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978-0-521-04777-7 - The Devs of Cincvad: A Lineage and the State in Maharashtra

Laurence W. Preston

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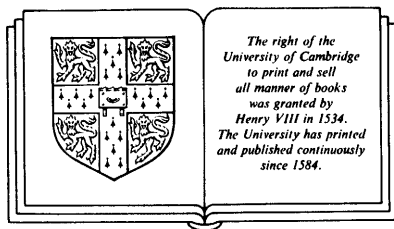
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# THE DEVS OF CINCVAD

*A lineage and the state  
in Maharashtra*

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*for Trevor and Graham*

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## PREFACE

The historian who attempts to write on two great eras continually feels the pull of one or the other. In this history of the Dev lineage of Cincvad village I have often had to resist the temptations and pressures to concentrate on the 'traditional' (whatever that might mean) order of the preconquest Maratha state. Likewise, I have not sought to evaluate, in any usual manner, the impact of the British conquest of India. With a certain deliberation, therefore, I have examined an institution through which the profound political change of the conquest could be seen in a somewhat dispassionate way. The Dev lineage experienced both the old order and the new imperialism. For the Devs, great matters of lineage welfare were equally pressing under the Marathas and the British. In both eras the Devs looked to the state for protection and support while always living in suspicion and respect for the state's power.

My understanding of the conquest and, generally, change in India is conservative. In fact, I am also not at ease with such slogans as 'social change'; Indian society changed rather less than the opportunities for Indian social institutions to act out their constant objectives. The conquest created the need for alternative strategies in devising new solutions for old problems. Of course, social adaptation may be considered as the visible effects of deeper social change. I have no quarrel with the notion that societies do change. But, as I think any acquaintance with modern South Asia would press home, Indian society clings to the past in many of its fundamentals. Historians have rightly given serious attention to the effects of European imperialism on India. Here I have taken a different perspective: social institutions and social structure often dictated how the conquest would affect Indians.

The sources for a history of the Devs of Cincvad have perhaps helped to shape my cautious approach to historical change. Working on one lineage necessarily means searching out local and often humble documents. The great affairs of state and empire yield to the mundane practicalities of revenue documents concerned only with the immediate and particular. When examining either the vernacular or English sources for a lineage such as the Devs, the historian is forced to concentrate on the purpose of the documents, and thus to discern what is



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common in the sources. My overriding impression of the material I have been able to study in Pune and Bombay – and this is only the most basic sample of what is available – confirms the constancy of purpose of Indian social institutions throughout both the Maratha and British periods. With this understanding I offer the present work.

Although he is in no way responsible for the specific or general conclusions reached in this study, Professor N. K. Wagle has been my first and continuing inspiration to unearth the history of Indian social institutions. Professor Wagle's insistence that historians of early modern India must make use of the plentiful but neglected archival resources available in Marathi has been simple but sage advice. Several others have read and commented on the present work or in other ways offered their encouragement. The many kindnesses of Frank F. Conlon, Peter Harnetty, Milton Israel, Barrie M. Morrison, Ed. Moulton, Günther-Dietz Sontheimer and A. P. Thornton have been truly appreciated.

In India my research was made possible by a fellowship from the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. To that sympathetic organization, and to Professor A. R. Kulkarni, my sponsor, I extend my thanks. Much of this work was written at the Australian National University, Canberra. I gratefully acknowledge the incisive comments of the faculty and students of the Research School of Pacific Studies and the Faculty of Asian Studies. A postdoctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as facilities provided by the Department of History, University of Toronto, brought this work to a completion.

Finally, the remarkable forbearance of my wife, Jennifer, and my sons, Trevor and Graham, cannot be adequately described.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout the footnotes:

BA Bombay Archives, Elphinstone College, Bombay

RD Revenue Department

PD Political Department

Citations are thus, BA: RD; volume/compilation, pages

PA Pune Archives ('the Peshva daphtar'), Bund Garden Road, Opposite Council Hall, Pune

DC Deccan Commission files

Citations are thus, PA: DC volume/serial number of letter.

IC Inam Commission Marathi rumals ('bundles')

SD Shahu daphtar, document numbers taken from M. G. Diksit and V. G. Khobrekar, eds. *Shahu daptaratil kagadpatramci varnanatmak suci*, 2 vols. (Bombay, 1969–70)

English files in PA (Inam Commission and Agent for Sardars) are cited thus, PA: list number; rumal/file, pages, or folios

## INDIAN TECHNICAL USAGES

Indian usage is to note large numbers in terms of units of 100,000 (*lākhs*). Thus, for example, 1,000,000 is 10,00,000 or ten hundred-thousands.

Because the Indian calendar year does not correspond to the western calendar, year dates cited from Indian documentary sources are expressed as extending over two western years. Thus, 1834/5 is the Indian calendar year (of whatever Indian era) that began in 1834 and ended in 1835.