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## 1 Introduction: Genealogy, Archive, Image

This compilation of essays addresses the ways in which history and tradition are ‘reinvented’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) through text, memory and painting. In particular, it focuses on the making of Jhala dynastic history in Jhalavad over a millennium, from the eleventh century to the present day in northeastern Saurashtra, a region of peninsular Gujarat in western India. Hindu Rajput *kuls* (clans), like the Jhalas, have existed in India since the seventh century and in Saurashtra from the eighth century onwards (Singhji, 1994, 30). During this period, they have shaped internal religious and caste politics through intraclan and intercaste rivalries and alliances, as well as the region’s relationships with external, hegemonic state forces, including the Rajput Solanki and Vaghela imperial dynasties, the Delhi and Gujarat Sultanates, the Mughal empire, the Maratha confederacy, the British Raj and the postcolonial Indian Republic.

Over this period, the Jhalas have been a force in the region. They founded their kingdom in the late eleventh century at Patadi before forming capitals at Santalpur, Mandal, Kuwa-Kankavati and Halvad. Later, they established the capital city of Dhrangadhra in 1741 (Mayne, 1921, 27-30), where the erstwhile ruling family still resides. After 1783, the kingdom was renamed Halvad-Dhrangadhra, and in 1820 came under the expanding control of the English East India Company (McLeod, 1999, 19). Following the first war of Indian Independence or the ‘Mutiny’ in 1858, it was administratively reclassified as a princely state.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the last ruler, Maharaja Meghrajji III’s birth in 1923, Halvad-Dhrangadhra was a First Class, 13 gun-salute state, comprising of 1,157 square miles and a population of 250,000 (Obituary of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra-Halvad, 2010).

Adopting Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée* approach, these essays illustrate how the ‘scars of events’ from the past affect a present reality (Strauss as quoted in Braudel, 1982, 36). A multidisciplinary work, which crosses the boundaries of history, anthropology, musicology, literary studies, visual, film and digital media, this volume investigates how connective histories, what we term ‘genealogical geographies’<sup>2</sup>, construct a region, community, dynasty and family over several centuries. ‘Genealogical geographies’ is an understanding of the present and the past as shaped by lineal records of kinship. In this way, it links the deeply intimate life histories of individuals, the premier Jhala kings or Jhallesvars and their close associates, royal and non-royal, with the formation of a particular land and place – Jhalavad – both

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<sup>1</sup> The princely states, which consisted of more than five hundred semi-autonomous kingdoms, covered two fifths of the subcontinent’s land mass and one third of its population. They created their own forms of internal governance, revenue collection, law courts and religious institutions, separate from that of directly governed British India (Copland, 1997, 8; Ramusack, 2004, 2).

<sup>2</sup> We are indebted to Rajkumari Rajasree Jhala who helped us coin this term.

as a territorial state found on an ever shifting map, and an emotive geography of the imagination, remembered both in past and contemporary longings (Anderson, 1983). In the process, these essays highlight the importance of studying peripheral states and marginal actors in the context of larger imperial and national historiographies.

In particular, this volume chronicles the genealogical history of the Jhala *kul* and its rulers through a series of digitally produced miniature paintings. These paintings are themselves interpretations of the collected textual and oral archive of Meghrajji III (1923-2010). Carefully enhanced over a lifetime, this archive includes ancient, medieval, colonial and postcolonial texts as well as eyewitness accounts and ethnographies. No other scholarly work delves into the history of the Jhala dynasty in such a systematic way and with such breadth.

It is a particularly fortuitous and opportune time to publish this book, which could not have been conceived in an earlier era of academic production. While rooted in the pre-modern era of the eleventh century, this book explores the making and remaking of identity in contemporary Jhalavad through twenty-first century methods of expression which have emerged only recently with the digital age and communications revolution. Before going further, it is important to address the history of this region and its larger place in the Indian subcontinent.



**Figure 1.1:** Poet Dungarsi recounts the tale of the founding of Halvad February 10, 1488 to Jhalavad Raj Gajsinhji I in 1663.

## 1.1 The Periphery/Centre Debate: Framing a Region Through Dynastic History

While a peripheral state in western India, Jhalavad lay at the vibrant fault lines of global, dynamic empires and cosmopolitan, culturally hybrid innovations. The history of kingdoms and royal courts around the world is inherently one of transcultural exchange and flexible, porous border sharing, either for those on the fringes or centres of empire. Rooted firmly in a regional past in what is today contemporary Saurashtra, the Jhala royal court and its satellite aristocracy at various times was influenced by (and influenced) the larger political, religious and economic forces of empire, which shaped the Indian subcontinent during much of its history, and vibrantly connected it with transcultural systems of political governance, law, revenue collection, religious expression, and material production, patronage and consumption.

As historians of modern South Asian and imperial history have argued, regional or local narratives are invariably global histories (Bayly, 2004, 2), shaped by global geopolitics, trade routes, cultural and religious amalgamations (Darwin, 2008) and imperial collecting (Jasanoff, 2005; McGowan, 2005, 263-287), and should be read more comprehensively and deeply over the *longue durée* (Armitage and Guldi, 2015; Bayly, 1989; Pomeranz, 2000; Greene, 1994; Daniels and Kennedy, 2002; Smolenski and Humphrey, 2005; Marshall, 2007).

Monarchies, among the oldest form of government and human social ordering, are in many ways a prime prism through which to observe such cross-cultural relationships. An institution shaped by social hierarchy and inequality, hereditary succession and elaborate etiquette, it was focused both on the local and the supralocal, the individual sovereign (usually male, occasionally female) (Walthall, 2008, 1), and the broader world which sustained him, particularly a courtly household of close relatives, friends, advisors and domestic staff who were engaged in the organization and administration of royal life and duties (Duindam, Artan and Kunt, 2011, 1). Kings, from the Tudor monarchs of England, the Bourbons of France, the princes of the Mughal Empire, Ottoman Sultans and the Shoguns of Japan, were highly sensitive to the local concerns of their own citizenry while simultaneously ever conscious of the need to create alliances with external forces, whether military, economic, sacred or aesthetic. There is a rich literature on such court studies, particularly in the field of anthropology (Tambiah, 1985; Geertz, 1980; Beattie, 1960; Butler, 2002; Ikegami, 1997; Inomata, and Houston, 2001).

The Jhala state from its founding in Patadi under Harpal Dev in 1093 A.D. came under the influence of various imperial actors, whether the Solanki and Vaghela Rajput Dynasties, the Sultanates, the Mughals, the Marathas or the British, as mentioned earlier. These imperial umbrella states would introduce various cultural practices, Indo-Persian, Central Asian, Maratha and European, into the royal court, creating a contested synthesis of the regional periphery and the metropolitan center. Jhala

rulers would both resist and accommodate these new cultural additions, creating a hybrid concept of governance, religious practice and material display, fusing together aesthetic elements from Asia and Europe, the modern and the pre-colonial, the religious and the secular.

Rajput kingdoms, like that of Jhalavad, adopted and resisted various aspects of Mughal political, economic, social and religious practice. The era saw them co-opted into Mughal forms of administration and revenue collection, particularly the *mansabdari* system (Richards, 1995, 24), the celebration of Persian as the court language of official discourse, the hybrid development of syncretic religious practices which intermingled aspects of medieval Islam, such as Sufism, and Hindu *bhakti* (Embree, 1958/1988, 484), the patronage of Mughal traditions of architecture and painting (M. Bose, 2015, 33; Glynn, 1996, 67-93; Asher, 2008, 22-46; Asher and Talbot, 2006, 148-151), dress and ceremonial ornamentation (Hambly, 2003). Indo-Persian court culture also influenced the domestic life of the court with the implementation of gender seclusion (through the building of *zenana* palaces), the veiling (*pardah*) of aristocratic and royal women, and political marriages of alliance between Rajput princesses and members of the Mughal family and dignitaries (Joshi, 1995; Lal, 2005; A. Jhala, 2008).

## 1.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Reverberations

Later, in the process of opening up to European trade and cultural influence, the Mughals also made India vulnerable to European conquest and ultimate capture of indigenous markets. The English East India Company was founded in 1600 under Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth I, and by 1619 gained the right to trade in Mughal India, under Mughal Emperor Jahangir (Bose and Jalal, 2004, 34). With the global rise of European trading houses in the eighteenth century, India would see itself as the desired focus of robust occidental military capitalism, fought over by the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English, among others. As the English and the French embarked upon the Seven Year's War (1756-1763), American Independence (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the ensuing Napoleonic campaigns (1803-1815) in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century North America and Europe (Marshall, 2005), so too did they militarily engage at the peripheries, including India. It is no small detail of history that with Britain's loss of its American colonies, it shifted its sights eastward to India, later dubbed the jewel in its crown of colonial possessions, after capturing the wealthy and strategically significant province of Bengal in the 1760s (Bose and Jalal, 47). By 1818, the English East India Company was the dominant European force in western India, including the Gujarat peninsula, and within a few decades, Britain was the paramount power in the entire subcontinent after the transition from Company to Crown rule, following the first war of Indian

Independence in 1857, when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1858 (Ramusack, 2004, 164).

The Jhala state, like most Indian kingdoms, would be influenced by ensuing European systems of trade, politics, reform and consumption during the high point of the British Raj. It would come under the larger umbrella of colonial paramountcy, even while remaining internally semi-autonomous. New western systems of local administration, governance, law, medicine and education were introduced into princely states. Royal households adopted more European forms of dress, cuisine, architecture and language, as did the rulers of Halvad-Dhrangadhra. British imperialism brought new technologies to India, for textile production, manufacturing salt by products, road building, railways and printing presses.<sup>3</sup> Megalopolises, such as Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay, enabled regional princes, like the Jhala rulers, to attend all-India wide imperial durbars, and steamship travel to Europe encouraged them to engage in the wider world of European travel and cultural exposure (Jaffer, 2007, 19–22).

In 1947, at the same time India became independent from British rule and was partitioned, the princely states lapsed, merging into the new democratic states of postcolonial South Asia. However, Indian princes continued to play an engaged role in the public life of the new nation. Former rulers served as diplomats, governors, patrons of educational and charitable institutions, local magnates, company directors, cabinet ministers and, particularly, as elected politicians (Copland, 1997, 267-8; Ramusack, 1978, 244-6; Cannadine, 2001, 174). Of the 284 princely families, which were granted the Privy Purse and privileges at the merger of the states, more than one third have been candidates for state legislative assemblies or the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament). More than two thirds of these royal families came from Rajput dynasties alone (Richter, 1978, 335-7). The last Maharaja of Dhrangadhra was himself among this first generation of princely politicians (*rajvanshis*), serving as a deputy governor (*uparajpramukh*) of Saurashtra in the transitional government and later as an elected politician both to the local Gujarat assembly and the Indian parliament.

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<sup>3</sup> During the late nineteenth century, the rulers of Halvad-Dhrangadhra were among this generation of reform-minded, modernist Indian princes. Raj Mansinhji (r. 1869-1900) of Dhrangadhra founded English language schools for boys and girls, reformed the judiciary and established hospitals and cotton ginning factories. His successor, Ajitsinhji (r. 1900-1911), who ruled during the first decade of the twentieth century, worked on infrastructure and building projects, paving roads and constructing the Ajitnivas Palace and Jaswantsinhji Library, as well as making primary and secondary education free in the State. For his social reforms, he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India (KCSI) in 1909. His son, Ganshyamsinhji, who was partly educated in England, built additional schools, hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages, established scholarships for the study of math and science, and founded a Chemical Works to process salt. For these various acts, he received the new dynastic title of Maharaja in 1918, was also made a KCSI and later became a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (GCIE) in 1922. See Mayne (1921, chapter 6).

In the process, peripheral areas like Jhalavad and other Indian monarchies, which survived up through the middle of the twentieth century, were constantly in flux over nearly a millennium. While open to new influences, the kingdom continued to practice various pre-colonial and pre-Islamic conventions, perpetuating institutions and patterns of living in the periphery long after they may have disappeared at the centre. These include the ceremonial and ritual performances of kingship, in the *rajyabhishek* (royal coronation), royal marriage festivities, pilgrimages, the Rajput Durbar, the maintenance of gender-segregated festivities, such as *zenana* and *mardhana mehfil*, the building and consecration of temples, wells and other auspicious sites, and the sacred plowing of the fields.<sup>4</sup> In examining such practices, these essays are situated in recent studies on the continued salience of marginal communities and smaller states within larger imperial superstructures.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.3 Scholarly Ruminations: Studies of Princely India and Ethnohistory

In addition, this collection arises out of the dynamic, growing scholarship on the Indian princely states,<sup>6</sup> which includes more focused studies on specific regions or erstwhile kingdoms<sup>7</sup> as well as particular themes in princely historiography, from religion and nationalism, women and domesticity, to education and the environment.<sup>8</sup> This group of essays is also situated within the vibrant discourse on Rajput history, kinship and kingship, although much of this previous work is two or more decades old, with rare exceptions.<sup>9</sup>

In particular, it emerges out of the nexus between history and anthropology, and is indebted to pioneering endeavours in South Asian ethnohistory, notably

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<sup>4</sup> Marzia Balzani noted the various ways that the current Maharaja of Jodhpur continues to practice royal ritual in everyday life (Balzani, 2003, 21) while Lindsay Harlan has addressed the continued practice of various forms of religious observation, ritual practice, marriage customs and *pardah* observance among aristocratic Rajput women in late twentieth century Rajasthan (Harlan, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Shail Mayaram (2003) has argued for the resuscitation of orality and myth in constructing the history of the marginalized Meos, who existed under various umbrella states (sultanate, Mughal, British colonial and princely); also refer to the work of Agha and Kolsky (2009).

<sup>6</sup> There is a wide history on princely India. See the work of: Copland (1997); Dirks (1987); Ramusack (2004 and 1978); Keen (2012). For collected essays addressing various themes, refer to Ernst and Pati (2007); Jeffrey (1978) and Ikegame and Major (2009). For an overview of Indian princely historiography, see Groenhout (2006, 629-644).

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Cohen (2007); Ikegame (2013); McLeod (1999); Rai (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Bhagavan (2003); Hughes (2013); A. Jhala (2008 and 2011); Kooiman (2002); Lambert-Hurley (2007); Plunkett (1973, 64-80).

<sup>9</sup> For some illustrative works, refer to Harlan (1992); Joshi (1995); Kasturi (2002); Minturn (1993); Peabody (2003).

the work of Bernard Cohn, Nicholas Dirks and Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph (Cohn, 1987 and 1996; Dirks, 1987). As Bernard Cohn argued in his seminal collection, *An Anthropologist Among the Historian and Other Essays*, “history can become more historical in becoming more anthropological, [and] anthropology can become more anthropological in becoming more historical” (Cohn, 1987, 42). The Rudolphs in particular incorporated ethnohistory as a lens through which to observe the sustaining interrelationship between tradition and modernity, and thus better understand institutions and societies caught in the ‘midpassage’ (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967, 6).

This merging of history and anthropology was most influentially deployed in Nicholas Dirks’ work on the ‘little kingdom’ of Pudukkottai, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Dirks suggests that interdisciplinary scholarship fosters an “ethnohistorical” type of fieldwork, spent as much working in archives, libraries and government offices as in interviewing significant citizens, participating in village festivals, attending marriages and transcribing conversations in their entirety (Dirks, 1987, 13-14), and this compilation follows a similar trajectory and methodology. However, Dirks focused primarily on the colonial era and concluded that the Indian kingdom was a ‘hollow crown’ upon an empty political stage, which contrasts to our argument of the continued political influence of Jhala polities in constructing identity and embodying power in both the colonial and postcolonial periods. Furthermore, we also question Dirk’s arguments in his later monograph *Castes of Mind* on the systematized colonial construction of caste identity. Indeed, while this is a powerful thesis which may have applied to directly governed British India, it was less a reality in regional kingdoms, like the Jhala polities, which had only indirect colonial intervention particularly in relation to caste reform and for a much shorter duration (Dirks, 2001, 5). More recently, Aya Ikegame has combined historical and anthropological methodologies in her work on the clan, lineal and marital connections of the Mysore royal family in *Princely India Re-imagined*. She similarly uses anthropological insights to contextualize the historical past, such as the reports of British political officers, in the process revealing how royal practice was shaped both by colonial modernity as well as the “constantly changing and contesting cultural norms of local society” (Ikegame, 2013, 14). Similarly, Nandini Sundar applied such ethnohistorical methodologies to understand ‘tribal’, princely Bastar in eastern India, histories of resistance and the struggle for natural resources (Sundar, 1997). More recently, outside the field of princely India, Joy Pachuau has innovatively incorporated historical analysis into her ethnography of the Mizo people and the construction of a Mizo identity in northeast India (Pachuau, 2014).

In the process, this group of essays examines the ethnohistory of the Jhallesvars through a particular archive and the painstaking diligence of one archivist, Maharaja Meghrajji III, who over several decades collected various materials – oral, written, musical and visual – on the genealogical geography of Jhalavad. Before going further, it is important to examine this archive and its creator.

## 1.4 The Role of the Archive: Meaning, Preservation and Revitalization

Memory, like history, is rooted in archives. Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, pride in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses. Archives contain the evidence of what went before. This is particularly germane in the modern world. With the disappearance of traditional village life and the extended family, memory based on personal, shared story-telling is no longer possible; the archive remains as one foundation of historical understanding. Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories. Archives are our memories. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 18).

This compilation is based upon the sources culled from a particular archive and the imagination of a particular archivist. As Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook suggest above, archives preserve memory and consecrate history, which is particularly vital in a contemporary present where non-textual forms of remembering, such as the oral accounts of extended family members or village communities, are increasingly becoming lost. Archives serve as “narratives” and “stories” of individual, familial, communal and ultimately regional recollection.

The concept of the archive developed in the English language from ancient Greek via medieval Latin and later French. It etymologically is rooted in the idea of “arkheion,” that is the residence of the “archon,” a superior magistrate who held the official papers of the law in his home (Derrida, 1996, 2). Before it became adopted by Anglophone nations in the nineteenth century, the archive’s meaning was largely connected with this idea of the historical record or an authentic document (Jenkinson, 1922, 3).

Thus, from its origins, as Jacques Derrida has argued, the archive was correlated with power as the material site of the law and the construction of knowledge. In his definitive work, *Archive Fever* (or *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* in the original French publication), Derrida extended Freudian psychoanalytic theory to argue that the archive emerged out of a repetitious need to record as a counteractive device against the erasure of memory (in the “death drive” impulse). He called for the democratization of the archive in its constitution and construction (Derrida, 1996, 1-9) and argued that it was molded by prevailing social, political and technological conditions (Manoff, 2004, 12). Michel Foucault, who in *The Archeology of Knowledge* similarly argued that knowledge was power, likewise influenced theorists of the archive. Together, they propounded that the archive was the focus for human knowledge, memory and power and a quest for justice (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 4).

Such interpretations of the archive would lead to various derivative spinoffs, including the ‘social archive,’ the ‘raw archive,’ the ‘imperial archive,’ the ‘postcolonial archive,’ the ‘popular archive,’ the ‘ethnographic archive,’ etc. (Manoff, 2004, 11). For the purposes of this collection, it was the creation of archives on the non-western world, particularly imperial and postcolonial histories, which are most salient. In



*The Imperial Archive*, Thomas Richards, channeling Foucault and Edward Said (Said, 1978), argued that the administrative heart of the British Empire was focused on knowledge production and the institutions which supported it, such as museums, surveys, geographic societies and universities. Recording and documenting empire thus became a way to psychologically legitimate imperial dominance and surveillance of large territories beyond its control. The imperial archive served as a ‘fantasy’ repository of knowledge, which bolstered up state and empire (Richards, 1993, 4-6).

South Asian scholars have also been preoccupied with the idea of the archive, which has sharply influenced the development of both the history and anthropology of the region. Whether it is through exhuming records of the marginalized, forgotten or silenced which is the project of the Subaltern Studies collective, ‘decentring Europe’ and the multiplicities of western power, exposing the construction of Orientalist misconceptions or problematizing the study of gender, sexuality and women’s history,<sup>10</sup> South Asian scholars have attempted to mine the archive and in the process widen its range and possibilities.

Nonetheless, most of this scholarship, particularly in postcolonial independent India, has focused on nationalist historiography, to the exclusion of regional kingdoms, which existed long before the advent of modern states. While they came under the umbrella of colonial influence in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, these local principalities also often reflected an authentic indigenous past.

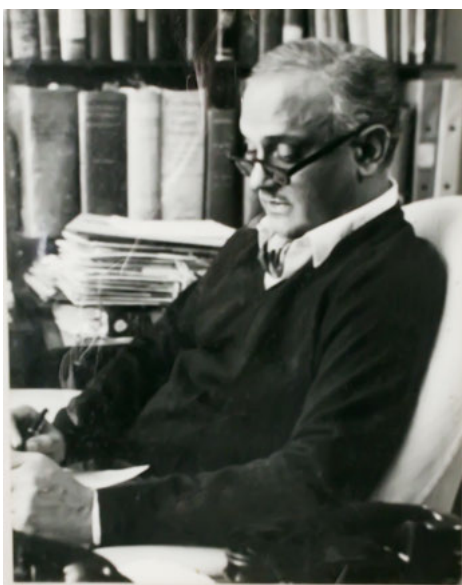
The particular archive which informs these essays was largely collected by one archivist, who was assiduous in finding documents and records, and annotating, labeling, summarizing, classifying and ultimately preserving them in both physical and digital form, so they can be used today. He was also a historic individual who lived (temporally and psychologically) within the various political systems, monarchic and republican, and time periods, early modern, medieval, colonial and postcolonial, which inform these essays. Thus, the documents he collected canvas a vast period of time in global and particularly South Asian history, from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries, in emphasizing how a peripheral state and peripheral dynasty came into contact with larger imperial forces and in the process resisted and collaborated with them in often both innovative and subversive ways.

Incorporating a wide range of source materials, this archive includes bardic epics, diaries, songs and poems, medieval court chronicles, genealogies, architecture (in the form of royal palaces, leisure houses, step wells, cremation grounds, cenotaphs, dams and lake compounds), stone inscriptions, paintings, heraldic sources, and royal ritual of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are composed in diverse languages, from the ancient to the modern, including vedic and classical Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, medieval and modern Gujarati, Hindi, Marwari, Kutchi, Sindhi and Marathi, as well as English. It also includes an impressive archive on the musical legacy of

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**10** For a fuller discussion of this scholarly literature refer to Mathur (2000, 93-99).

the royal court, which Meghrajji recorded after his return from Oxford in 1957.<sup>11</sup> As archivist, Meghrajji had enormous ingenuity in appraising, selecting, describing and preserving these records, which are central to the identity formation and construction of memory (Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 2), for a region and a people. The archive was his ‘brain child,’ a particular passion and pleasure, and his biography is seminal to understanding this collection.



**Figure 1.2:** H. H. Maharaja Meghrajji III in his study, 1985.

## **1.5 Archivist as Ethnohistorian: H. H. Maharaja Meghrajji III of Dhrangadhra**

His Highness Maharaja Meghrajji Mayurdwajsinhji III was born in the Ajitnivas palace in Dhrangadhra on the 3rd of March 1923. He was first educated at the Dhrangadhra palace school, in a mixed classroom with his brothers, eight sisters and occasionally

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<sup>11</sup> Meghrajji engaged India's premier musical institution, All India Radio, to record the songs of classical court singer, Bhagvati Bhai Prasad, over the course of a year. Later he documented the songs of zenana court singers, Langha Alarakhi Bai and Mir Hemu Bai, on royal women's rites of passage. His son, Jayasinhji Jhala, added to this collection with recordings in 1979, made in collaboration with the National Center for the performing Arts, Mumbai, which today, along with the World Music Library, Harvard University, houses copies of these audial works.

cousins, under the direction of Jack Meyer. In 1933, the palace school moved to England, where it was renamed the British public school Millfield in Somerset.<sup>12</sup> He soon left, however, to continue his education at Haileybury before returning to India, where he was enrolled in St. Joseph's Academy at Dehra Dun and thereafter Shivaji Military School in Pune, before prematurely curtailing his studies to become Maharaja.

On acceding to the *gadi* (throne) in 1942 on his father's early death, he enacted a vibrant policy of reform and modernization. He pushed for the affirmation of the fundamental rights of his subjects, desegregation of untouchables and women's rights to property and remarriage. He made primary school free and accessible and encouraged village and municipal self-government.

However his reign was only a few years long and, with the approach of Independence and Partition, he worked for a free, republican India. He was among one of the first princes to sign Viceroy Mountbatten's Instrument of Accession, which saw the amalgamation of his kingdom with larger Saurashtra and in the process lost his regnant powers. In 1948, he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire. From 1948 to 1952, he served as *uprarajpramukh* (deputy governor) of Saurashtra, and was briefly president of the state bank and a member of the Planning Commission.

In 1952, he left political life to resume his education, going up to Christ Church, Oxford, where he enjoyed a close friendship with the House's senior censor, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper. In 1953, he attended the coronation of the young queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey. During six years at Oxford, he read philosophy, took drawing classes at the Ruskin School, dabbled in heraldry and completed a BLitt in Anthropology, writing a thesis on the Hindu *Samskaras* (sacraments).

After his degree, he returned to India and entered electoral politics, as had a number of his other fellow princes. In 1967, he was elected to the Gujarat legislature and later the Lok Sabha between 1967-1971, where he worked for the protection of the princes' titles and their privy purses against Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, through leading the Concord of Princes, over an embattled three year period. He and his allies won the case, when the Supreme Court of India declared the stripping of their privileges unconstitutional. However, Mrs. Gandhi dissolved parliament and, under the new government, the Chief Justice was removed and the Constitution Amendment Bill reintroduced.

Meghrajji later lost his reelection, as he was hospitalized in London and unable to campaign. Thereafter, he largely retired from political life and focused on scholarship and the creation of the archive, which informs this volume. He would spend the last three decades of his life, researching the history of the Jhala *kul* (clan). While he did not publish his work in scholarly journals during his lifetime, he created a small press

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12 Meyer would later become Headmaster of Millfield School.

in Dhrangadhra to share his research (Obituary of the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra-Halvad, 2010). He died on 1 August 2010, aged 87. To the last day of his life, he was still interested in preserving these records. His passing marked the end of an era. As one admirer argued, he was a “ruler, moderniser, legislator, intellectual, heraldist, socialite, traditionalist and anglophile. . . His Highness might have been casually dismissed as another playboy prince; but his erudition and deep intellectual curiosity, his committed public service and concern for his people’s welfare, and his kind-hearted nature and generosity of spirit gave short-shrift to such unfair comparison. His passion for heraldry, genealogy and chivalry provided further evidence that this was a peerless prince.”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his life, he was keenly aware of the importance of recording memory. From a young age, he noted everything from the most momentous public events of his life to quotidian minutiae, which sparked his limitless curiosity. As a ruler, he kept a diary, a byproduct of his disciplined English public school education, which he hoped would serve as a reminder to his future adult self of adolescent aspirations, affectionately christened ‘Sharda.’ A promising student with polyglot interests, he studied theology, philosophy, painting and anthropology at Oxford, writing a thesis on the Hindu sacraments. His letters throughout his lifetime, whether to colonial administrators, members of the Viceregal staff, the British aristocracy, Indian government officials, scholars and even friends and family, had margins for commentary and exegesis of select texts. Once sent or received, they were always carefully filed away by his staff chronologically or thematically. Even the books of his personal library in Dhrangadhra were inscribed, not only with the place, date of purchase or name of the giver, but also often the date(s) he had last read and re-shelved them.

In later years, when he had retired from public life and became a full time scholar, he took his library and archives with him wherever he traveled – whether it was to his New Delhi home, his country house in Pune, his childhood palace estate in remote Dhrangadhra or even during a six-month visit to Princeton, NJ. Wherever he was, his rooms were spartanly furnished and whatever surfaces remained – desks, tables and the floor surrounding his reading chair – stacked high with scholarly tomes, manuscripts and files of his own notes or ‘jottings.’ Monier-William’s Sanskrit dictionary lay beside Hobson Jobson’s Anglo-Indian compendium and medieval Gujarati lexicons; Abu’l Faz’l’s Persian *Ain-i-Akbari* beside Alexander Forbes’ *Ras Mala* and 2 volumes of *The Hindu World*. On a given day, he might be working on autobiographies of the first founder of the Jhala lineage, the eleventh century Harpal Dev and his consort, the goddess Shaktima; annotated excerpts of British, Marathi and Gujarati records on the eighteenth century queen Rani Jijima; or sketches for the

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<sup>13</sup> Refer to <http://bloggingyoungfogey.blogspot.com/2010/09/hhthe-maharaja-of-dhrangadhra-halvad.html>. Also published in the *Heraldry Gazette*, <http://www.theheraldrysociety.com/publications/heraldrygazette/March11p5-8.pdf>.

new temple he had commissioned at the former Jhala capital in Patadi. This archive was a rich and meticulously recorded fund of material, which informs the paintings and essays of this volume.

Not only did he compile and preserve an archive on his ancestors, often interwoven with transliterations and occasional translations of relevant texts, passages or terms, but he also added his own memories. During the course of his lifetime, he wrote hundreds of pages of essays and ‘thoughts’ on wide ranging topics of his own lived experience: whether the rituals of his coronation (*rajyabhishek*) in 1942, his letters as *uprajajpramukh* from 1948-1952, or his correspondence for the Concord of Princes as the leader of the parliamentary opposition against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1970-1971. He spent much of his later years re-remembering these moments of his past alongside collecting the larger archive on the Jhallesvaras. Thus he deepened the record with his own vibrant recollections as much as he preserved it, in the process becoming ethnographer and ethnographic subject, historian and primary source.

This process was one of deep joy and intimate connection; indeed, of what Walter Benjamin describes as the blissful ownership of knowledge. “O bliss of the collector,” Benjamin opines after unpacking his much beloved library “. . . For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that for a collector – and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be – ownership is the most intimate relationship one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him, it is he who lives in them” (Benjamin, 1968 reprint 2007, 67). One could well imagine Meghrajji sympathizing with such sentiments when considering his own library, his own archive.

## 1.6 Painting the Jhallesvaras

The paintings, which form the basis of these essays, reinterpret Meghrajji’s collected oral, textual, archeological, genealogical and material archive as well as more recent ethnographic research by Jayasinhji Jhala, in an innovative visual process. Originally exhibited as the “Illustrated Story of the Jhallesvaras” at the Mehrangarh Fort Museum in Jodhpur during winter 2014, the paintings depict a series of events in the dynastic history of the Jhallesvaras and highlight key moments in each ruler’s reign, from the eleventh to twentieth centuries. Artistically, these paintings emerged out of the Rajput miniature painting tradition, with an emphasis on a developing Jhalavadi hybrid style.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The paintings are produced through an ongoing collaboration with Raj Meghrajji’s granddaughter and painter, Liluye Jhala and miniaturist Vijay Chauhan, the storyteller Amrit Kalu and bard Kiritdan Gadhvi, as well as past and present students of Jayasinhji Jhala from Temple University, including Dr. Lindsey Powell, Anabelle Rodriguez, Katey Mangels, Rhett Grumkow, Keith Marchiafava, and Cameron Snyder Mitchell.

## 1.7 Painting Methodology

These pieces are constructed through a new method of contemporary painting, which marries digital technology, photography and traditional Indian miniature styles. The creators utilized computer generated imagery for the forms and colours to create a mood traditionally known as *rasa*. *Maya* (illusion) and *lila* (play) also inform the paintings which are based on the story, *katha*, mythical, historical or ethnographic.

The painting process is influenced by the pioneering work of contemporary painters Shazia Sikander and Amrit and Rabindra Singh, who have reconceptualized the Indian miniature in a contemporary present. Sikander juxtaposes Indo-Persian miniatures with newer digital media forms, including animation, video and mural, to produce wildly imaginative works, while the Singh twins, whose school of art has been dubbed “Past Modern” combine western and eastern aesthetic traditions in often witty and symbolic ways ([www.shahziasikander.com](http://www.shahziasikander.com) and [www.singhtwins.co.uk](http://www.singhtwins.co.uk).)

The recording of dynastic history through paintings was not new for the Jhallesvars. Soon after Meghrajji came to the *gadi* in the early 1940s, he commissioned court painter Mul Chand to depict various historical events in the Raja Ravi Varma style of European realism. This painting collection, however, was later removed from public view and stored for several years. In the 1980s, Jayasinhji Jhala revisited these paintings as a Harvard doctoral student and the experience catalyzed his own interest in creating a visual archive of genealogical history. He first engaged the local Jhalavadi painter H. Valera from the nearby town of Limbdi to paint large canvases (5ft by 7ft) for display in the main gallery of the Durbar Hall in Ajitnivas palace. Later through the introduction of his cousin, Maharaj Durgapratapsinhji of Pratapgarh, Jayasinhji commissioned painter Vijay Chauhan, a teacher who is descended from a family of traditional miniaturists.

Each painting is produced in several stages. In the initial stage, the painting is conceived by addressing specific historical, genealogical, literary or ethnographic sources from Meghrajji’s archive. In the second stage, the painting is created digitally through Photoshop software and photography. US-based artists sent sketches of paintings, full or partially complete, to Vijay Chauhan. In the third and last stage, the digital image is altered and painted by Chauhan with the help of his assistants in Rajasthan. Most of these images are painted in the traditional Marwari style of western Rajasthan, although elements from the Gujarat, Mughal, Deccan, Punjab and Pahari miniature painting schools are also incorporated in the final composition, along with contemporary photographs of relevant historical monuments, objects and landscapes. The resultant Jhalavadi hybrid style takes images or parts of images from published books on Rajput, Mughal and other painting traditions to shape a composition based upon a given poem, song, story, monument or stone inscription. Wherever a Jhalavadi visual image or fragment is available, it was given more importance in the making of the painting. The final paintings as reproduced in this volume reflect the amalgamation of these various visual traditions, painterly, photographic and new media, and serve as reinterpretations of Meghrajji’s archive.

## 1.8 Marginal Voices and Diverse Sources

In addition to bringing attention to a history of the princely state in the periphery, these essays highlight figures often marginalized in earlier historical records, who cross boundaries of caste, class, gender and occupation. They include such oft understudied subjects as women, non-royal members of the court, including ministers (*dewans*), genealogists (*barots*), surveyors, administrative and domestic staff and other subordinate groups, of various ethnic, religious and caste backgrounds in their relationship with the Jhala dynasty, including Bhils, Siddhis, Madaris, Langhas, Bhavai players, farmers, and wandering *bhakts* (or devotees). In the process, it reveals how such seemingly marginal historical figures radiated influence outward from the royal domestic into the broader planes of everyday life between the court and its peoples, and between the state and larger political forces, Mughal, British and later nationalist.

This collection also depicts the Jhallesvar in various lights, not only as supreme, divinely ordained monarch. While at times a hero and a god, the Jhala king also emerges in these essays as outlaw, refugee, usurper, soldier and occasionally mercenary, pilgrim, renunciate, banker, patron of the arts and architecture, educator, reformer, legislator, industrialist, parliamentary politician, scholar and private individual. These are also life histories of Jhallesvars as imbedded within families, as sons, brothers, cousins, fathers, uncles and grandfathers and so on, entrenched in all the intimate trials and tribulations, aspirations and jealousies, of the familiarly domestic. In this way, these essays reveal very human natures, informed both by human frailty and the mythic status given them in recollected memory and legend.

Building upon the rich documentation of Meghrajji's archive and Jayasinhji Jhala's commissioned paintings, the collected essays here address the source material through a diversity of disciplinary perspectives. These chapters examine musical songs, theatrical plays, histories of arms and weaponry, bardic chronicles and poetry, ethnography and ethnographic encounters through the lens of historians, anthropologists, Sanskritists and musicologists, as described below.

## 1.9 Chapter Outline

The first four chapters address the myths and history of the Jhala dynasty. The first chapter by John McLeod is a genealogical overview of the Jhallesvars from their early genesis in the Makhvan clan until the present. After beginning with a brief discussion of McLeod's personal relationship with the archive and Maharaja Meghrajji as archivist, the chapter focuses on a detailed chronology of the dynastic line, emphasizing particular rulers or members of the family.

Kevin McGrath in the second chapter analyzes the literary depiction of the Jhallesvars, through poetry, song, folklore and mythology, over time. In particular, he highlights the development of a particular Kshatriya culture, in depictions of the king as hero/warrior. He makes fascinating connections between the Sanskrit epic, the Jhalavad archive and the paintings in the construction of a *kshatriya dharma*.

In Chapter three, Tony McCleghanan provides a rich military history of the Jhallesvars, focusing on the pre-colonial era up until the arrival of the British. Through emphasizing particular episodes of military engagement, McCleghanan underlines how the territorial boundaries of the Jhala state changed over time, as it came into contact with various imperial powers, Solanki, Sultanate, Mughal and Maratha.

Angma Jhala examines the history of women associated with the Jhala court in chapter four. While addressing a variety of female archetypes, including woman as *kuldevi* (clan deity), regent and warrior, her central interest lies in the reign of the mid-eighteenth century queen, Rani Jijima, who ousted her usurper brother-in-law and met the armies of the Maratha *peshwa*. Her reign would later lead to the consolidation of the kingdom as Halvad-Dhrangadhra.

Chapters five and six address recent ethnography on the Jhallesvars as patrons of the musical and theatrical arts. Michael Oppenheim in chapter five examines the history of musical traditions in the Jhala dynasty and circles of patronage, connected directly or implicitly with the erstwhile court. Jayasinhji Jhala in Chapter 6 focuses on contemporary re-remembering of a late fifteenth century event, *Kuva-no-Ker*, after a long period of forgetting. The ‘well of sorrow’ or *Kuva-no-ker* commemorates the sacrifice of Jhala royal women during the sacking of Kankavati in 1486. These women chose to die by drowning rather than be enslaved by the Muslim enemy. The chapter references twenty-first century folklore in the context of earlier bardic (*charani*) and colonial texts. In the process, it argues that contemporary inheritors of the Jhalavad past continue to shape its future development.

In conclusion, by focusing closely on one lineage over a long period, this volume aims to achieve a cohesiveness and intellectual depth and breadth that generalized scholarship often cannot. Taking an ethnographic approach to Indian history and genealogy in such a manner and across various loci, from court to village to grasslands to museum, is unusual. Through incorporating high-resolution digital reproductions of historical and recent photographs, archival and contemporary film and video footage, audio files of court poetry, music, genealogical and astrological readings, alongside a rich archive of written and oral texts, this work will establish new ways of understanding longstanding tradition and its constant reinvention. We believe it will be of wide interest to a range of academic and aesthetic disciplines, including history, genealogy, folklore, bardic and oral literatures, art and architecture, women’s studies and histories of domesticity, music, theatre, photography, film and video studies and the developing field of digital media. We hope that that it will further catalyze other such multidisciplinary studies.



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