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978-1-107-08031-7 - *Nomadic Narratives: A History of Mobility and Identity in the Great Indian Desert*

Tanuja Kothiyal

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Nomadic Narratives

The Thar, which is today divided by an international boundary, has historically been a frontier region connecting Punjab, Multan, Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. *Nomadic Narratives* looks at the desert as a historical region shaped through the mobility of its inhabitants, who were warriors, pastoralists, traders, ascetics and bards, often in overlapping capacities, exchanging mobile wealth and equally mobile narratives.

It challenges the frames of Mughal–Rajput relationships generally employed to explore the histories of the Thar, arguing that Rajputana remains an inadequate category to explore polities located in this frontier region, where along with Rajputs, a range of groups like Charans, Bhils, Meenas, Soomras, and Pathans controlled circulation, and with whom the Rajput states had to constantly negotiate.

The narratives that emerged from Rajput courts, and later from the British administrator-historians, obfuscated the intertwined histories of Rajputs and other groups, giving primacy to the former and ascribing marginality and criminality to the latter. It is only in the oral narratives of these marginalized and criminalized groups that references to shared histories and indeterminate mixed identities are preserved.

Sifting through a wide range of Rajasthani written and oral narratives, travelogues of British administrators, and vernacular as well as English records, *Nomadic Narratives* explores long-term relationships between mobility, martiality, memory and identity in the desert expanses of the Thar.

This book will be useful for scholars, researchers and students of pre-colonial and colonial histories of western India, for those interested in processes of identity formation, as well as for general readers who are interested in knowing an alternative history of Rajasthan.

Tanuja Kothiyal teaches History at Ambedkar University, Delhi, and is at present a Fellow at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Her research interests include studying networks of circulation, people, resources and ideas in medieval and early modern western Rajasthan. She is also interested in exploring oral narrative traditions in western India, as ways through which alternate/counter narratives were produced and circulated.

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Dedicated to the memory of my mother
Kaushalya Kothiyal

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The purpose of wandering
Is to obtain a vision,
Otherwise there's bread aplenty
and salt anywhere.¹

¹ Deccani Sufi couplet as quoted by Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Aurangzeb's Deccan*; *Malfuzat -I-Naqshbandiya*, Delhi, 2001, 137.

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List of Abbreviations

AAR	<i>Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han</i>
FP	Foreign Political
IESHR	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient</i>
JPASB	<i>Journal and Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JWH	<i>Journal of World History</i>
JWSR	<i>Journal of World-Systems Research</i>
Khyat	<i>Munhata Nainsi ri Khyat</i>
MAR	Marwar Administration Report
MAS	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
MHJ	<i>The Medieval History Journal</i>
NAI	National Archives on India
NSIR	Northern India Salt Revenue
RSAB	Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.
SIH	<i>Studies in History</i>
SP Bahi	Sanad Parvana Bahis (Jodhpur)
Vigat	<i>Marwar ra Paraganan ri Vigat</i>
ZB	Zagat Bahi (Bikaner)

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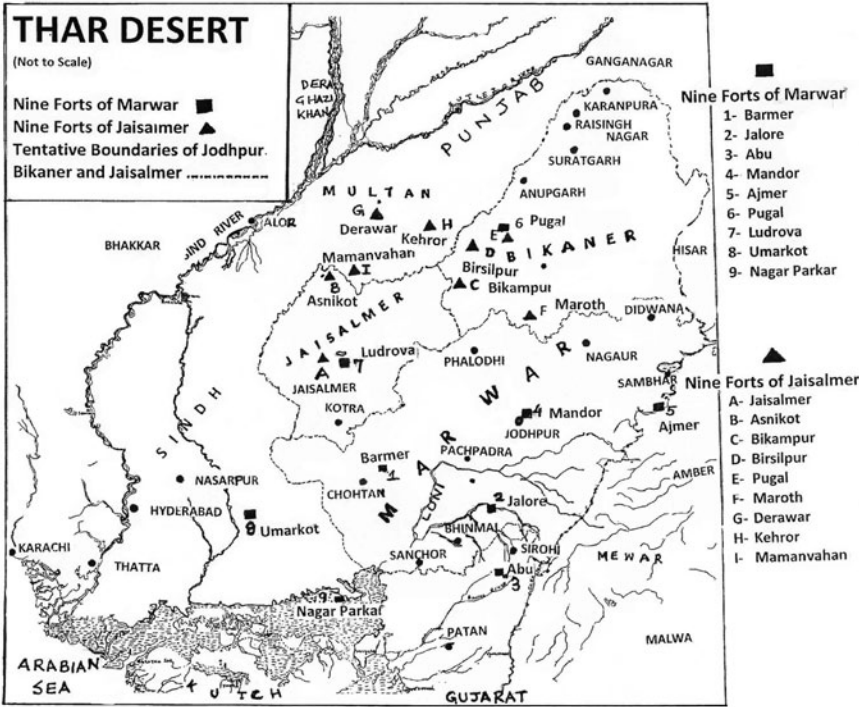
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While I extend my gratitude to all who have helped in making this work possible, for any error in the text I hold myself responsible.



Glossary

Agar	Salt mine or pan.
Akalwant	Someone with divine knowledge
Akharsidh	Brave and successful in battle. Also one able to control battlefield through miraculous powers
Arhat	Persian Wheel
Bachri	Heifer (Cow)
Baldiya/Banjara	Community involved in trade and carriage of salt and grain
Bambhi	Member of a community engaged in skinning of dead cattle
Bapoti	Inheritance from father
Begar	Forced labour
Behtiwan	Transit tax
Bhai-bandh	Kinsman
Bhomiya	Hereditary right holders entitled to collect share in the produce.
Bhunga	Grazing tax in Bikaner
Bhuraj	Tax on the bhurat grass
Bolawo	Local protection tax levied by Thikanadars
Bund	Dam
Chakar	Serviceman
Chanch	Shallow well
Chappaniya Kal	Famine of VS 1856/1900AD
Chattra	Royal Umbrella
Chira	Revenue circle in Bikaner

xvi	Glossary
Chirayat	Revenue assignee in a Chira
Dalali	Tax paid by middlemen in the markets
Dan	A commercial tax
Des	Clan land
Dhad	Raids usually understood to be cattle raids
Dhani	Overlord
Dhavala	A woolen garment worn by Jat women
Dugani	Local currency in Western Rajasthan
Ganveti	Resident Cultivator
Ganayat	Relatives by marriage
Ghasmari	Grazing tax on animals grazing on grass.
Ghiyayi	Tax on sale of ghee
Ghora Kambal	Tax on wool production
Goria	Skin of cows and buffaloes
Ijara	Lease against cash
Jhota	Heifer (Buffalo)
Jhumpi	Temporary shelters constructed by pastoralists in forests and grasslands
Jod-dar	Official designated to care for the jod
Jod	Grassland
Kamdar	Official at village level
Kankar kunta	Estimation made on the standing crop
Katariya	Shearer
Kayali	A Commercial tax
Khadin	A series of dammed channels
Khatik	Member of butcher community also engaged in shearing.
Korad	Tax on grass of dry moth or til
Kosito	Shallow well
Kunta	Estimation arrived at by guessing at threshing floor
Lata	A system of collecting all the grain and measuring it with kalsis after which the darbar share was taken on spot
Looe	Coarse blanket
Mapa	A commercial tax
Nagara	Drums
Naree	Skin of sheep and goats
Navikhati	Unbroken, unconquered land
Nesar (nikal)	Exit Tax
Oran	Sacred grove

Pancharai	Grazing tax on animals that ate leaves
Partal	Fallow land
Pattadars/Pattayat	Revenue assignees of Pattas (Rajputs)
Pesar	Entry tax
Phadiya	Local currency in Marwar
Qabulat	Fine or tribute
Rahadari	Transit tax
Raigar	Community involved in tanning of hides
Rajvi	Pattadars who did not pay rekh
Rawanna	Travel permit for commodities mentioning amount, type, destination and route
Rekh	Income of the Patta
Rel/ Bahla	Seasonal overflow of the rivers
Sagani	Interpreter of omens
Sasan	Revenue free grants to Charanas, Brahmins, Jogis, Sevags etc.
Sayer Jihati	Record of commercial taxes.
Sehat	Tax on Sewan grass
Serino	Tax on wool
Siladibab	Tax on leather workers
Singhoti	Grazing tax on sheep
Solkalar	Saline lands
Subhraj	Ceremonial lore of praise
Tanda	Caravan of the Banjaras
Thakurai	Overlordship
Tikayat	Anointed chief
Vikhau	Periods of displacement faced by Rajputs in the medieval period.

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Note on Transliteration, Translation and Dates

Assuming that readers familiar with Rajasthani languages will not require diacritical marks, and the unfamiliar will find them cumbersome, I have omitted all diacritical marks. I have retained original spellings and diacritical marks while citing the works of other scholars, which accounts for variations in spellings of place names in the text. However, in my own writing, I have used contemporary English spellings for Indian language words, names and places. Most of the translations from Rajasthani works are mine, unless indicated otherwise. All dates mentioned in the book are in Common Era, unless stated otherwise.

Contemporary Place Names and their
Nineteenth Century Spellings

Contemporary Name

Abu
Ajmer
Bikaner
Harauti
Jaipur
Jaisalmer
Jodhpur
Luni
Mewar
Nagaur
Pachpadra
Phalodi
Pokhran
Rajasthan
Sambhar
Sindh

Various Spellings in the Text

Aboo
Ajmere
Bikanir
Harowtee
Jeypore
Jeysulmere, Jaisalmir
Joudhpore, Joudhpur, Jodhpoor
Loonee
Meywar
Nagore
Puchbudra, Pachbhadra, Puchpadra
Phallodee, Filodi
Pokharan, Pohakaran
Rajast’han
Sambur
Sind, Scinde