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978-1-107-11856-0 - The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past,
1200–2000

Cynthia Talbot

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The Last Hindu Emperor

This fascinating new study traces traditions and memories relating to the twelfth-century Indian ruler Prithviraj Chauhan: a Hindu King who was defeated and overthrown during the conquest of Northern India by Muslim armies from Afghanistan. Surveying a wealth of narratives that span more than 800 years, Cynthia Talbot explores the reasons why he is remembered and by whom. In modern times, the Chauhan King has been referred to as “the last Hindu emperor,” because Muslim rule prevailed for centuries following his defeat. Despite being overthrown, however, his name and story have evolved over time into a historical symbol of India’s martial valor. *The Last Hindu Emperor* sheds new light on the enduring importance of heroic histories in Indian culture and the extraordinary ability of historical memory to transform the hero of a clan into the hero of a community, and finally a nation.

Cynthia Talbot is Associate Professor of History and Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

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Note on transliteration and citation

In order to increase readability, I have kept diacritical marks to a minimum. I retain the typical English spellings for place names and for Indian words that can be found in English dictionaries (e.g., Brahmin). For personal names and other proper nouns, I use “sh” for the Indic letters more formally transcribed as ś and ṣ, as well as “ch/chh” instead of *c/ch*. Diacritics have been applied primarily in the titles of texts and for occasional words in South Asian languages, usually set off in italics. In those instances, I have followed the general system of transliteration for Sanskrit and Hindi found in scholarly works such as the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* by R. S. McGregor. When authors of Sanskrit works are cited, I leave in the inherent vowel “a” at the end, but not in the case of those who composed in Brajbhasha, Rajasthani, or modern Hindi; I have followed a similar practice in regards to words that typically appear in Sanskrit contexts (for instance, *svayaṃvara* instead of *svayaṃvar*; or the dynastic name Chahamanā rather than Chahaman).

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. When verses from a Sanskrit or Hindi text are cited, the first number indicates the canto/chapter/book, while the second number identifies the verse; the two numbers are separated by a period and no comma precedes them – thus, “*Surjanacarita* 10.128–130” refers to verses 128 through 130 in the tenth canto or chapter of the text *Surjanacarita*. I adopt a slightly different system in the case of books with multiple volumes: the volume number is separated from the page number by a colon, and the numbers are preceded by a comma – thus, “*Ā’in-i Akbarī*, 2:302–4” refers to pages 302 through 304 in the second volume of the text *Ā’in-i Akbarī*.

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Abbreviations

Bora <i>Rāso</i>	Rajmal Bora, ed. <i>Candvardāikṛt Prithīrājṛāsau</i> .
Gupta <i>Rāso</i>	<i>Prthvīrāj Rāsau</i> , ed. Mataprasad Gupta.
<i>JASB</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</i> .
Mohansimha <i>Rāso</i>	<i>Prthvīrāj Rāso</i> , ed. Kavirav Mohansimha.
Pandya <i>Rāso</i>	<i>Prthvīrāj Rāso</i> , eds. Mohanlal Vishnulal Pandya and Shyamsundar Das.
<i>Rajasthan</i>	James Tod, <i>Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan</i> , ed. William Crooke.