great bravery and courage, but he is also praised not only as a warrior but also as an administrator, social reformer, nationalist, and even mystic. Shivaji may have been a legend in his own time, but his legend has grown a great deal over the last three hundred years. Thus in writing this book, I have taken on two tasks: first to understand the seventeenth-century Shivaji and the kind of hero he was in the context of the Maharashtrian culture of that time; but second, and more important, to examine critically the growth of his legend as it relates to narratives of Maharashtrian Hindu identity. The first chapter will be an examination of the narrative of the Shivaji legend, how his story has become unified and coherent. I will then turn in chapter 2 to the seventeenth-century texts that give us clues to the legend's genesis as the story of a martial or epic hero. In chapter 3, the story is embellished by eighteenth-century tales of Shivaji's relationship with the well-known saints of his time. The fourth chapter will turn to the wedding of the Shivaji legend to **(p.6)** the history of nationalism, first in opposing British colonialism and then as a story of regional and Indian identity. The fifth chapter will conclude the book with an examination of the “cracks” in the narrative, places where one might challenge the ideology that the narrative assumes. These cracks are the places where we see efforts to construct a meaningful tale against corrosive forces of disharmony, contradiction, and hypocritical compromise.

The Shivaji legend is a glorious story. Good guys, though often outnumbered and outgunned, win in the end. Shivaji is brave, fair, and compassionate. He loves his mother. He is pious. He is patriotic. It is no wonder that the Shivaji of these stories is held up to the children of Maharashtra today as a hero of whom they can be proud. What is problematic, however, is the fact that good history is rarely about good guys and bad guys, and that the simplistic reading of history in these terms leaves Maharashtrians with a history in which Muslims (12 percent of the current population of Maharashtra) can only play the role of aggressors, usurpers, and oppressors. The modern descendants of those Muslims are thus vilified as outsiders to a society which, though founded on secular principles, is easily swayed by the rhetoric of Hindu chauvinism. In reviewing in these pages the growth of the legend of Shivaji, I hope that I can contribute in some way to a richer understanding of this great man, and rescue his biography from the grasp of those who see India as a Hindu nation at war with its Muslim neighbors.

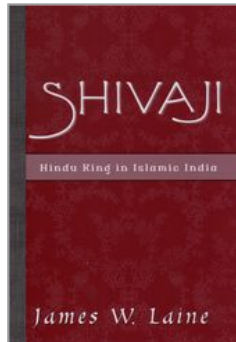
Notes:

- (1.) Two years after Shivaji's birth, Shah Jahan would begin building the Taj Mahal in memory of his beloved wife.
- (2.) The Solar dynasty, the royal lineage of Lord Rama, is described in the epic *Rāmāyana*.
- (3.) SBH 6.26–31.



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Shivaji and Maharashtrian Hindu Identity

James W. Laine

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Abstract and Keywords

Any narrative contains clues regarding the setting in which it was made. Although Shivaji's early biographers may write about Shivaji's numerous feats to explain explicitly the historical aspect of Shivaji's legend, these may also implicitly build a narrative about the cultural history of Hindu Maharashtra. Accounts of Shivaji's life in the late 17th century would point to how this warrior can be linked to the attributes that saints possess, while those made in the 19th and 20th century depict Shivaji as a liberationist, as an egalitarian who promotes social reform, and a nationalist. There is a need therefore to look into how Shivaji became a hero to the Maharashtrians, and a nationalist advocate for freedom as a Hindu. This chapter provides a discussion regarding Maharashtra as a state that values language and culture, the Hindu identity, and Indian culture.

Keywords: Maharashtra, Hinduism, Indian culture, historical Shivaji, cultural history

These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized.

Michel Foucault 1972, 25

In 1988, an Indian friend gave me a social science textbook intended for fourth grade schoolchildren in the state of Maharashtra. It is entitled *Śivachatrapati* (1985), an account of the

life of Shivaji, and is intended as a lesson in the way a native son of Maharashtra threw off three hundred fifty years of “foreign,” that is, Islamic, rule and established *swaraj* (*svarāj*), or self-government. It was written as a civics lesson, an authorless, patriotic history designed to form the young minds of independent India's next generation of citizens. It is prefaced with a pledge to the “imagined community” of India (“India is my country. All Indians are my brothers and sisters.”) and with a long description, written by Jawaharlal Nehru, of the meaning of Shivaji's life for modern Indians (“Shivaji did not belong to Maharashtra alone; he belonged to the whole Indian nation.... A devout Hindu, he was tolerant of other religions.... Shri Shivaji is a symbol of many virtues, especially of love of country.”). Over the years, as I conducted research on numerous texts related to the life of Shivaji, the sort of documents historians would usually turn to, I found that this textbook often gave me a clue to the teleology of the long cultural process which produced a biography that is lodged within the minds of many Maharashtrians.¹ **(p.8)** Whereas the explicit purpose of Shivaji's early biographers—the chroniclers, panegyrists, and balladeers—was to celebrate his feats and victories, and the explicit purpose of twentieth-century historians was to find the historical Shivaji, the implicit purpose of all of them was to construct a coherent narrative not only of his life, but also of the cultural history of Hindu Maharashtra. This narrative of cultural identity is almost seamless, almost taken for granted, almost fully consistent with the virtues and ideals informing the accounts of how Maharashtra, and India, came to be what they are today, and how eternal principles of good and evil have contended in that deceptively coherent story. The textbook served as a reminder to me that any narrative held within it clues to the rules of its formation, and that besides the questions of what it was Shivaji really did and did not do was the question of what he came to mean for Maharashtrians as a hero, as a Hindu, and as a nationalist freedom fighter.

The school textbook presents itself as a unity, a simple distillation of received knowledge, rather than what Foucault would call “a node within a network,” “caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences” (Foucault 1972, 23). It is, of course, such a node, and all the “simple facts” presented in the book have complicated genealogies. The task I have set myself is not that of providing a more accurate account of Shivaji's life by stripping away the legends attributed to him by worshipful myth makers or misguided ideologues, but rather to be a disturber of the tranquillity with which synthetic accounts of Shivaji's life are accepted, mindful that the recording and retaining of any memory of Shivaji is interested knowledge. How have Maharashtrian Hindus constructed a narrative of Shivaji's life that is consistent with the narrative they construct of their own identities as Hindus, as Maharashtrians, and as Indians? The history of this discourse begins with early accounts of Shivaji's life in the late seventeenth century, takes interesting turns a century later, when the warrior's story is closely linked to that of the region's saints, and finally comes to the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the Hindu king is portrayed as a liberationist, an egalitarian social reformer, as well as a nationalist. In the modern popular imagination, many of these strands are woven together and reproduced in both bland textbooks and dramatic popular accounts as though the simple facts can be taken for granted. In other words, the dominance of a certain grand narrative of Shivaji's life is so powerful that the particular concerns of its many authors have been largely erased.

(p.9) The question of the inclusion of Shivaji in a narrative of Maharashtrian, Hindu, and Indian identity first involves the interrogation of these categories, which are too often assumed to be primordial, objective, and thus obvious. But if Shivaji was a Maharashtrian, a Hindu, and an

Indian, in what sense did he accept membership in these clubs? In what sense is it anachronistic to ascribe to him such memberships, and in what sense not? How have the processes that came to produce modern Maharashtrian, Hindu, and Indian identities come to color the accepted biographies of Shivaji? Answering these questions will be the burden of this entire book, but to begin the discussion, I want to consider these three categories briefly in turn, to see how each might be problematic.

Maharashtra

The term Maharashtra today refers to the state in western India bordering Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh to the north, Andhra Pradesh to the east, Karnataka and Goa to the south, and the Arabian Sea to the west. It is home to the cities of Mumbai and Pune, has a population of about ninety million, and is a little larger than the United Kingdom, being the third largest in land area of all of India's states. Geographically, it is divided by the Western Ghats, a mountain range running north and south and known as the Sahyadris in Maharashtra. This range separates the wet coastal area, the Konkan, from the much drier high plain, the Desh. The name Maharashtra is ancient, but has had clear boundaries only since 1960. Prior to that time, it was part of larger administrative units, successors to the Bombay Presidency of British Empire days (Dikshit 1986, 1-II), and before that subject to a succession of empires, Hindu and Islamic.

If Maharashtra as a political-administrative state is something of recent origin, many would see Maharashtra as a distinct cultural and linguistic region with a seven-hundred-year-old history. The key factor in that cultural integrity is language: Maharashtra is the land of Marathi speakers, bordered by those who speak Gujarati, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, and Konkani.² The emergence of the Marathi language is linked to the use of literary Marathi by Maharashtra's preeminent saint-poets, beginning with Jnaneshvar (fl. 1290), and running through a lineage of devotees of the god Vithoba of Pandharpur (Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram).³ Thus the linguistic identity of Maharashtra as a land of **(p.10)** Marathi speakers is related intimately to the story of the rise of a devotional religious tradition and the dethronement of Sanskrit as the proper medium for religious literature. It is important to note that alongside the growth of a vernacular Marathi literature, linguistic diversity persisted until the twentieth century, and the frontiers between languages were often very hazy. Not only is the deity at Pandharpur, a town that might claim to be the religious center of Maharashtra, hailed by a Kannada name, Vithoba but the city itself was, according to Charlotte Vaudeville (1974, 139), probably an area where Kannada was spoken in the medieval period; Marathi gradually came to predominate in the thirteenth century.⁴ Richard Eaton (1978) has coined the term Perso-Marathi to describe the language of brahmin officials in the Adil Shahi state, a Muslim kingdom with a capital at Bijapur along the Maharashtra-Karnataka border, and it is worth noting that the earliest ballad composed to celebrate the deeds of Shivaji is also written in a Marathi so Persianized that virtually no modern Maharashtrian can read it with ease.⁵ To this day, many brahmins have the surname Parasnis, which indicates a former profession as a clerk literate in Persian. Only in the twentieth century would the Marathi language receive a standard form as the result of published dictionaries and the technologies of mass communication. But despite the attempt to standardize, not only does the Marathi spoken by a person living on the Andhra border differ from that of one living on the coast but a brahmin also speaks a very different Marathi from that of lower-class folk. Surely by the seventeenth century, Marathi speakers did have something of a

cultural tradition to which they collectively belonged, but the degree to which that was a primary marker of identity is difficult to assess.⁶

Marathi is the southernmost Indo-Aryan language; it is related grammatically and structurally to the northern Indian languages, but it has absorbed many elements of the southern or Dravidian languages as well. Many have noted the same pattern in other aspects of Maharashtrian culture in general and the style of Maharashtrian Hinduism in particular. In the writings of the seventeenth-century saint Ramdas, we find the term “Maharashtra Dharma,” and there are many who would see a common religious tradition as a central element in the unity of Maharashtrian culture.⁷ Religious expression, borne by a common language and located in a sacred geography, according to this view, provided the cultural unity that found political expression in the rise of Shivaji's kingdom.

What indeed would characterize the common religious heritage of Maharashtra and how is it related to Shivaji? According to the nationalist (p.11) argument, the rise of Shivaji and the rise of medieval *bhakti* (devotionalism) are twin pillars of the same edifice. *Bhakti* poet-saints preached a devotion to one God and emphasized the equality of all devotees, making possible a nationalist community beyond caste divisions.⁸ This *bhakti* is the *bhakti* of Pandharpur, focussed on the god Vithoba (Vitthal) or Pandurang. Vithoba's devotees are called Varkaris, vegetarian Vaishnavas of all castes who perform the pilgrimage to Pandharpur. Maharashtra's prominent anthropologist Iravati Karve goes so far as to say: “I have found a new definition of Maharashtra: the land whose people go to Pandharpur for pilgrimage” (Karve 1988,158).⁹

But even within the grand narrative of Maharashtrian identity, we see a plurality of religious traditions rather than an obvious dominance of the Varkari movement. Ramdas was noted as a devotee of Rama and Hanuman, and was only tangentially related to the Pandharpur faith, though he is sometimes adopted by that tradition today. Shivaji was a Shaiva, his patron deity the goddess Bhavani of Tuljapur (a deity declared inferior by the Varkari hagiographer Mahipati). Shivaji's grandfather was a patron of Shambhu Mahadev at Shingnapur; Shivaji's older brother and his own eldest son were named for that deity and it is often said that Maratha soldiers went into battle with the Shaiva cry “Har Har, Mahadev!” Finally, while on his final campaign in south India in 1677, Shivaji went out of his way to visit the Shaiva shrine of Mallikarjuna, Shri Shailam (Śrī Śāilam), in Andhra Pradesh. In no early text is Shivaji clearly related either to Vaishnavism generally or specifically to the saint tradition of Pandharpur.¹⁰

Shivaji's devotion to Bhavani and Ramdas's devotion to Rama are only two among many such traditions that do not fall under the Pandharpur umbrella. Anne Feldhaus (1986) has explored the sacred places of the ancient Mahanubhav sect¹¹ and Paul Courtright (1985, 202–247) the Maharashtrian sites of Ganesha (*aṣṭa vināyaka*). There is an important cult of Dattatreya (Pain and Zelliott 1988, 95–108), a notion of protective goddesses,¹² and numerous other overlapping sacred maps in Maharashtra.¹³

The writer who would work on the project of forging a regional identity must creatively select from a wide range of available symbols, both historic and geographic (Cohn 1967, 5–37). Even during the nationalist movement, when the moderate reformer Justice Ranade championed the idea of the Maratha kingdom of Shivaji as a precursor to a modern independent India and linked

Shivaji to the “protestant movement” of Maharashtra, the more prominent nationalist and neo-traditionalist, **(p.12)** Lokmanya Tilak, alongside calls for a celebration of the life of Shivaji, chose to develop a popular festival to the god Ganesha (a god in no particular way associated with Shivaji)¹⁴ rather than champion either the Varkari tradition or the goddess Bhavani.¹⁵

Thus there are reasons to mention Bhavani, Ganesha, Jnaneshvar, Ramdas, Shahji, Shivaji, and Tilak in a history of Maharashtra, but there are no obvious reasons to link them in a directly linear narrative. Likewise, there are reasons to refer to Maharashtra geographically as a land of Marathi speakers who recognize a variety of sacred geographies of Maharashtra that include Shaiva shrines, Tuljapur, the Ganesh sites, and shrines to Dattatreya and Parashurama, as well as group of saints' towns (Alandi, Dehu, Paithan) connected by pilgrimage routes to Pandharpur. But the modern narrative that so easily weds the story of Shivaji to a Maharashtrian sacred geography centered at Pandharpur is anachronistic.

One final question in regard to the linkage of Shivaji's career to a proto-nationalist Maharashtrian consciousness: did Shivaji see himself as assuming the role of liberator of Maharashtra? In other words, was he, in terms of his own identity, a Maharashtrian, with patriotic attachments to the soil of Maharashtra? In what sense was the “Maratha polity” a regional state?¹⁶ Strategically, Shivaji used the mountain forts of the Sahyadris as his base of operations and established his capital at Raigad. Although much of modern Maharashtra remained out of his control, he did conquer small regions of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Gujarat. His successors conquered a much larger realm, and the Maratha empire of 1758 stretched over a wide swath of central and northern India, into regions where Marathas were hardly welcomed as liberators. Today one finds Marathi-speaking communities in Gujarat (Baroda), and Tamil Nadu (Tanjore), vestiges of previous Maratha power. Shivaji's quest for power (like that of his father and half-brother in south India and that of his peshwa successors) did not stop at the borders of a Marathi-speaking cultural region. In the eighteenth century, Marathas had ambitions of succeeding the Mughals, and established capitals in several cities outside the Marathi-speaking region. When Shivaji sought legitimation as a Hindu king, he recruited Maharashtrian brahmins from Benares (Ganga Bhatta and Paramananda) to conduct his orthodox coronation and compose a Sanskrit epic (the *Śivabhārata*) in his honor. The epic thus composed praises him as a Hindu king, but makes no mention of Maharashtra or Marathas as such.¹⁷ In his own quest for legitimation, Shivaji thus employed classical, pan-Indian symbols, not regional ones.

(p.13) Hindu/hinduism

Just as, in viewing the growth of the Shivaji story we must hold the category “Maharashtra” in suspense, a symbol contested and without primordial meaning, surely the term “Hindu” must also be a fluid sign. In opposing modern communalism, it has been the fashion of many scholars to assume that Hindu identity, as opposed to Muslim identity, is a modern phenomenon, a result of a British tendency to assume the category of religion as a primary marker of identity. This critique has illuminated the many ways in which Hindus and Muslims inhabited common social worlds in premodern times, and the ways in which alliances across communal lines were common at various levels of social life.

Twentieth-century textbook accounts of “Hinduism”—accounts that have been largely adopted by India's neo-Hindu intellectual elite—do very little however, to relate “Hinduism” to “Islam,” or Hindus to Muslims. Instead of teaching courses and writing textbooks on “Religions of South Asia,” Western academics have tended to reify “Hinduism,” “Buddhism,” and “Islam” and treat them as separate entities. The scholar working on “Hinduism” has little training in South Asian Islam, and the student of South Asian Islam little training in Hinduism. The first begins with Sanskrit and later learns a modern vernacular. The second starts with Persian and later learns Urdu. The first tends to study a classical tradition that begins with Vedic literature, runs through the classical tradition (Upanishads, *Gita*, epics, Puranas), culminates in *bhakti* poet-saints, and leaps to Ram Mohan Roy, Gandhi, and the modern period. The second obviously concentrates on the period of Islamic political power in India, ca. 1200–1700. These are two different castes of scholars.

If, however, we think critically about the standard account of “Hinduism,” and consider the fact that Islam is treated cursorily even though Islamic power held sway for the several centuries prior to British rule, we realize a number of critical things:

- “Hinduism” is treated in an apolitical way.
- When Islam is considered, it is pictured as Middle Eastern Islam, and not fully understood in terms of the cultural styles of Islam developed by South Asians. So, for example, Islam as an egalitarian tradition is contrasted with the hierarchical nature of Hinduism, despite the fact that the Persianized nobles ruling India in the medieval period were elite aristocrats who would neither dine with nor intermarry with indigenous Muslims.

(p.14) • Hindu-Muslim interaction is treated as an encounter between Sufis and mystics. Kabir becomes the paradigmatic figure. Both Muslims and Hindus are cheered if they understand “true” religion as interior, unrelated to specific practice, and, again, thoroughly apolitical in nature. In other words, examples of protestant styles of religious identity are sought out and displayed.

In this discourse, Hinduism is largely treated as a private religion, unrelated to political structures. If we look at the outlines of two popular textbooks, Thomas J. Hopkins's *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (Hopkins 1971), and David R. Kinsley's *Hinduism* (Kinsley 1982), we see a number of these features. Hopkins organizes his book chronologically, with the first three chapters treating the Indus Valley, the Vedic sacrifice, and the Upanishads. Chapter 4 treats heterodox movements (Buddhism, Jainism, etc.), and Chapter 5 is entitled the New Brahmanical Synthesis (*varṇāśrama-dharma*, etc). Chapters 6 and 7 treat the classical epics and Puranas, with some attention to classical philosophical schools. The last chapter is entitled “The Continuing Tradition,” in which Hopkins devotes two pages to Muslims, and the rest to the British and modern period. There he concludes that Islam was a “radical alternative” to Hinduism, but that Hindus living under the dictates of the “brahmanical synthesis” “were little changed by Muslim teachings and practices” (132). Kinsley spends even less time discussing South Asian Muslims and the relationship between Muslims and Hindus in premodern India. His book is not organized chronologically, but he does provide an historical sketch in his second chapter. There he summarizes the medieval period (A.D. 600–1800) as “characterized by three developments: (1) the rise of devotional movements with a corresponding outburst in the

construction of temples; (2) the systematization of Hindu philosophy into six schools dominated by the school of Advaita Vedanta (nondualistic Vedanta); and (3) the rise of Tantrism, a movement employing ritual techniques to achieve liberation" (17). So despite the fact that Muslims politically dominated India in the last half of this period, Kinsley does not discuss Islam at all. Given the Hindu-Muslim political confrontations of the twentieth century, Kinsley cannot ignore Islam in his next section, but he summarizes the role of Islam in South Asia vis-à-vis Hinduism in the following terms:

As early as the eighth century A.D. Muslims had entered India, and by the thirteenth century, Islam had come to a position of political dominance in North India. Increasingly Hindus found themselves ruled by **(p.15)** non-Hindus, and British domination, beginning in the eighteenth century, represented to Hindus a continuation of foreign rule. Although many Hindus were attracted by the teaching of the equality of all believers in Islam and converted to that religion, the majority remained at least nominal Hindus and in various ways continued the traditions of the past. (20)

According to this portrayal, then, Muslims were early foreign colonists, their rule a prelude to that of the British, while eternal Hinduism continued its traditions unaffected by several centuries of Islamic rule. A few people converted to an egalitarian Islam, but most did not. Surely we treat the Islamic period inadequately if we describe medieval Hinduism as a tradition of Puranas, philosophy, and *bhakti* saints unaffected by a largely Islamic political system. And since little is done to describe the South Asian Islamic tradition in these texts, we are unprepared for the British period, when Hindu and Muslim interaction is, rather too suddenly, political indeed.

It would be grandiose to claim that this book will be a corrective to a scholarly discourse that separates Hinduism from Islam and treats the period of Islamic rule as a period in which Hindus continued their Sanskritic and devotional tradition largely untouched by the culture of their political masters. I do hope, however, that by bringing this material concerning Shivaji to the attention of those who study religion and religious identity, not only will we have a thicker description of South Asian Islam but we can have a richer portrait of medieval Hinduism as well. We need to consider not only the poetry of seventeenth century *bhakti* saints but also the religious lives of more ordinary Hindus at the courts and in the armies of seventeenth-century Muslim sultans.

Consider Shivaji's grandfather, Maloji, who entered the Islamicate world in at least two ways. First, he attained power and social status in service to the Nizam Shah, a Deccani sultan ruling from Ahmednagar. Through his military service to the shah, he was named a jagirdar of Ellora and claimed the title of Raja.¹⁸ And second, at the level of popular religion, he and his wife turned to a local Sufi saint in the hope of divine assistance in conceiving a child. When they were blessed with two sons, he named them after the saint, Shah and Sharif. Maloji's tomb in Ellora is so Islamicate in style that uninformed Hindu visitors today presume it to be the tomb of a Muslim.

This is not to say that a man like Maloji had no sense of Hindu identity. He was, for example, the patron of the important temple to Shambhu Mahadev in Shingnapur. At the same time, he could

participate **(p.16)** rather easily in both the cosmopolitan Islamic court life and the popular religion where Sufis and Hindu saints traded on their charismatic powers without concern for communal boundaries.

The Varkari tradition also includes Muslim devotees and writers. A good example of such a person would be Sheikh Muhammad, a seventeenth-century Maharashtrian saint from the Ahmadnagar region, who apologetically confessed that although born into the caste of Muslims, he still had sincere devotion to God (defined in Hindu *bhakti* terms). He also rejected the political and military ventures of Muslim regimes in India (Wagle 1989; Dhare 1994). Sheikh Muhammad is famous for a line of Marathi poetry: “*Śekh Mahmad avindha/tyāce hrdayī govinda*” which I would translate as: “Sheikh Muhammad is *avindha* (one having unpierced ears, that is, a Muslim), but in his heart is Govinda (Krishna).” He is portrayed as transcending communal religious distinctions and is known as “Kabir's avatar.” R. C. Dhare also notes that Shivaji's grandfather Maloji was a patron of Chand Bodhle, Sheikh Muhammad's guru, a Hindu listed in a lineage of Sufi pirs. Chand Bodhle was also the guru of Janardanaswami the guru of the famous poet-saint Eknath (d. 1599) (Dhare 1994, 79–83).

All these data accord with interpretations of Islamic culture in India as Indian, integrated into and inextricable from indigenous culture.¹⁹ At the political level, anticomunalist historians emphasize that Muslim sultans allied with Hindu rajas against rival sultans, that the armies of the sultans contained many Hindu soldiers, and that the armies of rajas contained many Muslims. Such facts are marshaled to dispute the “two-nation theory,” according to which Muslims represent the intrusion into South Asia of an alien, Middle Eastern culture that could never be assimilated, and that the creation of separate nations, India and Pakistan, was the inevitable modern result of an ancient cultural antagonism.

But not only neotraditionalists and communalists have supported the idea that Hindus and Muslims in pre-British times had conflicting worldviews and inhabited different social worlds. Sheldon Pollock has drawn our attention to the way intellectuals in Hindu courts, wedded to the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition and aware of the unassimilable way of life of invading Turkish forces in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, responded with a massive literary output of *dharma*-literature that defined in a “totalistic” manner a Hindu way of life, a “Hinduism” to be contrasted with something truly different, something “other” (Pollock 1993a, 1993b). Louis Dumont, while accepting the fact that the Hindu and Muslim communities “have drawn together on the level of **(p.17)** social fact,” still argues that “coexistence has produced no general ideological synthesis.”²⁰ Similarly, Francis Robinson argues that elite, Persian-speaking Muslim nobles, the Ashraf, “had come from abroad to rule,” that they cherished what they felt were international Perso-Islamic standards of cultivation and behavior and, finally, that “the emergence of Pakistan was the last striking expression of Perso-Islamic values in India.”²¹ According to these interpretations, then, Hindus and Muslims may seem to participate in a common culture but, according to a certain presumed architecture of the soul, they embraced different visions “deep down”, and thus their repressed tensions “smoldered” beneath the surface.

It seems to me that in order to mediate this debate, we need to describe more adequately the way “Hinduism” and “Islam” were contested categories for the premodern people of South Asia.

If we are to be descriptive rather than covertly or unconsciously theological, our definitions of Islam or Hinduism should not exclude “bad Hindus” and “bad Muslims.” Moreover, there was wide variation in the degree to which Islam and to a lesser extent Hinduism, had social, political, and economic scope within the culture. In response to Central Asian invasions, there were brahmin scholars in Hindu courts who sought to define and preserve a whole way of life, and others who, like modern neo-Hindu intellectuals grappling with secularism, sought to essentialize “Hinduism,” or religion in general, by restricting it to matters of mystic insight and sincere devotion while excising, or claiming to excise, its roots in the political culture. Similarly, some Muslims sought to work out a mystic union between Hindus and Muslims, while leaving social-political questions outside the realm of “religion.” Perhaps unwittingly, these Muslims often reduced their Islamic identity to that of a caste, and unconsciously endorsed a Hindu social system. There were also those scholarly Hindus and Muslims who argued for increased rigor in maintaining religious orthodoxy and orthopraxy, while others were quite content to have their political legitimacy conferred by rulers or saints of different religions. Meanwhile, there were those subalterns for whom these distinctions would have seemed meaningless, as well as elites more interested in maintaining power and sharing in a cosmopolitan shared culture of the court than in forging alliances based on purely religious grounds. And, as Cynthia Talbot has shown, there were those rising military chiefs who used Hindu tropes of demonization not so much in order to defend “Hinduism” or attack “Islam” as to gain legitimacy, by taking upon themselves the classical role of the *kshatriya* (Talbot 1995). While thus forging new regional-linguistic identities, **(p.18)** these rajas wrote historical narratives that linked them with a noble past and, in short, created a sort of ethnicity.

What I hope to show in much of what follows is that Shivaji himself, and even more those who later celebrated his heritage, claimed for themselves both a Maharashtrian and a Hindu identity, but that Shivaji made those claims in the context of a debate (or perhaps just uncertainty) about the proper boundaries for those categories, a context different from but analogous to similar debates today.

India

“India” is perhaps the least interesting of these terms to deconstruct, because it is the most obvious candidate for anachronistic usage. As I noted above, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sees in Shivaji a symbol of “love of country,” and it has been common among nationalist Maharashtrians to see in Shivaji a devotion not only to Maharashtra but also to India as a whole. The school textbook that quotes Nehru states that “‘Hindavi Swaraj’ was his dream. Anyone who lives in Hindusthan, no matter to what community or religion he belonged, was a ‘Hindavi.’ Their Raj was ‘Hindavi Swaraj’” (*Shiva-chhatrapati*, 76). Was Hindusthan “India”? Was it ever conceived as a nation of individuals collectively participating in a project of “Hindavi Swaraj” (a Perso-Sanskrit phrase)? Did anyone ever adopt the Persian word “Hindavi” to refer to himself, a word which like the English word “Indian” might be used to describe an identity that transcended caste and region? For seventeenth-century or eighteenth-century people living in the heartland of what is today Maharashtra, “Maharashtrian” and “Hindu” may have been meaningful markers of their identities. But using the word Hindavi to mean Indian, which connotes for us a citizen of a modern nation state, is far more problematic, and to claim Shivaji as an Indian will also lead us astray.

Surely Shivaji saw himself as participating in a civilization, if not a nation, that we think of as India. He recognized the Sanskrit language and the city of Benares as aspects of a brahmanic civilization, and sought royal legitimation in terms of the rules established by that ancient order. His pursuit of properly royal power meant, however, that his fellow Indians and fellow Hindus were, often as not, military opponents. Though this fact is incontrovertible, it can be explained by arguing that unfortunately not all Hindus were ready to support swaraj, but were greedily attached to the local power they might exercise as vassals of **(p.19)** Islamic empires.²² According to this reading, “the people,” especially the simple hill people known as Mavlis, were allied with Shivaji as he began to build an independent Maratha power. But landed aristocrats were not always eager to do so:

The Mavlas.... gathered around Shivaji, ready to do his bidding. They lived for Swaraj and were willing to die for it. They were simple Maratha folk. They loved Shivaji more than their life. But there were others who nursed a silent hatred against Shivaji and the work that he was doing. For generations they had served the Adilshahi Kingdom of Bijapur and took pride in being servants of that Kingdom. They were naturally jealous of Shivaji's gifts. Maratha sardars like the Nimbalkars, the Ghorpades, the Moreys opposed Shivaji's efforts to establish Swaraj. It was necessary to bring them to book and teach them a lesson. (*Shivachhatrapati*, 28)

To brand the Nimbalkars, Ghorpades, and Mores “collaborateurs” is to presume that the choices before them were moral and clear: “We are Hindus; we belong to a religion opposed to that of foreign invaders, and we must either protect ourselves by compromising with the oppressors or engage in a risky revolt to establish an independent Hindu kingdom led by Shivaji.” Surely such thoughts would have been alien to these landed nobles. Even if Shivaji envisioned the world that way, it is doubtful that such a picture would seem accurate to aristocrats whose blood was bluer than Shivaji's. What legitimacy could he claim to have primacy over them? We might note that even one of Shivaji's staunchest allies, the Jedhe family, collaborated with the Mughals within four years of Shivaji's death (Gordon 1993, 94).

The origins of the Shivaji legend may be located at precisely this juncture, for it would be in response to rival princes that Shivaji had to gain charisma and establish claims of authority. How would he arrogate himself to the position of maharaja, king of kings, atop a hierarchy of local rajas who would supply him with military support and tax revenues and withdraw the same from the far more established sultans of the Deccan? To win such support, Shivaji's deeds had to be great, and his story had to be compelling. In the following chapter we turn to those earliest accounts of those deeds, accounts composed by balladeers, court poets, and chroniclers patronized by Shivaji and his immediate descendants.

Notes:

(1.) I will consider this text in both its Marathi and English versions at some length in chapter five below.

(2.) Maharashtra was separated from Gujarat in 1960 on the basis of language, though there remain a few subdistricts where a majority of people speak a language other than Marathi as a mother tongue (Dikshit 1986, 113–116). This includes Mumbai, where numerous languages are spoken, and the lingua franca is Hindi.

- (3.) It is a commonplace that vernacular language is a development produced by the rise of devotional religious movements, but Sheldon Pollock has seriously challenged this view. He argues (Pollock 1998) that a new politics inspired vernacularization after A.D. 1000. Rather than aiming at “universal rule,” kings in this period sought to control cultural-linguistic regions, and patronized vernacular literature as part of that enterprise.
- (4.) Some scholars claim that the Krishna River Valley was Kannada speaking as late as the sixteenth century.
- (5.) Shahir Ajñāndās, “Afzalkhan Vadh” in Kelkar (1982), 1:7-22.
- (6.) On the general issue of the premodern diversity of language, see Kaviraj 1993. He writes of Bengali: “Before the British came, the linguistic map of ‘Bengal’ would have been quite confused and unfamiliar. The use of language was stratified in several ways. ... (T)he frontiers where one language ended and another began were bound to be hazy” (24). Also see Anderson (1991) on the relationship of language standardization, print capitalism, and nationalism. He notes that “speakers of a huge variety of Frenches, Englishes and Spanishes, who might find it impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of understanding one another via print and paper” (44).
- (7.) According to S. G. Tulpule 1979, 394 ff., “Maharashtra Dharma” was first used by Sarasvati Gangadhara in his *Gurucarita* (1538), but it is Ramdas who is credited with the idea of an activist Hindu program of “Maharashtra Dharma,” a sort of religious complement to the political-military activism of Shivaji. Also see Wink 1986, 34, 218-219).
- (8.) See M. G. Ranade 1961. Ranade sees the *bhakti* poet-saints as “protestants” playing an essential, democratic role in the rise of nationalist consciousness. I discuss Ranade fully in chapter four.
- (9.) Also see G.-D. Sontheimer's film *Vari* (Pilgrimage) made with Henning Stegmüller (Adonos Films, 1990).
- (10.) In following a standard, Sanskritic royal ideology, the SBH does portray Shivaji as a partial incarnation of Vishnu.
- (11.) The term “Maharashtra Dharma” first occurs in a Mahanubhav text, and that some of the earliest usage of Marathi is found in Mahanubhav texts, predating anything associated with the Varkari sect. Feldhaus (n.d.) has noted that the Varkari movement, though claiming these early saints, became a mass movement only in the nineteenth century with the revival led by Haibatray Baba.
- (12.) In the *Tānājīcā Povāḍa* (Kelkar 1928, 1:31-63), v. 21, we read of the local goddesses of Maharashtra (Bhavani of Pratapgad, Mangalai of Satara, Vardani [Ramavardayani] of Par, Parvati of Pune) coming as a group to feed soldiers in the army of Shivaji's heroic general Tanaji. To this we could add other notable local goddesses, who like local Madonnas, have a protective function: Lakshmi of Kolhapur, Jogai of Amba, Renuka of Mahur.

(13.) See Paul Courtright's map of sacred sites in Maharashtra, (1985, 206). Courtright gives a succinct account of the narrative of Maharashtrian cultural identity that I am attempting to problematize (202–205).

(14.) The one narrative link between Shivaji and Ganesha is provided by the story that when first sent to Pune, Jijabai discovered and restored an ancient Ganesha image in Kasba Peth.

(15.) See Courtright 1985, 226–247 and Wolpert 1962. Wolpert explicitly links Tilak's use of Shivaji and Ganesha [here Ganapati] in his forging of a narrative of Maharashtrian heritage: “The Ganapati festival had imparted to Hinduism a congregational character indispensable to its new political role. The Shivaji festivals went a step further by deifying the father of the Maratha nation, and thereby sanctifying its political history, thus providing Indian nationalism with a precept from its own past” (80).

(16.) Following the usage of Gordon 1993.

(17.) The *Śivabhārata of Kavindra Paramānanda* (SBH). I have translated this text as *The Epic of Shivaji* (Laine 2001). This text will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

(18.) The holder of a jagir has rights to local tax revenues to maintain soldiers who can be called upon to serve the emperor.

(19.) See Ahmed 1981. Also see Asghar Ali Engineer 1991. Gopal's 1991 introduction to this volume (11–21) is also a useful example of the anti-communist critique of the “two-nation” theory.

(20.) Dumont 1980, 320. These quotations are taken from the appendix entitled “Nationalism and Communalism,” an essay that tries to relate religion to society and politics in South Asia. Dumont argues, in effect, that partition was inevitable:

once the power prop [the British] was removed, riots could very easily be provoked and unexpectantly flare up. Similarly, on a far larger scale, the announcement of partition must have appeared to the people as a complete vacancy of power, and an invitation to put an end to their mutual compromise and reach a new order by their own means.

The case is sociologically illuminating. We learn that people who lived together for centuries do not really constitute a society if their values have not fused. (321–322)

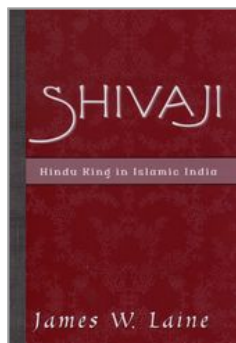
(21.) Francis Robinson 1983 wrote this article to refute the work of Imtiaz Ahmad and his colleagues. It occasioned a lively debate in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*; see Veena Das 1984.

(22.) They were not yet *true* Indians, that is, patriots; see Daniel 1966, 202.



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The Epic Hero: Seventeenth-Century Sources for the Heroic Legends of Shivaji

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Abstract and Keywords

Before Shivaji's mother passed away, she envisioned that Shivaji would someday attain the status of *chatrapati*. Shivaji's birth and early childhood could therefore be characterized as worshipful and intimate. Another significant event in establishing an accurate account about Shivaji's life includes Shivaji's coronation. As Shivaji was crowned *chatrapati* of a Hindu kingdom through an orthodox lustration ceremony that revived traditions of royal Hindu culture, he searched for other ways that involve ancient symbols of kingship in which he can further exercise his military and political power. Although this chapter contains accounts of his life and death, the chapter mainly examines the following tales that portray Shivaji as one who is of noble birth and one who is supported by divine forces in battling demonic enemies: the killing of Afzal Khan (1659), the raid on Shaista Khan (1663), the escape from Agra (1666) and the conquest of Simhagad (1670).

Keywords: Shivaji, birth, death, coronation, chatrapati status, kingship, Afzal Khan, Shaista Khan, Agra, Simhagad

In blood sacrifice we find the genesis of the Shivaji legend. Shivaji's first great act of heroism was the killing of Afzal Khan. It was this deed that inspired the first known ballad of Marathi literature, and it is this story, more than any other, that Maharashtrians today know in detail. In killing Afzal Khan, Shivaji became a hero, a man to be compared with the heroes of the classical epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and his later great deeds only confirm his superhuman status. In reading the earliest sources of the Shivaji legend (texts written in the 1659–97 period), we find the ingredients of a heroic tale: a man of noble birth who fights demonic foes, is aided by divine beings, and is capable of daring raids and artful escapes. All these elements are elaborated in later texts, but in this chapter I will confine myself to those

earliest sources and provide an interpretation of the best-known of those tales. I begin with the killing of Afzal Khan (1659), before considering three other martial-epic tales: the raid on Shaista Khan (1663), the escape from Agra (1666), and the conquest of Simhagad (1670). It was in light of these events that Shivaji's earliest biographers examined all the details of his life, so we shall consider them first and then turn to the birth-to-death biographical narrative as it was written by poets and chroniclers in the late seventeenth century.

Readers may turn to a range of twentieth-century historians—Maharashtrian, Bengali, and European—for specific details on the events of Shivaji's life.¹ My concern here is to analyze the way these events begin to form a narrative and, in short, make a good story.

(p.21) Afzal Khan

Afzal Khan marched into Maratha lands in 1659, three years after Shivaji had forcibly claimed the district of Javli (near Mahableshwar) from Chandrarao More. More, a local raja, typically claimed legitimacy both on the grounds of divine sanction (“We are the kings of Konkan; our king is Shri Mahableshwar [the local incarnation of Shiva]. By his grace we rule”) and on the grounds of the Adil Shah's confirmation of his position (“the padshah was pleased to give us the title ‘Raje’”[SBMH, 70]). Though Shivaji had received the district of Pune to administer from his father, who was a loyal servant of the Adil Shah, he had begun to act independently. He was still officially, like Chandrarao, a vassal of the sultan, but had, without the court's authorization, conquered several nearby hill-forts and annexed territory. He had sent self-justifying reports to Bijapur that he was administering these new possessions better than their ousted former leaders, and was thus an even more valuable servant of the Adil Shahi empire. Meanwhile, he also sent letters to Aurangzeb, negotiating with him in regard to Mughal invasions of Adil Shahi territory.

Shivaji's claims of loyalty were not, however, believed, and even his father Shahji distanced himself from his son's behavior. The court at Bijapur called upon the general Afzal Khan, who had fought with Shahji in the Karnatak wars, to lead a force of some twelve thousand northward to bring Shivaji into humble submission.

The several seventeenth-century texts that give an account of Shivaji's meeting with Afzal Khan are largely in agreement, and it is easy to see how a consistent legend grows out of these tellings despite the fact that there are minor differences in detail. In what follows, I will give the basic story, drawing on four sources: *Afzal Khan Vadh*, “The Killing of Afzal Khan” (Kelkar 1928, 1:123), the earliest of Marathi heroic ballads, composed by one Agrindas (or Ajnandas) in 1659, though probably revised later; the *Śivabhārata* (SBH), cantos 17–21, composed by Shivaji's court poet Kavindra Paramananda on the occasion of his coronation in 1674; *Śrīśivaprabhuce*, an historical chronicle composed by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad (hereafter referred to as Sabhasad) at the court of Shivaji's son Rajaram in 1697; and the Jedhe chronology (Jedhe), a sort of listing of events kept by the Jedhe family, hill country chiefs with local power confirmed back to the fifteenth century.

The scene of the court at Bijapur can be richly imagined. The important nobles of the Adil Shah's empire meet in durbar, and the call is **(p.22)** made for a brave general to subdue the upstart rebel Shivaji. A betel leaf is laid out, and the man who picks it up signals his acceptance of this

challenge. At the time, in 1659, the reigning Adil Shah is a boy, Ali Adil Shah II (r. 1656–72), who took the throne when his father finally died from a long debilitating illness. His mother had been the de facto ruler since the mid-1640s, and some of the texts mention her as the one who chooses Afzal Khan for this mission. Descriptions of Afzal Khan emphasize his imposing size, his attitude of braggadocio, his hatred of Hindu gods, and his demonic nature.

Once commissioned, Afzal Khan's army marches out, amid numerous evil omens (such as meteors falling, thunderbolts in a cloudless sky, and so on; SBH 17.60–64). He marches to Tuljapur, where he smashes the image of Shivaji's family goddess, Bhavani. He slaughters a cow before the temple, and, according to Ajnandas, taunts her, "Show me some miracle now!" (Kelkar 1928, 12 v. 10). He desecrates other temples (Pandharpur, Shambhu Mahadev) on the way to Wai, a town he had previously governed. From Wai, he and Shivaji communicate by envoys.

Shivaji's strategy is to lure Afzal Khan to Javli, a place near the foot of Pratapgad, where they might conduct negotiations apart from their armies, with only a few bodyguards present. Shivaji's envoy emphasizes that Shivaji is in awe of the khan, that he considers him his elder, an associate of his father, and that he was willing to submit to his wishes. This flatters the proud man, and he lets down his guard. Meanwhile, Shivaji meets with his advisors and takes every precaution. His patron-goddess Bhavani appears to him in a dream and warns him of the khan's treachery but assures him of victory. According to Sabhasad, she assures Shivaji in words reminiscent of the *Bhagavadgītā* that he is her instrument: "I am pleased. I shall assist you in everything. At your hands, I shall get Afzal killed. I grant you success. Thou shouldst have no anxiety" (Sen 1920, 11). Ajnandas has her declare: "A goat with thirty-two teeth has come for the slaughter!" (Kelkar 1928, 12 v. 10). Shivaji awakens resolved to meet either death or victory, and prepares for the meeting both by prayer and by putting on thin chain mail and an iron cap under his clothes, and concealing weapons on his person: a sword "possessed" by Bhavani, and steel hooks attached to the fingers known as "tiger claws."

As prearranged, the two men meet in a tent, their guards and armies kept at a distance. They trade insults, Afzal calling Shivaji a "peasant boy" (*kuṇbī...*) and Shivaji retorting by calling him a "son of a fry cook" (*bhāṭḍrī*). In a bluff manner, Afzal urges Shivaji to bow his head (**p.23**) and be humbled before the Adil Shah's court, in exchange for which he will be properly commissioned as a vassal lord. He feigns to embrace Shivaji, but quickly moves to stab him with a concealed knife. The knife grates against the chain mail, and Shivaji reacts in an instant, deals the huge khan a mortal blow with his sword, rips out his guts and slices off his head. In the ensuing melee, as Shivaji's guard Jiv Mahala kills the expert Adil Shahi swordsman Sayyid Banda, a signal is sounded and the Maratha troops, hidden in the woods, swarm in to rout the stunned Adil Shahi army. Many are killed, but those who surrender are treated with Shivaji's mercy and invited to join his cause. The khan's head is brought back to the goddess and Shivaji's mother as a grisly trophy, and is today buried separately from the khan's tomb in Javli. It is buried under the "Abdullah tower" of the Pratapgad fort, beneath the temple of Bhavani that Shivaji established there.

After this fearsome deed, Shivaji would no longer be able to maintain any pretense of being a loyal servant of the Adil Shah. He would have to win the support of other Maratha chieftains and

either cast his lot with the expansionist Mughals or claim complete independence as a king of kings. The heroism of this act and his communion with the goddess made him seem, like the epic heroes of old, a man touched by the gods. Sabhasad concludes:

In the days of yore, the Pandavas extirpated the Kauravas (and then alone) did such a hand to hand fight between individual heroes take place. The Raje himself killed in single combat the Khan who was by nature a veritable Duryodhan; as much strength in body as in wickedness of heart. Bhim killed him single-handed. Similarly did [the Raje]. Śivaji Raje was Bhim himself. It was he who killed Afzal. This deed was not that of a human being. An incarnation he surely was. (Sen 1920, 25)

In a similar vein, Ajnandas sings: “The king was born an avatar. As Rama and Ravana had a one-on-one fight, so too did Shivaji and Afzal Khan” (Kelkar 1928, 22 v. 36).

Writing in Sanskrit on the occasion of Shivaji's enthronement in 1674, Paramananda tells the same basic story of the killing of Afzal Khan, but we find his account informed by a more brahmanic ideology. For Paramananda, Shivaji is not so much a Bhima, an epic hero known for his strength and ferocity, as he is Vishnu's avatar (SBH 18.27ff.), the protector of gods, brahmins, and cows. He is opposed to Afzal Khan because the khan burdens Mother Earth as a demonic incarnation of the Kali Yuga or age of decline. This account is one of the forces of **(p. 24)** *dharma* against the forces of *adharma*, and Afzal Khan's death restores peace and stability to the earth (SBH 18.20ff.; 20.14ff). Here is how Paramananda portrays Shivaji's reflection on his opponent:

This is the Muslim
Whose profoundly evil conduct
Has strengthened the greatness
Of the Kali Yuga.
He is that evil man
With the splendor of (demon) Nishumbha,
Who insulted the goddess of Tuljapur,
A merciless, angry, heap of sins,
Who always wishes to kill
Any brahmin that he sees.
He is like a mountain of sin,
Completely a man of passion,
Determined to obstruct
The path of caste-*dharma*s.
He is the opponent of all *dharma*s,
And supporter of all *adharma*s—
He has advanced on me,
And it is up to me to kill him!
Cows are placed on earth
For the procedures
Of the seven sacrifices,
Producing milk and ghee

And the other goods of oblation.
But alas! this dark soul
Kills cows every day,
And desires to overturn
The holy law completely!
Mother Earth is surely supported by *dharma*,
She is, in turn, held up by the gods,
And the gods are supported by brahmins.
Therefore are these brahmins
The root of all people,
And should zealously and always be
Protected and given worship.
Taking birth in age after age (*yuge yuge*),
Verily, do I protect
Gods, brahmins and cows.
(SBH 18.18-27; Laine 2001, 233-235)

(p.25) In proclaiming Shivaji the protector of gods, brahmins, and cows, Paramananda is proclaiming Shivaji a kshatriya, the very status he needed to be crowned *chatrapati*, an independent monarch. Looking back from the coronation in 1674, the killing of Afzal Khan in 1659 was not simply an act of courage, it was premeditated violence in the service of the brahmanic world order.

Shaista Khan

Four years after the death of Afzal Khan, Shivaji had an encounter with a second Muslim noble, Shaista Khan, uncle of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Like Afzal Khan, Shaista Khan was sent to subdue Shivaji, and his failure to do so makes this story something of a doublet for the Afzal Khan story; the two events are often mentioned together.

Ever since the collapse of the Nizam Shahi dynasty, the Mughals had been drawn southward to the Deccan, and competed both with Shivaji and the Adil Shahis for territory in Maharashtra. Soon after the Afzal Khan incident, Shivaji lost the city of Pune to the Mughals, and Shaista Khan took up residence in the house known as Lai Mahal, Shivaji's boyhood home. In 1663, Shivaji decided to make a daring raid on Lai Mahal and the very person of Shaista Khan. The story of this raid, though very well known, is not found in the *Śivabhārata*, since Paramananda did not finish the text and the last events he describes occurred in 1661. Moreover, we have no surviving ballad that describes the event. Thus, for early mention of the Shaista Khan episode we have only a brief mention in the Jedhe documents and the full account given by Sabhasad.

The story opens with a recognition of the enormous size and power of the imperial army. Certainly Shivaji would not be able to meet such a force head on, but would have to rely on his dash and wit, and the story is based on a celebration of the victory of cleverness and courage over sheer might. As in the Afzal Khan tale, the goddess Bhavani comes to her "child" to encourage him. Sabhasad describes Shivaji as possessed by the goddess, who uses the king as her mouthpiece. She declares that just as Afzal Khan was defeated, so too will Shaista Khan be (Sabhasad, 35; Sen 1920, 42).

Thus emboldened by divine assurance, Shivaji enters Pune with a corps of a thousand select soldiers on foot. When questioned, the men claim to be Mughal sentries, and are allowed to pass. Reaching Shaista Khan's residence, described as a maze of tents, Shivaji and some of his **(p.26)** men quietly cut their way into the sleeping quarters. When some of the women there come to know of the intrusion and inform Shaista Khan, he falls into a panic, and huddles among the women of his harem, knowing that Shivaji would never strike a woman. When, after a considerable length of time, he decides to leap for his sword, Shivaji strikes a blow, cutting off the fingers of one hand. A great tumult ensues, guards awaken, and Shivaji and his men make their escape. Shaista Khan survives but, to use a popular pun, has been “punished” (*śāsta*), and is so fearful of future attacks, that he retreats in disgrace to the Mughal capital and is reassigned to distant, far safer Bengal.

This spare narrative provides two elements—Shaista Khan hiding among the women of his harem, and the cutting off of his fingers—that are elaborated in later texts. In some accounts, Shaista Khan loses his fingers when fleeing Shivaji. He places his hand on a windowsill as he leaps out to escape and Shivaji slashes at the hand there. In other accounts (Chitnis, SDV), however, he is protected by his women, who all beg Shivaji to spare his life. Just as Krishna spared the life of the serpent demon Kaliya at the request of his wives (Viṣṇu Purāṇa 5.7), Shivaji agrees to let him go. Shaista Khan is forced to lead Shivaji out of the camp to safety, and as a punishment and warning, Shivaji cuts off a few fingers.

The Escape from Agra

Shivaji had struck again! Twice now he had foiled the great sultans. To the consternation of his Muslim opponents, this “hell-dog,” this “mountain rat” seemed to prevail miraculously over his more powerful enemies. Rumors circulated that Shivaji could fly, and his plundering raids, especially of Surat in 1664, gave him the reputation of a marauder among the Mughals and the European traders under Mughal protection. In 1665, Aurangzeb appointed Jai Singh, a veteran Rajput noble, as general of a large Mughal army dispatched to the Deccan to subdue Shivaji. From March to June of that year, Jai Singh followed a policy of military attack coupled with widespread destruction of the countryside and alliance with all Shivaji's internal enemies. Finally Shivaji sued for peace, surrendered twenty-three forts, retained control of twelve, and enrolled his son Sambhaji in the imperial service. At that point, Shivaji became a Mughal vassal allied with Jai Singh in his military campaigns against the Adil Shah, which continued the rest of the year.

(p.27) It was, then, as a Mughal officer that Shivaji was invited to visit the imperial court of Aurangzeb. Despite his fears, Shivaji was consumed by Jai Singh that he would be protected. Perhaps he would be made viceroy of the Deccan, with sufficient Mughal support to crush both the Adil Shah and the Qutb Shah, ruler of Golconda (Sarkar 1961, 135).

None of these military and political considerations, however, figures very large in the well-remembered story of Shivaji's first experience of the imperial court in Agra. What is legendary in this story is the meeting of the Maratha hero with Aurangzeb, whom Marathas villify as an icon of Muslim intolerance. The two men become not so much players in a political and military game of alliance, strategy, and the careful balancing of power as personal enemies emblematic of Hindu-Muslim antagonism.

The primary early text for the story is once again Sabhasad (45–53), who throughout the passage considers Aurangzeb's court to be in Delhi. Once again, the goddess prepares Shivaji for the test to come. After Shivaji declares all to be in the goddess's hands (“[it is] the Goddess's kingdom”), she possesses him and declares, “O child, the occasion is a difficult one this time. Jai Singh cannot be killed. He does not make peace. He has to be met. After meeting him you will have to go to Delhi [sic]. These critical circumstances will occur. But I shall be with you. I shall, by various endeavours, protect my child and bring him back and give him victory” (Sabhasad, 40; SBMH, 131).

Negotiations between Jai Singh and Shivaji are made easier by the fact that Shivaji respects Jai Singh as a fellow Rajput and Hindu, and it is Jai Singh's assurances that assuage his fears. He continues to be suspicious of Dilir Khan, a Mughal general who does not himself completely trust in his commander Jai Singh, fearing that he will secretly collaborate with his coreligionist. Finally, the peace treaty is concluded, and after Shivaji's service in campaigns against the Adil Shah, he proceeds to meet Aurangzeb.

Marching northward for two months, Shivaji is presented at court and makes three bows, as prescribed by etiquette, though in his own mind he bows once for Shambhu Mahadev, once for Bhavani, and once for his father. Realizing that he has been ushered to a section reserved for lesser nobles, Shivaji takes offense and creates something of a scene before being escorted from the emperor's presence. Meanwhile, Shaista Khan reminds Aurangzeb of Shivaji's treacherous attacks and superhuman abilities: “When he entered my camp, he jumped forty cubits [40 *gaj* = 80 feet] from the ground and entered my pavilion. If the emperor were to grant him an interview, he is sure to jump **(p.28)** forty or fifty cubits and play foul with him also” (SBMH, 139, translating Sabhasad, 51).

The emperor does not agree to a private meeting with Shivaji, and puts him under a sort of house arrest. At this point, Shivaji knows his life is in danger, but he is consoled by Bhavani. He begins at this time to make a practice of sending large baskets of sweetmeats, carried on poles by two porters, to various nobles. At first guards check these regularly, but after a few days cease to do so. Then one day, leaving an associate in his bed and sending out the report of illness, Shivaji and his son slip into two of the baskets and are carried past the heedless guards by the porters. Provided with horses at a prearranged spot, he and his son escape the city and make it to Mathura. There he places his son in the care of three brahmins, who agree to conduct him to Maharashtra. To elude his pursuers, Shivaji takes a long roundabout route to Maharashtra, going not directly south but east to Benares where, disguised as a holy man, he worships as a pilgrim.² From there he swings south and east, evades detection, and returns in glory to his own capital in the mountains of Maharashtra. Meanwhile, his son is almost discovered, but to protect him the brahmins eat with him, a seeming proof that the boy's brahmin attire is no disguise. For breaking their caste's dietary code to protect the prince, the three brahmins are liberally rewarded.

The Conquest of Simhagad

Shivaji's rivalry with the Mughals continued in the years after his escape from Agra, but Aurangzeb, troubled by internal disputes at court and in his family and by pressure on the Persian frontier, was in a much weaker position. Jai Singh died in 1667, and because Shivaji

developed a good relationship with Prince Muazzam, now viceroy of the Deccan, he could make peace with the Mughals and concentrate on domestic affairs and the strengthening of his government. Not until 1670 did war with the Mughals break out again, and he began to recapture several of the forts ceded to the Mughals in 1665. The most famous of these conquests was the attack on Kondana, a fort near Pune, which came to be known as Simhagad, the “Lion Fort.”

The conquest of Simhagad merits only a line in the Jedhe chronology, but is fully described by Sabhasad (60). It is an early ballad, however, that tells the tale as an epic story. It is entitled *Tānājīcā Povāḍa*, “The Ballad of Tanaji,” fifty-five stanzas composed by Shahir Tulsidas (Kelkar 1928, 1:31–63).

(p.29) The ballad begins with an intriguing tale of Jijabai challenging her son to a game of dice (v. 4). After protesting against the impropriety of such a game, Shivaji agrees to play. With the goddess's divine assistance, Jijabai promptly wins, and as her prize demands that he take the heavily armed Simhagad. Here Jijabai is all but identified with a goddess who can be, by turns, both nurturing and capricious, affectionate and peremptory. When Shivaji is fearful and cautious, she even threatens him with a curse (v. 6). Thus compelled, he sends for his old comrade Tanaji Malusre who must, in a very poignant scene, leave the wedding preparations for his young son to report with his men (vv. 9–11). Jijabai calls on the goddesses of Maharashtra to feed and provide uniforms for his entire army (vv. 19–23). Then, blessing the soldiers in their mission, she sends them to attack Simhagad.

The rest of the ballad concerns the battle and its aftermath. First the men must scale the cliffs secretly—in later accounts they are pulled up by giant iguanas! After they kill the guards and breach the gates, the battle begins in earnest, with great casualties for the Mughal forces. The balladeer describes, however, how the fort's captain, a Rajput convert named Udebhan, continues to lie abed with his many wives, engaged in erotic play, even while his sons are dying in the fray (v. 42). Here we have a thoroughly decadent, evil opponent indeed! Only when his sons are dead does the dastardly figure leave his bed. He then commands the grisly sacrifice of a pregnant cow, and all his wives are slain (v. 49) to protect their honor from any future molestation.³ Udebhan may be evil incarnate—addicted to opium, sex, and gluttony (he was said to eat half a cow at one meal)—but he is a mighty warrior. So taking up sword and buckler, he meets the formidable Tanaji and holds his own in a terrific duel. Protected by the goddess, Tanaji fights well, but when she averts her gaze to avoid looking at the sacrilege of a slain cow, he is mortally wounded (v. 50). Led by his enraged brother, his loyal Maratha soldiers rally to kill Udebhan and take the fort. But the joy of victory is clouded by the sadness of losing Tanaji. When his body is carried in state back to Shivaji, it is said that the king mourned his comrade with the words “the fort (*gaḍ*) is won, but the lion (*simha*) is lost!”⁴ The ballad concludes with Shivaji making a personal visit to Tanaji's village, to adopt Tanaji's son as his own and arrange for the boy's marriage (vv. 54–55).

It is a sure fact of history that Shivaji's Maratha soldiers took Simhagad in February of 1670. But the ballad became part of what we might call the “vulgate epic”—the popular heroic legend of Shivaji's life—by supplying numerous elements of pathos and tragic heroism. Here was a great **(p.30)** warrior who died dueling with a quintessentially evil opponent, who represented the

antithesis to all things held sacred to Hindus: marriage, woman as maternal, cows, ascetic self-control, and self-denial.

Maharashtrians who know anything at all about Shivaji will know these stories of Afzal Khan and Shaista Khan, and the escape from Agra; the hero they portray is the character they know, or presume, when considering the full biography of the Maratha king. We can now consider some of the other events recorded in the biography of Shivaji generally known at the end of the seventeenth century.

Coronation

One important moment for the construction of an official biography was surely the grand event of Shivaji's coronation. For the last decade of his life, he was relatively free of Mughal pressure, and in 1674, was enthroned *chatrapati* of an independent Hindu kingdom in an orthodox lustration ceremony (*abhiṣeka*). The ceremony, which had fallen out of use in Islamicate India, was seen as a revival of royal Hindu traditions. In other words, there is clear evidence that at the end of his career Shivaji began to think in new ways about his exercise of military and political power, ways that drew upon ancient symbols of Hindu kingship. He called upon a prominent pundit from Benares, Gaga Bhatta, to establish his genealogy and claim of true kshatriya status before investing him with the sacred thread, performing an orthodox wedding, and then a royal lustration ceremony of enthronement (Bendrey 1960). At this time, Shivaji lavished great wealth on all the brahmins who were gathered to confer legitimacy, and he employed two poets to write laudatory epic poems about him. One was Paramananda, whom we have mentioned as the author of the Sanskrit *Śivabhārata*, a text that is clearly composed for the coronation though never finished (or at least no complete version is extant). The second was Kavi Bhusan, who wrote the *Śivarājabhūṣaṇ* in the Braj dialect of Hindi.⁵ The portrayal of Shivaji in both these texts as an avatar liberating the earth from the evils of Muslim oppression is clearly part of a general effort to gain legitimacy for a new kind of kingdom.

Sabhasad (92–94) represents the coronation as having been instigated by Gaga Bhatta, who was drawn by the king's fame to come to **(p.31)** Maharashtra. He reached the conclusion that as “the Musulman Badshah reigned (seated) on a throne with an umbrella (over his head), and Shivaji, though he had subdued four Badshahis, and possessed seventy-five thousand cavalry, forts and strongholds, had no throne, the Maratha Raja should (also) be the Lord of the Umbrella (Sen 1920, 113–114, translating Sabhasad, 92). There is a sense in which Sabhasad portrays Shivaji both as a badshah, understood in a Persianate way, and as a kshatriya maharaja, understood in a Sanskritic way: “In this age, all over the earth rule barbarian badshahs. Only this Maratha badshah became *chatrapati*” (Sabhasad, 93). Sabhasad goes on to record the names of Shivaji's eight ministers with their new, Sanskrit titles. He also notes Gaga Bhatta's proclamation of Shivaji's royal blood, declaring him a pure kshatriya of the Sisodia clan of Rajputs (Sabhasad, 93). Perhaps fifty thousand brahmins were feasted at the coronation, but no mention is made of Ramdas, the brahmin whom many consider to be the king's guru.

Shivaji's mother Jijabai died shortly after the grand coronation, and the king observed a long period of mourning, during which he did not ascend his throne. According to some traditions, he saw his mother's death as one of several inauspicious omens connected with his coronation, and was persuaded by a group of Tantric priests, rivals to Gaga Bhatta's party, to have a second

enthronement, following Tantric rites, four months after the first (Sarkar 1961, 211ff.). This group is thought to have had undue influence on the king's oldest son, especially during his short reign after Shivaji's death.

Birth and Boyhood

Shivaji must have been consoled by the fact that before she died, his mother had the gratification of seeing her son achieve the status of *chatrapati*, the first truly Hindu king so crowned in centuries. She may have reflected on the remarkable experiences her son had had since his birth forty-four years previously in Shivneri, and she may have reminisced with Paramananda as he composed the *Śivabhdārata* to celebrate Shivaji's great life. In the sixth and seventh cantos of that poem, he described the birth and infancy of the prince in terms both intimate and worshipful. Employing hindsight, the court poet described the child as a future hero, king, and divine incarnation.

Paramananda first describes Jijabai as “visited” by Lord Vishnu:

(p.32) So Vishnu, Lord of Yoga,
Wishing to enter the womb
Of Shahji Raja's wife,
And content in himself, he gave her
A vision of his very self
Once then in her dreams,
The lovely queen saw Vishnu:
He was praised by many gods
And he had in his lotus hands
A conch, discus and mace.
The Dark One had four arms
And the *śrīvatsa* was on his chest;
The *kaustubha* jewel adorned his throat
And he wore the necklace of victory.
He was dressed in yellow silk
And his jewelled crown gleamed;
His *makara* earrings sparkled,
And on his happy face
A gentle smile played.
He had a handsome nose
And long lotus eyes.
He was auspiciously marked,
And every limb of his body
Was a wondrous abode of charm and play.
Embraced by Lakshmi,
Garlanded by forest flowers,
The god who makes up all gods
Was adorned with every ornament,
And his lotus feet bore the signs

Of the thunderbolt and the prime meridian,
Of the banner and royal umbrella.
But now in his divine play,
He bore the likeness of her child,
Sitting on her very own lap.
So after a good long time,
The wife of Shahji Raja
Did bear in her womb
A portion of mighty Vishnu.
(Laine 2001, 95–96, translating SBH 6.1–8)

Here Jijabai has a vision of Vishnu that catalogues his divine characteristics and marks, including those peculiar to him, such as the *shrivatsa*, the tuft on his chest; the *kaustubha*, a jewel obtained in the churning of the ocean; and the “necklace of victory,” as well as other royal marks (p.33) like the thunderbolt associated with Indra, and the royal umbrella. He also wears earrings in the shapes of *makaras*, mythical aquatic creatures usually emblematic of Kamadeva, the god of love. The “prime meridian” here refers to the *rekha* on his lotus feet, the line that stretches from Lanka to Mount Meru and seems to be suggestive of his world-swallowing cosmic nature.

Paramananda goes on to describe how Jijabai had birth cravings for all kinds of royal and martial emblems:

To mount tigers, elephants and forts,
To sit stately on a golden throne,
Under a royal umbrella;
To raise banners on high
And have chowries whisked;
To hear the sound of drums
Calling men to war;
To bear bows and arrows,
Swords, spears and shields;
To conquer forts and win victories,
To establish *dharma*,
To delight in large donations—
These were the (odd) cravings
Which came daily to the pregnant queen.
(Laine 2001, 97, translating SBH 6.15–18)

In both these cantos, we find descriptions of Shivaji that call to mind similar descriptions of the baby Krishna, descriptions that delight in contrasts between the charming innocence of the child combined in one person with the awesome power of God. We also find an emphasis on the solar imagery that proclaims the birth of a prince into the epic clan of Lord Rama, the Solar dynasty, thus strengthening the genealogical claim Gaga Bhatta was making, namely, that Shivaji was a kshatriya, a Rajput of the Sisodias of Udaipur:

So, as the sun, friend of the world,
Enters the world with its lotus hands,
The boy grew up, day by day,
Like a new-born, rising sun,
Taking away all blindness
With his tremendous splendor.
(Laine 2001, 108, translating SBH 6.96)

We can imagine these as the rosy memories of Jijabai as she thought of the boy she raised to be king. One might also note that although **(p.34)** Shahji is recognized as the boy's father, the theme of divine incarnation gives Shivaji a divine father and subtly pushes Shahji to the margins—where, in fact, he was for most of Shivaji's life.

Karnatak Campaign

After his costly coronation, Shivaji was able to make a few raids on Bijapuri territory to build up his treasury, and he was fortunate that civil war in the Adil Shahi territories, as well as internal and external problems facing the Mughals, meant that he was relatively free from invasion. Nonetheless, in 1677, Shivaji felt the need to undertake a major campaign. Like the Mughals, who continued to make advances against the strife-ridden sultanate of Bijapur, Shivaji looked southward. Rather than strike at the Adil Shahi heartland, he was drawn to the Karnatak plain and wealthy Tamil coast, southwest of Bijapur.

The area to which Shivaji was drawn was the very one where his half-brother Vyankoji (known as Ekoji, son of Shahji by his second wife) had established a base of nominal Adil Shahi power, namely, the districts of Jinji and Tanjore. Vyankoji was even enthroned maharaja of Tanjore in 1676, perhaps in emulation of his more famous half-brother, and Tanjore was to remain a Maratha kingdom until British times (1855).

Much of the Shivaji's military and diplomatic activity in south India both before and after this last campaign is known to historians, but plays little role in the legend of Shivaji as an epic hero. Beyond the mass of detail about numerous battles and raids, there are only two narrative elements that one would see as important to the story: Shivaji's visit to the shrine of Shri Shailam and his meeting with his half-brother.

Before Shivaji marched into south India in 1677, he secured his capital and central Maharashtrian possessions, and came to an understanding with the Mughal viceroy so that he would face no northern threat during his long campaign in the south. As part of this strategy, he also sought an alliance with the Qutb Shah of Golconda, and chose to bring his entire army and entourage to the Qutb Shahi capital near the modern city of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. After a highly ceremonial, month-long meeting with the shah, a meeting orchestrated by his brahmin vazir Madanna Pant, Shivaji marched south toward Karnul with Qutb Shahi financial and military support.

Oddly enough, while his army waited at Anantpur, near the Andhra-Karnataka border, Shivaji took a small party with him for a ten-day religious retreat to the well-known shrine of Shri Shailam, twenty-four **(p.35)** miles from Karnul. Shri Shailam, a Shaiva shrine to the god Mallikarjuna, is in a beautiful forest on the Krishna River, over three hundred miles downstream

from its source at Mahableshwar in the mountains of Maharashtra. Sabhasad reports in a very abrupt fashion:

Then he went to Śrī Śailya. He bathed at the Nilganga and saw the god (of the place). The rites of the holy place were performed. The Raje was highly pleased with this sacred place, it seemed a second Kailas to him. He felt disposed to offer his body to the god there and to sacrifice his head (*tethe he deha śrīs arpan karave; sirkamal vahave aise yojile*). At that time Sri Bhavani took possession of his body and said, — “Thy salvation (*mokṣa*) does not lie in such things. Do not commit this act (*karma*). There are many duties (*kartavya*) to be performed by thy hands in the future.” (Sen 1920, 124, translating Sabhasad, 98)

This story is important for several reasons. First, it confirms the early depiction of Shivaji as a Shaiva, and special devotee of the goddess Bhavani. Second, it relates Shivaji the warrior to notions of self-sacrifice, preserving a motif as old as Vedic literature.⁶ And finally, in ways not explicit in this brief, early telling, the story portrays Shivaji as a latter-day Arjuna, for Shri Shailam is in popular understanding the place where the epic hero Arjuna met Lord Shiva, who was disguised as a mountain tribal: Arjuna fought with him and was reduced to an unconscious, sacrificial ball of flesh before being revived and supplied with divine weapons (*Mahābhārata* 3.40.1–42.4). This epic story has many links to the *Bhagavadgītā*, just as Shivaji's encounter with the goddess here concludes with a *Gītā*-like message: you are not to seek salvation (*mokṣa*) through a religious act of self-sacrifice, for there are still karmic duties to perform in this world.⁷

Like the *Mahābhārata*, the story of Shivaji admits of stories of less than perfect families. Like the great *Bhārata*, the *Śivabhārata* begins with an account of how Shivaji's father has a falling out with his in-laws (SBH 3), and the story of Shivaji's invasion of south India involves a consideration of Shivaji's rivalry with his half-brother. Sabhasad (Sen 1920, 125ff.) reports that while he was besieging Jinji, Shivaji had a ceremonial visit with Vyankoji, during which Shivaji demanded of his younger relative half of their father's holdings in south India. Vyankoji refused, and fearful of being imprisoned, secretly fled Shivaji's camp and returned to his kingdom of Tanjore. In a letter Shivaji supposedly wrote to his half-brother, he accuses Vyankoji of sowing discord and playing the part of Duryodhana (SBMH, 170–173). Perhaps Shivaji considered Tanjore unassailable or perhaps he considered it inappropriate to attack his own kin, but whatever the reason, he returned to Maharashtra (p.36) in 1678, and although a man of only forty-eight years, began to reflect on his death and how he would pass on his kingdom to his sons. In fact, he would be dead in two years.

Death

In the two years before he died, Shivaji tried to arrange a settlement between his two sons, giving the Maharashtrian heartland to his younger son Rajaram, still a boy, while giving his newly acquired southern districts to Sambhaji. Incensed at this arrangement, Sambhaji briefly broke with his father and allied with the Mughals under Dilir Khan for almost a year. He returned to his father four months before Shivaji died, but the king surely died a disappointed and pessimistic man.

Since he died of an illness, Shivaji was denied a warrior's death, the sort of death for which his general Tanaji is celebrated, so his chroniclers describe him as going to death almost willfully, a

wise but rather disheartened man, who predicted a difficult future for his Maratha kingdom. Sabhasad, writing from the court of Rajaram, disparages the rival brother Sambhaji, and has Shivaji prophesy that his elder son will be cruel, decadent, and incompetent (Sen 1920, 150ff.). In this account, Shivaji then sinks into meditation on the goddess and departs this sorrowful world, renouncing its vanity in his final hour.

The Meaning of the Shivaji Legend In 1697

In the heroic texts we have surveyed thus far, we see the articulation of ideas and values that construct a Hinduism in contrast with a Muslim identity, a construction that is not ideologically simple but full of complexity, a construction that nonetheless depends upon an intellectual separation of the two identities as distinct and opposed. What makes the understanding of this separation a matter of subtlety is the fact that on the one hand, elite Hindus were able to participate in the Islamic world of seventeenth-century Deccan politics, while on the other hand, elite Muslims often accommodated themselves to Hindu social structures. Twentieth-century scholars are often appalled at the popular anachronism of seeing full-blown communalism in the seventeenth century, and are delighted when they can show evidence of significant cultural exchange between the groups. As we noted in the case of Shivaji's grandfather, he accepted employment from a "pious" (p.37) (*dharmātma*) sultan, named his sons for a Sufi saint, and was buried in an Islamic tomb. From the Muslim side, the Adil Shahi sultan Ibrahim II could learn Sanskrit, patronize the Hindu artistic elite of south India, and offer invocations to Ganesha and Sarasvati, while continuing to employ Maharashtrian brahmin bureaucrats in preference to rival Shi'as or the foreign-born Muslims who opposed his policies (Eaton 1978, 98ff.). Thus it is clear that Hindus and Muslims participated in a common world in many ways that are unfamiliar today. The boundaries were not so blurred, however, that either Hindus or Muslims would see the issue of conversion to Islam as inconsequential, and symbolic markers of difference and boundary maintenance were often clearly articulated, if not fixed. They were not fixed because persons from different social locations, with different interests, found it to their advantage to define their religious allegiances in different ways.

In the early texts that tell of Shivaji's career, we see Muslims first designated in Sanskrit primarily as *yavana* (and in the case of the Abyssinians, as *Siddi/Siddi*, meaning Lord or Noble), less often as *mleccha* (barbarian). In Marathi texts, the term *musalmān* is commonly used in the eighteenth century, but found even in the earliest ballad, the *Afzal Khan Vadh*. Many modern conclude that *yavanas* were seen as ethnically rather than religiously different, given that the original meaning of *yavana* seems to be "Greek," designating foreigners from the northwest. Such a category would aptly apply to the Turkic peoples first entering India in the tenth century. Taking *yavana* as purely an ethnic term, and not a religious one, is, however, problematic, for two reasons. First, it presupposes an ability to distinguish these categories in the modern sense. For "Hindus" in this period, "Turks" were both racially/ethnically and religiously different. Their different "way of life"—one might say their dharma—was not always, or even often, distinguished from their formal religious affiliation as Muslims, or from the fact of their racial and ethnic "otherness" as foreigners. Second, we do find a rare reference to "*yavanas* with black faces" (SBH 4.49) meaning Abyssinians. Thus what had begun as an ethnic term has shifted to refer more broadly to the religious community first identified with "Turks" but later seen to include other races.

The body is also the site of symbolic identity markers. Muslims are *avindha*, “those with unpierced (ears),” whereas converting to Islam is seen primarily as accepting circumcision. (These of course refer only to males; in my texts I find no female-specific references to conversion or physical identity marking, even with regard to dress.) Conversion to Islam also involved the taking of a Muslim name, but it is noteworthy **(p.38)** that Shivaji's father and uncle had the names Shahji and Sharifji, names taken from a Sufi saint, and yet they certainly remained Hindu. One might argue that the names Shah and Sharif, though common to Muslims and their languages, were Islamicate rather than Islamic, in the sense that they have more of a royal or noble connotation than a theological one. But that fact in itself speaks to the degree of Islamic cultural penetration in the Deccan, so pervasive that by 1600 many aspects of Islamicate culture did not stand out as alien. As a contrasting case, Shivaji's top general Netaji Palkar defected to the Mughals in 1667, was circumcised and took the name Muhammad Quli, but converted back to Hinduism with a purification ceremony in 1676 (Sarkar 1978, 154–155). Thus, in crossing back and forth over the Hindu-Muslim boundary by means of clearly defined rituals, a noble such as Netaji would come to a very different understanding of Islam, Hinduism, and “religion” than would the illiterate villager who would participate rather indiscriminately in local rituals and festivals originating in the two “religions.”

I find evidence in the *Śivabhārata* that the word *dharma* could mean both “order or moral law” (the classical Sanskrit definition) as well as something more like the modern English word “religion.” This suggests that although Hindus and Muslims in many ways lived in a common society, they both felt that there should be distinct boundaries between the two communities; the degree to which any individual was comfortable with participation in the cultural styles associated with another group, however, remained widely variable. One might question whether there are important chronological shifts, as well as class and caste differences, in the way these boundaries of identity between Hindu and Muslim were drawn. Shivaji himself, growing up in Pune, at that time a remote and insignificant town far away from the Bijapuri court, was unlike his father and grandfather in being not only less content to be in vassalage to a Muslim sultan but also concerned to extend the scope of Hindu culture. Moreover, he dealt with sultans who adopted a more rigorist religious policy than their predecessors. I would argue that his elaborate Sanskrit coronation, his choice of Sanskrit rather than Persian titles for his ministers, and his patronage of brahmin pundits (such as Paramananda, author of the *Śivabhārata*, and Gaga Bhatta, celebrant of his coronation) are all signs that he wished to extend the boundaries in which his religion reigned, not so much geographically as socially and politically. These may have been gestures of legitimation, but he could very well have chosen better-known Persianate ways of achieving the same end.

(p.39) This is to say that Shivaji was not only discontented with the idea of being Islamic, he was discontented with even being Islamicate, that is, he read his religion not as a strict constructionist or in purely theological or essentialist ways, but saw religion as broadly diffuse through culture. We might say that he saw “religion” as *dharma*. Thus, although Richard Eaton has emphasized the new Islamic rigorism in the Adil Shahi regime after 1656, a rigorism that parallels the later policies of Aurangzeb (Eaton 1978, 177ff), I would say that Shivaji was similarly disposed to see Hindu and Muslim subcultures—not just theologies—as distinct. There would be constraints on Shivaji's religious agenda, as there were for Aurangzeb of course, and

there were ways in which Shivaji was not wholly consistent in his Hindu policy.⁸ For example, he wore Persian royal dress and used words such as *faqir* and *salaam* quite unself-consciously, as well as being at times quite willing to accept vassalage to the Adil Shah or Mughal emperor. But I would have to disagree with Stewart Gordon, who has written: “Shivaji was not attempting to create a universal Hindu rule. Over and over, he espoused tolerance and syncretism. He even called on Aurangzeb to act like Akbar in according respect to Hindu beliefs and places. Shivaji had no difficulty in allying with Muslim states which surrounded him ... even against Hindu powers” (Gordon 1993, 81). I do not think I am disputing the evidence Gordon adduces, but my interpretation depends on how one uses the word “Hindu.” In these matters, it seems to me there is no more clearly “Hindu” position than to exalt Akbar's policies and to patronize Muslim religious practices and persons within the context of Hindu culture. Such “tolerant” inclusivism is a fundamental structure of Hinduism, a structure that can expand to include Muslim sultans as honorary kshatriyas as long as the scope of polycentric, polytheistic Hindu culture is not infringed upon. It is for this reason that even in a text like the *Śivabhārata*, which ever resorts to the caricature of Muslims as demons, Shivaji's father, grandfather, and uncle can be seen as legitimately serving Muslim sultans. Shahji is even described as spreading the rule of Lord Rama in his military conquest of the Karnatak rajas while he was in military service to the Adil Shah:

Having subdued the other rajas
By means of his policies,
He [Shahji] made the kingdom of Adil Shah
Like that ruled by Lord Rama himself.
(Laine 2001, 88, translating SBH 5.20)

(p.40) Later in the text, Shahji's policies as an Adil Shahi governor allow many “to give up their fear of Muslims” (SBH 11.7). Similarly, the Nizam Shah can be described as *dharmātma*, which I translate as “man of piety.” In classical Sanskrit ideology, the king is the protector of gods, brahmins, and cows, and when he does that, even if he be Muslim, he may be seen as in service of *dharma*.

The same text will shift, however, to a different perspective in which all Muslims are incarnations of demons, that is, forces of *adharma*, the enemies of gods, brahmins, and cows. Curiously, Paramananda has Afzal Khan, Shahji's comrade-in-arms in Karnataka, bragging of his own activities there in terms of temple destruction and harassment of Hindu gods. Was the Bijapuri war in the Karnatak the spreading of the rule of Lord Rama, or a sign of the Kali Yuga? Paramananda seems to move between the two perspectives with surprising ease.

Even within the language of demonization, Muslims are comprehended within a Hindu cosmos and evaluated as forces of good or evil according to that worldview. The *Śivabhārata* goes so far as to attribute Aurangzeb's successes to the ascetic power he accumulated in a previous life (SBH 9.14–18).

The *More Bakhar*, a chronicle of the aristocratic More clan (a clan that claimed descent from the Maurya dynasty), gives an account of letters exchanged between Shivaji and one Chandrarao More, which record their dispute over which of them should be the legitimate ruler of Javli, a district near the modern hill station of Mahabaleshwar. Shivaji argues: “You call yourself ‘Raje’

without propriety. We are the true king. God Shambhu has made us king." As we noted above, Chandrarao responds: "It is yesterday that you became king. Who made you king? ... We are kings of the Konkan; our king is Shri Maha-baleshwar [the local incarnation of Shiva]. By His grace, we rule. By His grace, the Padshah [Adil Shah] was pleased to give us the title 'Raje,' and the morchel (peacock whisk) and the throne" (SBMH, 70). Thus we see More claiming sovereignty based on the grace of his local patron deity Mahabaleshvara as well as from his overlord, the Adil Shah, against Shivaji's claim of annointment by Shambhu (the name of Shiva used at a shrine in Satara patronized by his grandfather). The chronicle concludes with a description of Chandrarao's execution and Shivaji's takeover of Javli, and states that although Shivaji established his patron goddess Bhavani at Pratapgad (just north of Javli), "the world still cherishes the name of Chandrarao." In a text such as this we find evidence to support the claim that premodern Maharashtrians, even elite petty rajas, did not understand their identity **(p.41)** and allegiances in terms of communalist blocs opposed to one another simply as "Hinduism" and "Islam."

On the other hand, when Aurangzeb sent his Rajput general Jai Singh to the Deccan in 1665 to subdue Shivaji, Shivaji sent a letter to the general, written in diplomatic Persian, in which he appealed to Jai Singh as a fellow Hindu, calling on him to "attack those who are the enemies of religion" and to "abolish Islam root and branch" (Sardesai 1927, 169–178). Nonetheless, in the same letter he praises Dara Shukoh, claiming that if he had been emperor (and not Aurangzeb), "he would have treated his people favorably." It is interesting to note that throughout the letter, Shivaji refers to Hinduism as "the *dīn* of Hindus," thus using Islamic terminology, the Arabic word *dīn* (religion), to refer to his religion. In other words, the possibility of conceiving "the religion of Hinduism" in terms borrowed from Islam was not a difficulty, although in this letter the two religions are clearly opposed to each other in a manner we might call "communalist" today.

In a similar vein, Shivaji's son Sambhaji (named for the same Shambhu of Satara mentioned above) adopted a pragmatic policy of recognizing a legitimating Muslim power, even within the context of advocating religious loyalty. In a letter to the Rajput raja Ram Singh (Jai Singh's son), he encourages him to join in support of Aurangzeb's son Akbar in a rebellion against his father the emperor: "If you and we join our forces and place Akbar on the throne, we shall get the opportunity of protecting our religion" (Sarkar 1978, 185).

It is perhaps not surprising that Muslims are usually not judged according to their own community's standards but are included within a Hindu cosmos, a world of Hindu values. As I have stated above, however, we find in the *Śivabhārata* the use of the word *dharma* in two ways: not only to mean the natural law of the universe, with *adharma* a sort of principle of demonic chaos, but also used to mean the *interpretation* (by human beings) of the truth of things. Using the term in this second way, we see the emergence of the idea of two separate religions, two *dharmas*, with Muslims having their own *dharma*, with its own principles, a legitimate alternative view of the world, even if it is referred to as the *mleccha dharma* or "religion of the barbarians." An individual Muslim can be described as being able to act "according to the dictates of his own religion (*dharma*)" (SBH 13.40), or acting in such a way as to "transgress his own Book [(*svapustaka*), that is, the Qur'an] (SBH 12.114). Shivaji is described as "devoted to his own religion" and "assuming leadership of his own religion (*dharma*)" (SBH 17.12, 19.30).

This view is not, however, fully embraced, as is evident in the fact that **(p.42)** the author is also happy to have Muslims describe themselves in the terms ascribed to them by Hindus—as demons, forces of the Kali Yuga, cow killers. To use the distinction developed by Jonathan Z. Smith (1992), there is here the emergence of a discourse of “difference,” which recognizes the difference of Hinduism and Islam, two *dharma*s (or two *dīns*), but negotiates that difference. This discourse is, however, weak, and has not displaced the more dominant discourse of “otherness,” in which the Muslim is not just different, but Other, declared to be barbaric and unintelligible, and thus caricatured as the cruel, lustful, intoxicated, cow-slaughtering idol-smasher. In this discourse of Otherness, we have images of anti-Hinduism, not another *dharma* but rather *adharma*. This sort of image, which is especially prominent in Marathi ballads, remains prevalent even in the popular culture of Maharashtra today. For example, early traditions portray the Adil Shahi general Afzal Khan as attacking the temples of Pandharpur and Tuljapur, even taunting the goddess Tulja Bhavani, before marching to Javli, where he met his death at the hand of the devotee Bhavani, Shivaji.

We have noted that in the earliest ballad, “The Killing of Afzal Khan,” the khan taunts Shivaji by asking why he has such fancy tents, decorated like those of a badshah, when he was but a peasant. Shivaji retorts: “I know your caste, you son of a cook (*bhaṭārī*)!” These traded insults were not caricatures but actually quite accurate. Before receiving the honorific name Afzal Khan, the general's name was Abdul Bhatari; Shivaji, when he met Afzal in 1661 in Javli stood on land taken by murder from the More clan five years earlier, a clan more aristocratic than his own Bhosle family (and the Mores assisted Afzal Khan in his march on Javli). So although here we have Afzal Khan portrayed as a demon, we nonetheless also glimpse a common world of difference and conflict but not absolute otherness. It is noteworthy that the ballad's language is heavily Persianized (unlike eighteenth-century Marathi), and passages where the khan speaks are sometimes rendered in something of a Deccani Urdu. Shivaji himself is throughout referred to by the Persian honorific Sarja, “the lion” and can quite naturally “give his *salaam* (greetings)” to his father, and even to the Hindu deities Shiva and Bhavani.

Conclusion

Shivaji was born into a world in which Muslims played very natural roles. They were rulers and commanded a certain obedience and respect. They were nobles and generals. They were saints, dead or alive, **(p.43)** radiant with charisma and holy powers. To Hindus, the specifics of Islamic belief were not well known and were often interpreted within the framework of the Hindu worldview, but their religious praxis—diet, dress, circumcision, festivals—were known as well as the variant practices of the many Hindu castes that made up the society. By and large, Muslims were different in their beliefs and practices but not inexpressibly alien. Moreover, Muslims were not a uniform group. Whatever their theoretical affirmation of unity, there was great internal diversity among the Muslims of seventeenth-century Maharashtra; they were Afghans and Ethiopians, Persian-speaking nobles, and low-born Marathi speakers, Shi'is and Sunnis. They were soldiers in the mutually hostile armies of the Adil Shah, the Nizam Shah, and the Mughal emperor, of the Abyssinian Siddis and of Shivaji himself.

Thus any portrait of seventeenth-century Maharashtra that pictures Shivaji leading a band of united Hindu liberationists against a united Islamic oppressor must be rejected as a gross misrepresentation. There were many local powers, and local leaders carefully calculated their

own interests, casting their lot with whatever empire offered them the most wealth and security and upward mobility. For Maratha nobles, the seventeenth century was a time of shifting fortunes. Some did well by allying with Shivaji's movement, others in continued service to the Adil Shah or the Mughals. We see this pattern in Shivaji's grandfather, who rose to prominence by serving with the Nizam Shah and by using the nizam's influence to broker a marriage alliance with the aristocratic Jadhav family. Shivaji himself began as a nominal servant of the Adil Shah, and later agreed to an alliance with Jai Singh and to fight as a Mughal general. Even Shivaji's son calculated his best interests, and served briefly in alliance with Dilir Khan, a prominent Mughal general. This tendency continued into the eighteenth century, when the system of alliances became, if anything, even more complex. But in the seventeenth century, it is clear that religious identity was not a major factor in determining how Maratha nobles forged military and political alliances.

So what are we to make of Shivaji's orthodox coronation, his patronage of brahmins and poets who proclaimed him a protector of Hinduism? How did he become a hero, and what sort of hero was he?

Given the world into which he was born, it is not surprising that Shivaji would participate in many aspects of Islamicate culture, donning Persian dress, offering *salaam*, patronizing the shrines of Sufi pirs, even fighting in one of Aurangzeb's armies. In this he followed ways of life similar to those of his grandfather, father, sons, and grandsons. **(p.44)** And yet we suspect that his agenda was something different, and that he did stand apart. There were constraints on how independent he could be, but it does seem that when he could, he attempted to rule as an independent Hindu monarch, to be a patron of his religious traditions, and to challenge the hegemony of the Islamicate world around him. His predecessors and successors were more accommodationist, less heroic, and less well remembered. Moreover, the stories of their bravery were nowhere near as good. The killer of Afzal Khan, the "punisher" of Shaista Khan, the man who slipped from the grasp of Aurangzeb performed great deeds, deeds that presume a great cause and a great inspiration. The inspiration was the Goddess Bhavani (and behind her, his mother Jijabai); the cause was independent rule, *swaraj* (*svarāj*). The idea of a reified Hinduism, a sort of essence of all the diversity of indigenous practices and beliefs of Hindus, a religion standing in opposition to Islam, was an idea only vaguely felt in the seventeenth century, something perhaps implicit in the notion of *swaraj*. But Shivaji's great heroism was an epic and martial heroism, a heroism of the warrior. It would take a century for the stories of the martial hero Shivaji to be wed to those of the Hindu hero. To those I will turn in the following chapter.

Notes:

(1.) Sarkar 1961, Sardesai 1946, Gordon 1993.

(2.) There is a nice irony here, for while he was under house arrest, Shivaji offered to Aurangzeb to renounce the world and live out his days in Benares wearing the saffron robe. Aurangzeb dismissed the offer with scorn. "Let him turn faqir and live in Allahabad fort [a place for state prisoners]" (Sarkar 1961, 147).

(3.) A similar tale is told of Afzal Khan, whom Udebhan resembles in several respects (Sarkar 1961, 70ff).

(4.) This phrase (*gaḍ ālā, paṇ siṃha gelā*) is not found in the early ballad, but is very well known, perhaps because of the romantic popular novel *Gaḍ Ālā paṇ Siṃha Gelā!* (1972), written by H. N. Apte (d. 1919). S. G. Tulpule described Apte to me as the “Sir Walter Scott of Marathi literature.”

(5.) For information on this text, I have relied completely on the work of Allison Busch (1999 and 2002).

(6.) For a discussion of Shivaji as an epic hero/sacrificer, see my article, “Śivājī as Epic Hero” (1995), where I relate this material to the theories of J. C. Heesterrnan 1985 on sacrifice and warfare.

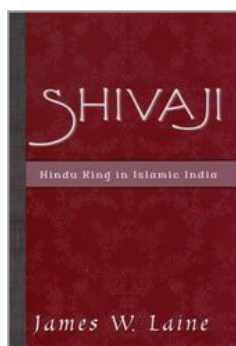
(7.) For a translation and discussion of this passage in the *Mahābhārata*, see my book *Visions of God* (Laine 1989), 37–40, 52–57, 66–75. Also see Scheuer 1982, 205–245.

(8.) Aurangzeb for example, found himself supporting Hindu shrines for political reasons (Chandra 1993).



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The Hindu Hero: Shivaji and the Saints, 1780–1810

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Abstract and Keywords

In spite of the fact that Shivaji is remembered as the father of Maharashtra and that a notion exists that his reign could be considered a period of Maratha glory, Maratha was only able to recognize its peak during the mid-18th century as Brahmin prime ministers, peshwas, and Shivaji's descendants received power. Despite the rise of peshwa power, Shivaji's legend continued to be retold and this received more attention to the history of peshwa reign. This chapter identifies the cultural context that is required to be able to reflect on Shivaji during this time of Maratha authority and the decline of Mughal power experienced before the British colonization emerged. The chapter does this by examining primary resources such as *bakhars* and other authentic historical chronicles from the 18th century.

Keywords: Maharashtra, Maratha glory, peshwa reign, Mughal power, bakhars, historical chronicles

Although Shivaji is remembered as the father of Maharashtra and his reign as a time of Maratha glory, Maratha power reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, when actual power fell to a succession of brahmin prime ministers, the peshwas, and the royal descendants of Shivaji became mere figureheads. The peshwa period produced its own noteworthy figures and heroes, but the story of Shivaji continued to be told, rewritten, and elaborated throughout this period, and no narrative of peshwa power replaced the story of Shivaji as the central myth of Maharashtrian identity.

Before we turn to the elaboration of the Shivaji legend in the eighteenth century, it will be necessary to summarize briefly the political and cultural history of that time. After Shivaji's death in 1680, there was a period of disputed succession. His eldest son Sambhaji moved quickly

to claim the reins of power, executing a large number of Shivaji's loyal courtiers and those military men who favored his rival brother Rajaram, a boy often who had been hastily crowned immediately after Shivaji's death.¹ Rajaram's ambitious mother, Shivaji's second wife, was also executed, and Rajaram was kept in confinement for the nine years of Sambhaji's reign. Sambhaji continued to be plagued by factions, as numerous prominent Maratha families opposed his rule, but he carried out several campaigns in south India and Goa. Late in his reign, he was contacted by Aurangzeb's son, Prince Akbar, who was eager to rebel against his aging father and establish an alliance with the Marathas. This alliance provoked Aurangzeb to lead an invasion of Maharashtra, and (p.46) although Akbar escaped to Persia, Sambhaji was captured, tortured, and cruelly executed in 1689. His wife and their son, later known as Shahu, were taken into the Mughal camp, while Rajaram, now nineteen, was declared king, and escaped to Jinji, deep in Tamil country. Nearby, in Tanjore, Rajaram's cousin Shahji, son of Ekoji, ruled a second south Indian Maratha kingdom.

From Jinji, Rajaram's armies were able temporarily to stymie the Mughal advance in the Deccan. By 1698, Rajaram could establish his capital in the heart of Maharashtra, at Satara. Two years later, he died at the age of thirty, leaving his queen, the famous Tarabai, to carry the fight against Mughal power in the name of her son Shivaji II. Rajaram's line survived into the modern period as the *chatrapatis* of Kolhapur, a small princely state in southern Maharashtra. In 1707, Aurangzeb died and Shivaji's grandson Shahu returned to rule Maharashtra after seventeen years of life in the Mughal camp. He ruled until 1749 from Satara. Thus, from 1707 to the British period, there were two royal lines in Maharashtra, traceable to Shivaji's two sons. But when Shahu named the Chitpavan brahmin Balaji Vishwanath his prime minister in 1714, we see the founding of peshwa rule in Maharashtra, centered at Pune, which made Shivaji's descendants insignificant and led to a period of Maratha paramountcy not only in Maharashtra but also from Gujarat to Delhi to Orissa. In this period Pune, the de facto capital, became a wealthy city of brahmin bankers, intellectuals, and politicians.

After a crushing military defeat at Panipat in 1761, Maratha power, which had already fragmented into a confederacy of five powers with capitals in Baroda, Gwalior, Indore, Nagpur, and Pune, declined somewhat, even as there was growing European influence on the affairs of South Asia. By 1818 the British, who admired the Marathas as the inheritors of a proud military tradition and had seen them as the key players in central India, used the raja of Satara as the figurehead of their own growing military, political, and economic control of the region. James Grant Duff, serving as Resident at Satara in 1818, published his three-volume *History of the Mahrattas* in 1826, which was ostensibly part of a colonial construction of knowledge about Maharashtra, but which was to be the basis for influential nineteenth-century anticolonial reflections by Maratha intellectuals. But before we turn to Grant Duff and the colonial and modern periods of Maharashtrian history in the next chapter, we may pause to consider here two important questions. First why, if Maratha power reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, are the peshwas and other military heroes of this period not remembered with the same affection as Shivaji? And second, what was the cultural (p.47) context for further reflection on Shivaji in this period of Maratha supremacy and Mughal decline prior to the rise of British colonial power?

All answers to the first question will be speculative, but there are several interesting possibilities. The appeal of the Shivaji legend is based largely upon the fact that Shivaji was an underdog, a rebel confronting the enormously powerful sultans of the seventeenth century. His personal bravery in face-to-face encounters with Afzal Khan, Shaista Khan, and Aurangzeb personalize this historical narrative and make it a romance. Furthermore, in Aurangzeb Shivaji has a formidable opponent in what has seemed to be a culture war between an unbending Islamic orthodoxy and a revival of classical Hindu inclusivism. When we turn to the peshwas, however, we find figures of great talent and power, but in their success they become more like the Mughals they opposed. An air of wealth, decadence, and accommodation clings to the peshwas, which contrasts unfavorably with the image of Shivaji clustering with his rustic Mavli lieutenants, uncomfortable with the courtly life of sultans and defending Hindu gods, brahmins, and cows against intolerant barbarians who are bigger and stronger, but never as clever or noble. In the peshwa period, the brahmins are no longer simply the symbols of learning, orthodoxy, and vegetarian peacefulness, they are now the generals and powerbrokers of the realm, who assume the trappings not only of kshatriya royalty but of Persianate kingship as well.

There are some charming stories about the eighteenth century in the collective memory of Maharashtrians. Take, for example, the life of the great Bajirao, the second peshwa appointed by Shahu. In his history of Pune, B. G. Gokhale describes him in these terms:

His career of twenty years (1720–40) was an epic of ceaseless energy, undaunted courage, inspired leadership and matchless military skill. He led his redoubtable cavalry from one victory to another, through Gujarat and central India and on to Delhi. He humbled the Nizam, the greatest grandee of the Mughal Empire; and through his victories and his love for his mistress, Mastani, left behind for the Marathas a legend of all that was brave, daring and romantic in the Maratha character. (Gokhale 1988, 5)

Few Maharashtrians today know the details of Bajirao's illustrious military career and his role in transforming Pune from a market town into a grand city, but most would know of his illegitimate affair with the Muslim dancing girl Mastani. He lavished gifts upon her, but more orthodox members of his brahmin caste castigated him for the affair and ultimately had her imprisoned in 1739 while he was on campaign.

(p.48) It is said that on that campaign, he died not of battle wounds but of a broken heart. The mention of Mastani introduces the role of romance and sexuality in heroic literature, a role that I will explore more fully in chapter 5. Here one might note, however, that the figure of Shivaji is always portrayed as the obedient son, so devoted to his mother that his love life is hardly imaginable. He is contrasted to his Muslim opponents who, following the standard Hindu tropes, are depicted as cruel and lascivious. In the Shivaji legend, we find a simple heroic opposition of good and evil, of the noble Hindu hero who respects and protects women, even the wives of his adversaries, in contrast with Afzal Khan or Udebhan, who use women as sexual playthings only to murder them on a whim. With Shivaji's death, we find a far less satisfying opposition. Rajaram and Sambhaji both married their daughters to Mughal nobles (*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, 48) and Sambhaji was chastized for “violating” a brahmin woman (Sarkar 1961, 317). Meanwhile, Aurangzeb took Shahu and his mother into his own household, where they were well cared for and even allowed to continue the practice of their religion. Upon his release from Mughal captivity, Shahu immediately paid a visit to Aurangzeb's tomb in Khuldabad.

After the early death in 1772 of Madhav Rao Peshwa, whose beloved and devoted wife followed her husband in death by mounting his funeral pyre, the contest for the peshwa's power assumed new levels of intrigue, corruption, and internecine violence. The career of Ghashiram Kotwal (d. 1790), a north Indian brahmin who served as chief of police in what became the corrupt capital, represents the sort of bribery and licentiousness that characterized late peshwa times. His penchant for blackmail and young girls was the theme of the controversial twentieth-century play "Ghāśiram Kotval" (Tendulkar 1984).

In answer to our first question, we may reasonably conclude, then, that although Maratha power under the peshwas was unsurpassed and the Marathas were the most powerful state in India in the mid-eighteenth century, their story cannot be read as an heroic tale in which forces of good are marshaled against forces of evil. The good guys and the bad guys no longer look very different.

In answer to our second question, we can examine those texts that elaborate the Shivaji legend, first to consider the cultural contexts in which the legend was being retold, and second, to consider the consequences of the more developed narrative.

The primary sources for understanding the eighteenth-century version of the Shivaji legend are the historical chronicles or *bakhars*, which followed the tradition of Krishnaji Sabhasad, whose 1697 biography (p.49) of Shivaji we have considered as one of the earliest sources for the legend. His text was expanded by Raghunath Yadav, writing under the pen name Chitragupta in 1761, but the most influential and original treatment of Shivaji's life comes at the end of our period, when Malhar Rao Chitnis produced a biography of Shivaji for his patron Shahu II (d. 1808), the Satara *chatrapati*. This text, the *Śakakarte Śrī Śiva Chatrapati Mahārāj* (Chitnis), and that of the anonymously authored *Śivadigvijay* (SDV), are the two richest legendary accounts of Shivaji's life to be written before the advent of the Western-inspired biography.² These two texts, when supplemented by the accounts of Shivaji meeting the saints in the hagiographies composed by Mahipati, the Vakari hagiographer, may be taken as the best examples of a literature that sustains the memory of Shivaji and which provides a full treatment of the mythic narrative of his life. This sort of mythic and legendary biography becomes a narrative of Hindu identity in its opposition to Islam.

Already in the seventeenth-century texts we find narrative examples of a movement that can be characterized as the transformation of a martial hero into a religious figure. But it was in the eighteenth century, when the complexities of the actual nature of Hindu and Muslim interaction in the seventeenth century became a blurred memory, that this movement gained real force and became a permanent part of the Shivaji legend. This is most clearly seen in the wedding of Shivaji's story to that of the prominent seventeenth-century saints, which adds a completely new chapter to the legend. Even if we restrict ourselves to the tales known in Shivaji's own time, we see traces of a religious hero fighting a religious war, and these traces are elaborated in the eighteenth century to articulate the Hindu dimension of Shivaji's legendary identity. Perhaps the fact that Maratha politics in the eighteenth century could not be read in moralistic terms led to a nostalgia for what seemed to be a simpler world in which Shivaji held up the banner for all that was noble in Hinduism.

One interesting elaboration of the Shivaji legend is the story of his childhood visit to his father in Bijapur. The primary purpose of this story is to explain why Shivaji followed a life course different from that of his father, and why he ended up living in Pune with his mother, apart from his father. In the *Śivadigvijay*, we read:

The city [Bijapur] was under Muhammadan government (*yavanī rājya*) and cow slaughter (*govadh*) was frequent. He [Shivaji] felt disgusted.... and used to say to his father's house, — “it is not good to live upon the bread of Muhammadans (*yavanānce anna*) and to witness cow slaughter. **(p.50)** Death is far more desirable. I shall no longer tolerate any slight upon religion (*dharma*) or any act of Muhammadan injustice (*yavanī avicār*). If my father abandons me on that account, I shall not mind, but it is not good to stay in such a place.” (Sen 1920, 157, translating SDV, 68)

When Shivaji persists in his reluctance to accommodate to Islamic practices, including a rebellious unwillingness to observe proper etiquette at the Adil Shah's court, his father is forced to send him away to a place where he will not cause constant offense (SDV, 69–71, Sen 1920, 157–59). In some accounts, Shivaji, though a mere boy, goes so far as to murder Muslim butchers for the offense of cow slaughter! And so it is that Shivaji must be sent away from the Bijapur court where his father served as a respected noble. As a later writer constructs this event, following the eighteenth-century chronicles, Jijabai tells her husband to excuse Shivaji's irregular behavior and to send the two of them to Pune: “Jijabai communicated these wishes to Shahaji and pointed out the undesirability of punishing the boy for this sort of eccentricity, though otherwise so humble and docile and obedient [*sic*]. His mysterious hatred of Mahomedans, she thought, agreeably [*sic*] to the feelings of a Hindu woman, must be a legacy inherited by him from a former birth” (Takakhav 1921, 65). Besides the need to establish a reason for Shivaji and his mother to live apart from Shahji, the stories of Shivaji's life in Bijapur have the secondary purpose of portraying him as uncompromising in matters of religion. Here he is a person whose deep commitments to Hinduism, expressed by a belief in the sanctity of the cow, made him a champion of the faith and put him at odds with Islam.

Another place we see eighteenth-century elaboration is in the story of Shivaji's escape from house arrest in Agra. In Sabhasad's early account, we have the kernel of the story. Shivaji outwits his guards, escapes, and travels incognito to Benares before returning to Maharashtra. In Chitnis's account, the entire fifth chapter of his seven-chapter chronicle is entitled “The Defeat of the Delhi Emperor,” and the escape is given its fullest symbolic significance. Before the escape, Shivaji worries to himself: “How will I get out of this fix? I have taken as my way not to take the bread of Muslims, and to establish *dharma*. Shall I now give that up to be the emperor's *vazir*? Or should I with skill and courage try and escape and thus fulfill my plans?” (Chitnis, 210).³ He concludes that even at the risk of his life he must pursue his mission, and places the burden on the goddess. In Chitnis, once his escape is successful, Shivaji's return trip home becomes a major pilgrimage. Dressed in the saffron robe of a holy man, he travels not just to Benares but also north, past Hardwar, and from there to Prayag, Ayodhya, and **(p.51)** Gaya, taking holy baths and seeking a vision of the gods (*darśan*) before turning back to Maharashtra (Chitnis, 213). Along the way, he is put up by a woman who apologizes for the poor fare she has to offer. A sardar of Shivaji had looted her village, she complains (Chitnis, 213). Taking note of the woman's name, he assures her that all will be well, and makes plans to

discipline his soldiers and make restitution to the good woman. This folkloric story of entertaining angels—or at least the king—unawares has become a standard story in the Shivaji legend. It is also important to have the king meet humble folk and understand their plight while he himself is temporarily poor and vulnerable.

Like Arjuna, who takes long pilgrimages as part of an initiation into the difficult life of the warrior who is also part holy man and yogi,⁴ Shivaji's pilgrimage after his escape from Agra becomes a clue to the character the eighteenth-century writers wanted to portray. He is disguised in saffron robes, but for the reader the disguise is intended not so much to hide as to reveal. The *Śivadigvijay* has Shivaji prepare his men for the raid on Shaista Khan's residence with the following speech: "I have become a Fakir for the sake of Hinduism (*hindudharmākaritā phakīrī ghetlī āhe*). Though I had wealth and kingdom, I have thrown myself into the current. Those who are my real followers will come with me. Success and failure lie with the goddess" (Sen 1920, 202, translating SDV, 220). We saw that in Shri Shailam, scene of Arjuna's near-death initiation at Shiva's hands (*Mahābhārata* 3.40–41), Shivaji was tempted to offer his head in self-sacrifice, only to be dissuaded by his goddess. Now on pilgrimage, he assumes a temporary but meaningful role of the renouncer, and in this liminal state learns the fate of the poor of his kingdom, ravaged by war. The temptation to renunciation, the desire of the warrior to renounce the world of wealth, power, and violence, becomes a primary preoccupation of the eighteenth-century writers who transform Shivaji from the martial hero violently protecting the core of Hinduism (gods, brahmins, and cows) into a character who embodies the core values of an essentialized, universalistic religion (renunciation, contemplation, devotion). The author of the *Śivabhārata* is content to praise Shivaji as a kshatriya, the royal warrior who accepts the caste role of legitimate ferocity in the protection of brahmins and their practices. In the eighteenth-century texts, however, we find an unwillingness to rest content with caste particularism and a growing sense that all persons in all times and places are called to the truths of a universalistic, devotional Hinduism steeped in the values of the renouncer. Even the king must be drawn to this vision. The emerging ideology of universalism governs the new narrative element found (p.52) in these writers, namely, Shivaji's relationship to the saints. This theme is prominent in the chronicler Chitnis, but in the hagiographer Mahipati it becomes the dominant motif.

Two prominent saints of seventeenth century-Maharashtra, Tukaram (d. 1649) and Ramdas (d. 1681), are associated with Shivaji. During the modern pilgrimage to Pandharpur, Tukaram's icons of Tukaram's sandals (*pādukās*), carried in a palanquin, are brought from his hometown of Dehu to Pune where they meet with the scandals of Jnaneshvar. There, according to the traditional choreography, the two processions meet and Tukaram's palanquin goes first into the city. The procession passes a modern Tukaram temple, where one sees a mural that depicts Shivaji kneeling before the feet of Tukaram—secular authority submitting to spiritual authority. This theme is echoed in all the stories of Shivaji meeting Ramdas, which emphasize that the king completely submitted to the holy man's authority and handed his kingdom over to the saint.

No literary text of the seventeenth century associates Shivaji with either of these saints, although Ramdas writes passages that seem to be written as advice to the king (*Dās Bodh* 18.6). Some scholars produce letters and deeds to show that the king patronized Ramdas and/or accepted him as his guru. There are arguments about their first meeting. Was it 1649, and was

Shivaji's entire subsequent quest a holy war devoted to his brahmin guru? Or was it 1672, after most of the fight was won? (see R. D. Ranade 1982, 363–369; Deming 1928, 52–75). Or was he truly devoted to the nonbrahmin Tukaram, and were all these stories of devotion to Ramdas a brahmin plot to make the king a servant of brahmins (Phule 1969, 266)?

The fact that Ramdas is nowhere mentioned in documents associated with the king's coronation makes it unlikely that the saint was his personal guru or that he played a large role in inspiring his quest. The early texts clearly depict the king as a Shaiva and devotee of the goddess Bhavani. We also have evidence that the king's half-brother in south India, a realm where the Ramdasi order flourished in the eighteenth century, was also a patron of Ramdas.⁵ It appears likely that Ramdas may have sought and received the patronage of both kings, and given that the two brothers were rivals and followed very different agendas, it is even more doubtful that Ramdas played a major role in Shivaji's life. In the case of Tukaram, we have even less evidence that the two men had anything to do with each other. We may reasonably surmise that stories of the saints' role in Shivaji's life have more to do with eighteenth-century concerns than with actual events from a century before.

(p.53) Both Chitnis and Mahipati record stories of the encounter of Shivaji and Tukaram, and both report that although Shivaji sought out Tukaram to be his teacher, the unworldly saint sent him to Ramdas. And both give accounts of Shivaji's temptation to renounce the world, give his kingdom to his guru Ramdas, and live the life of an ascetic devotee, only to be told by Ramdas to resume his duties as a king. One can see the ideological concerns of the two writers by considering their works separately and in detail.

Mahipati (1715–90) was the grandson of the saint Bhanudas and a key figure in the tradition of devotion to Vithoba of Pandharpur. He lived in the village of Taharabad (Ahmadnagar district), where he worked briefly as a government official, but was known as a performer of dramatic devotional services of devotional songs (*kīrtans*) and a composer of hagiographies in Marathi. His first work, the *Bhaktavijay* (BhV) was composed in 1762, followed by the *Santalīlāmṛt* (1767), the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774), and the *Santavijay* (SV), left unfinished at his death in 1790. Western scholars have known of these texts since the 1920s and 1930s, when Justin E. Abbott translated portions of numerous Marathi hagiographies.⁶ It is the *Santavijay*, a hagiography of Ramdas, that is of primary importance to the Shivaji legend, since it repeatedly mentions the king's devotion to the saint; of the twenty-five chapters of the text, thirteen mention Shivaji. But despite this constant reference to the king, Mahipati gives us absolutely nothing in the way of historical detail about Shivaji. The stories are vaguely situated, formulaic, and clearly written for ideological purposes other than those of preserving an accurate portrayal of Shivaji's reign.

Mahipati's first concern is to depict Shivaji as a latter-day Arjuna, world-weary and prepared to devote himself to the saint. The first story of their encounter has Shivaji on a hunting expedition when he notices, first, that the ferocious animals of the forest go to Ramdas peacefully, and second, that Ramdas composes his verses on leaves and floats them down the river (SV 4.23ff.). Recovering these poems, Shivaji reads them and grows in admiration of the saint. People begin to grumble, however, that the saint has made Shivaji crazy, that the king has abandoned the pursuits appropriate for a king, such as horseback riding and hunting (SV 4.68–69), and that he is neglecting his royal administration. His ministers criticize him for failing to fulfill his duties as

a kshatriya and for preferring Ramdas's Marathi verses to Sanskrit learning. Nonetheless, Shivaji persists in his reverence for Ramdas, and is ultimately initiated as a disciple (SV 4.112ff.) by learning a secret mantra and vowing to follow certain practices: avoiding the killing of animals; **(p.54)** serving sadhus; observing the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight; and worshiping Maruti (or Hanuman, the monkey god and servant of Rama). Shivaji remains resolved to worship at his guru's feet, but is compelled by his teacher to accept the responsibility of kingship. Ramdas declares, "Now then without further doubts start on the path of your personal duties (*svadharma*). You have made an offering of body, mind, wealth, and kingdom to your *sadguru*. Therefore, no longer speak of anything as your own, and carry out my commands" (Abbott 1932, 60, translating SV 4.144). Shivaji departs reluctantly: "He could not bear the thought of separation (*viyoga*), and yet he did not wish to disobey Ramdas. Although his heart (*mana*) was bound to his *sadguru*'s feet, yet his material body had to walk along" (Abbott 1932, 60, translating SV 4:144–145).

At this point Mahipati has provided the classical compromise of the *Bhagavadglītā* between the universal virtue of renunciation and the particularism of caste duty. The king is to renounce the world in spirit, handing everything over to his guru, while yet continuing his duties as a king. Mahipati explicitly compares the *Dās Bodh* to the *Gītā* and Shivaji to Arjuna (SV 14.40ff). The fact that this is a painful compromise, however, is expressed by the king's extreme reluctance to assume his worldly role. In fact, all of Mahipati's further references to Shivaji's encounters with Ramdas repeat the basic scene and reiterate this unresolved tension between worldliness and renunciation (cf. SV 6.43ff., 8.20–21, 14.13ff.). None of these encounters provides any historic specificity; they all begin with a phrase such as "once the king learned that Ramdas was in the vicinity," or "just then, the king arrived," and the one specific that is often mentioned—that Shivaji afterward returns to his capital at Satara (e.g., 6.160)—is inaccurate. Although Satara was the eighteenth-century capital of the Shivaji's successors, his own capital was Raigad, and never Satara.

Mahipati's portrayal of Maharashtra's greatest king and military hero lavishing worship on his saintly guru is clearly an invitation to the worldly powers of his day to continue patronage of religious personages associated with the Pandharpur cult. Consistently with this aim, he pursues two other ideological points in the *Santavijay* and other texts. First, he demotes Gaga Bhatta and the Goddess Bhavani from the prominent role they play in the Shivaji legend. And second, he seeks to merge Ramdas, a devotee of Rama and Maruti, into the devotional cult of Vithoba of Pandharpur.

Gaga Bhatta, the brahmin scholar who was called to construct Shivaji's genealogy and perform his coronation, is portrayed in the **(p.55)** *Santavijay* as an envious fool who discourages Shivaji from reading the *Dās Bodh* and following Ramdas (SV 14.60ff.). In the end, however, he comes to see Ramdas as the incarnation of Maruti, even supreme *brahman* itself, and he loses his pride (SV 14.119–122). Thus the brahmin who in the seventeenth century texts was called upon to confer legitimacy on the king is replaced, in these stories, by the saint and guru Ramdas, a man not mentioned in those earlier texts. And it is likely that the average Maharashtrian today would know the name Ramdas, and would associate him with Shivaji, but only a small minority know the name Gaga Bhatta.

In portraying the king as a devotee of Ramdas, Mahipati portrays him as a disciple given to renunciation, periods of unconscious bliss (*samadhi*), and vegetarianism. Over and over again, we read in Mahipati that the king's ministers are concerned that the king is so intoxicated by divine contemplation that he neglects his royal duties (for example: “Now King Shivaji was day and night worrying over Ramdas; his kingdom and his wealth ceased to be dear to him”; Abbott 1932, 230, translating SV 15.59). In the seventeenth-century texts, the king is a devotee of Bhavani, a goddess who demands blood sacrifice and would never encourage the king to give up hunting or engage in meditation. She possesses him and leads him to war, which, as a kshatriya, is precisely the role caste Hinduism would have him play. This is also the role to which he was consecrated by Gaga Bhatta.

In converting the king to the universalistic, vegetarian Vaishnavism of Ramdas, Mahipati must deal with the fact that Shivaji was known to be a devotee of Bhavani, a nonvegetarian goddess whose temple in Tuljapur was the site of buffalo sacrifice until recent times. First he demotes Bhavani and then he absorbs her into the principle of primal (female) creation (*Ādi Māyā*). In the *Bhaktavijay*, Mahipati writes of one King Pipaji who is a pious devotee of Bhavani. When the king is visited by a group of Vaishnava saints, Bhavani herself refuses Pipaji's offerings until the saints are fed, and in a vision tells him that Vishnu is superior to her and to all other deities (BhV 26.23–27). In several places we read of Ramdas himself reforming worship and dismissing the “inferior deities” of folk Hinduism (e.g., SV 18.3 5ff.). Bhavani cannot be fully dismissed but she can be ranked as a deity of secondary importance. In the *Santavijay* (24.108ff), we read of the Bhavani image that Shivaji established at Pratapgad, the fort near the place where he killed Afzal Khan. This Bhavani appears to Ramdas, and when he asks her who she is, she replies: “I am the original *Ādi Maya*” (Abbott 1932, 368, translating SV 24.110). She asks why he has never praised her in (p.56) verse, to which he replies, “You are the Primal Force, the Mother-Illusion (*ādiśakti*, *mohamāye*, 24.113). No one can describe any one without the power that is of you. It is said that Supreme *Brahma* is beyond description. Whatever I have, therefore, said of it is through your power (*śakti*)” She answers, “Philosophy teaches that I have an infinite variety of forms, but when you describe my attributes, I listen with satisfaction” (Abbott 1932, 368, translating SV 24.114–115). The story goes on to tell how Ramdas agrees to sing her praises if she will give him a gift of pearl earrings. He transports himself magically to her locked temple, receives the gift, and returns to his hermitage. In the morning, the priests find the pearls missing, and an investigation ensues. The goddess then reveals to Shivaji in a dream that she has fashioned pearl earrings for Ramdas. Going to Ramdas the next day, he sees the proof, but still wonders how the saint entered the locked temple. Ramdas tells him, “How can one of pure mind, and freed from the bondage of worldly existence, be bound?” (Abbott 1932, 370, translating SV 24.138). Thus we find here an incorporation of Bhavani into a story of Ramdas, but her character is thoroughly formed by the principles of Vedanta. This is not the goddess who asked for Afzal Khan's head, but a philosophic abstraction of feminine creative power.⁷

Mahipati is in these various ways a narrativist, incorporating the narrative of Shivaji into a narrative of Ramdas, and then incorporating that narrative into his primary narrative of the *bhakti* tradition centered at Pandharpur. Unlike the other great poet-saints—Jnaneshvar, Eknath, Namdev, Tukaram—Ramdas is not a devotee of Vithoba but a worshiper of Rama and Maruti. Although the record is mixed, he is also not a radical reformer and critic of caste

privilege. For example, his lamentation on the decadence of his age includes a great emphasis on the decline of the brahmin's status (*Dās Bodh* 14.7.29–40).

Instead of seeing “surface” difference, however, Mahipati follows the classic Vedantic tradition of seeing underlying sameness, a philosophical inclination that allows him to include Ramdas in the Pandharpur tradition. In the *Santavijay*, we read of Ramdas going to Pandharpur and gazing at an image of Vithoba that is transformed before his eyes into an image of Rama (SV 9. 167ff.; cf. also BhV 47.73ff.). In the following chapter, Ramdas holds a performance of devotional songs a (*kīrtan*), and all the great holy men of his time are in attendance, including Tukaram, Sheikh Muhammad, and the poet Waman Pandit (SV 10.69–77).

It is not surprising that the impulse to narrative coherence brings Ramdas into contact with Tukaram and the two of them into contact **(p.57)** with Shivaji. In both Mahipati and Chitnis, we have accounts of Shivaji going first to Tukaram, only to be referred to Ramdas as the more appropriate guru for the king. All the accounts of Shivaji's relations with Tukaram emphasize Tukaram's unworldliness and unwillingness to accept the king's gifts. In Chitnis, Tukaram praises Ramdas, declares that the two of them are one, and directs Shivaji to seek out Ramdas to be his guru (83). There is the sense here, however, that Tukaram is unwilling to be involved in politics, whereas Ramdas praises Shivaji for his political and military program, calling him a blessed yogi, Lord of Men, Lord of Horses, Lord of Elephants, Lord of Forts, Lord of Earth, Lord of Sea, who protects gods, brahmins, cows, and holy places.⁸ “Maharashtra Dharma survives because of you,” he declares (Chitnis, 84). Ramdas goes on to give the king a program of religious observance:

You are the avatar of Bhim [Shiva]
A boon given by the goddess!
Keep her in your mind
And follow her directions.
Keep five observances:
Read the *Dās Bodh* Practice devotion to the mind
Practice meditation with and without images
Practice *japa* meditation [muttering repetitive prayers]
Maintain holy places
Follow the shastras and the Vedas
Whenever you wish, you will have my company.
(Chitnis, 85)

Ramdas then gives the king eight droppings of horse dung, symbolic of the cavalry, eighty thousand strong, which Shivaji would come to command.

These stories are innocent of historic context. Since Tukaram died in 1649, if Shivaji were to have met him it would have been very early in his career. One well-known story has Shivaji come secretly to Pune from Simhagad to attend a *kirtan* of Tukaram (BhV 48.95 ff.; Chitnis, 79). Getting word that Shivaji is there, the captain of Chakan fort sends two thousand Pathans to surround the meeting. Unable to discern which person they should apprehend, they consider killing them all. Tukaram commands everyone to stay put and have faith. Vithoba then takes Shivaji's form and leads the soldiers on a wild goose chase into the woods. A variation of this

story has God transform the whole assembly into identical Shivajis so that the Muslim soldiers cannot identify their prey, a motif taken perhaps from the story of Ali Baba and the Forty **(p.58)** Thieves.⁹ In reading this story, we have no sense whether the “Pathans” were Mughals or Adil Shahis, but if Shivaji was coming from Simhagad, a fort he acquired about 1647, then Pune and Chakan would have also been under his control. In a later period, he had lost Pune and Chakan to the Mughals, but had lost Simhagad as well, and of course by that time Tukaram was dead. That the very kernel of this story is folkloric and not historical is obvious, but what is important to note is the fact that Muslim opponents are no longer portrayed as Adil Shahis or Mughals (or Nizam Shahis or Qutb Shahis or Siddis); they are simply “Pathans,” representing a single bloc of Islamic opposition to the Hindu community.

The close identification of Shivaji's mission with that of the saints, a narrative element which, as we have seen, first occurs in the eighteenth century and becomes a permanent part of the Shivaji legend, is part of a general tendency to oppose a single universalistic Hinduism to a single monolithic Islam. In this picture, the subtlety of cross-religious alliances, and of the many differences and conflicts within the Hindu and Muslim communities, has been replaced by a picture of mythic clarity. Thus, from his boyhood Shivaji is revolted by the oppressive rule of Muslims, and will devote his life to the restitution of Hindu freedom and pride. His battles are not those of one Maratha chieftain among many, weighing his interests in allying with the numerous competing Hindu and Muslim powers of the Deccan, but rather the battles of indigenous Hindus opposing an oppressive foreign rule and all those collaborators who value their own local power more than their religion and their freedom.

For this myth to work, a portrait of Hinduism as something more than a loose cluster of tolerant, hierarchically ranked traditions had to be painted. In the eighteenth century, then, we see the emergence of a universalistic religion, a Hinduism that is more than caste particularism. Given that the de facto rulers, the peshwas, were brahmins who were playing the role of martial royalty, the ideology of caste Hinduism would be difficult to maintain. In this period, Pune became a city in which brahmins served as royals, generals, bankers, and merchants, as well as priests and intellectuals. So while Shivaji was being transformed into a would-be renouncer, brahmins were pursuing the vocations of kshatriyas and vaishyas. It is also interesting to note that although Ramdas is the author of works that proclaim a very unworldly gospel, he is also the incarnation of Maruti, and as such, a virile warrior-yogi. He is said to have established Maruti temples all **(p.59)** over Maharashtra that became village gymnasiums, and is always described as stout and athletic.¹⁰

In two places in the *Santavijay*, we read accounts of Ramdas displaying his prowess before Mughal captains at the town of Mahuli (SV 11.94ff, 14.28ff.). The stories have numerous parallels. In the first, we read that Aurangzeb had invaded the Deccan, bringing distress to gods, brahmins, and cows (SV 11.94–95). One day Ramdas comes across a Mughal captain practicing archery in the forest. When he sees him miss the target, he taunts him and claims that if the captain would shoot again, he could catch the arrow in mid-air. Ramdas does just as he promised, then further astonishes the captain by shooting an arrow straight through the trunk of a tree. “The Muhammadan's heart now trembled with fear. Said he: 'His seems an extraordinary power. This Hindu *fakir* could alone kill a thousand. If he took it into his heart to do so, he could

conquer the whole of this kingdom,” (Abbott 1932, 162, translating SV 11.106–107). The captain bows before Ramdas who then declares to him:

There is no difference between you and me. God [Chaitanya] pervades every being. To Him there is no such thing as mine and thine. You Muhammadans say that the formless Khuda [God] created the Muhammadans (*musalmānī*), and is it so written in your Kurana [Qur'an] that the Hindus originated from a thief (*cor*)? Your belief is not correct (*imān nāhl sābut*). It creates a continuous spirit of hatred. You trouble God and Brarjmans and therefore your purpose is not accomplished. (Abbott 1932, 162, translating SV 11.109–111)

The translation here is misleading. If one translates *cor* as “deceiver” we can reconstruct an eighteenth-century debate. Ramdas speaks for Hindus saying, “we are all children of God.” The Muslim replies, “yes, but although in primordial time we all recognized our creator, while you Hindus have been tricked by the Deceiver (*cor*) into the idolatry of Hinduism.” The Hindu replies, “you say that a thief (*cor*) has made us Hindus?”

Perhaps Mahipati obliquely captures a misunderstanding that became standard. According to an Islamic anthropology, in primordial time, God draws forth all humanity to ask each one of them singly, “am I not your God?” to which question, each assents. Thus Muslims assume that we have all once submitted to God; we have all declared ourselves Muslims. In ordinary history, we must simply remember our original pledge. The Muslim tells the Hindu then that he has been made a Hindu as the result of a deceiver, that is, Satan, but in rendering the word for **(p.60)** deceiver, he chooses the word *cor*, which can mean deceiver but normally means “thief.” The Hindu replies then to the perceived insult that he was “made by a thief.”

The second passage repeats the same exchange. In this story, a Mughal captain at Mahuli breaks up a *kirtan*, roughing up the participants (SV 19.30ff.). Mahipati indulges in a lengthy critique of Muslims, comparing them to the villains of Hindu mythology and complaining that they pollute brahmins and destroy temples and replace them with mosques built from the same material. The leader of the *kirtan* is arrested and a Muslim judge (*qazi*) is called to convert him forcibly to Islam (presumably by circumcision). Ramdas learns of this, appears magically on the scene in the form of Maruti. He slaps down the Muslim captain and puts everyone into a state of terror. He quotes the Qur'an to them that “God is the Preserver of the world” and criticizes them for the narrow idea that Muslims were created by God (*musalmān kele khudāne*), while Hindus were made by a *cor* (*hindu nirmile coram*, SV 19.65).

A writer such as Mahipati constructed a portrait of a monolithic Hinduism opposed to a monolithic Islam, with the seventeenth century seen as the story of Shivaji and Ramdas contending with Aurangzeb for cultural supremacy. Oddly enough, he authored such a narrative of simple clarity while living in a world of great complexity. After the defeat at Panipat in 1761, Maratha power would never again be unified. Given the factionalization of Maratha politics, some Maratha families (such as, the Nimbalkars of Phaltan) who opposed the dominance of Chitpavan brahmin power in Pune found it to their advantage to support the perennial rival to the peshwa, the nizam of Hyderabad (Gordon 1993, 154). Madhav Rao Peshwa (r. 1761–72), who died a tragic hero at the age of twenty-seven, defeated the army of the nizam of Hyderabad in

1762 only to ally with him in 1765 against the rival Maratha power, the Bhosles of Nagpur. Madhav Rao's successor, Narayan Rao (peshwa 1772–73), alienated the influential Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu caste by denying them access to the sacred thread ceremony and other Vedic rites, and declaring them to be shudras. This reversed a policy that went back to Shivaji himself, and insulted a community that had a long history of service to the Maratha monarchs.¹¹ But when opponents of the peshwa conspired to murder him, they employed some of the many foreign mercenaries employed in Pune, including many Muslims, for an attack on the palace. The raid resulted in the death of seven brahmins, two women servants, and a cow, in addition to the peshwa.

(p.61) Meanwhile, the British and French were becoming players in the geopolitics of the Deccan, finding allies among some Maratha generals and opposing others.

As Mahipati was writing his last work, the *Santavijay*, the Marathas allied with the English and with the nizam against Tipu Sultan (d. 1799), ruler of Mysore, and the Maratha hero Mahaji Shinde, using battalions of infantry and artillery trained by a French adventurer (Gordon 1993, 168), was conquering the Delhi fort and restoring the Mughal emperor Shah Alam to his throne. In gratitude, Shah Alam granted Shinde the government of Mathura and Vrindaban and declared cow slaughter illegal throughout the empire. The peshwa in Pune, to whom Shinde remained loyal, sent among others General Ali Bahadur, the grandson of Mastani, north to the heart of the old Mughal empire that Shinde was propping up (Sardesai 1948, 3:26).

Thus the historical record gives us all these anomalies: Hindus ally with Muslims to oppose other Hindus; a Mughal emperor makes cow slaughter illegal in order to win favor with his Hindu ally; a Muslim grandson of a brahmin peshwa goes to battle for a Maratha hero who is propping up the Mughal emperor; and brahmins acting as kings deny the rights of kayastha clerks to act as members of a twice-born caste, the rights they had gained at the time Shivaji had gained the same rights at his coronation.

All such anomalies could be listed for the seventeenth century as well as for the eighteenth. But if a writer experienced such contradictions in everyday life, perhaps as he looked back on the now-mythicized past he could impute to that golden age a greater simplicity. Perhaps the tales of Shivaji, now that memory's narrativizing work was done, could be read moralistically. The simple tale of the Hindu hero opposing the villainous Muslim could be constructed and told even amid an eighteenth-century experience that was, even as the seventeenth-century experience had been, not so simple. The yearning for such simplicity in an age of complexity was no doubt all the more urgent.

The ideological project of constructing a shared Hindu identity opposed to a Muslim identity, though often thought to be a product of the British period, seems to be well under way in pre-British Maharashtra, though, as we shall see in the following chapter, its full impact on modern communalism was realized under colonialism. A significant part of that project was the transformation of the region's royal and martial hero into a Hindu hero, a defender of the faith who, oddly and ironically, is portrayed in Mahipati as less interested in defending the religion than in practicing it. Meanwhile, as the king be **(p.62)** comes a reluctant warrior, the saint humbles Muslim captains with displays of his machismo. This exchange of martial and clerical

roles at the level of story is the result of an emergent universalism at the level of philosophy, and such universalism is the necessary precursor to the ideology of nationalism. For nationalism presumes that all the members of the “imagined community” participate equally in the common cultural tradition.

Notes:

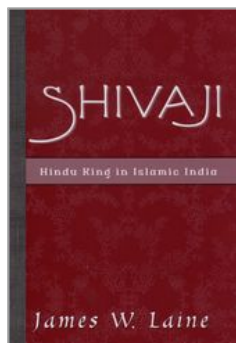
- (1.) The slain courtiers including Hiroji Farzand, Shivaji's half-brother, who had played the role of decoy in the king's escape from Agra.
- (2.) In addition to those texts we have discussed, some scholars use the *Ekkyāṇava Kalmi Bakhar* as an early, seventeenth-century text, while others see it as an early text with a large amount of eighteenth-century redaction. It is a very prosaic work with little of the epic tone, so it is not a very good source for tracing the rise of a mythic legend.
- (3.) *āpaṇ avalambilelā mārg yavanānce anna na gheṇe, dharmasthāpaṇā karṇe te sodūn; tyānce mhaṇavūn tyāṇjavaḷ vaziri daulat melavṇṇ rāhāve; kimvā mothe dhādse...*
- (4.) See Laine 1989, following the work of Madeleine Biarreau. For a synopsis of her views on the warrior-yogi, see Biarreau 1981, 77ff.
- (5.) In the eighteenth century, a Sufi writer in Tamil Nadu, Shah Turab, wrote a loose translation of Ramdas's *Mānace Ślok*, in which he praises Ramdas and espouses a syncretist doctrine of detachment. We know that the Maratha kingdom of Tanjore was the site of great religious interchange between Muslims and Hindus, and that Shivaji's half-brother sent Ramdas a gift of three religious images just before the saint's death in 1681. All this suggests that the Ramdas in south India, and perhaps Ramdas himself, were not so anti-Muslim as they are often thought to have been and that they sought patronage among kings with a tolerant program of patronage.
- (6.) For example, see his *Ramdas: Translation of Mahipati's Santavijaya* (1932); *Life of Tukaram: Translation from Mahipati's Bhaktalilamrita*, Chapters 25–40. (1980); and with Narhar R. Godbole, *Stories of the Indian Saints: Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya* (1982).
- (7.) According to some traditions, Ramdas himself established the image of Bhavani at Pratapgad. See V. P. Bokil 1979, 180; *Dās Bodh of Rāmdās* 18.6; Ranade 1961, 366–367.
- (8.) The titles Lord of Men, Lord of Horses, and Lord of Elephants are mentioned by Cynthia Talbot 1995, 703ff. She explains that they represent the three traditional divisions of the Indian army, but in the Hindu-Muslim frontier zone from the fifteenth century, three great kings divide up these titles, with the king of Vijayanagara being Lord of Men (infantry), the Orissan king the Lord of Elephants, while the Delhi emperor is the Lord of Horses (cavalry). Also see Wagoner 1993.
- (9.) I have heard this story orally, but found no literary reference for it.
- (10.) Bokil 1979 has a picture on the cover of his book that depicts Shivaji and Ramdas sitting near a Maruti shrine where boys are engaged in martial and gymnastic exercises.

(11.) The CKP's caste status was settled by a decision of Gaga Bhatta himself in a decision taken before Shivaji's coronation (Bendrey 1960, 26). Thus the same man who declared Shivaji a true kshatriya declared the CKPs twice-born, and to challenge that decision would be tantamount to challenging the status of the Bhosle.



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The Patriot: Political Readings of Hindu Identity in the Tales of Shivaji, 1869–2001

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

During the period of British colonization, the British considered the political and cultural affairs of the nation in their concerns as they exiled the last peshwa and appointed a raja in 1818 before actually attaining sovereign control in 1848. Because this period is dominated by British supervision, the versions of Shivaji's legend that were retold at this time reflected a consciousness of European culture and power in a way similar to how earlier explanations reflected the Islamicate context. This chapter seeks to understand how the Shivaji legend contains an underlying nationalist discourse by looking into the sociological study of the common themes observed from the legend and in the actual places where events of Shivaji's life are remembered.

Keywords: British colonization, political affairs, cultural affairs, European culture, nationalist discourse, sociological study

Soon after the age of Mahipati and Chitnis, the British became deeply involved in the political and cultural affairs of Maharashtra; they exiled the last peshwa and installed a puppet raja at Satara in 1818, before formally assuming sovereign control in 1848. Other Maratha princes in places such as Kolhapur and Baroda continued to reign, but they ruled only under British supervision. Thus, from the early nineteenth century to the present, any retelling of the tale of Shivaji would reflect some awareness of European culture and power, just as previous accounts reflect an Islamicate context. The entrance of Britain into Maharashtra and the rest of India was not a simple matter of economic, military, and cultural intrusion, and there was no single response. Maharashtra was a complex society and there were those who saw themselves as winners, others who saw themselves as losers as a result of British colonial enterprise. Similarly,

neither were the British a homogeneous group, single-minded in their purposes and strategies. The colonial period was therefore one of complex interactions between several groups of British and several groups of Maharashtrians, and the post-Independence period brought even more complicated cultural interactions. In the twentieth century, Maharashtrian cultural identity would be forged in the context of the nationalist project of constructing a pan-Indian identity, so the regional hero Shivaji began to be portrayed as a national hero well before the British handed over control of the subcontinent to an independent India and Pakistan. Finally, Maharashtrians today find themselves in a globalized contemporary world of late capitalism, **(p.64)** and are telling the stories of Shivaji on websites visited by émigrés in London, Dubai, and San Francisco.

One might choose, then, to see the many biographies of Shivaji that were composed over the last one hundred and fifty years as expressions of a host of different political and cultural interests, each reflecting the particular concerns of its author. Such an approach assumes that culture itself is not monolithic but is internally diverse, a realm of plurality, debate, and contestation. Indeed, the very presence of the British as outsiders provoked in the insiders difficult questions of identity: Who are we? Marathas? Maharashtrians? speakers of Marathi? heirs of Shivaji? Chitpavan brahmins? Untouchables? Muslims? Hindus? Indians? How would any of these answers tie us to a group that might challenge British colonial power, assuming we are agreed that it is oppressive and should be removed?

As an example, let us consider the example of Jotirao Phule, whose ballad on Shivaji was published in 1869. Rosalind O'Hanlon (1983, 1985) has characterized this work as the first of its kind: printed and published, "overtly ideological," and "socially disintegrative" (1983, 2–3). O'Hanlon's concern is to highlight the way Phule, a nonbrahmin political activist and reformer, used the Shivaji story as a way of advancing an antibrahmin reading of Maratha history. As she sees it, the colonial period was a period of ferment in which different political interests were articulated, and the publication of traditional ballads could express "conflicting political and social identities put forward by quite disparate social groups" (1983, 3). She also notes that the basic facts of the Shivaji story were gleaned largely from British historians, Grant Duff in particular.

In O'Hanlon's work, we see uncovered the very different portraits of Shivaji produced by late-nineteenth-century writers with very different social locations and political persuasions. She explicates Phule's ballad as an attempt to read the Shivaji story within a radically new historical paradigm, a paradigm constructed under the ideological requirements of Phule's nonbrahmin reform movement. That paradigm rejoices in Shivaji's low-caste status and sees him as a reminder of the glorious tradition of low-caste warriors whose heritage has been erased by Aryan and brahmin usurpers. Although Shivaji's detractors might have declared him a shudra, in contrast with his own sanskritizing claims of kshatriya status, no supporter had embraced the idea that he was non-Aryan. Thus Phule's ballad on Shivaji places the Maratha hero into a wholly different framework, and stands in opposition to both reformist and conservative nationalists who sought to revive the Shivaji legend as a way of inspiring patriotic resistance to British rule.

(p.65) In fact, Phule did not see the British as the problem. Educated in a mission school, Phule appealed to Queen Victoria (not yet declared empress of India) to recognize the plight of lower-caste folk, oppressed by brahmins:

Oh Queen, you have the power; Hindusthan is asleep
Everywhere, there is the rule of the Brahmans; open your eyes and see
In the small villages, the kulkarnis are the masters of the pen
In the provinces they hold great offices; thus they have high authority
Like Yama, the mamledar gives the Shudras ceaseless punishment
The poor foolish collector stands before the cunning Chitnis
How great is the authority of the Brahmans in the revenue departments
The Bhats [brahmins] are everywhere; the kunbis have no redress
Joti says, we run for help; deliver us from these evils.
(Phule 1969, 72, translated in O'Hanlon 1985, 174–5)

Phule questioned the very foundations of the caste system and the ideology of the four classes (*varṇxas*). He did not accept the orthodox idea that brahmin priests and intellectuals were “naturally” at the top of the system, working in collusion with Aryan royalty (the kshatriyas), while non-Aryan shudras and outcastes were “meant” to occupy the place of mean servitude at the bottom of the social hierarchy. According to Phule, the ancient invasion of Aryans displaced the indigenous folk who were warriors and owners and cultivators of the soil. He takes the word ksatriya to be a corruption of *kṣetriya*, “owner of fields.” This great martial race has been displaced by brahmins, demeaned by a misleading varna mythology, and it is this race of people, now called *kunbis* or peasants, which the *kunbi*-warrior par excellence, Shivaji, led in battle against the seventeenth-century Muslim powers. Shivaji's assault on Muslim power was not, for Phule, an assault on the opponents of Hinduism. For him, Turkish invasions were the second chapter in an ancient story of oppression of indigenous peoples, the Aryans' invasion being the first.

It is important to keep in mind the context of nineteenth-century caste politics when reading Phule's portrayal of Shivaji as a low-caste hero. First, although the British deposed the peshwa, a Chitpavan (Konkanastha) brahmin and for a brief period favored instead the Maratha successor of Shivaji, the well-educated Chitpavan elites maintained prominent roles in the colonial administration, just as they had in the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, the Marathas occupied an ambiguous position. Although Shivaji had had himself crowned in an orthodox coronation and was declared a kshatriya with links to a Rajput line, his successors were often denied access to Vedic ceremonies on the grounds that they were not true kshatriyas. N. K. Wagle (1987) has (p.66) studied these ritual disputes over whether Shivaji's descendents were true kshatriyas, and whether they should have access to rituals using Vedic recitation (*vedokta*). He argues: “The loss of Brahman political power in Maharashtra in 1818 and the post—1818 British policy of noninterference with respect to matters of religion and caste of their newly conquered peoples may have heightened the militancy of the non-Brahman moves against the Brahman monopoly of the *vedokta*” (Wagle 1980, 146–147). For example, the Candraseniya Kayastha Prabhu (CKP) caste, relying on rulings made by Gaga Bhatta, the brahmin who crowned Shivaji and declared him a twice-born kshatriya, claimed the right of *vedokta*. Shivaji's descendent Pratapsingh convened a meeting of scholars to discuss the issue of *vedokta* in 1830, and in 1838 was crowned in a ceremony meant to mirror Shivaji's own enthronement. Thus, the decade when Phule attended primary school saw major public debates about the varna status of several caste groups—not only Marathas but CKPs, Sonars, and Saraswats as well.

That the varna status of particular castes (*jatis*) might be in dispute was not new, nor was it produced by the conditions of colonial rule. As we have seen, the status of Shivaji's family was questioned from the beginning. When his grandfather proposed a marriage alliance between the Bhosles and the Jadhavs (Yadavas), it was opposed by the Jadhavs. When Shivaji was crowned, he went to the trouble of recruiting Gaga Bhatta from Benares to establish his genealogy, his claim to be a Rajput *kshatriya*, and his right to wear the thread of a twice-born caste. We know that the choice of Gaga Bhatta was not an accident. A member of a well-known family of *dharmashastra* scholars, Gaga Bhatta had visited Maharashtra on several occasions prior to Shivaji's coronation (Bendrey 1960, 22–26), issuing pronouncements on the high-caste status of Saraswats (1663) and CKPs (1669–72). According to the rules of the traditional game, the status of a particular group might be in question, though the hegemonic framework of the caste system was never questioned. Thus Shivaji could argue that his family should not be classified a *kunbi* peasant or *shudra* clan, but was, in fact, related to Rajput Aryan *kshatriyas*. This led to a general ambiguity about the status of all Marathas. Some of them claimed *kshatriya* status, and of course several Maratha families had much older claims to royal blood than did the Bhosles, while others were, because of their occupation as peasant tillers of the soil, unable to make such lofty claims. What was new in Phule, however, was his claim that *all shudra* and outcaste groups were pre-Aryan nobility, and that the entire system of castes was a brahmin-dominated ideology based on false readings of ancient history.

(p.67) Although Phule used the Shivaji story to develop an ideology of nonbrahmin protest, he was dependent on the popular oral tradition of the Shivaji narrative. He relied on this narrative to evoke the sort of emotional response the heroic narrative had always evoked. He hoped, however, to turn that appeal to the particular purposes of his caste politics. Nonetheless, he repeats in his ballad the standard stories of Shivaji's exploits: killing Chandrarao More and accessing Javli; the killing of Afzal Khan; the night raid on Shaista Khan; the escape from Agra; Tanaji and Simhagad.¹

As one would expect, Phule mentions brahmins Dadaji Konddev, Ramdas, and Gaga Bhatta only briefly and minimizes their significance. He asks: “Who should be the guru of the fish that play in the water?”² Instead of taking note of Shivaji's brahmin advisors, he stresses instead his brotherhood with his Mavli lieutenants and his role as servant, “giving his life for the peasants” (Phule 1969, 71).

Phule devotes several verses to the celebration of the bravery of two CKP heroes, Baji Prabhu Deshpande (a.k.a. Bajirao Pasalkar) and Murar Baji Prabhu. In the first case, Phule recounts the story of Shivaji's escape from Siddi Johar's blockade of Panhalgad in 1660. Shivaji escaped by night, but when he was detected Siddi Johar's troops gave chase, and only the heroic stand of Baji Prabhu at Ghod Khind allowed him to make his way to Vishalgad and safety. According to Phule (and all standard accounts of the story), Baji sacrificed his life to make sure his master escaped, dying happy once he heard the signal from Vishalgad that Shivaji had arrived (Phule 1969, 54).

The story of Baji Prabhu is found in earlier texts, the Jedhe chronology and the *Ekkydnāva Kalmi Bakhar*,³ but it is fully elaborated in Chitnis. Since Chitnis himself was a CKP, it is not surprising that he would praise the heroism of his caste fellow. Moreover, since Chitnis was employed

at the Satara court at a time when Chitpavan brahmins were clinging to their authority in Pune, and CKPs were assisting the Maratha rajas in their attempt to maintain a royal heritage long in decline, Chitnis was sure to highlight the role of men such as Bajji Prabhu. In the twilight years of both peshwa rule and the Maratha kingship, the political interests of Chitpavan brahmins in Pune and Marathas and CKPs in Satara were opposed, and such an opposition was a precursor of Phule's movement.

Phule also follows Chitnis in mentioning the story of Murar Bajji Prabhu's heroism (Phule 1969, 61; Chitnis 192). Whenjai Singh and Diler Khan brought massive Mughal forces into the Deccan to subdue Shivaji in 1665 (prior to the negotiation that brought Shivaji to the **(p.68)** Mughal court in Agra), Diler Khan besieged the fort of Purandar. Murar Bajji, the fort's commander, rallied his troops in defense and fought valiantly, but lost his life. This story of self-sacrifice, like that of Bajji Prabhu at Ghod Khind, is always told as tale of great patriotism. Phule's colleague K. A. Keluskar, writing in 1907, describes the battle with his usual fervour:

Murar Bajji put forth his utmost strength and disputed every step of Diler Khan's advance. The hardy Afghans recoiled from the swords of the infuriated Mavalis.... The example of their leader was a stirring inspiration to every Mavali heart; for Murar Bajji recked not of blood or life but put his soul into every stroke. And what should he reckon of life when in spite of his brave efforts the fort entrusted to him by his sovereign lord had thus been mined and breached and the stream of Mogul foemen was steadily pouring in? It was not for him to survive its capture but to prevent it to the best of his ability. Thus, indifferent to all but the call of duty, he fought on, now here, now there, exhorting and inspiring his gallant Mavalis by word and deed. In the midst of all the dust and din of war, he observed where the Khan was stationed, mounted upon his elephant, and in a moment he rushed upon him like a lion upon his prey. He had lost his shield and was now parrying the sword-thrusts of the enemy with his arm which was covered only with a scarf. When Murar Bajji drew quite near, the Khan addressed him in a loud voice, declaring his unreserved admiration of the valorous deeds he had done on the field that day and inviting him to surrender relying on his assurances, and promising that he would raise him to high titles and dignities. Upon this, it is said, the noble Murar Bajji retorted: "Ye are Turks and Tartars and what care I for you and your offerings? I am a true servant to Shivaji and will not hear terms of surrender. Sooner will I die than yield." With these words he prepared to aim a sword thrust at Diler Khan, when the latter, bow in hand, deftly shot an arrow and killed him on the spot. (Takakhav 1921, 257–258)

The self-sacrifice of Bajji Prabhu Deshpande at Ghod Khind, of Murar Bajji at Purandar, and that of Tanaji at Simhagad stirred patriotic sentiments, but a patriotism that had to overcome or hide the fractious impulses of caste disputes. Whereas the stories of Shivaji and his brave comrades that Phule repeated became central to the patriotic narrative, his idiosyncratic reading of history as a struggle of Aryans and non-Aryans was not widely influential. Although caste is never far from the surface of accounts of Maharashtrian heroes and the culture that produced them, self-conscious disputes about caste tend to be located in circumscribed debates about particular figures and events. Was Shivaji's guru Ramdas, and how much did the Brahmin saint influence the king's **(p.69)** policies? Was the nonbrahmin Tukaram in contact with Shivaji? Was Dadaji Konddev his influential mentor? These sorts of questions were and are still debated, but the system and ideology of caste society is taken for granted.

The assumption, however, that Shivaji was a hero for all Maharashtrians has rarely been questioned. The political visions and commitments of men from different castes (Marathas, CKPs, Saraswats, Chitpavans) could not have varied more widely, and this of course affects the portraits they paint of Shivaji. But all share the conviction that the age of Shivaji was Maharashtra's golden age. They agree that Shivaji was Maharashtra's greatest hero, and that any telling of his life should include certain memorable tales: how he outwitted Afzal Khan and Shaista Khan, how he escaped from Agra, and how he founded an independent "nation" (*svarājya*). Meanwhile, even as Phule has come to be accepted as a great man, the substance of his critique of the very foundations of caste ideology are largely ignored.

In modern times, the categories of "nation" and "independence" are so prominent that Shivaji's biography is almost always read as the life of a patriot who freed his nation from foreign control. Phule and his opponents accepted such a view, and it has been rarely if ever questioned throughout the twentieth century.

O'Hanlon reads two other late-nineteenth-century ballads as evidence of the contested ways Shivaji's biography was read in the context of the social and political debate furthered by Phule. First, she considers the ballad composed by Rajaramshastri Bhagavat, a reformist brahmin, and secondly, that of Eknath Annaji Joshi (O'Hanlon 1983, 21'33). Bhagavat argues that Shivaji led a broad liberation movement that cut across caste as well as a cultural revival grounded in *Mahārāṣṭrapanā*, "Maharashtra-ness." Joshi, on the other hand, saw Shivaji as a defender of brahmanic Hinduism, a protector of cows and brahmins. At the turn of the century then, following O'Hanlon and taking Phule, Bhagavat, and Joshi as representative of a host of writers of Shivaji lore, we can see that there was a diversity of opinion about the core meaning of the Shivaji legend. Numerous organizations also promoted interest in Shivaji (O'Hanlon 1983, 1; Cashman 1975, 98ff.). All of this calls for investigation of these numerous texts and the people who belonged to these organizations, to ascertain the variety of ways Shivaji was portrayed during the late nineteenth century. But given the common acceptance of Shivaji as a symbol worth contesting, there is a certain teleology to the process, a sense that in the end, a common narrative is largely accepted by the Maharashtrian populace.

(p.70) The beginning of the nineteenth century is the twilight of peshwa rule, whereas the end of the century sees the rise of nationalism. A writer such as Chitnis, writing in 1810, composed and wrote by hand his chronicle of Shivaji's life as a court document, intended to glorify his employer, the ancestor of the reigning (if not ruling) maharaja in Satara. Sixteen years later, drawing on a variety of such chronicles—several of which he claims to have lost—James Cunningham Grant Duff published his *History of the Mahrattas*. Also at the Satara court as the British Resident, Grant Duff wrote his book with the purpose of portraying Shivaji as a plunderer and a freebooter and his swaraj movement as an historical accident, a forest fire in the parched grass of the Sahyadri mountains.⁴ Moreover, as a printed and published work, Grant Duff's book became a common target of numerous writers living in a colonial world, a world where printed texts were widely available in a way manuscripts had never been. Similarly, not only would a man like Phule benefit from the newly accessible British education, he could spread his radical ideas through the print media.

In opposition to Grant Duff, virtually every Maharashtrian writer after Phule saw Shivaji as the father of a nation, a liberationist. There was much debate about certain particulars of Shivaji's life, and the stance these authors took in these debates had everything to do with their diverse social locations and their differing dreams for what their nation might become after independence. But again, what was never really questioned was the primordial category of “nation” and the nobility of that nation's father, Shivaji.

A complete study of the relationship of the Shivaji legend to emergent nationalist discourse would be a large project, especially because of the explosion of literary sources made possible by print technology. Daniel Jasper is at work on a sociological study of the common themes that emerge in what he calls “the Shivaji legacy” and the many public places where Shivaji's life is and has been commemorated in Maharashtra since the days of Phule.⁵ I will confine my discussion here to consideration of three turn-of-the-century figures who represent distinct movements or visions, and employ the Shivaji legend with differing ideological strategies in conceiving an independence from Britain. They are K. A. Keluskar, a Saraswat social reformer and colleague of Phule, who wrote a massive biography of Shivaji in 1907 and presented it to the Kolhapur prince, Chatrapati Shahu (r. 1884–1922), himself a man with important sympathies with the nonbrahmin movement; Lokmanya B. G. Tilak, the famous independence leader who, in a conservative brahmanic manner, sought to reject all British attempts to intrude upon **(p.71)** traditional Hindu ways of life, and who, as part of his call to revive Hindu culture, organized a Shivaji festival in 1896; and Justice M. G. Ranade, a moderate reformer who accepted much of the British critique of Maharashtrian society and wrote a very influential book about Shivaji that represented “the rise of Maratha power” as the result of a protestant religious and social reform (Ranade 1961). By looking at these three men, we can capture much of the social ferment and debate at the turn of the century, as well as see the formation of a commonly accepted narrative about Shivaji.

First, let us consider their differences in social location and ideology and their consequent disagreements about the historical Shivaji.

Unlike Ranade and Tilak, who were both Chitpavans, Keluskar was a Saraswat, a marginal caste that claimed brahmin status but was ranked beneath both Chitpavan and Deshastha brahmin castes and had significant alliances with CKPs. Thus it is not surprising that Keluskar reveals in his writing important sympathies with Marathas, CKPs, and even Phule's entire nonbrahmin movement. Saraswats, like CKPs and Marathas, had had their caste status challenged by elite brahmins in Maharashtra. As we have seen, Shivaji's claims of kshatriya status had to be buttressed by the *dharmashastra* scholar Gaga Bhatta, a man who also entered pleas on behalf of Saraswats, CKPs, and other marginal groups. Shivaji's descendants, Pratapsingh in 1830 and Shahu in 1901–1905, both found themselves in controversy over their continued claims of kshatriya status and rights to Vedic rituals. Keluskar presented his biography of Shivaji to Shahu Maharaja only two years after the Kolhapur prince had won a long campaign to have his claim of kshatriya status upheld by an authoritative Shankaracarya (monastic successor to the great nondualist philosopher, Shankara). Keluskar's book (1907) was entitled *Kṣatriyakulāvatamsa Chatrapati Śivajimahārāj yānce Caritra* (*The Biography of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Ornament of the Kshatriya Race*; Keluskar 1907), and begins by reiterating the traditional genealogy of Shivaji as descended from both Solar and Lunar dynasties and the Rajput royalty of Udaipur.

As we have seen in passages quoted above, Keluskar's portrayal of Shivaji is deeply patriotic and emphasizes the ways the king brought about liberation of his homeland by inspiring followers from every caste, especially trusty Mavli warriors, courageous CKP captains, and able CKP administrators. He thoroughly rejects the notion that either Dadaji Konddev or Ramdas influenced Shivaji in any important way, stating that his mother Jijabai was the primary influence of his youth, and that he first met Ramdas in 1672, after all his important victories had been **(p.72)** won. He rejects as a “heresy” Rajwade's idea that the birth of the dream of swaraj came from Dadaji at Shahji's suggestion: “The glorious thoughts of founding a new Hindu dynasty were not implanted in Shivaji's mind by Dadaji Kondadev, who on the other hand laboured hard to counteract them.... The real impulse then came from Jijabai. How true it is that one sweet and loving word from the lips of a mother makes a deeper impression on the heart than ten-thousand speeches” (Takakhav 1921, 91).

Not only does Keluskar see Ramdas's influence to be minimal (and he quotes the historian Sardesai to argue that perhaps the influence went the other way) but he also rejects completely the idea that the Pandharpur movement either influenced Shivaji's political vision or really did much to ameliorate caste inequalities (Takakhav 1921, 587–596). Here Keluskar explicitly opposes the central thrust of Ranade's arguments. Moreover, he strategically elevates Jijabai here, for what Hindu would ever challenge his ode to the mother's role?

Meanwhile Tilak, who opposed every British intrusion into what he considered traditional Hindu life—on issues of public hygiene, sati, cow slaughter, or child marriage—instituted not only the popular Ganesha festival but a commemoration of Shivaji as well. Although he was not as successful in raising funds for the Shivaji festival as he had hoped, the first and second festivals in 1896 and 1897 were influential in wedding the Shivaji tale to nationalist discourse. At the first, huge portraits of Shivaji and Ramdas were carried to Raigad fort, Shivaji's capital and the site of his coronation and tomb.

So despite the fact that Tilak opposed Shahu's claim of kshatriya status, no doubt because he saw such claims as inspired by English egali-tarianism, he held up Shahu's ancestor as the great hero, the manly liberationist who could inspire Maharashtrian (and later, Indian) nationalism in the face of British oppression. He was never a patient moderate, and was twice jailed for lengthy terms (1897–98, 1908–14) on charges of sedition. He saw in Shivaji a hero who in an earlier age rejected the legitimacy of status-quo Islamic rule, just as he himself hoped to reject the legitimacy of British rule.

What made Tilak's use of Shivaji radical was his claim that the hero's use of violence was appropriate in the service of nation building. He is famous for his defense of Shivaji against the charge that he treacherously murdered Afzal Khan; he argued not simply that Shivaji acted in self-defense (the usual claim of Hindu supporters) but rather that in such matters great men are not bound by conventional morality. This is a classic case for Tilak in his reading of the *Bhagavadgītā* as a manual for **(p.73)** violent action pursued not for personal gain but for lofty and just purposes. He editorialized in his Hindu paper *Kesari*:

Krishna preached in the Gita that we have a right even to kill our own guru and our own kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being actuated by

a desire to reap the fruit of his deeds.... Do not circumscribe your vision like a frog in a well; get out of the Penal Code, enter into the lofty atmosphere of the Shrimat Bhagavad Gita and then consider the actions of great men. (Wolpert 1962, 87, quoting *Kesari*, June 15, 1897)

Similarly, Tilak's associate, one Professor Bhanu, also speaking on the occasion of the second Shivaji festival, argued: "How can the European science of ethics, which has the greatest good of the greatest number as its basis, condemn Shivaji for abandoning a minor duty for the purposes of accomplishing a major one? (Wolpert 1962, 86, quoting *Kesari*, June 15, 1897)." These are the sorts of arguments that led to Tilak's conviction on the charge of sedition. A week after Tilak's and Bhanu's articles appeared in *Kesari*, the British official W. C. Rand, who had been widely criticized for the manner in which British soldiers carried out antiplague measures, was murdered along with a British soldier while they made their way home from the queen's jubilee celebrations. A month after that, Tilak was arrested. No direct connection was ever established between Tilak and the gunmen, though they were acquainted, and he did send one of the assassins a copy of the *Bhagavadgītā* to carry with him to the gallows.

As early as 1885, before the split between moderates and radicals became insurmountable, Justice M. G. Ranade had collaborated with both Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj and Tilak in the project of raising funds to restore Shivaji's tomb. In the peshwa period, Shivaji's capitol and tomb at Raigad were virtually forgotten. (We noticed above that Mahipati, writing a century after the great king's death, assumed that Satara was Shivaji's capital.) Phule had visited the dilapidated tomb, but it was an Englishman, James Douglas, writing in his *A Book of Bombay* (1883, 433), that shamed men like Ranade and Tilak into action: "No man now cares for Seevajee. Over all those wide domains, which once owned him lord and master, acquired by so much blood and treasure ... [n]ot one man contributes a rupee to keep or repair the tomb of the founder of the Mahratta Empire."

By 1896, when the first Shivaji festival occurred at Raigad, Tilak's radical position and rigid orthodoxy had alienated Shahu and moderate reformers like Ranade. Tilak's orchestration of both his famous Ganpati (p.74) festival and the Shivaji festival were seen to be not only anti-British but also anti-Muslim. Ranade, on the other hand, had a different vision of the future nation. Just before his death in 1901, he published his enormously influential *Rise of the Maratha Power*, in which he articulated his durable thesis that the Maratha swaraj was the result of religious and social reform, as well as the military and political leadership of Shivaji. For Ranade, the "independent nation" that Shivaji fathered could be a model for a postcolonial state in India. This was not because Shivaji led a Hindu revival that violently overthrew Muslim rule, but because a whole people, inspired by a kind of religious reformation preached by the Pandharpur pilgrims, became a united people. Among other things, Ranade's argument was also an early version of the "one nation" theory, which stands opposed to the idea that South Asia is necessarily and primordially split between its Hindu and Muslim populations. If India hoped to gain independence from the British in the twentieth century, it would have to embrace enlightened social reform, just as Shivaji had established swaraj in a region where Vaishnava devotees proclaimed all equal before God and disparaged the role of orthodox priests. Ranade himself ran the risk of excommunication from the Chitpavan caste because of his views on widow remarriage and the other social changes he proposed in opposition to Tilak's neotraditional stance.

The part of Ranade's book that endured was his wedding of the Shivaji story to the history of *bhakti*, seeing in the latter the ground for the rise of nationalism. Drawing on the literary heritage of Mahipati and Chitnis, he concluded the important chapter "The Saints and Prophets of Maharashtra" with a remarkable passage that deserves to be quoted here in full:⁶

We have thus noticed all the principal features of the religious movement, which, commencing with Dnyandev [Jnaneshvar] can be traced to the end of the last century as a steady growth in spiritual virtues. It gave us a literature of considerable value in the vernacular language of the country. It raised the *Shudra* classes to a position of spiritual power and social importance, almost equal to that of the Brahmans. It gave sanctity to family relations, and raised the status of woman. It made the nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration. It suggested and partly carried out a plan of reconciliation with the Mahomedans. It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies, and of pilgrimages and fasts, and of learning and contemplation, to the higher excellence of worship by means of love and faith. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It tended in all these ways to raise the nation generally to a higher level of capacity both of (p.75) thought and action and prepared it, in a way no other nation in India was prepared, to take the lead in re-establishing a united native power in the place of foreign domination. These appear to us to be the principal features of the religion of Maharashtra, which Saint Ramdas had in view when he advised Shivaji's son to follow in his father's footsteps, and propagate this faith, at once tolerant and catholic, deeply spiritual and yet not iconoclastic. (Ranade 1961, 92)

Here the moderate reformer and nationalist gives us not so much a history of Maharashtra from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries as a blueprint for the future nation that claimed independence from Britain. He rebuts here several of the arguments the colonists made that legitimated British rule, and described the religious and social reform of the days of Shivaji in terms palatable to a liberal British protestant (elsewhere Ranade twice used the term "puritan" to describe the *bhakti* movement; Ranade 1961, 27–28). Just as the British sought to overcome religious divisions at home by a state policy of toleration (Viswanathan 1998, 3–43), Shivaji's nation was built on religious tolerance, a "Maharashtra Dharma" that could even absorb Muslims (Ranade 1961, 3–4). It was egalitarian, and the status of women was improved. The power of orthodox clerics was circumscribed and the power of the religion of the heart (Hindus as Quakers!) took precedence over empty ceremonialism. He even diminished the importance of pilgrimage, despite the fact that the Varkaris are, by definition, pilgrims. Ranade's doctrine of religious tolerance, like the one he sees inherent in Shivaji's policies, becomes a primary element in neo-Hindu contributions to the commonly accepted Shivaji biography. It confidently assumes the basic humanity of Hindu inclusivism as the only reasonable charter for a unified nation, without appreciating how such an ideology allows Muslims one of two perhaps equally unpalatable roles: inflexible bigot, or antinomian (Hinduized) universalist. Aurangzeb is seen playing the first of these, Akbar the second.

Who was Ranade writing for? His British employers? To convince them that they ruled a nation that, like theirs, had gone through a kind of Reformation and enlightenment that gave the region a vernacular language, tolerant inclusive national religion, and a common patriotism that overcame class distinctions? Or was he writing for his fellow Indian reformers, who were committed to the idea that the colonial period would be a period of education, a school in which

Indians could learn the fundamentals of nation building: religious tolerance, enlightened social reform, egalitarian patriotism? Or was he responding to a sort of internalized external audience, the British interlocutor now **(p.76)** deeply lodged in his double consciousness? If one were to leap forward a hundred years, one would find that these are the very elements that Maharashtrian school children are to learn in their patriotic lessons about Shivaji's life, following a program deeply indebted to Ranade's legacy.

There are other details in Ranade's work that have proved to be less compelling, and that provoke the sorts of debate that test the nationalist program. He dismisses out of hand the idea that Shivaji was descended from Udaipur royalty, calling it a “fond superstition” (25). Ranade sees class status as socially constructed, not biological, and on those grounds, Shivaji was an aristocrat, whatever his bloodlines might be. On the other hand, he accepts the idea that Ramdas was Shivaji's chief advisor and the originator of the national flag and the egalitarian “Ram, Ram!” greeting (6). He accepts the idea that Jijabai was Shivaji's primary source of inspiration, but reserves an important role for Dadaji Konddev, arguing that “without such a guiding hand to regulate and curb his wildness, the success which attended Shivaji would not have been so certain and permanent as it proved in the end” (36). Here we have a kind of brahmin prejudice that Marathas might make admirably fierce warriors but will not have the prudence of brahmins. Thus Ranade argues that the national movement drew on the talents and loyalty of all classes, but he maintains the critical importance of the brahmins Ramdas and Dadaji in his narrative. When he treats the *bhakti* movement as a whole, he tends to homogenize its diversity, and when he includes saints of every social location, he emphasizes the movement's force as a unifying one. Tukaram is included in this movement but given no particular role to play, though Ranade, following Chitnis, does seem to accept the idea that Tukaram had contact with Shivaji. Finally, Ranade portrays the peshwa period as the final chapter in the story of Maratha independence.

Ranade is no controversialist, and the sweet reasonableness of *Rise of the Maratha Power* has given it a continuing influence. The thrust of the book is his broad argument about the role of religion, and to some extent the importance of sound administrative principles, in the project of nation building. Maharashtra, as a nation bound together by religion as well as language and culture, is a category he takes for granted, and he tends to gloss over differences of caste and religion in painting a portrait of a broad patriotic movement against “foreign” rule. Even while portraying the Muslims as foreigners, he still attempts to praise the Maharashtrian capacity for absorption, and resorts to the inclusivist, neo-Hindu argument that even Muslims can lose their rigid intolerance **(p.77)** in the face of universalist Hinduism: “there was a tendency perceptible towards reconciliation of the two races in mutual recognition of the essential unity of Alia with Rama, and by the time Shivaji appeared on the scene, this reconciliation seems to have been almost complete” (92). These words were written only a few short years after major Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Bombay (Courtright 1985, 233).

In 1900, Shivaji was portrayed not only as the father of a Maharashtrian “nation” but also as the leader of an independence movement with significance for all of India. For some, he had led a movement that unified disparate castes, for others, that vision was not emphasized. And given the fact that he won independence from surrounding sultans, it is hard to see how he could be portrayed as a hero for Muslims as well as Hindus, however much one might stress his

enlightened tolerance. Thus Ranade and Keluskar could not escape a certain cultural logic made explicit by Tilak: If Shivaji was the father of a nation, he was a Hindu nationalist, a religious nationalist, and not really a secularist. There is an irony here, for Shivaji may have been far more secular and pragmatic than he could be portrayed by Chitnis or Mahipati. The modern writer, even if he is a committed secularist reformer like Ranade, cannot strip away the religious mythification of Shivaji's life without endangering much of what makes his life heroic, what makes his biography a patriotic narrative. In other words, Shivaji's secularism can only be assured if we see him as motivated less by patriotism than by simple quest for power.

Even for Indians outside of Maharashtra, Shivaji provided the sort of hero they felt a nation needed. Responding to that internalized British interlocutor, Tilak saw Shivaji as fulfilling the role of a hero as described by Carlyle, and for would-be nation builders from Gujarat to Bengal, Shivaji was being praised in an astonishing profusion of poems, plays, novels, and essays.⁷ These writers drew support from Europeans such as Annie Besant, who lectured on Shivaji with Tilak in Pune in 1916, and Dennis Kincaid, whose *The Grand Rebel* appeared in 1937. Lala Lajpat Rai, like Savarkar, took inspiration from both the Italian revolutionaries and nationalists Mazzini and Garibaldi as well as from Shivaji, and wrote Urdu biographies of all three men.⁸ Aurobindo authored a ballad on Baji Prabhu and an imagined conversation between Shivaji and Jai Singh (Samarth 1975, 79–80), and even Rabindranath Tagore praised Shivaji for attempting to unite India, and said that he failed only because of internal caste divisions (Samarth 1975, 82–86).

Many of the key episodes in Shivaji's career were simply alluded to in Ranade's work, strengthening the impression that he wrote more **(p.78)** for fellow Maharashtrians than for British readers, however much he responded to perceived British criticism of his hero. Moreover, he relied heavily on Chitnis's historical chronicle, reproducing such obvious mistakes as having Shivaji escape from Aurangzeb's court in Delhi, not Agra. In the following generation, Maharashtrian historians became obsessed with sources, and were concerned not only to establish the status of Shivaji as the father of the nation, but to make the point that their history of his reign was better informed and more accurate than misleading European accounts.

The first pioneer in this historiography was V. K. Rajwade, an eccentric itinerant who combed the Maharashtrian countryside in search of authentic manuscripts. He eschewed the use of English and clung to Marathi as a sign of his anti-British patriotism. He never succeeded in writing a complete narrative of Maharashtrian history, but published twenty-seven volumes of historical documents and letters (Rajwade 1898–1915), and was known for his strong opinions. He completely rejected Ranade's thesis that the Varkaris led the way for reform and prepared for Maratha nationalism. He saw them as passive “do nothings” and dissociated the activist Ramdas from their tradition. Because of caste prejudices, he emphasized the role of Ramdas and Dadaji in Shivaji's movement, and sought the sort of documentation that would prove such points. He ended his days in Dhulia, provided for by S. S. Dev, the founder of an organization devoted to the preservation of the Ramdasi tradition.

Rajwade's passion for discovering primary texts influenced a whole generation of Maharashtrian historians associated with the Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandal (BISM). Scholars associated with this institution were and are deeply patriotic as well as committed to the discovery of the sort of documentation that gives their histories legitimacy. They publish in Marathi for the

brahmin scholars of Pune, and maintain a rather insular, exclusivist club.⁹ In 1927, the BISM's D. V. Apte and S. M. Divekar edited the Sanskrit *Śivabhārata* (SBH), which Divekar had discovered in Tanjore, and published it with an interlinear Marathi translation.

In the introduction to the SBH, Apte writes that the statement in SBH 18.19 that Afzal Khan damaged the Bhavani temple at Tuljapur—the sort of story that had wide currency but seemed suspiciously mythological—could be corroborated by an “authentic letter” (SBH 164) that stated that Afzal Khan harassed temples at Pandharpur and Tuljapur. This is the tone of this entire school of research. When one surveys the work done, for example, in a collection of essays edited by Apte and Divekar entitled *Śivāji Caritra Pradīp* (1925), we see articles by the likes (p. 79) of Rajwade that center on narrow questions of historical detail. Was Shivaji born in April of 1627 or in February of 1630? The answer may not seem terribly consequential, but the quest for the historical Shivaji would be built out of details, even while the patriotic motivation for collecting those details must be, for strategic purposes, undeclared. In their enthusiasm for a patriotic history based on primary sources, Pune's brahmin scholars produced numerous publications in the 1920s: the *Śivabhārata* (1927); Y. N. Kelkar's first volume of historical ballads (1928), new editions of the historical chronicles (*bakhars*); and the *Source Book of Maratha History* (SBMH, 1928).

Meanwhile, outside Pune's brahmin club, Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur continued his support of the nonbrahmin movement, and though he revered Shivaji as the founder of his dynasty and declared him to be the model of the enlightened nation builder, he saw the British as friends. Allied to the Maratha rulers of Baroda and Gwalior, Shahu pushed for social reforms that would end caste society. He had been educated by a British tutor, and in 1921, he welcomed the Prince of Wales to Maharashtra. He induced the visiting prince to inaugurate a memorial to Maratha soldiers killed in World War I as well as a commemorative monument dedicated to Shivaji. On that occasion, Shahu thanked Britain for introducing his people to liberalism and egalitarianism, and went on to declaim:

Your Royal Highness can well imagine the intensity of feelings of reverence and pride with which Marathas cherish the memory of the great Shivaji who has immortalised the name Maratha in the pages of history and who has instilled into them the soldierly qualities which were manifested in the great World War.

It was this great statesman who by introducing the system of eight ministers foreshadowed the system of Cabinet Government in India, and it was he who first conceived the idea of founding an Indian Navy. Your Royal Highness cannot fail to admire the strength of character of this statesman and warrior who was a bold religious reformer and who combated bravely the prejudices of his times. With all his zeal for the Hindu religion, he had, like the great Akbar, the same toleration for all castes and creeds....

... It now rests with us to take full advantage of the educational opportunities and equality which all peoples of whatever religion enjoy as their birthright under the paternal rule of our revered and beloved King-Emperor. (Keer 1976, 485)

This speech was delivered three years after Tilak's death, and in the same year Veer Savarkar's remarkable book *Hindutva* appeared. **(p.80)** Savarkar, who wrote this revolutionary text while jailed in the Andaman Islands (scratching it on the walls of his cell before memorizing it in parts), had declared Shivaji to be the instrument of his brahmin advisors, motivated to cast off oppressive Muslim rule. He quotes Chitnis: "Shivaji thought to himself—We are Hindus. The Muhammadans have subjugated the entire Deccan. They have defiled our sacred places! In fact, they have desecrated our religion and for that we would even lose our lives. We will acquire new kingdoms by our power and that bread we will eat" (Savarkar 1969, 56n).¹⁰ But, Savarkar concludes, "Dadaji was the guiding hand of the whole movement" (56), and he claims that Shivaji's movement was not parochial but rather— following yet another letter found by Rajwade—a movement of *Hindavi Svarajya*, a Hindu empire, "electrifying" the Hindu mind all over India (57–58).

Thus the British might jail those who, like Tilak and Savarkar, saw Shivaji as their model for Hindu revival and revolution, or they might celebrate with those who, like Shahu, saw their enlightened government as a reminder of Shivaji's progressive initiatives in religion, military technology, and government administration. But both sides contributed to a standard mythic narrative that celebrated Shivaji as both a hero and a nation builder.

About this time we find two other important historians working on the biography of Shivaji: Sirjadunath Sarkar and G. S. Sardesai. Although they worked outside the circle of the BISM and were seen as opponents of the patriotic mission of the BISM, they followed the same sort of quest for historical detail contained in authentic documents. Sarkar, a distinguished Bengali historian, wrote his *Shivaji and His Times* while completing a multivolume work on Aurangzeb, and he tended to trust Persian sources more than Maharashtrian documents. An outsider and convinced secularist, he wrote a less than worshipful biography of Shivaji, which cleared him of the charge of murdering Afzal Khan but convicted him of the murder of Chandrarao More. Moreover, he was excoriated by Maharashtrians for sometime, referring to Shivaji as "Shiva," without any of the usual respectful titles, and for challenging the idea that Shivaji and the Marathas had ever built a nation:

The Maratha failure to create a nation even among their own race and in their small corner of India, requires a searching analysis on the part of the Indian patriot. ...And for such an analysis we have to go down to the social conditions of Shivaji's time.

A deep study of Maratha society, indeed of society throughout India, reveals some facts which it is considered patriotism to ignore. We realise **(p.81)** that the greatest obstacles to Shivaji's success were not the Mughals or Adil Shahis, Siddis or Feringis, but his own countrymen.

First, we cannot be blind to the truth that the dominant factor in Indian life—even today, no less than in the seventeenth century—is caste, and neither religion nor country. (Sarkar 1978, 96–97)

Thus, for Sarkar, caste and clan divide Indian society, and blunt any impulse to patriotic bonds to country.

G. S. Sardesai was a Maharashtrian, and though he was Sarkar's friend and colleague, he took a rather more patriotic tone, and edited the *Shivaji Souvenir* as part of the tercentenary celebration of Shivaji's birth (1927). However much Sardesai revered Sarkar as a meticulous historian, he himself had no qualms about using the word “nation” to describe Shivaji's independent state (*svaraj*). After a long career (1875–1925) in service to Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, maharaja of Baroda—another Maratha king, with even more questionable bloodlines and progressive instincts—Sardesai was able to spend the last decades of his long life (1925–1959) absorbed in historical research, and he produced his magnum opus, a three-volume history of the Marathas at the dawn of Indian independence (1946–48). That work, *A New History of the Marathas*, was meant to supplant Grant Duffs three volumes, takes a very measured tone, but cannot escape the heady atmosphere of India's march to independent nationhood: “Maratha history is no longer the treasure of a single community or province; it should prove a source of inspiration, wisdom and warning to all India” (Sardesai 1946, 1:1) He speaks of Shivaji and the peshwas as having a “genius for nation-making” even while he admits the failures of the most decadent and least successful of the later rulers.

Part of Sardesai's task in telling Maharashtra's history as Indian history is accomplished by claiming the ancient Mauryans and Satavahanas as Maharashtrian dynasties (Sardesai 1946, 1:16–17). Continuing in the tradition of Ranade, he can deplore Muslim intolerance but accept many Deccani sultans as enlightened, and even claims that “the Muslim character of the rulers was confined only to their personal religion and did not affect their subjects” (Sardesai 1:31). In other words, in relegating religion to the private sphere, they were the equivalent of modern secularists. For Sardesai, it is only with the advent of Ibrahim Adil Shah's rule (1627) and that of Aurangzeb that the policies of religious tolerance were reversed.

Sardesai maintains a concern for the thoroughness and attention to primary sources lacking in Ranade, but his ideological concerns are very similar. In Sardesai's account, Shivaji grows up under Jijabai's and (p.82) Dadaji's influence, cannot stomach anti-Hindu activities prevalent in his father's Bangalore and, as a young man, inspires a sort of religious patriotism in the rustic Mavli mountain boys of his Pune territory. Drawing rather uncritically on early accounts, Sardesai “quotes” a teenage Shivaji exhorting his friends:

Why remain content with gifts conferred by foreigners or with our paternal acquisitions only? We are Hindus: this whole country is ours, and yet it is occupied and held by Muslims. They desecrate our temples, break our idols, plunder our wealth, convert our countrymen forcibly to their religion, kill cows openly; we will suffer this treatment no more. We possess strength in our arms. Let us draw the sword in defence of our sacred religion, liberate our native country and acquire new lands and wealth by our own effort. We are as brave and capable as our ancestors of yore. If we undertake this sacred task, God will surely help us. All human efforts are so helped. There is no such thing as good luck or ill-luck. We are captains of our soil and makers of our freedom. (Sardesai 1946, 1:97)

Here we find all the tropes of Hindu nationalism with all its anachronism and mythology. Shivaji is praised for his religious tolerance (and Sardesai does not fail to note that Muslim ladies enjoy his chivalrous protection), but his political goals are described as the quest for Hindavi Svarajya,

religious freedom, more than conquest of territory (Sardesai 1946, 1:267–269). In this respect, Sardesai is the bridge between Ranade and the dominant biographical narrative of Shivaji today. By the middle of the twentieth century, popular accounts of Shivaji's life and more scholarly histories share many things in common. A century earlier, Phule had attempted to interpret Shivaji's life within a radical framework, but the glorification of Shivaji as a low-caste hero has not gained much currency today.¹¹ How many people have retold the life of Shivaji in the last hundred years and seen their version performed or published as a play, history, or poem? The number of sources has multiplied exponentially. So it is perhaps surprising to see that a certain common narrative emerges. In the very recent past, we see Shivaji as the subject of an explosion of websites on the internet. It is perhaps too early to see if this new global medium, with all its fluidity and anonymity, will produce a rich variety of interpretations of Shivaji's life. A future scholarly analysis of the internet's Shivaji sites will reveal a great deal about the future of the legendary life of Shivaji as it relates to a globalized narrative of Hindu nationalism. Before turning to a cursory review of this material, it is important to note that in the period from 1960 to 1990, the story of Shivaji the patriot was generally **(p.83)** consistent with Ranade's account, and we find in two primary sources the contours of this hegemonic narrative. Those sources are the school textbook for history, civics and administration, *Shivachhatrapati* mentioned above) and the work of Shivaji popularizer Babasaheb Purandare, whose histories, plays, and films have made him the primary purveyor of the Shivaji legend.

The textbook is ninety-one pages, abruptly divided between the story of Shivaji ("History," 1–77) and a description of the contemporary political administration of villages, towns, and districts ("Civics and Administration," 78–91). The two sections are presumably coupled by the rationale that Shivaji the nation builder established a fair and efficient administration (chapter 15, 59–62). The textbook was written in 1970, and despite a recent attempt to revise it on the grounds that Maharashtrian school children should have lessons in history and civics that emphasize a more pan-Indian, rather than a regional outlook, the textbook has remained unchanged and compulsory. Any revision is easily branded as disloyalty to the memory of Maharashtra's greatest hero, and is thus abandoned. It is published in English and Marathi editions.

The textbook repeats all the familiar stories, and since it is brief, gives a pithy, condensed version of the dominant messages conveyed by the retelling of the Shivaji biography in modern times. The first message of the book is that the seventeenth century was a period of turmoil, suggesting without explicitly saying that Islamic rule brought unrest, warfare, famine, and loss of religious freedom. While most Maratha nobles were content to serve Muslim sultans in exchange for local rule of petty kingdoms (jagirs), Shivaji wanted to unite "the people" (Hindus?) to bring justice and religious freedom.

Shivaji's grandfathers, uncles, and father, of course, all fit the description of Maratha sardars content with service to Muslim sultans, and Shivaji began his own career as the Adil Shahi jagirdar of Pune. The textbook veils its criticism of Shivaji's relatives while more clearly portraying other rival Maratha sardars as "part of the problem." In other words, Shivaji is deemed important because he established *svarājya*, a word he did indeed use to describe his kingdom (though perhaps with a different meaning than it carries today). And, though his quest is seen as a contest with Muslim rulers ("foreigners"), the book must account for the fact that many of Shivaji's military campaigns carried him against Hindu rajas like Bajaji Naik Nimbalkar

of Phaltan and Chandrarao More of Javli. Although these aristocrats had longstanding claims to their fiefs and no obvious reason to grant Shivaji overlordship, the textbook narrative assumes that in light of Shivaji's noble cause ("freedom," especially **(p.84)** religious freedom) they should have cast their lot with him. The book dodges the controversial issue of Shivaji's caste, but does quote Gaga Bhatta at the coronation, when he declares Shivaji the *kṣātriyakulāvataṃsa* (as in the title of Keluskar's biography), a phrase rendered more neutrally in the English version as "ornament of the race of warriors" (58).

Following Ranade, the textbook includes a chapter on the "work of the saints," assigning them the role of leaders of a progressive egalitarian movement. Ramdas's work is highlighted, for he taught the people "to organise themselves and fight against injustice" (8). The work of the saints brought about a "great awakening" and "religion once again became a thing to be respected" (8). Avoiding the question of whether Ramdas was Shivaji's guru, the text simply concludes that the work of the saints "helped Shivaji in his fight for Swaraj" (8). Of course Shivaji grew up hearing the poems of Jnaneshvar, Namdev, and Eknath (how do we know this?) from his mother.

The textbook excuses Shahji for being absent from his son's birth and first marriage ("He was busy on the battlefield," 18), but hints that Shivaji had an agenda different from that of his father. He is quoted as a youth, declaring to his companions: "I am not happy. Must we always remain satisfied as bondmen (*vatandar*) of the Sultan? Must we always eat out of other people's hands?" (21). He proceeds to lead his companions in the oath of "Hindavi Svarajya." The historically questionable tale of the teenage Shivaji making this oath at Raireshwar goes back to Rajwade and is an oft-repeated patriotic story.

The textbook repeats all the favorite heroic tales: the killing of Afzal Khan, the heroic deaths of Bajji Prabhu, Tanaji, and Murar Bajji Prabhu, the attack on Shaista Khan, and the escape from Agra. The chapter on Tanaji is given the title of H. N. Apte's romantic novel, *Gad Ālā paṇ Simha Gelā!* ("The Fort Is Captured but the Lion Is Dead," 53), while the account of Bajji Prabhu's sacrificial last stand at Ghod Khind gives a sense of the way patriotism takes on the language of religion: "Their blood made Ghodkhind a place holy (*pavan*) in Swaraj. Ghodkhind became immortal in history as "Pavan Khind." We pay our repeated homage to the brave Bajji Prabhu and his brave men! (42). The repetition of these traditional heroic tales is wedded to a modern patriotism (*svadeśābhimān*):

Patriotism. Shivaji was the son of a Jagirdar. He was, therefore, a rich man. But from early childhood he hated slavery. He, therefore, fought against powerful enemies and made his country free. He [Shivaji] established Swaraj. He did this so that everyone would live in peace and **(p.85)** follow his religion without any outside interference, so that Marathi language and Hindu religion would acquire their due place of honour. He toiled all his life for the prosperity of his language, his religion, and his country and he succeeded in the end. (76)

To this rather modern-sounding patriotism, certain themes are added: Shivaji had the foresight to establish a modern navy (60), he was an efficient administrator (59–62), a "model son" (76–77), and most important, a progressive who avoided the discriminatory politics of caste and

religion (61, 70–74). All these respond to certain modern impulses. The European will appreciate how clever he was to get a modern navy and will admire his efficiency and justice as an administrator—as will the modern Indian frustrated with a bloated and corrupt bureaucracy. The bourgeois middle class want to be assured that he subscribed to family values, so his father must be excused for his neglect of his wife and son, and Shivaji must be admired as his mother's obedient son. But it is to religion that the text turns again and again. Shivaji fought against Muslim powers to replace them with a Hindu state, but a Hindu state governed by the modern secularist policy of religious tolerance, a policy rooted in the particular virtue of the king. He employed soldiers and administrators on the basis of their merits and not their caste or creed; he respected the sanctity of mosques, tombs and the Qur'an; and he chivalrously protected Muslim ladies (unlike his opponents, who regularly molested Hindu women), the text need not say.

The patriotic tightrope of championing the victory of the Hindu king over his Muslim opponents while maintaining that that victory was one for “freedom” can be seen most clearly in the textbook account of Netaji Palkar's life. Netaji, Shivaji's generalissimo, defected to the Mughals for eleven years, converted to Islam and took the name Muhammad Quli, and then returned to Shivaji and Hinduism in 1677. Here is the textbook account of these adventures:

Netaji was one of the bravest of Shivaji's captains. He was Shivaji's right-hand man. People used to describe him as a second Shivaji. At about the time Shivaji returned from Agra, Netaji fell into the hands of the Moghul troops. Aurangzeb sent him to Agra where he was forced to become a Muslim and thus Netaji Palkar became Mohamed Kulikhan. He took employment with the Emperor and showed remarkable valour during the Kabul campaign with the Emperor's troops. Ten years later he accompanied Diler Khan to the South against Shivaji. Netaji, though now a Muslim, had not forgotten Shivaji or Maharashtra. He remembered his past. He was deeply moved. His love for his country and religion returned. One day he deserted the Moghul Camp and walked (p.86) straight to Shivaji and said, “It is true that I am a Muslim convert (*miparadharmāt gelo*), but I want to return to my old religion (*svadharmāt*). Could I become a Hindu again?” Shivaji said “Why not? If you so desire, you can return to the Hindu fold.” So Netaji begged Shivaji to take him back to the Hindu religion. (73)

This is a very telling passage, where the marks of narrativization are especially apparent. First, it is not certain that Netaji was forced to convert. He had defected from Shivaji's army to join with Bijapur and was later lured into Mughal service by Jai Singh. It seems he played a rather dangerous game of shifting allegiances and may have converted to maintain his position (Sarkar 1978, chapter 9). But more important, there are certainly no sources that would give us a glimpse of his inner thoughts, or that he was “deeply moved” as his “love for his country and religion returned.” Like the “quoted” dialogue the writer provides, these are elements that fill in the story around the available historical facts. Fiction supplies the narrative flow, merges with historical data, and provides plot for the young reader.

All histories are emplotted in this way, of course, and the line between fiction and hard historical data is always blurred. What is insidious here is the claim that Netaji was forced to convert to

Islam, since forced conversion, though extremely rare, is central to the militant Hindu nationalist story of the violent entrance of Islam into South Asia.

Fictional enrichment of the historical account is a specialty of Babasaheb Purandare, whose histories, plays, and novels have made him the most influential purveyor of the Shivaji tradition over the last thirty years; his work is now disseminated by the worldwide web, despite the fact that he writes only in Marathi.

Purandare's early biography of Shivaji and all his later work avoid controversy and have one aim: veneration of the hero Shivaji through the retelling of his epic life. Purandare indulges without restraint in the dramatic embellishment of the narrative. In the tradition of the romantic novelist H. N. Apte, he fills out the characters of his epic drama by providing a novelist's account of their conversations and inner feelings. Every historical datum is a precious nugget to be utilized to enrich the story of the great hero and the Utopian kingdom he ruled, but no fact tarnishes that image. For example, in telling the story of Shahji's imprisonment early in Shivaji's career, he writes: "It was as if the Adil Shah grabbed Jijabai's wedding necklace (*mangalsūtra*) ... as if he gave her the choice of *svarājya* or her wifely auspicious-ness (*saubhāgya*)" (Purandare 1980, 37),¹² a passage illustrated with a (p.87) drawing of the shah as a figure in a nightmare, brandishing a sword that drips with blood, hovering over a terrified Jijabai, who huddles with her young son.

In his comprehensive biography, published in 1965, Purandare makes liberal use of references to the *Śivabhārata*. For example, Purandare repeats the scene in which Paramananda describes Shivaji as an infant being first brought out to witness the sun (SBH 6.91; Purandare 1965, 1:97–99). For the poet, this standard ritual becomes an occasion for reflection on Shivaji as descended from the Solar dynasty, and whereas Sardesai or Sarkar, or even Ranade, would ignore such a claim, Purandare makes full use of these rich mythological details, even while carefully attending to the historical record. He is clearly the follower of both Paramananda and Rajwade.

Purandare embellishes all these stories with mythic motifs, as if to say that Shivaji's feats, though historical, conform to the timeless drama of myths. For example, he illustrates the story of Shivaji's meeting with Afzal Khan with a picture of, and poem about, Narasimha Vishnu's avatar as a Man-Lion (Purandare 1980, 49), so that the fact that Shivaji attacked Afzal Khan by ripping his belly with "tiger claws" takes on mythic significance. Similarly, since Shivaji spared Shaista Khan at the request of his begging wives, the story is illustrated by reference to Krishna's lenience with the demon Kaliya (Purandare 1980: 74–75), a motif drawn from Chitnis and the *Śivadigvijaya*.

In *Maharāj*, a condensed version of Purandare's Shivaji biography meant for older children, each page is a chapter and includes a vivid illustration. Each page is, as it were, the equivalent of a scene in a film, a discrete episode sketched out visually with accompanying script. In the Afzal Khan episode, Shivaji is drawn almost as a young boy, half the size of his Goliath-like adversary (Purandare 1980, 50). Here we have a visual image that communicates his underdog status and perhaps the sort of oedipal messages that lurk beneath the surface of this story. Even as a thirty-six-year-old man, returning from Agra, he is depicted as shorter than his mother—and he

is always depicted sitting on a dais lower than hers—which conveys the consistent message that he is an obedient son before all else.

Purandare turned early to other media to tell the tale of Shivaji. He is a powerful speaker and has told the story of Shivaji's life on a series of cassettes. He has written a novel, *Śelār Khind*, that was made into a popular film entitled *Sarja*. And he has directed *Jānta Rājā*, a sort of theatrical outdoor pageant that requires an outside “stage” big enough (p.88) to accommodate horses and elephants. He has even proposed staging this show on the Mall in Washington, D.C. His cassettes and books are now widely advertized on the web, and more than one site seems to draw almost directly from either his biographical writing or from the school textbook.

The Brihan Maharashtra Mandal, an organization for Maharashtrians living in North America, holds a large convention every year and maintains a website (BMMOnline.Org) for coordinating the activities of numerous organizations across the continent. In 1997, the mandal's convention featured a modified performance of *Jānta Rājā* and visits by Babasaheb Purandare and vocalist Lata Mangeshkar (who has collaborated with Purandare on several projects). Madhukar Joshi gave an address on Shivaji that tilted its message to the concerns of Indian professionals living abroad. He praised Shivaji as a successful “manager” whose slogan was “Business people are the jewels of a nation” and whose capital Raigad “was a drive-through mall—except, of course, you rode a horse!”¹³

His text, however, is in large part an English paraphrase of Purandare's *Maharāj*, 35–69, and the web version includes the book's illustrations.¹⁴

Basic searches of the internet for sites related to Shivaji reveal that his story is retold in a manner similar to the dominant narrative found in the school textbook and the accounts of Babasaheb Purandare.¹⁵ At the end of the twentieth century, the story of Shivaji has been standardized as the patriotic tale of a great man whose kingdom can be seen as a golden age. He is celebrated first as a hero, the brave conqueror of Afzal Khan and escapee of Aurangzeb's house arrest. The history of his reign is personalized as a struggle between the tyrannical bigot Aurangzeb and the noble heroic underdog Shivaji. Shivaji lifted up the oppressed, common man, gave him freedom, especially freedom of religion. He was a progressive who modernized the administration of his realm and developed a modern navy. He respected women. He was a devoted son and was above all vice. In short, besides the compelling stories, the account of Shivaji's biography is currently governed by neo-Hindu nationalism, and the narrative has become so naturalized that it is difficult to imagine the story in any other way.

Beneath the surface of the taken-for-granted narrative, one can detect, however, a few traces of concern about the coherence of the story, places where the authors played a role in buttressing their account against the cracks that might form across its gleaming surface. These traces, these unstated questions, will be the theme of the following chapter.

Notes:

(1.) The sentiment of H. N. Apte's famous line, *gād ālā, pan simha gela!* (“the fort is won but the lion is lost!”) is expressed in Phule's balad by the phrase *gad hāti lāglā Tānhājī balī ghetlā* (“the fort is in hand, [but] Tanaji was taken as victim”) (Phule 1969, 64).

(2.) O'Hanlon 1985, 171, says that this line means that Phule did not accept the idea that Ramdas was Shivaji's guru. In the ballad, however, the line comes after reference to Dadaji Konddev. Anil Samarth translates it: "A fish does not need a coach for swimming."

(3.) See SBMH 110, which translates the passage from this *bakhar*.

(4.) "[T]he Mahomedans, whilst exhausting themselves, were gradually exciting that turbulent predatory spirit, which, though for ages smothered, was inherent in the Hindoo natives of Maharashtra; in this manner the contention of their conquerors stirred those latent embers, till, like the parched grass, kindled amid the forests of the Syhadree mountains, they burst forth in spreading flame, and men afar off wondered at the conflagration" (Duff 1971, 1:32).

(5.) Although he is studying the ways Shivaji has been portrayed in numerous genres over the last century and a half from a sociological perspective, Jasper has independently reached conclusions similar to mine, primarily that despite political differences, a common narrative of his life is largely accepted and has become a common public memory. My work has concerned almost exclusively texts, whereas Jasper considers other fields (cinema, theater) and is providing a rich portrait of these developments. See Jasper 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002.

(6.) In 1895, Ranade published this chapter as a separate essay (Ranade 1961, ii).

(7.) Anil Samarth surveys this literature in a comprehensive way. Cf his *Shivaji and the Indian Nationalist Movement* (1975). He lists a dozen Marathi plays about Shivaji that were published in the period 1893–1937, and traces literature about Shivaji in Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, and even Assamese.

(8.) His biography of Shivaji appeared in 1896, the very year Tilak held his first Shivaji festival. It was recently translated into English by R. C. Puri as *Shivaji the Great Patriot* (1980). Savarkar (1969) compared Mazzini to Ramdas in his book on the Italian revolutionary.

(9.) When I visited the BISM in the early 1990s, I was welcomed warmly, but was never allowed to see their manuscript of the *Śivabhārata*, a text I translated from their published version.

(10.) *Śivājīce manāt āle, je āpan Hindu, sarve dakṣiṇ deś yavanānī pādākrānt kelā. Kṣetras pīḍa kelī. Hindudharm badavilā. Prāṇhī deūn dharma rakṣū. āple parakrame navīn daulat sampādu te anna bhakṣū.* (Savarkar, 56)

(11.) A recent account of Shivaji's life by a fanner activist even praised the progressive land reforms instigated by Shivaji's brahmin tutor, Dadaji Konddev; see Sharad Joshi et al. 1988.

(12.) *Bādsāhāne āūsāhebānce jaṇu mangalsūtrac pakaḍle hote.... Bādsāhāne āūsāhebānnā jaṇu savlac pheklā hotā kī, 'bol! Tulā kay have? Tujhe saubhāgya ki svarājya?'*

(13.) <http://www.maayboli.com/literature/history/shivaji1.html>

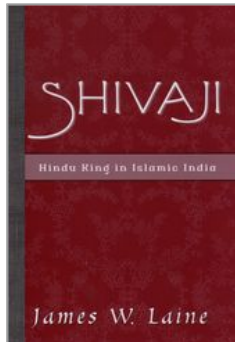
(14.) Similarly, the site <http://members.tripod.com/~shivshahi> reproduces whole paragraphs from the school textbook.

(15.) www.chatrapatishivajimaharaj.com; www.shivaji-maharaj.com; www.hindunet.org; www.hindubooks.org; www.freeindia.com; www.raigadropeway.org; www.historyofindia.com. Jasper 2001 discusses some of the cultural implications of the transmission of the Shivaji “legacy” on the web.



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Cracks in the Narrative

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

Maharashtra possesses a regional history that most of its inhabitants consider as a patriotic narrative about the nation. Because India is a relatively young nation and establishing its modern identity and national vision is still under construction, it is likely that nation builders would count on the regional golden age for reliable material. Therefore, writers should compare the accounts of the already colonized Maharashtra with accounts wherein Muslims were still at reign and Shivaji was perceived as a liberator. There could be many ways of construing Shivaji's story as there may be parts that can be modified by the narrator, or portions of the story are possibly unreported and made known to the public. What this chapter attempts to point out is that authors incorporate ideas about themselves and their dreams in their narratives.

Keywords: Maharashtra, patriotic narrative, national vision, identity, colony, authors' ideas

[O]ne is astonished in the study of history at the recurrence of the idea that evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over. We must not remember that Daniel Webster got drunk but only remember that he was a splendid constitutional lawyer. We must forget that George Washington was a slaveowner.... and simply remember the things we regard as creditable and inspiring. The difficulty with this philosophy is that history loses its value as an incentive and example; it paints perfect men and noble nations, but does not tell the truth.

W. E. B. Du Bios

As a young boy growing up in Texas, I, like all the other boys in my neighborhood, soaked up the story of Davy Crockett and the Alamo as a simple tale of good guys and bad guys. The bad guys, Santa Ana and his Mexican army, were cardboard figures, like the Indians to our cowboys, or the Nazis to our Americans, and we left them undeveloped and largely unnamed. I have vague memories of John Wayne's portrayal of Davy Crockett, and more vivid ones of Fess Parker on a Disney television series, but no real sense of the sources of that lore that thrilled my imagination. But as a five-year-old-Texan, I roamed the neighborhood in a coonskin cap, carrying a toy rifle, and singing, "Davy, Davy Crockett, king of the wild frontier!" Of course, it never occurred to me to question whether Davy Crockett was really a great hero, or whether the Texan war for independence from Mexico was noble or just.¹ My imagination was fired by the tale, and I replayed the adventures variably and incessantly, but certainly without a thought to how Mexicans might have told the story. A veteran of years of instruction in Texas history, I only recently returned to the story of the Alamo to consider it afresh. Now I can see the Texan war of independence as a war of secession from Mexico waged by Anglos, many of whom were (p.90) illegal immigrants to northern Mexico. Recent historians have begun to question many of the "facts" deeply imbedded in the Texan consciousness, and the growing Latino population in Texas will provoke new questions of regional identity.²

Like Texas, Maharashtra has a regional history that is as important to many of its inhabitants as the patriotic narrative of the nation. And since the nation of India is but half a century old, the task of creating a national identity out of the many resources of regional subcultures is still under way, and it is perhaps inevitable that the nation builders of Maharashtra would look to their regional golden age to find material for the construction of a modern identity and a national vision. Reaching back to Shivaji, before the more recent, better-remembered peshwa past, Keluskar and Rajwade, Tilak and Ranade compared their colonized Maharashtra to the days before Shivaji, when "foreign" Muslim powers controlled the Deccan, and saw in Shivaji a liberator. Purandare continues to do the same today.

There could, however, be radically different ways of reading the biography of Shivaji. Since the narrator is free to flesh out his characters with fictional dialogue and attribute to them feelings he has imagined are appropriate to their actions, we are left to wonder about the many ways Shivaji's life could be constructed but were not. His relations with his wives and children are, for example, largely unreported. But we can find hints in the commonly accepted accounts of roads not taken. Those hints suggest a kind of repressed awareness of what one might say about Shivaji if one were allowed to entertain certain unthinkable thoughts. In what follows, I do not mean to present a kind of debunker's portrait of Shivaji, warts and all. I have no intention of showing that he was unchivalrous, was a religious bigot, or oppressed the peasants. I have no intention of being a latter-day Grant Duff, revealing the "real" Shivaji to be a violent marauder.

My primary claim is not that I have a truer, more objective history than the standard accounts. What I would prefer to do is look once again at the emerging narrative that we have considered to see those places where the authors themselves have carefully avoided saying something, or where they say something rather abruptly in order to answer some unexpressed concern. Such a pursuit will allow us not to see the "real" Shivaji but to better appreciate the ideological concerns of the many authors who have shaped the narrative tradition of Shivaji's legendary life.

The real issue is what the authors are saying about themselves, about the dreams they hold, the dreams they see expressed in the tales of their hero.

(p.91) What, then, are some of the unthinkable thoughts, carefully held at bay by the narrators who have shaped the Shivaji legend into a familiar tale? Can one imagine a narrative of Shivaji's life in which, for example:

Shivaji had an unhappy family life?

Shivaji had a harem?

Shivaji was uninterested in the religion of bhakti saints?

Shivaji's personal ambition was to build a kingdom, not liberate a nation?

Shivaji lived in a cosmopolitan Islamic world and did little to change that fact?

Can we see where these narrative elements are avoided, and consider where they might lead if they were accepted or explored? Let us consider each in turn.

Did Shivaji have an unhappy family life? All the traditional accounts of Shivaji's life describe his family life in positive terms. But the simple fact is that Shivaji's mother and father lived apart for most if not all of Shivaji's life. Shahji married Tukabai Mohite about 1630 and was not present at his son's birth or his first marriage. Shahji pursued his career in Bangalore, first grooming his eldest son, Shivaji's older brother Sambhaji as his successor, and then, after Sambhaji's early death, passing everything on to Ekoji, Tukabai's son.³ It is always said that Shivaji was sent with his mother to govern Pune, that this was part of Shahji's political plan. In addition, Shivaji had to be sent away from the Adil Shahi capital because he could not tolerate cow slaughter and other practices associated with Islamic life. He was mysteriously passionate about his religious heritage, and for his own safety had to be removed from such a setting.

But perhaps he was born at a time when his parents were already estranged? How would the narrative look in light of such a supposition?

Shivaji's parents were married under trying circumstances. They were children, and Jijabai's parents opposed the match, considering themselves, as Jadhavs (Yadavas), to be too aristocratic to accept a groom from the Bhosles, a clan not accepted as one of ninety-six upper-class Maratha families. Because of Shahji's rising status in the Nizam Shahi regime, however, the sultan forced the Jadhavs to accept the marriage. At the time of Shivaji's birth, Jijabai's father and brothers were allied with the Mughals and at war with her husband. Earlier hints of family discord are found in the *Śivabhārata*, where Paramananda portrays a interfamily fight as similar to the warring cousins of the *Mahābhārata* **(p.92)** (SBH 3.8–3.57). And it is interesting that Paramananda, writing to establish Shivaji's status at the time of his coronation, uses abundant solar imagery to emphasize Shivaji's descent from the Solar dynasty, a line traced from his mother, not his father.

Most important, Shivaji pursued a career path at odds with his father's. Whereas Shahji thrived as a loyal servant first of the Nizam Shah and then of the Adil Shah, his son Shivaji was a rebel

who strategically accepted feudatory status at times, but always pursued, we are led to believe, the dream of independent kingship. The traditional narrative does recognize this difference of father and son. Paramananda devotes a canto to a reflection on Shahji's misplaced trust in his Muslim colleagues (SBH 16), and early chronicles have Jijabai feeling a mixture of pride and anguish over her son's independent spirit. The story that Shivaji visited Bijapur as a boy but could not restrain his revulsion at the site of cow slaughter is most telling in this regard. This story reveals the differences between father and son, and also serves as an explanation for why Shivaji lived apart from Shahji. To quote the *Śivadigvijay* again, Shivaji declares: "I shall no longer tolerate any slight upon religion, or any act of Muhammadan injustice (*yavanī avicār*). If my father abandons me on that account, I shall not mind" (Sen 1920, 157; SDV 68). This is a crack in the narrative, a sort of Freudian slip, for in using the word "abandons," the author suggests an estrangement between father and son that is almost always covered over.

Chitnis goes so far as to entitle the fourth chapter of his seven-chapter biography *Rājya-
maryadā-sthāpaṇa āṇi Pitṛ-darśana* (Establishing the Borders of the Kingdom and Seeing
Father),⁴ and this becomes the basis for the sort of statement made rather abruptly in the school
textbook:

Devotion to Father (pitṛbhakti). Shivaji always obeyed his mother. He fulfilled her every wish. He, however, missed the company of his father. Once Shahjiraje came to see him. Shivaji was overjoyed. He made him ride in a "palkhi" and walked by its side carrying his father's shoes. This shows his great devotion to his father. (*Shivachhatrapati*, 76)

This claim transparently reveals the author's fear that it is not true. There is no historical context for the meeting. It happened once upon a time.⁵ And, in order to quell the anxious sense that the father of the nation, the great hero of the golden age, was the child of a broken home, the author states simply that this single meeting—presumably very rare or it would not deserve mention—"shows" his devotion to his father. Keluskar follows Chitnis's account of this event, but embellishes it to add that Shivaji warmly greeted his father's second wife, treating her as **(p.93)** he would his own mother (Takakhav 1921, 207–209). And surely Jijabai embraced her as a sister!

The repressed awareness that Shivaji had an absentee father is also revealed by the fact that Maharashtrians tell jokes naughtily suggesting that his guardian Dadaji Konddev was his biological father. In a sense, because Shivaji's father had little influence on his son, for many narrators it was important to supply him with father replacements, Dadaji and later Ramdas. But perhaps we read the story of his life as governed by motivations buried deep in his psyche by a mother rejected by her husband. One could then see that Shivaji's drive to heroism was spurred by his attempt to please his doting mother, and that she, aware of her Yadava heritage and thinking of her husband as a collaborator of low birth, instilled in her son the dream of a revived Hindu kingdom.

Besides the fact that Shivaji grew up apart from his father, we are also aware of his testy relationship with his oldest son Sambhaji, who deserted his father's cause for a time and allied with the Mughals, and is primarily remembered for his affronts to the chaste virtue of brahmin women, his drug use, and his association with Tantric priests of questionable integrity. Upon his father's death, he had Rajaram's mother Soyraibai executed on the charge that she poisoned

Shivaji. None of these unseemly facts accord well with the family values of contemporary middle-class Indians, and are largely ignored in popular modern accounts.

We know that Shivaji was also the father of Rajaram and three daughters, but hear nothing of his relationship with these children. The great man was great because of his public deeds, and as a great man, he is presumed to be a man whose private virtues informed his domestic life. But, in fact, we know virtually nothing of his family affairs.

Did Shivaji have a harem? It is also hard to think about Shivaji having a harem, perhaps because the practice of polygamy is associated with Muslims. Paramananda, writing about 1674 and covering events up until 1661, mentions none of Shivaji's wives, nor the birth of Sambhaji, despite the fact that he went to his fateful meeting with Afzal Khan a few months after his first wife's death. Sabhasad states, however, that the king had seven wives, and we know the names of at least eight wives and concubines.⁶ Except for the rumors that Soyerbai lobbied for her son Rajaram against the claims of Sambhaji, none of the wives play any role in the standard biography of the king, and the story of the hero totally lacks romance. There is the one charming tale that Aurangzeb's daughter Zebunnissa gazed upon Shivaji when he came to the Mughal court at Agra, fell in love with him, and thus never married. But for (p.94) the most part, it is as if the king had no love life. It seems that because the authors of his biography were so keen to portray him as the obedient son, they admitted no rivals to the affection Shivaji felt for his mother.⁷

In an interesting way, Shivaji's lack of a love life is related to his interpretation as a would-be ascetic, longing to renounce the world of power and violence to be a devotee of the saints. So it becomes difficult to imagine raising the third question: *Was Shivaji uninterested in the religion of bhakti saints?* The standard accounts of Shivaji's relation to the saints are found in Mahipati and Chitnis, and debate is largely over the issue of whether the king was a devotee of the brahmin Ramdas or the non-brahmin Tukaram. What has become unthinkable is the idea that he was not significantly related to either, that he dispensed patronage to notable religious figures for political purposes, and that his own religious devotion was reserved to the unreformed cult of Tuljapur Bhavani and Mahadev of Shingnapur. As we have seen, in the earliest accounts of Shivaji's life there are no references to his encounters with saints, but rather, consistent accounts of his devotion to Bhavani, even accounts of divine possession. Moreover, we have the early account of his intense religious experience at the shrine of Shri Shailam on his last major campaign, suggesting that as late as 1677 he was still the warrior carrying the sword of a fierce goddess, not the vegetarian disciple of a saint.

The crack in the narrative is supplied by Mahipati who, as we have seen in chapter three, goes out of his way to elevate Ramdas, ridicule Gaga Bhatta, and demote Bhavani to the rank of a lower-caste deity.

The narrative coherence we find in Ranade and the discourse that follows from his writing presumes that a Maharashtrian identity flows first from Varkari religious reform, beginning with Jnaneshvar in the thirteenth century. It is Vaishnava, vegetarian, and critical of caste prejudice. Ramdas, though not a Varkari, and surely uninterested in their program of deemphasizing the status of brahmins, is nonetheless included in the "religion of the saints" by Mahipati, Ranade,

and in all standard nationalist accounts of Maharashtrian history. Once “Hinduism” is conceived as a “religion” with a bloc of equal and interchangeable “members,” devotion to Bhavani can be brought back into this all-encompassing fold, a move Mahipati makes by having Ramdas praise her as “Ādi-Māyā.”

Such religious universalism, with the premise that there can be religious truths that claim the adherence of all people in all situations, may have been nascent in the early Varkari movement, and is certainly **(p.95)** the ideal of a writer such as Mahipati. According to such universalism, one should be a vegetarian as part of one's devotion to Vitthoba, regardless of one's caste. But such views are opposed by the particularism of traditional Hindu notions of caste, which presume that something like vegetarianism may be appropriate for one caste but inappropriate for another. And if we presume that Shivaji was a devotee of a nonvegetarian goddess like Bhavani, to whom blood sacrifices have always been offered, and not a follower of the Varkari movement, the ascription to him of universalist Hinduism begins to look anachronistic. In other words, in his own time, he assumed that there were brahmins, renouncers, and saints who adopted lives of vegetarianism, celibacy, and ahimsa, attributes appropriate to their particular role and way of life but not to the life of a kshatriya. Among certain Varkaris, and for Mahipati, and certainly for Ranade and later nationalists, many of those attributes become marks of an ideal uni-versalist Hinduism, a club to which all should belong; they reach back to include Shivaji—the king as exemplary Hindu, not the king as exemplary kshatriya. We can thus contrast Mahipati's view of kingship, where Shivaji is consumed with the desire to live the renouncer's life, with that of Paramananda writing a century earlier. Universalism prevails in Mahipati, whereas Paramananda, himself a brahmin playing the traditional role of court intellectual, accepts a more traditional particularism.

We can still glimpse in the earliest periods an account of Shivaji's life that takes for granted an hierarchical society in which Shivaji was appreciated for playing a traditional role, a king who succeeds at conquest, amasses wealth, and patronizes brahmins and ascetics. Sabhasad never mentions Shivaji as being a follower or devotee of Ramdas or any other holy man. He is described at his coronation not as devotee but as generous patron: “Fifty thousand brahmins had assembled, as well as ascetics, holy men, sannyasis, guests, yogis, Jangams [Lingayats], Manbhavs, and *jaṭadāris* [ascetics with matted hair] of various communities (*jātis*). All of them were given sweets and grain for four months” (Sabhasad, 93). Paramananda can unabashedly proclaim Shivaji a conquering plunderer who nonetheless frees his subjects from fear and gives them protection and the freedom to prosper:

So the mighty [King Shivaji]
Exacted tribute [throughout the Konkan]
From various Europeans,
Evil men, worse than Muslims,
Who were especially powerful,
(p.96)
Because of their skill at aiming cannon
And their cleverness in fortification.
They were wealthier than Kubera

And as skilled [in architecture!
As [the divine architect] Maya,
And nearly invincible
In faring on the high seas;
[He also exacted tribute]
From bare-bodied Malabari seamen
And other sea traders,
Coming from every continent,
As well as from discontent sardars,
Who were wild as elephants.
He immediately claimed
The wealth of Rajapur,
Which had long been guarded
By various tightfisted foreigners.

The destroyer of villains [Shivaji]
Had many men dig up the earth,
Where vessels filled with gold
Had been buried in holes.
Although magical ointment
Was not applied to his eyes,
The King could truly still see
These caches [of hidden wealth].
Wherever the king might cast his eye
Just there, like Mt. Meru,
Would be heaps of gold.
The populace brought to him there
So many heaps of jewels,
That it was as if nearby
Stood a mountain of *lapis lazuli*.
By employing his miners,
O how he purified that earth!
With all its caches of wealth,
[A land] which had become impure
Because of its long contact with Muslims.
Gold and silver, brass and lead,
Copper, iron and tin,
Glass and *svarnamaksika*,
Pearls, emeralds and rubies,
Diamonds and coral,
Rhinoceroses' horns and elephants' tusks,
Musk, saffron, sandal and camphor,
(p.97) Black sandal and orpiment,
Berry perfume and red sandal,
Cardamom, cloves and cinnamon,

Copacini and clearing nut plant,
Crocodile claws and tatty root,
Nutmeg, marijuana and opium,
Tamalpatra and *piyala*,
Walnuts, grapes and dates,
Melon, pepper and betel nuts,
Pine and ginger,
Indian spike nard and *cavak*,
Salt, saltpeter and natron,
Haritaki purgatives and turpentine,
Resin, bitumen and beeswax,
Collyrium of blue, black and other types,
And copper sulfate,
Bishop's weed and asafoetida,
Cumin and Lodhra leaves,
Gum resin, madder and red lead,
Quicksilver, yellow ointment,
Sulfur and red arsenic,
Lac, myrrh and cow-urine pigment,
Various poisons and their antidotes,
New clothes woven from deer's hair,
Silk, calf-skin and country-cloth:
These and many other goods
Did the king bring by stallions and mares,
By bulls and laborers with poles,
And he stored them in his many forts.
Shethli, Saundal and Harcheri,
Nevre, Naghvade and Kotvade,
Kelvali and Kasheli,
Pavas and Dhamanase,
Belvade and Kharepatan:
These and many other towns
Brought their tribute to him.

[Kharepatan is a few miles south of Rajapur and the other towns are in Ratnagiri district within a few miles.]

Thus having controlled various districts
And plundered different types of wealth,
The courageous [king] returned
To his own kingdom.
(Laine 2001, 364–366, translating *Śivabhārata* 30.1–26)
(p.98) Then, having advanced on the district
Known as Pallivan,
Shivaji granted his favor

To those who were worthy,
And punished all those persons,
Who deserved his punishment.

Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras,
Bangle-makers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, coppersmiths,
Carpenters, masons, barbers and jugglers,
Malis, potters, artisans and bards,
Many weavers, tailors and dyers,
Panwallahs, oil-pressers, washermen, wine-makers,
Goatherds, cowherds, Guravs, farmers,
Perfume-makers, bakers and shell-vendors,
Drummers, flautists, vina players,
And experts in various instruments,
Hunters, weapon-sharpeners, fletchers,
Money-lenders, snake-catchers, chamars,
Tribals, fishermen and Mangs:
[All] these [castes of men], formerly fearful,
Now reached their goals, by coming quickly
To [King Shivaji's] realm again,
And in many ways they rejoiced,
Growing more prosperous day by day.

[Malis are the gardener caste. Guravs are a caste of priests who, although considering themselves brahmins, are not generally reckoned such. They do wear a sacred thread and have their own sacred book. Chamars are leather-workers and untouchable. Mangs are also an untouchable caste, traditionally rope makers.]

(Laine 2001, 375–376, translating *Śivabhārata* 31.16–23)

These passages resemble the passages at the end of Sabhasad that catalog the king's possessions, and to read them is to reach back to grasp a seventeenth-century conception of kingship. Here we see kingship not in the anachronistic sense of a mission to liberate and build a nation of citizens free of religious oppression, but in the traditional sense of amassing wealth and power and glory. In reading Paramananda's account, one authorized by the king for his own coronation, can we begin to contemplate whether *Shivaji's personal ambition was to build a kingdom, not liberate a nation*.

Shivaji's kingship certainly revived old Sanskritic practices largely forgotten in his day, but he could not escape the cultural dominance of (p.99) worldwide Islam. Even the kingship itself was understood in Islamicate terms. As we noted above, Sabhasad claims Shivaji to be both a maharaja and a badshah, that is, a king understood in both Sanskritic and Persianate terms. The king dressed in Persian style and spoke a language full of Persian words. His successors reverted to mostly Islamicate practices, to the extent that Marathas were associated with customs called “Marathmola” (such as seclusion of women and eating from a common dish) largely taken from Muslim courts (O'Hanlon 1985, 19). His granddaughters were given in

marriage to Mughal noblemen. Could it be that *Shivaji lived in a cosmopolitan Islamicate world and did little to change that fact?*

Let us assume that Shivaji did attempt to revive specifically Hindu practices by patronizing a Sanskrit poet and giving his ministers Sanskrit titles. But how does his reign appear if we assume that the dominance of Islamicate culture was largely unaffected by his thirty-five years on campaign? One could assume, as Sarkar did (Sarkar 1961, 135), that he agreed to go to Aurangzeb's court in Agra because he had hopes of being named Mughal viceroy of the Deccan. Had he received such an honor, it is doubtful that he would have planned a coronation eight years later, but would have conducted his career much as his father did as an Adil Shahi noble and governor of Bangalore. Even after the debacle in Agra, he was willing to send his son Sambhaji to Aurangabad in 1667 to assume the title of Mughal mansabdar (commander). And his last campaign was carried out with the support of Muazzam, Aurangzeb's son, who was serving as Deccan viceroy in 1677. His close allies, the Jedhes, gave their allegiance to the Mughals in the generation after Shivaji's death, and his grandson was raised in Aurangzeb's court and returned to reign in Maharashtra with the full collusion of Aurangzeb's successor. Given these facts, it surely seems that the overall pattern of Hindu-Muslim military and political collaboration seems to have been little changed by Shivaji's experiments with revived Hindu cultural practices.

Nonetheless, the very presence of Islam made Hindus more aware of their own cultural and religious identity, furthering the tendency to use the word *dharma*, "way of life" to mean *din*, or "religion." Shivaji and his contemporaries participated in this process, in this "venture of Hinduism," but it was the narrators of the life of Shivaji that completed the process of transforming the way of life that Hindus led into a religion in the modern sense. Some of these authors—Ranade, Keluskar—were deeply influenced by the British and by critical categories of **(p.100)** European thought ("religion," interior and exterior, and "nation"), but others—Paramananda, and more so Mahipati—began the process of fashioning a discourse of universalistic religious identity well in advance of British times.

The formation of a narrative of Shivaji's life was, and is, an attempt to overcome forces of disintegration, an attempt to plaster over the cracks.

Notes:

(1.) I found the passage in the epigraph quoted in James W. Loewen's book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (1995), 8. He discusses the process of "heroification," "a degenerative process ... that makes people over into heroes. Through this process our educational media turn flesh-and-blood individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest" (19). This seems to be a process very much at work in the growth of the Shivaji legend, and though I am less concerned with presenting the hero's flaws, I am sympathetic with the project of seeing the process that reduces the historical figure's complexity in favor of a moralistic narrative.

(2.) For a good review of critical histories of the mythicized Texan past, and its place in current identity politics, see Brear 1995.

(3.) Paramananda tries to cover over this crack in the narrative by baldly proclaiming:

But his younger son Shivaji,
Who had such a glory of qualities,
The king [Shahji] esteemed much more highly
Than the other son Sambhaji.
(Laine 2001, 131, translating SBH 9.62).

(4.) This chapter title is in Sanskrit, and the phrase *pitr-darśana* would not be the normal Marathi way of saying “seeing Father.” The use of the Sanskrit word *pitr* for father with the Sanskrit *darśana* for seeing connotes a kind of ritual gaze.

(5.) Takakhav notes that Keluskar follows Chitnis in recording the story of the reunion of Shahji and Shivaji in Jejuri about 1663, but admits that the dating of the event is problematic; Takakhav 1921, chapter 14.

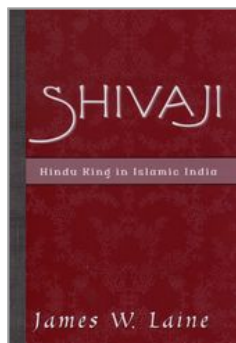
(6.) Cf Sabhasad 69n, where the editor Vakaskar lists eight queens: Saibai, Sagunabai, Soyerbai, Putlabai, Lakshmibai, Sakwarbai, Kashibai, and Guna-vantbai, married between the years of 1640 and 1657 (when Shivaji was between ten and twenty-seven years old, or thirteen and thirty if one accepts his earlier birth date). Saibai died in 1659 before his fateful encounter with Afzal Khan. Putlabai committed sati on Shivaji's funeral pyre.

(7.) See my article “Shivaji's Mother” (1996) for a full interpretation of jijabai as a rejected wife.



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Epilogue. The Construction of Hindu and Muslim Identities in Maharashtra

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Abstract and Keywords

Scholars have been able to put up a vast collection of writings regarding religion, its definitions, and specific religious traditions like “Islam” or “Hinduism.” From a modern perspective wherein India has become politically united, various ancestors from the subcontinent of India are thus considered forerunners of the nation. However, issues arise regarding the use of such terms as “religion”, “Hinduism”, and “Islam” as these may be used in several different ways as using these terms entails varying scope. This book has observed that identity construction is common to the writings on Shivaji from the 17th and 18th centuries, and that the meaning of being Hindu or Muslim depends on one's social location, experience, and interests.

Keywords: Islam, Hindu, religion, varying scope, social location, experience, interests

A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time is shown a number of colleges, playing fields, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. He then asks 'But where is the university? I have seen where the members of the Colleges live, where the registrar works, where the scientists experiment and the rest. But I have not yet seen the university in which reside and work the members of your university.

Gilbert Ryle (1991, 53)

In every age, pious Muslims have reasserted their faith, in light of the new circumstances that have arisen out of the failures and also the successes of the past. The vision has never vanished, the venture has never been abandoned; these hopes and efforts are still vitally alive in the modern world. The history of Islam as a faith, and the culture of which it has

formed the core, derives its unity and its unique significance from that vision and that venture.

Marshall G. S. Hodgson 1974, 1:71

[W]e should take religious discourse and practice as constitutive of changing social identities, rather than treating them as ideological smoke screens that hide the real clash of material interests and social classes.

Peter van der Veer 1994, ix

(p.102) In the years since the publication of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's *Meaning and End of Religion* (Smith 1962), scholars have generated a huge literature on the very category of religion, refining their definitions of "religion" or of particular religious traditions such as "Islam" or "Hinduism." Their concern has been to determine just what the scope of their study should be when studying cultures previously described as "Muslim" or "Hindu" or constituted in some large measure by "religion."¹ In the last few years, the nature of identity has been similarly problematized, so that persons we once thought of as "Indian" or "Hindu" can be shown, through a sort of intellectual archeology, to be possessed of a very different sense of self than that held by their contemporary descendents. As Sudipta Kaviraj puts it, it is only by the "constructing of the past as history" (that is, as a coherent narrative) that modern Indians can, for example, lay claim to the Satavahanas, second-century Andhra dynasts, as ancestors and "ancient Indians" (Kaviraj 1993, 17-19). In other words, from the perspective of the modern, politically united Indian nation—by definition, an anachronistic perspective—all sorts of ancestors from the subcontinent can be found to be the forerunners of this nation, even when those "ancestors" would not have felt themselves to be part of some Indian whole.

Although this is not the place to review the immense literature that deconstructs "religion," "Hinduism," and "Islam," or even "India," one cannot escape the influence of these intellectual currents, and as we attempt a more circumscribed study, that of "Hindu" and "Muslim" identity in seventeenth-century Maharashtra, we must be aware that all these terms bear a heavy burden. It has obviously been important for modern Indian intellectuals, faced with the problems of communalism in their society and committed to a secular historiography, to see that the overly coherent narratives constructed by "communalist" or "primordialist" Hindus and Muslims incorporate premodern "Hindus" and "Muslims" into communities with which they would not have easily identified.² But it is also the case that in avoiding this anachronism the modern secularists may be guilty of another anachronism. Based on their reading of the teachings of reformist saints, and their view of "the village" as a religiously syncretic melting pot, they impute a kind of modern liberalism to the premodern subject, according to which religious affiliation is a rather insignificant and private affair. Moreover, in blaming all social and political divisions between Hindus and Muslims on British colonial policies, they may be guilty of crediting the British with a supreme but unwarranted historical agency.

(p.103) What I want to argue here is that terms like "religion," *dharma*, "Hinduism," and "Islam" remain descriptively useful for modern scholars, as they were for historical subjects, even though we must remember that terms of this logical type, like Ryle's "university," are used

in a variety of ways and have varying scope. Moreover, such terms were in fact already in use by the seventeenth century in Maharashtra with the same sort of fluid and contested usages we find today.³ The fact that we can find counterexamples to defy almost any definition of “Hinduism” one might formulate, or the fact that there is no ancient indigenous term “Hinduism,” does not necessarily mean the word is not and was not a useful one. In some cases Hinduism will be used to describe a religion in the modern sense—“organized” with an articulated theology, practice, and defined membership⁴—while in other cases it denotes a religious system diffuse and coextant with village culture.⁵ Moreover, although we may with much greater assurance define “Islam” theologically by reference to, say, the five pillars, as historians or anthropologists we may find it difficult to apply such a strict definition to the astonishing variety of lived “Islams” to be observed.⁶ Yet here again, certainly in precolonial times we will find people who see themselves as subscribing to something called “Islam” and can imagine there to be a tradition that should be common to all Muslims (even if this is an ideal or an abstraction). Surely in A.D. 1600, many of the people of South Asia could define themselves not only by reference to caste, village, region, and linguistic group, but with reference to religion as well. The fact that none of these categories had strict boundaries did not diminish their usefulness, nor make the enterprise of constructing religious identity any less real. Seventeenth-century Maharashtrians, like modern ones, would use terms equivalent to “Hinduism,” “Islam,” or “religion” as family resemblance terms. Perhaps they could not define these words in terms a computer could recognize, but they remained meaningful words even in the context of debate about their boundaries.⁷ No one can cogently argue that boundaries did not matter (though there are those who seem to do so for rhetorical reasons); the true arguments were about where to place those boundaries.⁸

In examining texts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Maharashtra, especially those associated with the Maratha hero Shivaji, we have seen that the work of identity construction was ongoing in this period, and that although being a Hindu or Muslim in the seventeenth or eighteenth century did not mean membership in the religion of Hinduism or Islam in quite the same sense it means today, it did mean something. The precise meaning of Hindu and Muslim identity varied (**p.104**) from person to person and depended on that person's social location, specific experience, and personal, political, and economic interests. In that sense, I hope to have shown more generally that any Indian historiography which divides the present from the past too sharply may be misleading in creating too static a picture of precolonial people and portraying them as without agency and without the capacity for thinking about religion in abstract, universal, and broadly political terms. In such an historiography, we see the present, where Hindus and Muslims are portrayed as having been forced to inhabit separate camps, opposed as political blocs (two “nations”), as the result of only British colonial policies and modern reformist notions of “religion.” In opposition, we see the past, where identity was forged locally and allegiance to Islam—much less “Hinduism”—was an abstraction at best entertained by ideologues who made up only a tiny fraction of the population; everyone else was involved in religious practices unrelated to the discourses of the “world religions.” Such a cleavage of past from present is every bit as mythic as the primordialist view, according to which Hindus and Muslims in South Asia have always been two distinct peoples, bearing two clearly opposed religions, and having rival political objectives and destinies. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Maharashtrians had religious identities in the sense that they defined themselves as Hindus and Muslims (though what that meant varied as much as it does today), even while they

calculated their precise interests as soldiers, ascetics, peasants, and kings. It should not surprise us that their definitions of religious affiliation would vary widely, or that they would use these definitions in a discourse intimately related to questions of both metaphysical truth and political power.

The question remains whether, despite these debates, one can meaningfully speak of a “venture of Hinduism” in the same sense that Marshall Hodgson argued for a unitary “venture of Islam” (Hodgson 1974, 1:30ff.). What venture was undertaken by those who sought to articulate a common set of ideals over against the ideals of Muslims living among them? And given the internal diversity within both camps, does the opposition of these two groups create a portrait that distorts while it oversimplifies? Moreover, whereas Muslims may experience great internal diversity within their religious community, their *ideal* has always been to create a single brotherhood. At the heart of Hinduism, however, the ideal itself has often been the maintenance of internal diversity. Or has the formulation of universalistic Hinduism since the eighteenth century itself been the adoption of a more Islamicate ideal? The idea that all Hindus in all times and places should uphold certain **(p.105)** truths (even while, like Muslims, all may not actually agree just how those common truths should be formulated) is structurally more similar to the “religion” of Islam than to classical Indian religious formations.

In a recent, very thorough study, David Lorenzen (1999) marshals a vast amount of evidence to dispute the idea that “Hinduism” was a British construction, but he depends heavily on the ideological portrayals of Hinduism and Islam found in the proponents of popular *bhakti*. He notes that these accounts differ from the tendency of Sanskrit writers simply to ignore nonorthodox religious practices. We might note that in the first case, a particular view of ideal religion would color one's account of what was central to Hinduism, elements that reign supreme in nationalist neo-Hinduism: nonviolence, tolerance, detachment, and sincere inner devotion. In the latter, the concern with brahminic orthodoxy makes other elements central: reverence for cows, brahmins, and sacred images; concern for purity and caste proprieties. The construction of a narrative that would include all Hindus in their opposition to Islam depended on the creative selection and molding of elements from both *bhakti* and brahmanic traditions, an emphasis on both the tolerant, nonviolent, and pious traditions from *bhakti*, along with a reverence for cows and images from Purāṇic brahmanism. What had to be overcome was the persistence of caste-based values, and here is where Ranade's reading of the *bhakti* tradition became crucial for the democratic, nation-building project. The narrative of Shivaji's life, already reshaped by *bhakti* writers by 1800, was thoroughly overtaken by the nationalist narrative in 1900 and has been sustained as a grand narrative of Hindu nationalist identity, despite all the inner inconsistencies, anachronisms, and communalism that imaginative enterprise has entailed. **(p.106)**

Notes:

(1.) Most recently, I have found Gerald James Larson, *India's Agony over Religion* (1995), to be most helpful, especially 142–177. Also see Lipner 1996 and Brian K. Smith 1987, 32–55. David Lorenzen has covered several aspects of the debate over Hinduism's genesis in his article, “Who Invented Hinduism?” (1999).

(2.) Cf. Pandey 1990 and Chatterjee 1986 and 1993. Peter van der Veer, in writing about his treatment of the historical background to contemporary religious nationalism in India, states: "No doubt, studies of 'aspects of culture,' and especially of traditional cultures,' do much to freeze and objectify culture as heritage, as a tangible sign of common identity. This problem is even more overwhelming in the case of a work ... that generalizes about a huge society over a large time period. It is hard to escape from speaking about 'the Hindus' or 'the Muslims' if one does not intend to provide a detailed contextualized case study" (1994), xiv. My essay here is a "contextualized case study," but even here there is a danger of reifying "Islam" and "Hinduism" in ways that do not account for the variety of identities Hindus and Muslims of different social classes and regions and periods might have.

(3.) It is ironic that contemporary Hindu "fundamentalists," in seeking to expand the scope in which Hinduism operates in the culture—a common fundamentalist objective—won a recent victory based on a classically liberal definition of "religion." On December 11, 1995, the Supreme Court ruled that whereas, according to the constitution, no political party in India may campaign on a religious platform, the BJP could nonetheless endorse a program of "Hindutva" because the concept of Hindutva referred to a "way of life" and was not explicitly religious. The court even ruled that "Hinduism" did not refer to a specific religion. (One notes that the constitution uses the word Hinduism to refer to all Indian religions, including Jainism and Sikhism.) Since *dharma* has to do with "ways of life" rather than the sort of theological creeds associated with the practices and discourses of institutional religion in the West, we see that the Indian Supreme Court adopts a Western definition of religion in such a way as to allow the BJP to campaign on an antisecularist, Hindu nationalist platform.

(4.) Daniel Gold (1991) uses the term "organized" to denote Hinduism as a self-conscious creed and organization.

(5.) See Larson's typology of religions, which includes village Hinduism under Type 7, characterized by "cognitive indeterminacy," a "micro-communal" social structure, and a hierarchical view of the individual (1995), 174. In distinguishing this type of religion in China, C. K. Yang 1961, 1–27, refers to it as "diffused religion." Larson locates other aspects of Hinduism and neo-Hinduism in five more of his eight types of religion. He also categorizes four different Islamic traditions. His goal is to be more specific in locating religious communities, and thus he finds broad discussions of "Hinduism" and "Islam" misleading.

(6.) In his unpublished essay "Koine and Cosmopolitan Islam," Kevin Reinhart (n.d.) deals with the fact that for most Muslims, their lived experience of Islam is undeniably local, even while they believe themselves to be part of a "world religion" of Islam. Moreover, they do have certain things in common with Muslims worldwide; Reinhart refers to these as "morphemes" of a Koine Islam. Bereft of meaning in themselves, they are inflected locally. Thus, for example, all Muslims recognize the authority of the Qur'an, and thus the Qur'an is a Koine morpheme of the religion all over the Islamic world. On close inspection, what any individual Muslim means by the Qur'an or claims to be in the Qur'an varies widely, and is largely given content through what Clifford Geertz calls "local knowledge." Gregory Kozlowski 1995 argues that "Islam, like conventions of international relations, provided a common set of moral boundaries, a common etiquette and world of meaning in which disparate individuals or corporate entities could interact. Islam

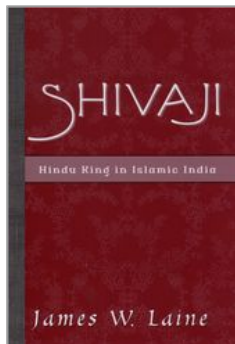
provided the Mughal state with a language which resembled that of international diplomacy." In general, the characterization of South Asian Islam as colored primarily by the South Asian cultural context is associated with the work of Imtiaz Ahmad and his colleagues; see Ahmad 1981, especially Ahmad's introduction. Outside the South Asian context, the work of anthropologists has often alerted scholars to the problem of referring to "Islam" as a transhistorical or essentialist category. The anthropological tradition runs from Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (1971), to Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam* (1982), and to John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse* (1993).

(7.) See Ferro-Luzzi, 1989. Ferro-Luzzi uses Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance and Indian philosophical concepts to characterize "Hinduism" in non-reifying terms. Others in the same volume argue that "Hinduism" is a colonial construction and inappropriately applied to the plural traditions of precolonial India. See especially Stietencron (1989). In a later work, von Stietencron and others further develop the same point; see Dalmia and von Stietencron 1995. If one is to argue, for example, that pre-Islamic Shaivism and Vaishnavism are separate religions, as von Stietencron does, one must also ask why either of these traditions, marked as they are by considerable multiformity, constitute "a religion." Moreover, although the many Hindu traditions differed from one another in theology, practice, and so forth, they did inhabit a common social and political world, and saw the Islamic social world as a threat to their *dharma*. It is often the presence of the other that allows different groups to reconceive their common identity.

(8.) In his critique of the popular view that Sufis, as mystics, are not concerned with traditional boundaries between Hinduism and Islam, van der Veer argues that "there have always been mechanisms for boundary maintenance within Sufism that stress Islamic exclusivity." More generally, he claims that "identity formation works by a dialectics of inclusion and exclusion" (1994, 43). He notes that debates over the question of "who is a good Muslim" invariably involve reference to previous authorities and links to the past; also note his discussion of the ideological purposes of portraying Indian Islam as syncretistic (199–201).



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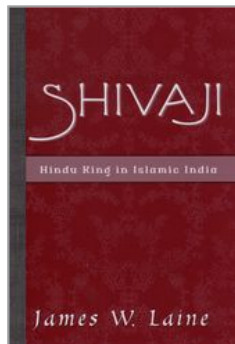
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