



# BUNDI FORT

## A Rajput World

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edited by Milo Cleveland Beach

*Māṅg*

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Page 2: Bundi Fort, from the east. WE109215/Dinodia Photos.

Pages 4–5: Chitrashala (Rang Vilas), Bundi Fort. WE109214/Dinodia Photos.

Page 7: Detail of wall-painting in the Chhatar Mahal, Bundi Fort. V10-1401403/Dinodia Photos.

Pages 8–17: Enlarged views of figures 3.1A–3.4.

Photographs courtesy of Shubha and Prahlad Bubbar.

A stylized variant of the Bundi tiger on this page is the symbol of NGO Dhonk Crafts, Ranthambhore. It is used at the top of the pages as a motif, with their permission.



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कैले तो। पोवै न च कै परबंइ चक त हो दु वीर य प ल ग ती। जी व न ज्ञा म नी त जी त ज्ञे म ति भा न दु ती न की म ती॥  
 मं ना सी य द्द मा स हो त र्द क ग्रा म न बा सी॥ पुर पैन की को कै ह न यं पी पो न बा सी॥ ये ही स मे स ज सी है न ली यो  
 जै स्या स तै श्री ना य हु। के सो दा स ग्रा सा ढ बू है त मै न सु तो र्दु त गा त हु॥ १॥





# THE RULERS OF BUNDI IN MUGHAL-PERIOD LITERARY CULTURE

ALLISON BUSCH

It is the nature of courts to assert themselves aesthetically, and Bundi is no exception. Matiram Tripathi, one of the finest Brajbhasha (classical Hindi) poets of the 17th century, recognized the stature of the Bundi court precisely on account of its aesthetic achievements and praised the connoisseurs of the state, noting that “in singing, in poetry, and in the arts, the people are very knowledgeable”.<sup>1</sup> Court arts invite connoisseurship but also patronage. Hindi poets of the Mughal period (1526–1858) often spoke of the worth of a court on the basis of whether “gunis” (those with talent) clustered there. Once again on the authority of Matiram, we know that Bundi was just such a place. The poet praises Rao Surjan Hada (r. 1554–85) as the founder of Bundi and its attendant cultural life.<sup>2</sup> It was also Rao Surjan who established formal ties with the Mughal empire and, perhaps not coincidentally, the first known Bundi literature is a Sanskrit biography of this celebrated king.

## The Literature of Bundi

Rajput rulers participated in the Persian culture of their Mughal overlords but when it came to their own patronage preferences, they typically sponsored texts in Indic languages. At Bundi, as at other contemporary courts that entered Mughal service, the *charita* (idealized biography) genre had a special cachet. The Bundi court favoured Sanskrit for this genre, as evident from Chandrashekhara’s *Surjana Charita* (Biography of Rao Surjan, 1590s) and Vishvanatha’s *Shatrushalya Charita* (c. 1635).<sup>3</sup> These *charitas* combined biography, hagiography and history and are profitably considered Rajput analogues of the influential Persian chronicles, such as Abu’l Fazl’s *Akbarnama*, that were produced at the Mughal court during the same period. The rulers of Bundi sponsored *charitas* to make claims about the magnificence of their dynasty.<sup>4</sup>

There is also ample evidence for the Bundi court’s interest in significant works of literature that originated elsewhere. Some, such as the popular story cycle *Madhavanala-Kamakandala* (see figure 3.18) and the compositions of the Brajbhasha poet Keshavdas of Orchha, were expertly illustrated by Bundi painters. One such painting accompanies the following verse from Keshavdas’s *Baramasa*, which features an ingenious woman who cannot bear the thought of her lover’s imminent departure (figure 5.1):

5.1 “Don’t leave me in the month of Asarh!”, from a *Baramasa* series, Bundi, c. 1780. Opaque watercolour on paper; 36.6 x 25.1 cm. Museum Rietberg Zurich, Gift Collection Horst Metzger, © Photograph: Rainer Wolfsberger.





The high winds gust fiercely in all directions.  
 How can you leave your beloved at home?  
 Have you lost your mind?  
 Ascetics adopt a single posture for the whole month.  
 Even birds stay put.  
 This is no time for a man to leave home!  
 Shrinath<sup>5</sup> too takes to his bed with Shri right by his side.  
 It's unheard of for a person to set out in the month of Asarh.<sup>6</sup>

Indian poetry is filled with the laments of the iconic *virahini*, the woman who is separated from her lover, but here Keshavdas presents an original twist. The *nayika* or heroine gives a series of arguments as to why the month of Asarh is completely unsuitable for travel. When the next month arrives, she makes similar arguments against travelling at that time. In the end, all of the twelve months (*baramasa*) of the year prove to have impediments and thus the lover is never allowed to leave.

The Rajput and Mughal elites of early modern India relished such vernacular poems and many were prompted to appoint their own court poets. If we have a good sense of where Bundi literature starts, its development and full extent are still not well established. Indian courtly literature is a neglected subject and countless works available in Indian palaces and manuscript libraries remain unpublished. An anchor for any discussion of the Hindi literature commissioned by Bundi rulers is Matiram Tripathi's *Lalitlalam* (Finest Lover), a collection of 400 Brajbhasha poems that were written, as the poet puts it, "for the delight" of the Bundi king Rao Bhao Singh (r. 1658–82).<sup>7</sup> We also have a good sense of the place of Bundi in the literary imagination of other Rajput courts since several Hada kings feature in the poetry of Hindi writers working for other patrons. But the full extent of Bundi literary heritage remains to be discovered.

### Narrations of Self and Other: Praise Poems as Literary Portraits

The complexity of a court's self-narration is one important issue to consider when approaching Bundi literature. How did a court poet like Matiram speak about his Bundi patrons? One central mode of narration was dynastic, as in this poem that proceeds chronologically through the lineage of Bundi rulers:

Surjan's son was Bhoj, protector of the gods on this earth.  
 Bhoj's son was King Ratan, renowned as King Bhoja himself in charity.  
 Ratan's son was [Gopi]Nath, lustrous as a precious gem (*ratna*).  
 [Gopi]Nath's son was Chhatarsal, a respected leader (*nāth*) of men.  
 Chhatarsal's son constantly spears the hearts of his enemies (*shatrūna ura sālata*).  
 Matiram says, King Bhao Singh garners acclaim in the world day by day.<sup>8</sup>

Each line of this verse, which forms a "connected chain" (*ekavali*), reconstructs the Hada lineage generation by generation while also underscoring dynastic continuity by cleverly referencing how a royal son embodies the qualities of his father. Thus, Rao Chhatarsal was esteemed as a *nath* or leader, an epithet that invokes his father's name, Gopinath. And Bhao Singh, Matiram's patron, shows the martial qualities of his father Chhatarsal (a common modern spelling but originally written *Shatrusal*) because he constantly "spears" (*salata*) the hearts of his enemies (*shatru*). Like portraits (figure

5.2 Maharao Buddh Singh of Bundi and his forebears at worship, c. 1730–35. Opaque watercolour on paper; 29.4 x 20.7 cm. Museum Rietberg Zurich, Gift Collection Horst Metzger, © Photograph: Rainer Wolfsberger. Buddh Singh is seated at the top right, facing (from the top left): Rao Chhatarsal, Rao Bhao Singh, and Maharajkumar Kishen Singh and his son Rao Aniruddha Singh. On the right below Buddh Singh are Rawat Devi Singh of Begun (in green), Maharao Durjansal of Kota, and Malhar Rao Holkar, three men who helped Buddh Singh during a period of political turmoil.





महाराजजी श्री ऊमोद सिंह जी के नित्य नियम समय में दर्शन करिवा को चित्र पत्र पंजा  
यतेन देव और बड़ों का और उपकारों का चित्र को छैती स्यो दू जो बण जायोग्यो

स्यो

श्री जगन्नाथ जी श्री महारूपारवता श्री राम जानकी जी



महाराज  
जी श्री रा  
वता जी

महाराज  
जी श्री रा  
वता जी

महाराज  
जी श्री रा  
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जी श्री रा  
वता जी

गहजी महाराज श्री  
गोविंदजी महाराज





5.2), poems could serve as dynastic records that maintained the court's historical memory.

A longstanding Indian literary and inscriptional tradition was the *prashasti* or "praise" poem in honour of a ruler. These often showcase an interesting mix of generic and specific traits (the same can also be said of Indian portraits), since to be a king meant at once to achieve a certain paradigmatic form and to demonstrate individual worth. Since Bhao Singh was the patron of *Lalitlalam* it is only natural that he was also the focus of its panegyric intent. In several verses Matiram stresses the king's magnificent generosity (*dana*) or religious devotion (*bhakti*). Another prominent theme is sexual charisma, in keeping with longstanding norms of presenting Indian royalty as paragons of both the fecundity and the power upon which the prosperity of the kingdom depended. A person who is *lalit* is refined, and a *lalit nayaka* is the best type of lover according to Indian aesthetic theory. The likely import of Matiram's unusual Hindi title is to suggest that Bhao Singh was not just *lalit* but also the *lalam* ("forehead ornament") of all lovers, i.e., the very best.

Often Matiram's praise poems are politically inflected. Bhao Singh, like so many Rajput rulers of the day, was a *mansabdar* (ranked official) in the Mughal administration. He had an important post as a military commander in Aurangabad, and he took part in several of the Maratha campaigns in the Deccan alongside other leading *mansabdars*, notably







5.5 The town of Bundi and the Aravalli range. Photograph: Clark Worswick, 1968.



Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur and Maharaja Jai Singh of Amber.<sup>9</sup> Something of a balancing act was required for the simultaneous narration of the Bundi rulers as imperial servants to the Mughals—an ineluctable truth of the period for all Rajput rulers—and kings over their own domains.

What kind of cultural idioms were appropriate for the expression of Bundi political authority when the king himself was a subordinate to the Mughal emperor? In the case of portraiture, visual analogues between Rajput (figure 5.3) and Mughal (figure 5.4) styles indicate a shared vocabulary for kingly self-presentation. The Bundi painter responsible for figure 5.3 was manifestly aware of Mughal conventions and must have striven to present his patron in a manner that invoked imperial style, even if the final product remains squarely Rajput in its overall aesthetic. There are analogous cases for poetry. Matiram often stresses the Bundi court's authority in a style that draws on the language of Mughal governance while adding a local dimension. This might also be read as a subtle form of political insubordination. For instance, in these lines he embeds Persian titles in his Hindi poem to highlight Bundi power:

Matiram says,

The glory of King Bhao Singh, the rising sun of the Chauhan family,  
has expanded in every direction. How can the Mughal nobility (*umara*) even  
compare, when the emperor (*patshah*) of Aravalli parallels the [Mughal] *patshah*?<sup>10</sup>

This is not only a Mughal idiom, however. Invoking the Chauhans makes a specifically Rajput dynastic claim (the Bundi kings were descended from a Mewar-based branch of the Chauhan clan). Matiram also boldly asserts that Bhao Singh is “emperor of Aravalli”, a reference to the mountain range that is a defining feature of Rajasthan topography, and the very landscape in which Rajput rulers expressed their kingly status architecturally through

*opposite*

5.3 Portrait of Rao Chhatarsal of Bundi with his son Bhao Singh, Bundi, c. 1660–70. Opaque watercolour on paper. Formerly in the collection of Sangram Singh of Nawalgarh. Photograph: Milo C. Beach.

5.4 Jahangir and his vizier Itimad-ud-daula, from the Kevorkian Album, by Manohar, c. 1615. Ink, opaque watercolour and gold on paper; 39 x 25.9 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 55.121.10.23.





5.6 Hathipol, Bundi Fort.  
Photograph: Molly Emma  
Aitken.

the building of forts and palaces (e.g., figure 5.5). The claim that Bhao Singh is emperor of his own Aravalli region is a recurring motif in the *Lalitlalam* and its import seems clear. In an age when Rajput leaders were stationed as mansabdars all over India and challenged to prove their mettle, the rulers of Bundi demonstrably took pride in Mughal service and reaped its rewards but their own sense of political selfhood could not be denied.

As Bundi's court poet Matiram had an important political role to play and he used various strategies to execute that role. On some occasions he co-opted Mughal political idioms, infusing them with local salience; at other times he invoked classical tropes inherited from Sanskrit models of kingship. Any number of "literary portraits" of Bhao Singh readily attest to this point. For example:

A lion in warfare, worthy son of Chhatarsal,  
you bestow spirited elephants, just like that.

Matiram says,

the heady fragrance of your fame spreads to the shores of the four oceans.

The world speaks of you as a Chauhan Sultan (*chahuvānī sultatānī*).

No king on earth comes close to being your equal.

Lord Bhao Singh, I see two things in you:

You are the rising sun of the Chauhan dynasty and the Sultan of Aravalli.<sup>11</sup>

Like the painted portraits for which Bhao Singh's reign is renowned (e.g., figure 5.7),<sup>12</sup> this verse makes an aesthetic and political argument about the king. He is a sultan of his region. He is wealthy and beneficent in his gifts of elephants—as earlier chapters have shown, elephants were associated with royalty, a typical gift to underlings, and a favourite decorative motif at Bundi; e.g., figure 5.6.<sup>13</sup> The poet also calls attention to his patron's widespread fame (*kirti/yash*), another classical kingly trait. A second literary portrait likens the Bundi ruler to Indra, the most regal of the Hindu deities:

5.7 Rao Bhao Singh of  
Bundi, by Tulchi, c. 1670.  
Opaque watercolour on  
paper. Collection of Rawal  
Devendra Singh of Nawalgarh.  
Photograph: Milo C. Beach.









Wise men serve him, and he considers the gurus' words authoritative.

He is wrathful toward earthly enemies,  
crushing the army formations of other kings.

A brimming sea of power finds force in his hands,  
establishing his fame in the world.

You might think it is Indra of whom I speak  
but it is His Majesty Bhao Singh.<sup>14</sup>

In this poem Matiram uses Hindi double entendres to reinforce his point. For instance, in line one the word for wise men, *vibudha*, also means “god” and the word for guru doubles as “Jupiter”. The result is a powerful equivalence—powerful because it is reinforced at the level of language itself—between the Bundi king and the gods on high. The idea that earthly rulers were organically connected to the divine realm is also an important theme of Bundi painting.<sup>15</sup>

Matiram's *Lalitlalam* contains yet other clues about how the Bundi rulers saw themselves. A few verses evince something we might be inclined to see as communal partisanship, as when Bhao Singh is portrayed as “the shield of the Hindus” or “leader of the Hindus”, but this spirit is by no means dominant in the work.<sup>16</sup> Matiram and his patron recognized that an important component of Mughal-period political ethics was to respect the lifeways of both Hindus and Muslims. Bhao Singh is accordingly praised with the epithet “leader of the two faiths”.<sup>17</sup> This was also, incidentally, a title accorded to Jahangir by the poet Keshavdas, showing, once again, a rich consonance in cultural idioms across social and political milieus.<sup>18</sup>

### Memories of Bundi Military Service

Being alert to instances of such consonance also proves useful when assessing the literary representations sponsored by the court. In presenting the early generations of Bundi rulers Matiram stresses their invaluable military service. Rao Ratan (figure 5.8) “attained great





5.8 Royal procession of Rao Ratan Singh of Bundi, c. 1615–20. Opaque watercolour and ink on paper; 24.2 x 68.5 cm. Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad.

5.9 Rao Chhatarsal riding an elephant, c. 1655–60. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. Kanoria Collection, Patna. Photograph: Milo C. Beach.



fame in the imperial wars”, he notes, and was “a supreme ornament of the army.”<sup>19</sup> This is also an emphasis of the Sanskrit *Shatrushalya Charita*, mentioned above, and *Rao Ratan Ri Veli*, a bardic composition in Rajasthani by the Jodhpur poet Kalyandas Mehadu.<sup>20</sup> Contemporary Persian texts present a similar view. Jahangir, who benefited considerably from Bundi military expertise, exclaims enthusiastically that Rao Ratan Singh Hada is “a great servant of the court” and “a valiant Rajput chieftain”. He was exalted first with the title “Sarbulandi Rai” and later, after a stunning military success, “Ram Raj”, the highest title awarded in the Deccan. Rao Ratan also defended the emperor against an incursion from his own son, Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan).<sup>21</sup>

When Shah Jahan fell ill in 1658 he too had to ward off the political rebellions of his offspring and these events loom large in the literary records of Bundi and many other Rajput courts. Matiram composed this prashasti poem to commemorate Chhatarsal, Rao Bhao Singh’s father (figures 5.3 and 5.9), for his heroic efforts to protect the emperor and the heir-apparent Dara Shikoh:

The two armies clashed, prince against prince, and the whole world bore witness.

Martial songs blared, and all were primed for war, desiring a hero’s fame.

Matiram says, [Gopi]nath’s son did his duty, and the light of his fame brightened.

In shedding the blood of his enemies, Rao Chhatarsal was tried and true in battle.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately Chhatarsal lost his life unsuccessfully defending Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh at the battle of Dholpur. Matiram’s eulogy envisions his patron’s father as having reached “Kashi”, or a place of liberation on the battlefield, his skull now adorning Shiva on Mount Meru in heaven.<sup>23</sup>

Rao Chhatarsal’s sacrifice was widely remembered beyond the Bundi court. Maheshdas’s *Binhairaso* (“Tale of Two”, 1660s?), a Rajasthani narrative poem about the Mughal war of succession of 1658, devotes considerable attention to the exploits of Rao Chhatarsal and is a good example of why it is necessary to consider Rajput courts in





relation to one another and not simply in relation to the Mughals. Maheshdas, who was patronized by an entirely different Rajput clan, the Gaurs (and who thus would have had no special incentive to glorify the Hada dynasty), reports with great fanfare how Chhatarsal rushed to Agra to help the emperor after the imperial forces suffered a grave military setback at the battle of Ujjain (also known as Dharmat).<sup>24</sup> Out of all the people he could have summoned, it was the Bundi king whom Shah Jahan enlisted to try to remedy the situation (figure 5.10). Maheshdas reports on the Hada king's solemn acceptance of the emperor's charge:

The Rao came to Agra and bowed at the feet of the emperor.

He honoured him greatly, in all his majesty.

With horses and elephants, a diamond-studded dagger, a gleaming jewelled sword,  
a shiny gold necklace and gems and emeralds that he had kept,  
the Mughal lord honoured him, and he readied himself, firm in his heart.

He gave him a suit of clothing and betel.

He placed the burden of Delhi on his shoulders.<sup>25</sup>

This notion that Rajputs carried "the burden of Delhi" is an important theme in Rajasthani literature. In Chhatarsal's case, and that of his 15-year-old son Bharath, who also bravely faced Aurangzeb's troops at the battle of Dholpur in 1658, the burden proved to be a heavy one. Maheshdas captures this succinctly: "they sacrificed their lives, performing manly duty".<sup>26</sup>

The consonance between the accounts of Matiram and Maheshdas is striking, even if they wrote in different Hindi dialects and resided at different courts. Both were deeply cognizant of Bundi military achievements and the kingdom's dynastic history.<sup>27</sup>

Notably, they also employ similar epithets for the Hada rulers. In Maheshdas's *Binhairaso* Chhatarsal is presented as "the lord of Hindus" but is also at the same time "esteemed among the two communities", suggesting his ability to protect his co-religionists while maintaining a non-partisan stance. And, although his Rajasthani poem is in part a celebration of imperial service, in which each Rajput must do his duty to the Mughal emperor, Maheshdas, too, points to the simultaneous capacity for regional political assertion when, as Matiram had done for Bhao Singh, he styles the Bundi ruler Chhatarsal "the emperor of Aravalli".<sup>28</sup>

Hindi writers continued to see Mughal service as a vibrant poetic subject into the next century, even as the empire began to weaken. We need only consider Krishna Bhatt's *Jajau Raso*, an unpublished Rajasthani poem about the Mughal succession war of 1707, so named because the battle took place at Jajau. As in 1658, the Mughal princes competed against each other in a deadly engagement. This time the antagonists were two of Aurangzeb's sons, Muazzam and Azam, and, once again, a Bundi king—in this case Buddh Singh (figure 5.11)—is shown in a key supporting role (on the side of Muazzam).

On this occasion the campaign is successful. "Buddh Singh achieved victory in a fraught engagement, cutting down his foes with his Deccani sword."<sup>29</sup> As often with Rajasthani war ballads, the poet creates wonderful sound effects that mimic the dashing of fierce warriors and the slashing of gleaming swords:

*hakem humkarem hamkarem hāka pārem,*  
*hakārem hajārem hanem hoda dārem*

5.10 Portrait of a Hindu noble, presumably Rao Chhatarsal of Bundi, from the Late Shah Jahan Album, c. 1645–50. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. Museum Rietberg Zurich, permanent loan Catharina Dorhn.









Such masterful onomatopoeic lines do not lend themselves to ready translation, but an approximate meaning is:

Jostling and shouting, his troops pushed the enemy troops to the limit,  
slaying them by the thousands.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever perspective the Persian chronicles may present on Mughal events, it was always the prerogative of Hindi poets to showcase specifically Rajput valour. Rajput kings who generally merit only a few passing lines in a Persian account can attract an entire Hindi poem in their honour. Moreover, these poems frequently offer up their own slant.

The *Jajau Raso* puts Buddh Singh in the lead role at the battle of Jajau and his martial endeavours are given divine sanction in telling ways. As is often the case in early modern Indian poetry, the gods are seen as deeply connected to the threads of human action. In Krishna Bhatt's account Shiva and Parvati are shown in conversation up in heaven. Shiva gives his firm backing to the "greatly intelligent" Muazzam, who, crowned as the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah (r. 1707–12), has "promised to protect the Hindus."<sup>31</sup> Once again, a commitment to Indian pluralism is presented as an important political ethic, and as grounds for a Muslim emperor gaining the approbation of Shiva. The goddess Kali, too, comes on the scene at the end of the work. She blesses Buddh Singh for his valiant efforts on behalf of the Mughal emperor.

### Conclusion

Long after the Mughal heyday, the raos of Bundi continued to be celebrated in Hindi poetry. The Brajhasha poet Padmakar, writing in Bundelkhand in central India in the 1790s, offered up this brief prashasti to them: "The Hadas are brave and excited to fight. Their worldly worth is in battle."<sup>32</sup> Bamkidas, an acclaimed poet from the Jodhpur court during the reign of Man Singh (r. 1804–43), memorialized Chhatarsal's honourable service to Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh during the war of 1658. Like Matiram, who equated death on the battlefield with dying in Kashi, the highest form of liberation, Bamkidas found the language of pilgrimage a powerful metaphor for conveying the gravitas of a hero's death. He likened Chhatarsal's sword to a tirtha, or holy site, a place of crossing from earth into heaven.<sup>33</sup>

Generally the voices of Hindi writers have been little acknowledged when we look back at the Mughal period, with scholars giving overwhelming preference to imperial Persian sources. The investigation of Hindi literary expression in this essay has provided some additional views and, especially when combined with attention to the court's visual culture, offers clues about how the Bundi rulers saw themselves; how others saw Bundi; and how the Bundi court understood its role in Mughal political culture.

Hindi writers directed some of their efforts to the self-narration of the court. We see this in Matiram's attention to genealogy and statements that reveal the Bundi rulers' pride in their Chauhan lineage. Prashasti poetry, an established literary form whose primary purpose was the praise of kings, is an especially fertile genre for understanding the Bundi sense of self. Here it can be particularly helpful to trace relationships across the arts, since portraiture is a visual analogue to the prashasti style.

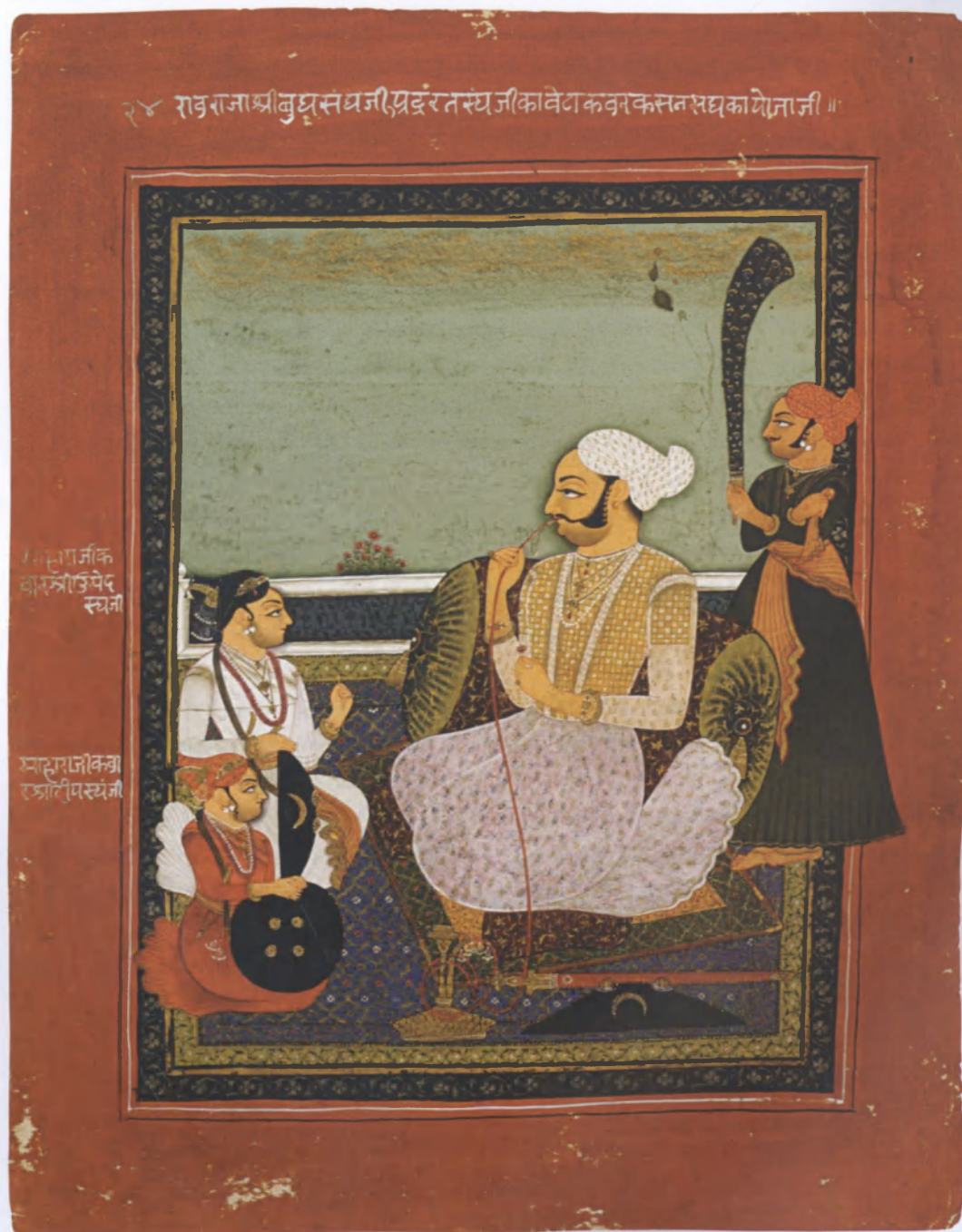
If noting genre crossovers can be illuminating, it is also useful to point to areas of discrepancy between painting and poetry. Narrativizing Mughal power is an important





theme of the Hindi literary records of this period, a subject that is largely absent from the world of painting. Of course, martial themes, a focus of this essay, are not the only poetry that was of interest to the court. Literature commissioned at Bundi covers a wide range of topics and includes devotional poems (especially about Krishna) as well as love lyrics that depict beautiful women and courtly diversions, including poetic compositions that elucidate the musical modes known as Ragamala. In these domains, which were more impervious to politics, there is much greater overlap between the visual and textual materials.

Mughal politics itself occasions differential treatment across the archive of Bundi literature. Sometimes the Mughal state is wished away by strategic omissions, as when



5.11 Rao Buddh Singh of Bundi with his sons Umaid Singh and Dip Singh, c. 1760. Opaque watercolour on paper. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.95-1955.





Chandrashekhara, an early Bundi court poet writing in Sanskrit, chose to focus on the Hada rulers, paying no heed to the dominant imperial power. At other moments, and this is largely true of the Brajbhasha and Rajasthani records, Mughal power sits front and centre. In modern popular understandings of Rajput-Mughal relationships Hindus are often thought to “resist” Muslims but the poetry tells another story, stressing cooperation and mutual benefit. The Hindi poets who wrote about Bundi show the court’s pride in their military service and their willingness to fight to the death for the Mughal overlord. This is how Chhatarsal was widely remembered. And yet this is not to suggest an absence of political competition. In fact, Hindi poetry reveals the striking complexities of early modern political life. To claim of a Bundi king that he was “lord of the Hindus” or to praise the Mughal emperor for his protection of Hindus, as Matiram and Krishna Bhatt (respectively) did, points toward critical moments of negotiation about political and religious interests. And epithets like “padshah” or “sultan of the Aravallis” are arresting instances of how Islamicate terms were used to assert Bundi sovereignty. Narrations of self and other were, in other words, closely intertwined and drew on common cultural and political vocabularies.

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#### NOTES

- 1 “*Gīta kabitta kalāni ko, taḥam saba loga sujāna.*” *Lalitlalam* 1983, v. 7.
- 2 *Lalitlalam*, v. 22.
- 3 See Talbot 2012 and also chapter 4 in this volume.
- 4 Charitas are an important, if underutilized, resource for understanding early modern political culture. Contemporaneous examples of the charita genre can also be found in Brajbhasha and Rajasthani at neighbouring courts such as Amber and Orchha. Allison Busch, “The Classical Past in the Mughal Present: The Brajbhasha Riti Tradition”, in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kavya Literature*, ed. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman and Gary Tubb, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 648–90; see especially pp. 648–77. For further on Amber and Orchha, see chapter 6 by Edward Leland Rothfarb in this volume.
- 5 Shrinath (“Lord of Shri”, i.e., Lakshmi) is an epithet of Vishnu and an apt choice in this context because it emphasizes the inseparability of the couple.
- 6 Keshavdas Mishra, *Kavipriya*, in *Keshavgranthavali* vol. 1, ed. Vishvanathprasad Mishra, Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1954, 10.27.
- 7 *Lalitlalam*, v. 38.
- 8 *Lalitlalam*, v. 260.
- 9 For a basic account of the political career of Rao Bhao Singh, see Gahlot 1960; Mathur 1986, pp. 143–54.





- 10 *Lalitlalam*, v. 58.
- 11 *Lalitlalam*, v. 165.
- 12 Bautze 1985, pp. 107–22.
- 13 For further on this point, see chapter 4.
- 14 *Lalitlalam*, v. 94.
- 15 See chapter 3.
- 16 *Lalitlalam*, vv. 34, 79. A similar expression is used in relation to Rao Bhoj in v. 25.
- 17 *Lalitlalam*, v. 140.
- 18 Keshavdas, *Jahāngīrjascandrikā*, ed. Kishorilal, Allahabad: Sahitya Bhavan, 1994, v. 31.
- 19 *Lalitlalam*, vv. 27–28.
- 20 On the *Shatrushalya Charita*'s portrayal of Rao Ratan, see chapter 4; Kalyandas Mehadu specifically references Rao Ratan's swami-dharma or commitment to the overlord. See his "*Rao Ratan ri veli*", in *Aitihāsik Veli Saṅgrah*, ed. Narayansingh Bhati, Jodhpur: Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan, c. 1980, v. 99. I am grateful to Cynthia Talbot for the reference.
- 21 *Jahangirnama* 1999, pp. 288, 407, 433.
- 22 *Lalitlalam*, v. 195.
- 23 *Lalitlalam*, v. 33: "*nātha-tanai tihim thaura bhiryau, jisa jāni kai chatrina kaum rana kāsī/sīsa bhayo hara hāra sumerū, chatā bhayo āpu sumeru ko bāsi*" (The son of Gopinath entered the fray, knowing that for a kshatriya the battlefield is Kashi/His skull was added to Shiva's garland on Mount Meru, as Chhatarsal himself became a resident of Meru, i.e., heaven.)
- 24 "*Dili madati dauriyā, pānma dharī būndī pattī*" (The Bundi king rushed to the aid of Delhi and remained steadfast). *Binhairaso*, 1966, 2:5.
- 25 *Binhairaso*, 2:6.
- 26 "*Prāna kalapi paurisa karai*". *Binhairaso*, 2:58.
- 27 Compare the treatments of Bundi genealogy in *Lalitlalam*, vv. 23–37 with *Binhairaso*, 2:7, 2:10.
- 28 These typical epithets of the Bundi kings are attested in *Binhairaso* 2:55 and 2:7.
- 29 Verse 18 in Krishna Bhatt, *Jajau Raso*, unpublished manuscript, Pothikhana, accession number #757, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Sangrahalaya, Jaipur.
- 30 *Jajau Raso*, v. 18.
- 31 "*Bahādura sāhi mahāmativāna, karī pana rākhana kom hinduvāna*". *Jajau Raso*, v. 16.
- 32 Padmakar, "*Himmatbahadurvirudavali*", in *Padmakargranthavali*, ed. Vishvanathprasad Mishra, Varanasi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1959, v. 32.
- 33 There is a nice play on the word *dharā*, earth, and *dhārā*, sword blade. Bamkidas, "*Git Maharao Raja Satrasal Hada Hada Bundi Rau*", in *Mahakavi Bamkidas Ashiya Granthavali*, vol. 1, ed. Saubhagyasingh Shekhavat, Jodhpur: Rajasthani Shodh Samsthan Chaupasani, 1985, p. 80.