

### Chapter III

#### THE BABI NAWABIS

While autonomous polities styled as *Nawabis* were evolving at the port towns on the mainland, a prominent clan, the Babis, was moving in the same direction with its scions assuming the stature of *Nawabs* at Junagadh, Radhanpur and Balasinor. Besides these, there were two minor *Nawabis* at Ranpur and Bantwa. Significantly, all these polities survived beyond the eighteenth century as major and minor native states during the era of British paramountcy. A survey of the circumstances leading to the rise of these polities is important as it provides insights to the patterns of disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the areas beyond the mainland.

From Mughal administrators in the province, the Babis began to wield independent authority over the areas hereditarily held by them and styled themselves as *Nawabs*. Amongst all the Babi *Nawabis*, Junagadh emerged as the most prominent polity in Peninsular Gujarat, while the others merely survived the decline of Imperial collapse. The vicissitudes of the *Nawabs* at Junagadh were indeed the most challenging and significantly insightful. An attempt has been made in the following pages to review the rise of this polity and examine the pattern of consolidation and the nature of related power relations located therein.

The antecedents of the Babis could be traced to an Afghan immigrant Adil Khan Babi, who accompanied Humayun to Delhi in 1555. During the reign of Shah Jahan, Adil Khan's grandson, Bahadur Khan rose in prominence and was assigned a *jagir* at Sirohi in Rajputana.<sup>369</sup> In 1654 when the Imperial prince Murad Baksh was appointed as the *suba nazim*

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<sup>369</sup> S. B. Rajyagor, *History of Gujarat*, Delhi, 1982, p. 331

of Gujarat, Bahadur Khan's son, Sher Khan was sent along with him.<sup>370</sup> From this juncture began the steady rise of the Babis as an important component within the provincial bureaucracy.

In 1663-64, Sher Khan who had earned an impressive reputation for his abilities, was appointed as the *thanadar* of Chunwal, a *pargana* in Pattan *sarkar* (north Gujarat) with 500 horse under him. At the Emperor's instance, 200 *sawar* were added thereafter.<sup>371</sup> It is pertinent to mention here that Chunwal was a troublesome *pargana*, being the stronghold of the *kolis*. Frequent references are made by Ali Muhammad Khan to their predaciousness and the rebellious posture of its *zamindars*, who paid *peshkash* only on chastisement. While sureties of refraining from predatory activities were insisted upon by the Mughal administration they invariably disregarded their commitment made to the authorities. In 1664, a *baluch* adventurer impersonating the late Dara Shikoh rallied around himself a large number of people in and around Chunwal and Viramgam (Jhalawar). The *kolis* of the area, who never missed opportunity to create trouble, too joined him. The imposter and his supporters were firmly chastised by the *suba nazim* Mahabat Khan. When this incident was reported to the Emperor, an Imperial order was issued to the *nazim* instructing him to punish Dud *koli* of Chunwal. The appointment of Sher Khan to administer such an area indicates the high level of confidence that the administration reposed in his abilities.<sup>372</sup>

Sher Khan had four sons: Muhammad Mubariz Khan, Muhammad Muzaffar, Shahbaz Khan and most illustrious of all, Jafar Khan. It was Jafar Khan's descendants who established the three prominent *Nawabis*

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<sup>370</sup> J.W. Watson ed. Statistical Account of Junagadh; Being the Junagadh contribution to the Kathiawad Portion of the Bombay Gazetteer, vol. VIII, Bombay 1880, p. 17 (cited hereafter as the Bombay Gazetteer)

<sup>371</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.227

<sup>372</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.227, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 17

in Gujarat at Radhanpur, Junagadh and Balasinor (Wadasinor) during the course of the eighteenth century. An overview of Jafar Khan's career is important.

In 1694-95 Jafar Khan succeeded his father Sher Khan at Chunwal.<sup>373</sup> Meanwhile Muhammad Mubariz Khan, Jafar Khan's brother and *naib faujdar*, of Pattan was killed during military operations against the *kolis* at Sanpra located in the Pattan *sarkar*. The *suba nazim* Shujaat Khan awarded suitable *mansabs* to his sons while the charge of *naib* faudar of Pattan was assigned to Jafar Khan who was honoured with the title of Safdar Khan.<sup>374</sup>

In 1698 there arose differences between Safdar Khan and his patron, Shujaat Khan, which marked his withdrawal from Gujarat to Malwa, where he remained for some time. Significantly, his absence emboldened the *kolis* at Pattan to once again resume their rebellious activities.<sup>375</sup> Meanwhile, in 1701 Shujaat Khan died. Two years later, in 1703 when Durgadas Rathod, at the instigation of Ajit Singh, began to create disturbances in the province, Safdar Khan found the moment appropriate to return to Gujarat. He volunteered to undermine the rebel Durgadas, and succeeded in doing so. In 1704, while Durgadas Rathod was forced to flee the province, Safdar Khan was rewarded with the charge of *pargana* Bijapur in Pattan *sarkar*.<sup>376</sup>

Safdar Khan next figures, along with his sons, in the contingents sent to resist the Maratha forces led by Dhana Jadav in 1706. The campaign proved to be seriously disastrous from the Imperial standpoint, with many Mughal officials being taken captive, to be released only on the payment of ransom. Besides the *suba naib nazim*, Abdul Hamid Khan and many

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<sup>373</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 293

<sup>374</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 294

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, pp.305-6

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*, p. 314, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p.17

others, Safdar Khan too was taken captive, while his son Muhammad Usman was killed in the battle. Safdar Khan was released by the Marathas only after receiving the ransom amount. Incidentally his other sons, Salabat Muhammad Khan and Muhammad Sher Khan, were also taken captive along with Abdul Hamid Khan but they managed to cut their way through the Maratha hordes and escaped.<sup>377</sup>

Meanwhile in 1706, Durgadas Rathod was back to his rebellious ways creating disturbances at Jodhpur at the instigation of Ajit Singh. As in the past, Safdar Khan once again volunteered his services to deal with Durgadas. He gave a bond to kill the rebel along with a request for appointment to the post of *faujdar* at Pattan and an addition to his conditional *mansab* in event of his success. It may be noted that this time Durgadas was given refuge by the refractory *kolis*.<sup>378</sup> Such an anti-establishment stand was quite a common feature and seems to be a pattern among the *koli* clans.<sup>379</sup> Eventually, after the defeat of Durgadas, Safdar Khan's demands were fulfilled and he was appointed as the *faujdar* of Pattan.

Significantly, during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the Babis appear to have progressively grown in stature and prominence within the provincial nobility. While Safdar Khan was well established at Pattan, it is noteworthy that his sons too were inducted in the provincial administration with important positions. In 1716, his son Mahmud Sher, (Khan Jahan) received the title of Jawan Mard Khan and was appointed to the *pargana* of Radhanpur in Pattan *sarkar*,<sup>380</sup> while his second son

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<sup>377</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 318-325.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid*, p. 329, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 18

<sup>379</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan remarks that "As habits of rebelliousness ..... and riot are kneaded in the malignant nature of these classes, they created disturbances always when they noticed a slight weakness in the control of the *Suba nazim*". *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 150

<sup>380</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 369

Salabt Muhammad Khan was the *naib faujdar* at Golwad,<sup>381</sup> where he rendered useful services during the strife between the *suba nazim* Ajit Singh and Haider Quli Khan, the *mutasaddi* of Surat and Cambay.

From the 1720s the presence and role of the Babis became much larger. Besides holding important offices at the *pargana* and *sarkar* levels, the members of this clan appear to play an important part in the politics of the province at the *suba* capital Ahmedabad till the final disintegration when they redefined themselves as *Nawabs*.

In 1718, a civil war was recorded between the troops of Haidar Quli Khan and Safdar Khan Babi at Ahmedabad which is indicative of their ascendant stature.<sup>382</sup> It is pertinent to note that around this time Haidar Quli Khan was assigned the post of the *suba naib nazim*. Apparently, the conflict started with an altercation between the water carriers of the two nobles which got transformed into a riotous skirmish. Besides being a serious affair, matching swords with the forces of the *suba naib nazim* was indeed awesome and reflective of the rivalry and ambitions of the two leaders. It is noteworthy that the Babi forces were constituted of *kasbatis* and *kolis*. It is significant that this incident assumed alarming proportions. Safdar Khan's camp was looted and he, along with his brothers and relatives, was forced to flee the place and seek refuge at the *pargana* of Palanpur in Pattan *sarkar*. Subsequently, tempers were pacified and reconciliation was effected through the mediation of Muhammad Firoz Jalori of Palanpur.<sup>383</sup>

Around this time Safdar Khan was appointed as the *naib faujdar* of Godhra *sarkar*,<sup>384</sup> his son Salabat Muhammad Khan held the charge of the *pargana* of Viramgam in Ahmedabad *sarkar*, an important Rajput

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<sup>381</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.374

<sup>382</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 380

<sup>383</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 380-383.

<sup>384</sup> *Commissariat*, II, p. 405

stronghold, while Jawan Mard Khan continued as the *faujdar* at Radhanpur. Further, Muhammad Bahadur, the son of Salabat Khan, was assigned the charge of *faujdari* of the districts in the vicinity of Ahmedabad.

In 1721 once again, we see the Babis crossing swords with a rival, this time Shujaat Khan, an important Gujarat noble who had been appointed as the *naib nazim* of Haidar Quli Khan (the absentee *suba nazim* who remained at Delhi preoccupied with politicking at the Imperial court).<sup>385</sup> It is quite likely that Shujaat Khan was keen on containing the rising prominence of the Babis whom he perceived as his immediate rivals. To undermine them, he made a representation to his patron, Haidar Quli to transfer the *jagirs* of Safdar Khan and his two sons to himself and his brothers (Ibrahmin Khan and the martyr Rustom Ali).<sup>386</sup> When reports of this reached the Babis, Salabat Muhammad Khan (son of Safdar Khan) proceeded to Delhi where he was well received by both the Emperor and the *suba nazim* Haidar Quli Khan who ordered the restoration of the said *jagirs*. Further, his *mansab* was also enhanced.<sup>387</sup> Possibly the Imperial policy in these turbulent times was to patronize sections of provincial nobles in order to maintain a balance within the provincial nobility and continue to maintain Imperial authority over the region.

Meanwhile the antagonism between Safdar Khan Babi and Shujaat Khan (*naib nazim*) remained unabated. The latter had to lead an army to Kheda which was under the charge of Muhammad Khan Babi to enforce tribute of Rs 10000/-.<sup>388</sup>

Around this time, on the recommendation of Haidar Quli Khan, Muhammad Bahadur, son of Salabat Muhammad Khan was exalted with

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<sup>385</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 402

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>387</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 403-04, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 19, commissariat II p. 405

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid*

a *mansab* of 500 *zat*, 270 *sawar*, and appointed the *thanadar* of Sadra, and Virpur and given the title of Sher Khan.<sup>389</sup> In later years, it was Sher Khan Babi, who along with Jawan Mard Khan II, figure prominently in the factional politics at Ahmedabad from the 1730s.

In 1722 Haider Quli Khan was dismissed from the *nizamat* of Gujarat on charges of becoming autonomous of the Imperial authority and Nizamul Mulk was given the charge of the *nizamat*. Haider Quli was unwilling to hand over the charge to the new incumbent. It may be recalled that when the outgoing *nazim* sought support from the local nobles to resist his dismissal, the Babis sided with the Nizam, who by all means was more powerful of the two and getting his patronage was deemed more advantageous. Significantly, most of the local nobles and officials followed the same course. The justification offered was that “it was not in a private quarrel but in opposition to the sovereign that he (Haider Quli) sought their support”<sup>390</sup>. However, Shujaat Khan and his brother remained supportive to Haidar Quli Khan for a brief time.

It is important to note that Safdar Khan Babi was assigned the charge of defending the *suba* capital Ahmedabad till a *naib* was formally appointed by the Nizam, an acknowledgement of his enhanced power and position within the local bureaucracy.<sup>391</sup> Later, the Nizam made a brief visit to Gujarat. After assigning the charge of the province to his uncle, Hamid Khan, he returned to Delhi to manage affairs of the Empire as its *wazir*. However, the Nizam’s *nizamat* in Gujarat did not last for long as he chose to go to the Deccan feeling disgusted with the state of affairs at the Imperial Court where administrative reforms seemed hard to come

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<sup>389</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 404

<sup>390</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 19; Commissariat II p. 407

<sup>391</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 410

by.<sup>392</sup> In 1723, Qamaruddin Khan (titled as Itimad-ud-Daula and Nusrat Jung) assumed charge as the *wazir* at the Delhi, the Nizam was bestowed the office of the *vakil-i- Mutlaq* with the title of Asaf Jah, along with the charge of the six Deccan provinces. In view of these developments, the *nizamat* of Gujarat was assigned to Mubariz-ul-Mulk Sarbuland Khan. An Imperial order was thus issued, appointing Shujaat Khan, as the *naib nazim* with a *sanad* for administration of the *mahals* of *pargana haveli* of Ahmedabad, besides Dholka, Bharuch, Jambusar, Maqbulabad, Bulsar and Kadi.<sup>393</sup>

When Hamid Khan the *naib nazim* was informed of these developments, he refused to vacate his office and a civil war soon commenced. It is noteworthy that Ali Muhammad Khan intervened and approached the Babis asking them to dissuade the rebel Hamid Khan from resisting his dismissal and save the Ahmedabad from damage. Consequently, on the mediation and counsels of Safdar Khan Babi and Jawan Mard Khan Babi, Hamid Khan left the capital and went to Dohad, which ended the immediate crisis.<sup>394</sup>

However, in the Nizam's exercise of power in the Deccan, influence in, Gujarat was very crucial. It may be noted that the Nizam was working towards establishing his personal influence in the Deccan besides Malwa and Gujarat which were contiguous to the Deccan. Further, the strong presence of the Marathas in the deccan and the expansion of their influence in Gujarat necessitated either direct or indirect influence in Gujarat too. The reluctance of Hamid Khan, the uncle of the Nizam, to

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<sup>392</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 416 this aspect has been discussed at length by Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal court, 1707-1740*, op. cit, pp. 207-211

<sup>393</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 416. Ali Muhammad Khan suggests that the Imperial order appointing Shujaat Khan as the *naib nazim* was issued in response to a request by him in this regard. *Ibid*, p. 419. Also see commissariat II pp. 407-8

<sup>394</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp.416-417

hand over charge to the new incumbent in Gujarat has to be viewed in this context. The reading of the *Mirat* makes it amply clear that the Hamid Khan's offensive against the new *nazim* was at the instance of the Nizam.<sup>395</sup> To maintain his influence he thus sought the collaboration of the Maratha *sardars* Pilaji and Kanthaji who were affiliated to him vis a vis the Peshwa in the Deccan. This alliance had a major bearing on the future course of Maratha presence in Gujarat. At the instance of the Nizam, an agreement was concluded between the Hamid Khan and the Gaekwad sardars whereby they were offered the *chauth* of Gujarat if they successfully assisted in the reinstatement of Hamid Khan.<sup>396</sup> Hamid Khan in alliance with the Marathas emerged victorious in the battle against the Imperial forces. Incidentally, during the military operations, the three brothers, who were important nobles in the provincial bureaucracy, Shujaat Khan (*naib nazim*), Ibrahim Quli Khan and Rustom Ali, were killed.<sup>397</sup> While Hamid Khan embarked on the path of assuming de-facto autonomy, the Maratha rights to *chauth* in Gujarat became more definite. For the first time, they entered the *suba* capital Ahmedabad as allies of Hamid Khan.<sup>398</sup>

These developments were also very significant for the Babis. Their arch rival in the provincial bureaucracy, Shujaat Khan had been eliminated. More importantly, the disintegration of Imperial authority had become an irreversible reality which provided an opportunity to numerous ambitious elements within the province to assume autonomy and carve out personal niches for themselves, wherever and for whatever span of time it was possible, particularly in the face of the expansion and

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<sup>395</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan states that Asaf Jah was perturbed at Shujaat Khan's audacity "in not respecting his uncle Hamid Khan" and seeking Imperial orders for the office of *naib nazim* in his name. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 419

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid*, p.419, Also see *Bombay Gazetteer*, p19, and *Commissariat II* pp. 410-11

<sup>397</sup> *Commissariat*, II, p. 410

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid*, 412

consolidation of Maratha power, both on the mainland and in peninsular Gujarat.

When Hamid Khan emerged victorious, Salabat Muhammad Khan Babi found the conditions at Ahmedabad too uncertain. He wisely chose to withdraw to Viramgam (better known as Jhalawar located in the *sarkar* of Ahmedabad).<sup>399</sup> However, these very turbulent circumstances gave the Babis scope to steadily elevate their power and position. It is noteworthy that during the 1730s, contending parties at the *suba* capital chose to make alliances with them.

When news of Hamid Khan's actions reached the capital, Sarbuland Khan, the absentee *nazim*, was ordered to immediately assume charge of the province in person. Further, an amount of rupees one crore was sanctioned from the Imperial treasury to finance the organization of an effective force to undermine or expel the Marathas which ever was possible. While rupees fifty lacs were immediately paid in cash, the balance was to be disbursed in the form of monthly remittances of rupees three lacs.<sup>400</sup> A concerted offensive was launched against the Marathas under the leadership of the *nazim*'s son, Khanazad Khan. Jawan Mard Khan also joined the Imperial forces with his contingent. However, despite the victory of the Mughals,<sup>401</sup> the offensive was abruptly brought to an end.<sup>402</sup> Possibly Sarbuland Khan chose to reconcile to the emerging reality that the Marathas were here to stay. They were steadily growing as an important component in the regions power structure. Collaboration and networking with them was inevitably exigent to wield political authority. It may be recalled that Sarbuland Khan too was nurturing ambitions for assuming autonomy. Instead of clinging to the emaciated Imperial

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<sup>399</sup> *Ibid*, p. 435

<sup>400</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 436

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 443-444

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid*, p. 447; Also see Gense and Banaji, *The Gaekwads of Baroda*, I, p. 10

authority, collaboration with the Marathas could facilitate him to realize his own ambitions of assuming independence. From the Maratha standpoint, their rebel stature was getting transformed into a definite and a somewhat legitimate power. In view of these considerations, after much negotiation, an agreement was concluded with the Maratha chief Peshwa Baji Rao I in 1730, whereby the Marathas were granted rights to revenues of Gujarat though with stipulations. Details of the developments in this connection have been discussed at length in chapter one.<sup>403</sup> When reports of these developments reached the Imperial court, the monthly payments of Rupees three lacs sanctioned for undermining the Marathas was stopped.<sup>404</sup>

Incidentally during the tenure of Sarbuland Khan, three deaths in the Babi family are recorded which facilitated the induction of younger generation of the Babis to prominent administrative positions in the *suba*. In 1725 Safdar Khan who had grown quite old died.<sup>405</sup> Three years later Jawan Mard Khan Babi, son of Safdar Khan and *faujdar* of Petlad died during the course of military operations against the *kolis* of Balor, a village falling under his charge. Later on, at the request of the brother of the deceased, Salabat Muhammad Khan, Kamaaluddin Khan, his eldest son received the title of his father, Jawan Mard Khan II, with a *mansab* of 700 *zat* and was given the *parganas* of Sami and Munjpur (both were *parganas* in the Pattan *sarkar*)<sup>406</sup>. Likewise, his second son Muhammad Anwar Khan was granted the title of Safdar Khan, a *mansab* of 500 *zat* and the *faujdari* of Radhanpur.<sup>407</sup> The third member of this clan who died was Salabat Muhammad Khan Babi, the *faujdar* of Viramgam in 1730.

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<sup>403</sup> *Ibid*, 447. Also see Commissariat, II, pp. 425-428 and V.G. Dighe, Peshwa Baji Rao I and the Maratha Expansion, 1944, pp. 30-33

<sup>404</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 449

<sup>405</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 437

<sup>406</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Supplement, p. 198

<sup>407</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 459. Also see *Bombay Gazetteer* p. 20, and Commissariat, II, p. 432

Udaikaran, the Desai of Viramgam had been murdered by a Kasbati, named Ali Tank of that town. Salabat Muhammad Khan proceeded to investigate the matter and chastise the refractory elements. However, he fell ill on the way and succumbed at the village of Paldi (Sabarmati district).<sup>408</sup>

Some details on Salabat Muhammad Khan may be insightful. He had overtime assumed an influential position within the *Kathiawad* peninsula. Salabat Muhammad Khan had been assigned Gogha (port town in eastern *Kathiawad*) in *Jagir* and held the charge of Viramgam for a considerable span of time. This made his immediate sphere of operations quite important in politico-economic terms.

Significantly, the influence and assistance of Salabat Muhammad Khan, in his official capacity as the *faujdar* of Viramgam was particularly crucial to the Imperial *faujdar* at Junagadh in view of the growing anarchy and disintegration of the Imperial authority which often made his position very precarious. In 1728-29 Asad Quli Khan, the *faujdar* of Junagadh died. It is noteworthy that before his death he chose to nominate Salabat Muhammad Khan as his *naib*. However, this could not be affected as Salabat Khan was posted at Viramgam and he could not be spared, in view of the extension of Maratha incursions in these parts. It may be noted that, Viramgam constituted the entry point to Peninsular Gujarat from the north which necessitated capable and reliable leadership to prevent the Marathas from entering the peninsula. The *niabat* of Junagadh was thus assigned to his son Sher Khan Babi. Subsequently, though Ghulam Muhiyuddin Khan, the son of Asad Quli Khan was appointed as *faujdar* of Junagadh by the Emperor he found it appropriate to continue Sher Khan as his *naib*. A *sanad* in this regard was thus

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<sup>408</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 468

issued.<sup>409</sup> Later, while another *naib*, Mir Ismail was appointed in place of Sher Khan, he had made himself somewhat indispensable in these parts. About twenty years later this Babi figures as the *Nawab* at Junagadh. Meanwhile following the death of Salabat Muhammad Khan, Sher Khan was assigned the charge of his *jagirs* at Balasinor, Virpur and Gogha<sup>410</sup> which facilitated him to maintain his influence in these parts.

Further, Salabat Muhammad Khan also figures prominently as a mediator, intervening to resolve dissensions and succession disputes. An illustration of this is noticeable in relation to Jam Tamachi of Nawanagar, the son of Jam Raisinhji 1709-1718, whose accession became possible through the intervention of Salabat Muhammad. In 1718, Raisinhji the reigning chief at Nawanagar was killed by his brother Hardhoji who thereafter usurped authority. The deceased ruler's wife was the sister of Pratapsinhji, the Jhala ruler of Halwad, who was very concerned with the reinstatement of his nephew at Nawanagar. To achieve his objective he sought the alliance and patronage of the *suba nazim* Sarbuland Khan to whom he gave his daughter in marriage and married one of his nieces to Salabat Muhammad Khan Babi. Marriage alliances for political gains were a traditionally proven strategy since early times. Eventually, Jam Tamachi was seated on the Gaddi primarily at the intervention of Salabat Muhammad Khan in 1727.<sup>411</sup> As a token of gratitude for his role, Jam Tamachi presented Salabat Muhammad Khan with three villages: Trakura, Charakhdi and Dahiya. Subsequently, these villages were sold by his sons Sher Zaman Khan and Diler Khan to Kumboji of Gondol

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<sup>409</sup> *Ibid*, p. 454

<sup>410</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 469

<sup>411</sup> *The Hind Rajasthan*, Pat IB, p. 563

when he was seeking strategic and contiguous areas to consolidate his regime.<sup>412</sup>

All these three members of the Babi clan had made a definite mark in the region through their firm initiative, military and administrative abilities and sound judgment. They laid firm foundations for the next generation of Babis who maintained and extended the concerns of this clan which impressively survived the disintegration of Imperial authority in Gujarat. It may be pertinent to note that wielding authority in a *koli* and Rajput dominated zone was indeed challenging. The *koli* activities (insurgency and brigandage) were intensive in *parganas* having *koli* settlements in the Pattan *sarkar* while Viramgam was an important stronghold of the Jhalas, a prominent Rajput lineage.

On the whole firm foundations were laid by the early generation of Babis. Significantly during the subsequent decades, their successors steadily moved ahead playing a far more important role during the phase of anarchy, intrigues and most importantly the growing prominence of the Marathas whose presence in peninsular Gujarat was becoming increasingly pervasive. A distinct dimension discernible in relation to the Babis was their policy of always aligning with the more powerful and promising side or faction and in this their judgment was indeed very sound which explains their moving centre stage around the 1740s. Significantly while familial considerations were strong, individual ambitions are noticeable and gained primacy during this phase when both Sher Khan and Jawan Mard Khan figure as rivals and collaborators. In 1730 Sarbuland Khan's tenure came to an end, the circumstances of which have been discussed at length earlier. The most important factor behind his dismissal was the assumption of an autonomous behavior,

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<sup>412</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 20

besides his utter failure against the Marathas for which adequate funds had been provided to him from the Imperial treasury. He was consequently recalled and the charge of the *Suba* was assigned to Abhay Singh Rathod.<sup>413</sup>

At the very outset when the new *nazim* arrived at Ahmedabad, as was customary, Sher Khan presented himself with appropriate gifts to the *nazim* and obtained from him the title of 'Bahadur', besides the confirmation of his ancestral *jagirs*. Likewise, Jawan Mard Khan too presented himself with the customary gift which was rewarded with an addition in *mansab* and the *watandari* of Vadnagar.<sup>414</sup>

Abhay Singh in all earnest tried to deal with the Maratha problem. The Maratha camp at this juncture was experiencing an intense rivalry between the Peshwa and the senapati Dabhade. Abhay Singh chose to ally with the Peshwa against the Dabhades and his *Sardars*: Pilaji Gaekwad, Kanthaji Kadam Bande, Udaji Pawar, Kanhoji Bhonsle.<sup>415</sup> Thereafter, military operations commenced against Pilaji Gaekwad at Dabhoi and Baroda (which had been recently occupied). Next, Abhay Singh treacherously got Pilaji assassinated at Dakor. His death caused great consternation amongst his followers which facilitated the recapture of Baroda. It was in these circumstances that Sher Khan Babi was appointed as the *faujdar* of Baroda *sarkar* which is indicative of his reputation and capabilities.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 470

<sup>414</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 482-83, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 21. Remarking on the prosperity of Vadnagar, Ali Muhammad Khan writes "It has been a common saying among the people of this province that the city of Ahmedabad had two golden wings: one was Vadnagar and the other was Umreth. This saying arose from the fact that in both these towns, there were many wealthy and prosperous merchants whose wealth was estimated by lakhs. But owing to the vicissitudes of fortunes and successive calamities both these towns have fallen low and are reduced to ruin and desolation". *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 445

<sup>415</sup> Gense and Banaji, p. 10

<sup>416</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 492, *The Hind Rajasthan Part IB*, P. 543

Retaliation to these developments from the Dabhades was quite natural. In 1733, Umabai, the widow of Khanderao mobilized forces and launched an offensive which proved to be effective. Abhay Singh was compelled to negotiate for peace. Accordingly, the Dabhades agreed to withdraw, on the promise of payment of eighty thousand rupees as *khandani* besides continuation of the agreed *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the *suba*.<sup>417</sup> The role of Jawan Mard Khan is quite important here. He was named as the Imperial surety for this payment to Umabai. Further, Abhay Singh appointed him as the *faujdar* of Viramgam *pargana*, the revenues of which he was to collect and forward to her.<sup>418</sup>

While Sher Khan was preoccupied with the charge of Baroda, his *jagir* at Gogha, administered by his brother Sher Zaman was endangered. Burhan-ul-Mulk, the powerful noble at the Imperial court, arranged the grant of the *jagir* at Gogha for his protégé Sohrab Khan, who around this time had been divested of his office of *mutasaddi* of Surat by the combined forces of Tegh Beg Khan and Mullah Muhammad Ali. This was in spite of the said *jagir* being recently sanctioned to Sher Khan by Abhay Singh. Though Sher Zaman, along with others, resisted the new appointee, he failed and was forced to flee the place. Meanwhile, the *naib faujdar* at Junagadh also complained against this new appointment to the Imperial court. Subsequently, while Gogha was retained by Sher Khan, Burhan ul Mulk managed to secure for himself the office of *faujdar* at Junagadh and appointed Sohrab Khan as his *naib* with an appropriate *sanad*.<sup>419</sup> The noteworthy aspect is the intervention of the *naib faujdar* of Junagadh in this matter which is suggestive of Sher Khan's rising

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<sup>417</sup> The Marathas did not always restrict themselves to the realization of such agreed levies. They came forward with new exactions whenever they were in a position of strength.

<sup>418</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p.507

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 511-12. Also see Diwanji Amarji *Tarikh-i-Sorath* tr. in English, E. Rehatsek. Ed. James Burgess, London, 1882, pp. 135-36 (cited hereafter as *Tarikh-i-Sorath*)

influence in the peninsula. Thus, Sher Khan maintained control over Gogha and the ancestral *jagir* of Balasinor, besides the newly assigned charge of Baroda.<sup>420</sup> However in 1734 Baroda was recaptured by the Maratha leader Mahadji Gaekwad, the brother of Pilaji, who found an opportune moment during the brief absence of Sher Khan, who had gone to Balasinor.<sup>421</sup> From this year Baroda remained under Gaekwad control and in 1764 Damaji II established his headquarters there.

At this juncture, Sher Khan moved to *suba* capital Ahmedabad. He was in high favour with the *naib nazim* Ratan Singh Bhandari. In 1734, Sher Khan was appointed the *naib faujdar* of Viramgam (an office held by his father) in place of his cousin Jawan Mard Khan II, whose relations with the local *desai* had become strained as he arrested the *desai* of the place on orders from Ratan Singh.<sup>422</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan, commenting on this appointment states that Sher Khan was appointed “as the *naib* of the place (Viramgam) because he was in concord with the hereditary *desai* from the time of his father Salabat Muhammad Khan Babi”.<sup>423</sup> Probably, Sher Khan was chosen to this office on account of his experience and familiarity with the area.

Some inputs on the strategic importance of Viramgam are relevant. This *pargana* could be classed as the entry point to peninsular Gujarat. It was indeed a very wealthy area which Ratan Singh was desirously eyeing. During the tenure of Salabat Muhammad Khan Babi, the routine functions of *faujdar* and commander of military contingents had been merged. In fact, he usually accompanied the *mulukgiri* (annual

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<sup>420</sup> *Gazetteer*, p. 21

<sup>421</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 513

<sup>422</sup> It seems that the *desai* was very wealthy and the *naib nazim* was keen on confiscating his wealth. He thus asked Jawan Mard Khan to arrest him. However, Jawan Mard Khan's had been appointed as *faujdar* under powerful securities, and these persons reacted very strongly against the arrest which made him release Udaikaran, the *desai*. *Ibid*, p. 512

<sup>423</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 512-513

expeditions to exact tribute by show of military force) contingents. Often the tribute was amicably collected by the *faujdar* in advance. From the standpoint of the chieftains in peninsular Gujarat, the immediate Imperial representative was the *faujdar*, who also collected the revenue or tribute. Thus, it was crucial for the *mulukgiri* forces to have a compliant *faujdar* at Viramgam, as he constituted the effective link between the peninsula and the mainland. The appointment of Sher Khan to this strategically important *pargana* is indeed an illustration of his prominent stature, abilities and most importantly, the level of confidence which the *nazim* reposed in him.

Within a year however, Viramgam passed under the control of the Gaekwads. Bhavsingh, the hereditary *desai*, feeling apprehensive of the Rathods at the Ahmedabad court, secretly sent messages to Damaji to capture and occupy Viramgam.<sup>424</sup> This tendency of *desais* to ally or seek the patronage of the Maratha *Sardars* seems to be an emerging pattern indicating either dissatisfaction with Mughal rule or an urge emanating from longstanding hereditary rights to aspire for autonomy in the face of Imperial collapse. Similar tendencies are discernible in South Gujarat and even districts in the mainland which facilitated the Gaekwad expansion and consolidation.<sup>425</sup>

The Maratha occupation of this strategic zone had far reaching implications. While it facilitated their expeditions to peninsular Gujarat, the Mughal *faujdar* at Junagadh was rendered somewhat cut-off from the *suba* capital Ahmedabad. Under these situations, he was increasingly left to fend for himself, managing defenses and administration from his own resources which often made his position quite vulnerable. In the

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<sup>424</sup> *Ibid*, 531, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 22

<sup>425</sup> It may be recalled that Pilaji enjoyed the support of the *desais* of Padra, Bhayali and Channi in Baroda District.

subsequent period there was little he could do to contain the Maratha depredations which became increasingly pervasive in the peninsula.

Following the loss of Viramgam, Sher Khan was back to his *jagir* at Balasinor. From 1735 to 1737, while his relations with the *naib nazim* remained cordial, Ratan Singh's position was steadily weakening on account of the nature of his unprecedented oppressive rule. In 1737 Momin Khan, the *mutasaddi* of Cambay was appointed as the *nazim*. Incidentally, Sher Khan's relations with the new *nazim* were not amicable. On an earlier occasion, Ratan Singh had assigned the charge of Petlad to him which was under the jurisdiction of Momin Khan. Thus for some time we find him maintaining a low profile.<sup>426</sup>

However, Jawan Mard Khan Babi II figures very prominently in politics at Ahmedabad. When Momin Khan, the *nazim* designate had to battle his way to assume office, he sought the support of the Gaekwads, besides other important nobles including Jawan Mard Khan, who was promised the assignment of *faujdari* of Pattan *sarkar* in the event of victory. In 1738, when Ratan Singh Bhandari was finally forced to quit, Momin Khan rewarded Jawan Mard Khan with the appointment of *faujdari* of Pattan, while his brother Zorawar Khan, was conferred the charge of Kheralu, a *pargana* in *Sarkar* Pattan.<sup>427</sup>

Meanwhile, the success of Momin Khan and his formal assumption of authority induced Sher Khan to reconcile to the new developments and come out of his shell. As was the convention, he along with Jawan Mard Khan visited Momin Khan, the new *nazim* who invited both to assist him in sharing the administrative responsibilities. Sher Khan thus

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<sup>426</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 23

<sup>427</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 578, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 23

accompanied him on a *mulukgiri* expedition to north Gujarat to collect *Peshkash* and establish order.<sup>428</sup>

Around this time Sher Khan was appointed as the *naib faujdar* of Junagadh.<sup>429</sup> The circumstances leading to his appointment are quite interesting and reflective of rampant ambitions, uncertainty and rapid change of officials, besides the basic exigencies and rationale underlying his appointment to this important *sarkar*.

In 1735 Sohrab Khan, the *naib faujdar* of Junagadh was killed near Dhandhuka during the course of military operations at Viramgam. The office which fell vacant was granted to Mohsin Khan Khalvi.<sup>430</sup> Shortly thereafter, Mir Hazbar Khan was appointed as *faujdar* while Mehrab Khan was assigned charge of *naib*. The latter was however soon replaced by Mir Dost Ali. Immediately hereafter, Mamur Khan arrived at Junagadh to assume charge as *naib faujdar* carrying a *sanad* to that effect. The new *naib* complained to the *suba nazim*, Momin Khan against the nomination of Sher Khan. It is interesting that Momin Khan pacified him stating that he would refer the matter to the Emperor and Hazbar Khan, the *faujdar*. Meanwhile, simultaneously while he asked Sher Khan to proceed to his *jagir* at Gogha, he secretly directed him to go to Junagadh and assume charge.<sup>431</sup> It seems quite certain that Sher Khan was the *nazim*'s choice for this office which is indicative of the confidence which Momin Khan had in the abilities of Sher Khan in these turbulent times particularly in the wake of the Maratha activities in these parts being on an increase. Further, he had a definite advantage over others in view of the fact that since about 1729-30 he had obtained the *ijarah* of

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<sup>428</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 581

<sup>429</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 583

<sup>430</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 528, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 22

<sup>431</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 583-84

areas in Jungadh. That must have familiarised him with the complexities of revenue affairs and thus made him worthy of the post.<sup>432</sup>

Sher Khan thus assumed office and firmly established himself at Junagadh. The problem of soldiers' salaries being in arrears which had not been resolved by his predecessors was tactfully settled by the new *naib*.<sup>433</sup> Meanwhile, the *faujdar* Hazbar Khan died. This office was assigned by the Imperial authority to Himmat Ali Khan, the nephew of the Momin Khan, the *nazim*. The new *faujdar* was keen on appointing someone from his kin as the *naib* but was advised against this by Momin Khan who recommended the continuation of Sher Khan.<sup>434</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan aptly remarks that "Junagadh came under the possession of Sher Khan without objection and partnership of any one".<sup>435</sup>

Meanwhile, however Sher Khan continued to maintain his interests at the capital while simultaneously consolidating his position at Junagadh. The most challenging dimension during the 1750s was the Marathas. Their depredations under Damaji and Rangoji were becoming an increasingly regular feature in the face of their occupation of the two strategic zones, Borsad and Viramgam, which were entry points to peninsular Gujarat. Like his ambitious contemporaries, Sher Khan too recognized the formidability of the Marathas. He thus adopted a conciliatory strategy in dealing with them which facilitated him to consolidate his authority in the peninsula.<sup>436</sup>

In 1743 when Momin Khan died, a phase of uncertainty and high ambition surfaced at the *suba* capital in which the Babis once again figure

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<sup>432</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 134. Also see, *The Hind Rajasthan*, Part IB, P.543

<sup>433</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 584

<sup>434</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>435</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 584

<sup>436</sup> *Commissariat*, II, p. 507

prominently. Momin Khan's cousin Fida ud Din and son Muftakhir Khan received Imperial orders to exercise authority till a *nazim* was formally appointed.<sup>437</sup> Rangoji the Gaekwad's officer at Ahmedabad took advantage of the uncertain conditions and enacted a coup and assumed control of Ahmedabad, the capital of the *suba*. The scheme for this was conceived in collaboration with Anandram a confidential officer under Momin Khan who had been recently disgraced and was thus waiting for revenge. Rangoji also approached Sher Khan Babi to join him with the promise of the office of *naib nazim* if the venture was successful.<sup>438</sup> Interestingly, during the course of enacting the coup, Rangoji at one point detached himself from Sher Khan, possibly not wanting to share the gains of the success which seemed imminent. Sher Khan in these circumstances switched sides and joined the Imperial camp.<sup>439</sup> Eventually, the coup attempt failed and Rangoji was defeated and taken captive. The Marathas were compelled to surrender both Borsad and Viramgam.<sup>440</sup> Resultantly, for sometime the Maratha depredations through Borsad and Viramgam remained in abeyance.

In the face of these developments and fluid conditions it may be noted that both Sher Khan and Jawan Mard Khan display urges of high ambition. Meanwhile, both Muftakhir Khan and Fida ud Din were rivals aspiring for *nizamat*. Damaji too arrived with his contingent at Cambay in response to the loss of Borsad and Viramgam.<sup>441</sup> At this juncture Sher Khan's judgment induced him to maintain links and side with the Marathas. Significantly, with his help Rangoji managed to escape to

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<sup>437</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 616

<sup>438</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 617- 625

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid*, p. 625

<sup>440</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 629.

<sup>441</sup> Gense and Banaji, I, p. 46

Borsad, an action which highly antagonized Fida ud Din Khan.<sup>442</sup> For some time Sher Khan shrewdly left the capital on the pretext of hunting but actually withdrew to his *jagir* at Balasinor.<sup>443</sup>

Jawan Mard Khan however remained quite prominent and visibly ambitious moving centre stage. It is noteworthy that Fida ud Din was considering the assignment of *naib nazimship* to him but his aspirations were much higher which is illustrated from the following account.

A brief overview of important developments in this connection may be relevant. In September, 1743, a *farman* ordering the appointment of Abdul Aziz (Maqbul Alam) as the *nazim* was received at Ahemdabad.<sup>444</sup> Incidentally, Abdul Aziz was the *qiledar* of Junnar (Poona district) who held the fortress on behalf of Asaf Jah (Nizam ul Mulk).<sup>445</sup> Along with this order, was also a letter written by the new *nazim* designate, nominating Jawan Mard Khan as his *naib*. The latter took the *farman* to Ali Muhammad Khan, who on examining the document declared it to be forged.<sup>446</sup> Surprisingly, Fida ud Din showed no reaction or response to this serious development and withdrew to Cambay.<sup>447</sup> Shortly after, Abdul Aziz assumed office as the *nazim* and Jawan Mard Khan became the *naib nazim*.<sup>448</sup> Interestingly, despite some resistance and the receipt of an Imperial *farman* announcing the appointment of Muftakhir Khan, Jawan Mard Khan maintained his supreme position. Around this time, Abdul Aziz was killed by the Marathas in December 1743.<sup>449</sup> In the face of these developments Khanderao, the brother of Damaji, demanded a

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<sup>442</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 634, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 24

<sup>443</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 634

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*, p. 637

<sup>445</sup> *Commissariat*, II, P. 486

<sup>446</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 638

<sup>447</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 646

<sup>448</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 637-647

<sup>449</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 654

confirmation of the Gaekwad's former rights to share in revenue, which the *naib* conceded after initial resistance.<sup>450</sup>

The high aspirations and supporting linkages and networking in this entire episode are quite fascinating. While there were ambitious elements at the *Suba* capital: small and big *zamindars*, Mughal officials- *nazims*, *faujdar*s, *mutasaddis*, *naibs*, *desais*, commercial elites, Marathas, the Nizam too remained persistent in his efforts to maintain his influence in the province of Gujarat which was affected through such patronizing interventions. Pertinently, crucial in this network of power, were the Arab *Jamadars*, *kasbatis* and other types of mercenary militia who were readily available during this period.<sup>451</sup> Infrequently, arrears in payments made them switch sides which significantly became the decisive factor during military operations for political primacy. Lastly, linkages with the Marathas had indeed become increasingly exigent and thus commonplace.

Significantly, during the subsequent phase, Sher Khan and Jawan Mard Khan appear to operate both in collaboration and in opposition to each other. Meanwhile, the Imperial court appears to have been still quite concerned with the seriousness of conditions at Ahmedabad and made a final bid to restore at least some order. In 1744, Fakhr ud Daulah, who held a *mansab* of 7000 *zat* and 7000 *sawar* was appointed as the *nazim*.<sup>452</sup> The new *nazim* was a noble of high stature. His niece, the daughter of his brother Raushan-ud-daulah, had been married to Nasir Jung, the son of Nizam-ul-Mulk.<sup>453</sup> At this juncture Jawan Mard Khan, at his own initiative, declared himself as his *naib nazim*, though his real aspirations

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<sup>450</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 656

<sup>451</sup> Ali Muhammad Khan discusses the condition of the Kasbatis, soldiers living in large numbers in *qasbas* at length. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 580

<sup>452</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 665

<sup>453</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 660

were for the office of *nazim*. While Fakhr-ud-daula, the *nazim* was on his way to Ahmedabad, he halted at Balasinor, the *jagir* of Sher Khan, and was respectfully received by the latter. Meanwhile, the ambitious Jawan Mard Khan rallied both Sher Khan and Raja Raisinhji of Idar to his side and launched an offensive against the new *nazim* in which they emerged successful while Fakhr ud Daula was taken captive.<sup>454</sup>

From this period, a pattern of dissensions, alliances and counter alliances is discernible. A bitter civil strife ensued between Khanderao and Rangoji for about four years 1744-48. When Rangoji was taken captive and placed in confinement during his attempted coup, Khanderao, instead of seeking his release, appointed Trimbakrao as his deputy at Ahmedabad. However, Umabai soon ordered his release and reinstated him in place of Trimbakrao at Ahmedabad. This arrangement was quite agreeable to the Babis. Meanwhile, the disgruntled elements: Trimbakrao, Punaji Vithal and Fakhr ud Daulah joined together and began to exact *chauth* in the Maratha controlled areas. To repulse them Rangoji turned to Sher Khan Babi for assistance. A serious military offensive was launched in which Sher Khan was injured and his *jagir* at Balasinor was threatened. Hard pressed, Rangoji sought help from Malhar Rao Holkar, who had been sent around this time to Malwa to collect revenue.<sup>455</sup> When news of his approach reached the fugitive *nazim* designate Fakhr ud Daulah, the siege was withdrawn.

Subsequently, another offensive was launched against Jawan Mard Khan at Ahmedabad by Fakhr ud Daulah in 1747 in which surprisingly his allies were Sher Khan Babi and Raisinhji of Idar. However, once again it proved to be futile. This was followed by a combine of Sher Khan, Raja Raisinhji and Rangoji for the defense of Borsad which was

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<sup>454</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 660-667.

<sup>455</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 665-672

attacked by a combined force led by Damaji and Khanderao who were supplemented with the contingents of Jawan Mard Khan.<sup>456</sup>

As a consequence of these developments, Sher Khan found himself distanced from his cousin Jawan Mard Khan who had created an enviable space for himself in these chaotic times. He enjoyed prominence for nearly a decade at Ahmedabad due to his sound political judgment and initiative. By about 1748 Sher Khan found the conditions at the Ahmedabad utterly hopeless where he saw no worthwhile role for himself in the presence of people like Damaji and Jawan Mard Khan. Placing his son *Sardar* Muhammad Khan at Balasinor, he proceeded to Junagadh.<sup>457</sup>

It may be recalled that he had been the *naib faujdar* of Junagadh for a number of years. While he was preoccupied with affairs in the mainland, his wives Laddi Bibi (also called Lakdi) and Aman Bibi had been managing the administration on his behalf; this may be relevant to the study of gender relations during this period.<sup>458</sup>

Sher Khan assumed the title of Bahadur Khan and styled himself as the *Nawab*. Consequently, Junagadh, another Mughal *Sarkar* was transformed into a *Nawabi*, in tune with Bharuch and Surat. While Sher Khan had successfully carved out a niche for himself, the more crucial and challenging task was consolidation of authority. This was effectively accomplished only during the reign of *Nawab* Mahabat Khan, under the able leadership of his *diwan* Amarji, an incredibly astute strategist and military commander. Before discussing details on the consolidation of authority during the tenure of early *Nawabs* at Junagadh a brief overview of the region is important.

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<sup>456</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 660-664

<sup>457</sup> *The Hind Rajasthan*, Part IB, p. 544., *Bombay Gazetteer*, P.36

<sup>458</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p.26

Peninsular Gujarat classed as Saurashtra literally meaning good land was designated as Sorath by Persian chroniclers. Around the mid eighteenth century, the peninsula came to be classed as *Kathiawad*, a derivative from the *Kathis* a small heterogeneous category inhabiting narrow tracts in the Sorath *sarkar*, whose predatory activities earned them a lasting disrepute. In the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi-i –Ahmadi*, *Kathiawad* figures as a small subdivision in the Sorath *sarkar* inhabited by the *Kathis*. This *sarkar* spanned major portions of the Peninsula. The length of this *sarkar* extended from the port of Gogha to Armara (Dwarka) and the breadth was from Div to Sardhara (Rajkot).<sup>459</sup> Under the Mughals, besides Khalsa or crown land, the *sarkar* included a large number of chieftaincies classed as *zamindars* which paid tribute or *peshkash* and came within the jurisdiction of the *Faujdar*. Many of the clan based polities predated the Mughals.<sup>460</sup> At the time when the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* was written, the Sorath *sarkar* consisted of sixty two divisions which included twelve ports.<sup>461</sup> Significantly, a large number of these divisions were under *zamindars* who were increasingly working towards assuming autonomy. Ali Muhammad Khan also furnishes revenue details of these divisions as recorded in 1753. Despite depredations and disintegration, while the figures in dams are quite impressive, the actual revenue remittances to the *Nawabs* are uncertain. It may also be noted that in 1752, a partition treaty was concluded between the Marathas whereby revenues of Gujarat were divided between the Peshwa and the Gaekwads, both on the mainland and in the peninsula.<sup>462</sup>

At the outset, in fact the *Nawab* Bahadur Khan was hopelessly hard pressed for finances. However the situation gradually changed,

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<sup>459</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 33

<sup>460</sup> A. R. Khan, *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar*, Simla, 1977, pp. 81-85

<sup>461</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* Supplement, pp. 204 -210

<sup>462</sup> *Commissariat*, II, pp. 505-507

particularly in view of the militarism, diplomacy and statesmanship of the *diwan* Amarji<sup>463</sup>. It may be recalled that even during the heydays of the Empire revenue exaction in these parts was infrequently a military exercise. Azam Khan the Mughal viceroy 1636-42 was classed as ‘*udhai*’ (lit. white ant in Gujarati). He came very heavily on the predatory *kathis* and *kolis*. His reign was marked by the clearance of forests, erection of fortifications and the establishment of *thanas*. Ali Muhammad Khan, writing in the mid eighteenth century, says thus: “he is to this day called by the high and low alike by the name of Azam Udhai, because like the white ant he destroys everything that came in his way”.<sup>464</sup> Since early times, Sorath was distant from the immediate Mughal authority despite the appointment of *faujars* and the setting up of *thanas*, unlike the mainland which remained within the direct Mughal Imperial purview. Despite these measures revenue collection was invariably a military affair and increasingly so during the first half of the eighteenth century evidenced in the *mulukgiri* expeditions.

The region over which Sher Khan established his *Nawabi* was marked by tendencies of disintegration. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the Mughal *faujdar* had in effective terms lost authority over several of the outlying military posts in the region. The hitherto official *thanadars* of outlying areas like Mangrol, Kutiana, Una-Delvada, Sutrapada, Somnath-Pattan besides other areas in the *Sarkar* had become virtually autonomous.<sup>465</sup> The effective authority of the Imperial *faujdar*

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<sup>463</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol., VIII, *Kathiawar*, pp. 474-78. Also see H. Wilberforce, *History of Kathiawad*, pp. 132-38

<sup>464</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 186-187

<sup>465</sup> Mangrol was a *pargana* with a port, located towards the southwest coastline; Kutiana or Kotiana was a *pargana* located on the northwest; Una was a *pargana* towards the southeast of Junagadh; Sutrapada was on located towards the southernmost extreme of Junagadh along the coastline, while Somnath – Pattan or Pattandeo was a *pargana* along the coast south of Junagadh.

was over time confined to the 'New Sorath'.<sup>466</sup> Thus, while Sher Khan had assumed independence and the status of *Nawab*, it was imperative for him to redefine his relationship with different constituents of the former *sarkar* of Sorath and other neighboring areas. The discussion hereon highlights important developments which marked the transformation of the fledging *Nawabi* to a prominent power in the peninsula

On reaching Junagadh, Bahadur Khan started working towards stabilizing his position. He neutralized an expedition led by the fugitive *suba nazim* Fakhr ud Daulah and Kanhoji Thapar, a Maratha leader, to collect tribute in the Peninsula. Hereafter, the town of Vanthali, located close to Junagadh city was occupied and the next target was the city of Junagadh itself where however defenses proved to be too strong.<sup>467</sup>

After settling affairs at Junagadh, Bahadur Khan visited the *suba* capital Ahmedabad, to explore the possibilities of his involvement in its politics. However he found the conditions there quite discouraging and returned back to Junagadh where he fully concentrated his energies towards consolidating his authority.<sup>468</sup>

The fact that Bahadur Khan's authority had not been firmly established over Junagadh is illustrated in an incident which occurred during his brief absence. Wasant Purabia (once upon a soldier), who had occupied Dhoraji and Upleta (both were located towards to the north of Junagadh) led an offensive and occupied the city of Junagadh. He was however expelled by the *Nawab's diwan* Dalpatram. The ambitious rebel next allied with Mansa Khant (*koli*) and together they occupied

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<sup>466</sup> Commissariat, II, p. 433. This demarcation of Sorath has been mentioned by Abul Fazl though the lists in the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* Supplement indicated that Sorath had sixty two *parganas* which included areas of both Old and New Sorath. Under the category of New Sorath, Abul Fazl includes, Junagadh with its suburban districts and about ten *parganas*. See, Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, II, tr. Jarret, p.250

<sup>467</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 26, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 140-41

<sup>468</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 26

Uparkot.<sup>469</sup> This fortress served as a hideout from where they led numerous plundering raids in the surrounding countryside. However, after about thirteen months Wasant rai was ultimately defeated and forced to leave the fort by the *Nawab*'s forces who were assisted by the Arab *Jamadar* Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla Zubeidi and the Thakore Haloji of Gondal. It is indeed important to note that a minor chief in alliance with an adventurous *koli* mercenary could be undermined only after thirteen months, that too with the assistance of the prominent ruler of Gondal<sup>470</sup>

While the trouble makers were defeated, the Arab militia, whose arrears had not been paid, launched an offensive and once again the Uparkot was occupied by them. Meanwhile in 1750, *Diwan* Dalpatram died. The *Nawab* was indeed placed in a very difficult situation as he could see no scope of raising finances to pacify the rebellious Arab militia. At this juncture the late Dalpatram's *Peshkar*, Jagannath Jhala, a nagar, figures very prominently both as the *vakil* of the Arabs and a confidante of the *Nawab*. His support was enlisted by Bahadur Khan with the promise of the office of *diwan* in case he intervened and successfully resolved this crisis.<sup>471</sup>

Bahadur Khan resorted to a devious scheme for expelling the rebels. He made pretence of departing on a *mulukgiri* expedition to arrange funds for the payment of arrears to the Arabs along with Jagannath and moved out of the immediate vicinity of junagadh. Meanwhile, Rudraji, the brother of Jaganath persuaded the Arabs to remove all the provisions and ammunition from the fort on the reasoning that it had become old and a fresh stock was to be laid. Once all the equipment was removed, a

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<sup>469</sup>The Uparkot or citadel was a fortress situated in a valley at the foot of the Mount Girnar. This fortress had been deserted before these troublemakers occupied it as a hideout in 1747. Later after their ouster though a chowki or post was established on several occasions it was occupied by Arabs and other insurgents whom the *Nawab* successfully was able to expel

<sup>470</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 24, 36; Also see *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 26 and S. B. Rajyagor, p. 331.

<sup>471</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 27

message was secretly sent to the *Nawab* to besiege the fort.<sup>472</sup> This venture however proved to be a failure. Eventually, after negotiations, the dues were settled and the Arabs departed. Sheikh Abdullah the *jamadar* was paid a certain amount realized by the *Nawab* selling off Dhoraji in 1754 to the Jadeja Thakore Kumbhoji of Gondal( a *pargana* towards the north of Junagadh, held by the chief of the Jadeja clan).<sup>473</sup>

Hereafter, no event of dissension or dispute is recorded during the remaining years of Bahadur Khan's tenure. Possibly at his juncture, the *Nawab* consciously did not try to disturb the prevailing set up where autonomy was the key word. His endeavor was to initially stabilize his position in the immediate environs of Junagadh. Extension and penetration of the *Nawabi* authority was pursued during the reign of his successors.

In 1758, Bahadur Khan died. He was succeeded by his son Mahabat Khan (1758-1775). His reign was marked by numerous pressures in spite of which the *Nawabi* survived and came to assume a preeminent position *vis a vis* other emergent polities in peninsular Gujarat.

At the very outset, when the *Nawabi* at Junagadh was still in its incipiency and ambitions were high, a phase of intrigues and succession disputes ensued. It may be noted that the accession of Mahabat Khan had taken place in the absence of his younger brother *Sardar* Muhammad Khan who was at Balasinor, the ancestral *jagir* of the Babis held by Sher Khan.<sup>474</sup> As the son of Sher Khan, *Sardar* Muhammad Khan had a legitimate claim to succeed him. While he did not express opposition to the accession of Mahabat Khan, the ambitious Bibi Sahiba Sultan, sister

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<sup>472</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 766-67

<sup>473</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 142-143 and *Bombay Gazetteer* p. 27. It may be noted here that Dhoraji had been held by Wasant Purabia who might have simply established himself there.

<sup>474</sup> Balasinor had been assigned to Salabat Muhammad Khan who died in 1730. the *Hind Rajasthan*, Part, IB, P. 771

of the late *Nawab*, was keen on installing her son Muzaffar Khan as *Nawab* at Junagadh. Incidentally, she was married to Shahamat Khan, the son of Sher Khan I, the late *Nawab*'s uncle. To realize her objectives, it is noteworthy, that she enlisted the services of the Arab *Jamadar* Suleiman, besides others. Consequently, an offensive was initiated. Mahabat Khan was taken captive and confined in the Uparkot, while Muzaffar Khan was proclaimed as the *Nawab*. At this stage, Jawan Mard Khan<sup>475</sup>, the *Nawab* of Radhanpur, arrived at Junagadh with a powerful contingent and besieged the fortress, espousing the cause of the captive *Nawab* Mahabat Khan. This was merely a pretense, as his actual objective was to take advantage of the dissensions at Junagadh, and establish his own son Ghazi-ud-din Khan as the *Nawab*. However, his efforts to defeat the forces stationed at Uparkot failed, and he withdrew from there. Stationing himself at a nearby place he bided time monitoring the developments. Eventually, once again the crisis was resolved by the intercession of Kumbhaji, the Thakore of Gondal<sup>476</sup>. It may be noted that the Jadeja chief also had his own vested interests. From his standpoint, a weak Junagadh was more desirable and this dimension seems to have been a persistent pattern even subsequently. Further, the acquisition of Junagadh by Jawan Mard Khan would make him too powerful and thus, dangerous to his interests in the Peninsula. His immediate intent to intervene was guided by the urge to derive territorial gains in the course of negotiations to end the crisis. Kumbhaji somehow managed to prevail upon Jawan Mard

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<sup>475</sup> After an impressive decade of prominence at the *Suba* capital Jawan Mard Khan had to reconcile to the preeminence of the Marathas and withdraw to his *jagirs* at Radhanpur, Sami and Munjpur, earlier *parganas* in the Pattan *sarkar*.

<sup>476</sup> Gondal was a small *pargana* of the Sorath *Sarkar*. In the eighteenth century under the able leadership of Kumbhaji II the Jadeja Thakore it was transformed into an important polity. He shrewdly established control over contiguous and strategic areas lying within the jurisdiction of the *Nawab* or other chieftains by resorting to diplomacy, conquests and purchase which ever was viable. Steadily he rose in power and prominence and his intercession had considerable weightage in these parts. For details see *The Hind Rajasthan*, Part IB, pp. 663-667

Khan and induced him to return to Radhanpur. Next he sought the freedom of Mahabat Khan on the condition that the *pargana* of Ranpur (east of Junagadh) <sup>477</sup> be assigned to Muzaffar Khan in view of his renouncing all claims over Junagadh. Interestingly, Kumbhaji acquired the *pargana* of Upleta (close to Dhoraji in the northwest of Junagadh), by once again advancing funds. An amount of 35,000 Jamshahi Koris was advanced and the annual *jama* of the said *pargana* payable to the *Nawab* was fixed at 5000 Koris.<sup>478</sup>

While Mahabat Khan was reinstated to his position, the chronic problem of finances continued. It is important to note that the financial crunch prevented the *Nawab* from maintaining a regular army and he had to compulsively depend on mercenaries. Though an inadequacy, such an arrangement proved to be incidentally advantageous at this juncture. In view of uncertain finances, the mercenaries currently recruited were forced to maintain themselves by indulging in predatory activities in the neighboring areas. An immediate consequence of this was the establishment of a variable tribute. Gradually, constant forays made the neighboring chiefs submissive and they often felt compelled to pay the tribute more regularly. Consequently, some degree of consolidation was affected through these circumstances.

Nonetheless problem of finances continued as maintaining the mercenaries was overall an expensive an expensive affair. This is testified by the fact that the salaries of the Arab militia had once again fallen in arrears.<sup>479</sup> They reacted by once again seizing the Uparkot to pressurize the *Nawab*. To worsen the matters, the ambitious Sahibah Sutlan Bibi, sought in this crisis an opportunity to seek gains for herself. Veraval, an

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<sup>477</sup> Ranpur was a fortified region at the foot of the Mount Girnar,

<sup>478</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, pp. 27-28, *The Hind Rajasthan* pp. 553-554 *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, 144-146

<sup>479</sup> It is noteworthy that this was a chronic problem. Mercenary militia was an integral feature in these parts which necessitated fund and salaries' falling in arrears was commonplace.

important located towards the southern extreme of Junagadh, was seized by her contingents. However, her forces were expelled from there by the autonomous chief of Mangrol (*pargnana* of Sorath *Sarkar*) Kazi Shaikh Miyan and his associate Malik Shahabuddin. Subsequently, in connivance with the local *desai* Sundarji, they began to administer the area in complete independence.<sup>480</sup>

In these difficult times, an astute and enterprising Nagar Brahman, Amarji, aged merely eighteen, a native of Mangrol, arrived at Junagadh. He assiduously changed the fortunes of this *Nawabi*. Amarji was promised the high office *diwan*, if he was successful in defeating the Arabs and resolving the crisis of arrears of salary. Amarji who had brought with him the Arab *Jamadar* Salman and a band of Arab soldiers from Porbandar, took up the challenge. In the offensive that was launched, Uparkot was successfully stormed and the Arabs were neutralized. After some negotiations, it was agreed that they would evacuate the place on the payment of half the amount that was due from the *Nawab*. Both Amarji and the *Jamadar* Salman were suitably conferred, as per promise, with high positions.<sup>481</sup> This was followed up by the re-conquest of Veraval from Shaikh Miyan.<sup>482</sup>

From this juncture the fortunes of the Junagadh *Nawabi* came to be defined by the abilities and strategies of *Diwan* Amarji who transformed the fledgling regime into a stable and predominant state through a series of expeditions and conquests. It is pertinent to note that the *Diwan* at Junagadh was not directly concerned with routine revenue affairs. His principal function was the *faujdari* or military affairs which involved the exaction of tribute and chastisement of refractory elements besides

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<sup>480</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 146-47

<sup>481</sup> *The Hind Rajasthan*, pp. 546.

<sup>482</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 147-48

extending the concerns of the *Nawabi*.<sup>483</sup> A brief survey of the subsequent events and efforts directed towards expansion and consolidation is important and insightful.

In 1764, Sheikh Miyan of Mangrol was once again back to his rebellious activities. Determined to chastise him, Amarji led a number of expeditions against him. During the course of these military operations, the forts of Seel, Divasa, Mahiyari and Bagasra (outlying areas located towards the southwest of Junagadh) which were in his possession, were captured. He then proceeded to Mangrol and compelled Sheikh Miyan to surrender on the agreement that the *pargana* of Mangrol would be equally divided between him and the *Nawab*.<sup>484</sup> This was an astute balancing act between chastisement and statesmanship, which seems to have been the general strategy of *diwan* Amarji.

Around this time, Mahabat Khan was beginning to feel insecure and apprehensive of the rising prominence and power of his *diwan* and his Arab commander, Salman. It is quite likely, that he was provoked to this effect by Amarji's rivals. Thus in 1767 *diwan* Amarji and his brothers Durlabhji and Govindji were placed in confinement while the Arab *Jamadar*, a close associate of Amarji was murdered. After five months, the captives were released on the payment of 40,000 Jamshahi Koris, following which they departed for Jetpur (a *pargana* to the north of Junagadh in Sorath *Sarkar*).<sup>485</sup>

The absence of Amarji, from Junagadh encouraged Sheikh Miyan to resume his refractory activities. Though the *Nawab* marched in person to chastise the trouble maker, he failed miserably. Eventually he was left with no option but to reinstate Amarji as the *diwan*. He thus asked Amarji

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<sup>483</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 148

<sup>484</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 28,

<sup>485</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, pp. 28-29, *The Hind Rajasthan*, pp. 546-47, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 149-150

to return and assume charge which the latter readily accepted. The rebel Sheikh Miyan was effectively chastised and forced to pay a heavy fine, restore plundered valuables, and most significantly, declare his allegiance to the *Nawab*.<sup>486</sup>

This was followed by the conquest of Sutrapada (south of Junagadh along the coast) where a Pattani Kasbati named Chand had assumed control.<sup>487</sup>

It is impressively significant that in 1768-69 the chieftain of Bhavnagar,<sup>488</sup> Rawal Wakhat Sinhji, sought the *Diwan's* assistance in undermining and expelling the *kolis* from Talaja (a *pargana* with a port in eastern *kathiawad*) who were indulging in piracy in the surrounding area. Though fringe categories, the *kolis* were indeed quite a formidable lot. The ferocity of the battle can be gauged from the fact that the *diwan* got injured during the military operations. Eventually hostilities ceased on the agreement that the *kolis* could reside at Talaja after paying a huge fine.

In 1770, Sher Zaman Khan Babi, the uncle of Mahabat Khan, and *Nawab* of Bantwa, (a small *pargana* in the northwest of Junagadh) led an offensive against Junagadh which was repelled.<sup>489</sup>

Around this time some more refractory elements were suppressed. During the course of military operations, the *Nawab* acquired control over the important fortresses of Dilkhania, Kutiana, and Mangrol.<sup>490</sup>

Further, the chief of Jetpur (located north of Junagadh) Kumpa Wala sought the services of Amarji to chastise numerous outlaws and bandits.

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<sup>486</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p.29

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 149

<sup>488</sup> Bhavnagar had been established recently. In 1722, Raval Bhavsinhji, the Gohel chief of Sihor had experienced a Maratha onslaught and managed to save the fortress of Sihor. However he realized the vulnerability of the place and was also keen to have an outlet on the seacoast. Thus he shifted his base from Sihor to a small village of Vadva, situated on a creek of the Gulf of Cambay. Here in 1723 he founded the city of Bhavnagar which rapidly rose in prominence as a port attracting to itself the trade which had been monopolized by Cambay, Gogha and Surat. *Commissariat*, II, p. 434

<sup>489</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 149

<sup>490</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 29. *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 152-53

One of these banditii had based themselves at Dilkahnia,<sup>491</sup> a hideout in the Gir forests. Following an offensive, the trouble makers were killed and dispersed. This was followed by the chastisement of the Miyanas of Malia in the southwest of Junagadh and the Babariyas in the environs of the Gir forests.<sup>492</sup>

Around this time, the Kasbatis, of Kutiana, Pir Khan Sarwani and his associates handed over the town to Hashim Khan, the *Nawab*'s adopted son. Soon after, they however protested against the oppressive ways of the *Nawab* and expressed their apprehension that the *Nawab* may hand over the fortress of Kutiana to Rana Sultanji of Porbandar.<sup>493</sup> The *Diwan* had to lead an expedition against Hashim Khan who was forced to surrender Kutiana which was thereafter placed under the charge of Amarji's brother Govindji. Hashim Khan was assigned the *jagir* of Majhevadi (west of Junagadh) by way of compensation.<sup>494</sup> During these operations he also encountered some opposition from the Kasbatis of Una (southeast of *Kathiawad*). Besides subduing them, he arrested the sons of the Kasbati Shiekh Tahir of Una and took them to Junagadh.<sup>495</sup>

In the early 1770s, strains developed in the relations of the *Nawab* with his *Diwan* in which Kumbhaji II, the Jadeja Thakore of Gondal, Kumbhoji II played a significant role. Kumbhaji II was viewing the *diwan*'s military successes with great apprehension. Though he had on earlier occasions secured the important *parganas* of Dhoraji and Upleta from the *Nawab* of Junagadh, he felt uncertain of the extent of Amarji's expansionist zeal. The emergence of a strong and powerful political entity

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<sup>491</sup> Dilkhanja was located towards the south-east of Junagadh.

<sup>492</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 153-54. *Bombay Gazetteer*, p.29

<sup>493</sup> It may be noted Porbandar was originally a coastal *pargana* in the Sorath *sarkar*, located one and half mile from Chhaya, the capital of the Jethwas. During the course of the first half of the eighteenth century when Imperial authority was steadily disintegrating in the peninsula, the Jethwa chiefs started asserting their autonomy by raising fortifications at Porbandar. *Commissariat II*, p. 433

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 149-54 Also see the *Bombay Gazetteer* pp. 29-30

<sup>495</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 30

in the region was viewed with apprehension and not desirable by the other emerging powers in the peninsula, though important chieftains were aspiring for individual preeminence. These regional chiefs regarded Amarji as the mainstay of the emergent power of the Junagadh *Nawab*. Consequently, Kumbhaji managed to convince the *Nawab* that the powerful *diwan*, if not checked would overthrow him. Consequently, at the instance of Mahabat Khan, Kumbhoji launched an offensive against Amarji who was encamped at Malasamdi. Significantly in this offensive the Marathas were also asked to assist. It is indeed impressive that Amarji was able to effectively withstand this combined offensive. Details of these developments are discussed in the *Tarikh-i-Sorath* which mentions Bamanioji of Chatrasah as the other principal instigator. According to the author of the *tarikh-i-Sorath*, Amarji led an expedition against Chatrasah who was defeated and forced to pay a heavy fine, besides promise to refrain from such actions in future.<sup>496</sup>

The *Diwan*'s reputation had been firmly established in the peninsula by this time and it is significant that his assistance was often being sought by neighboring powers.

In 1774 the *karbhari* of Jam Jesaji of Nawanagar, Meraman Khawas invited Amarji to assist him in chastising the Okha Waghers. A combined assault was launched which was successful and enormous booty was acquired. It may be noted that the Waghers were involved in piracy of all vessels on the sea which came within their sphere of activity for which they were highly despised. Nevertheless, it was a very lucrative preoccupation for them.<sup>497</sup>

It is quite likely that the fines exacted by *Diwan* Amarji must have provided him a great financial resource which was used in mobilization

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<sup>496</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, pp. 29-30, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 154-55

<sup>497</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 31, *The Hind Rajasthan*, Part IB, p. 547, *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 159-160

of forces essential for his various campaigns. Possibly the advantage which Junagadh enjoyed in comparison to other polities was the astuteness of its *Diwan* Amarji, who realized that military superiority was the key to the exercise of preeminent authority in the peninsula. More resources meant larger, stronger and more efficient armies which were essential for expansion and chastisement of refractory elements particularly during the early phase of this *Nawabi*.

Meanwhile in 1775 *Nawab* Mahabat Khan died and was succeeded by his son, Hamid Khan, who was a minor of only eight years. During his reign too the prominence of *Diwan* Amarji steadily continued to grow and with his each success the *Nawabi* authority was firmly getting consolidated. It is impressive that in 1775, Amarji led an expedition against Jhalawar, and reduced this powerful Rajput stronghold to a vassal status.<sup>498</sup>

Meanwhile once again a conspiracy was hatched against Amarji, by Mukhtar Khan and Edal Khan, the chiefs of Bantwa (west of Junagadh) who instigated Shubhan Kunwar, the minor *Nawab's* mother to collaborate with them. Other parties involved in this plot were the Kasbatis of Wanthali (close to Junagadh) and the Maratha commanders Mahipat Rao and Abu Rai who happened to be in the area on a *mulukgiri* expedition. Once again Amarji was victorious. It is suggested by the author of the *Tarikh-i-Sorath* that the Marathas felt compelled to sue for peace handing over the tribute collected and entrusting him the charge of collecting the remainder and then withdrew from the area.<sup>499</sup> Likewise, Wanthali too was reduced and its Kasbatis were chastised. Mukhtar

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<sup>498</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 30. *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p.161

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid*

Khan, after the chastisement, was spared and allowed to return to Bantwa only in consideration of his being a member of the Babi family.<sup>500</sup>

In 1776-77 yet another joint *mulukgiri* contingent led by the Peshwa and Gaekwad commanders, Amrat Rao and Thoban entered the peninsula to exact tribute. They encountered *Diwan* Amarji at Jetpur where he put up a stiff resistance. The author of the *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, referring to this event states that “the Marathas turned their backs”.<sup>501</sup> However, it seems that the strengths of both sides were equally matched and a decisive result was not possible. Peace was made the very next day through the mediation of the Wala Kanthad of Jetpur and Thakore Kumbhoji II of Gondal, following which the Marathas withdrew.<sup>502</sup>

Next, Amarji led a camping in the environs of Kutch. The Thakore of Morbi, Waghaji invited Amarji to assist him against the Vagad in Kutch. The combined forces crossed the Rann and seized the village of Kerianagar and Palanswa. The offensive was thwarted by the polite intervention of the Rao of Kutch.<sup>503</sup>

It is indeed interesting to note that during the course of *mulukgiri* expedition, an instance is recorded of an ambitious Maratha commander making an attempt to carve out a personal domain. In 1777, Jivaji Shamraj, the Gaekwad commander arrived in the peninsula on a *mulukgiri* campaign. While at Amreli he began to conquer surrounding areas and even raised fortifications with the objective of probably establishing himself independently there. Amarji launched a decisive offensive against him and forced him to retreat from the area.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31 & pp. 162-63

<sup>501</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p. 163

<sup>502</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 160-63

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163, *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 31

<sup>504</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 163-64.

In 1778-79 two campaigns were led by Fatehsingh Rao Gaekwad wherein the Marathas returned without any noticeable accomplishments.<sup>505</sup>

It is significant that during his remaining tenure too insurgents were subdued with stern firmness but thereafter condoned on payment of fines and promises. Amarji appropriately realized that political power was not a monolith but a network of linkages wherein even fringe categories held needed some space and significance.

It is significant that Rana Sultanji of Porbandar was also not spared. The *diwan*'s response to his refractory activities was chastisement, and exaction of excess tribute.<sup>506</sup> A reference is also made to some Sindhi banditti residing in the towns of Devra and Khagasri who were harassing the surrounding areas with their plundering raids. Kumbhoji represented to the *Diwan* in this regard who responded promptly chastising the trouble makers.<sup>507</sup> Further in 1782, Amarji led an expedition against Sheikh Tahir the Kasbati of Una and Delwada. While these areas were annexed two villages however were granted in inam to him. The *faujdar* of these districts was assigned to Prabhashankar a nagar of Vansvadi who curbed all refractory elements in this area.<sup>508</sup> It seems he had earned such a reputation for himself that both the Habshi of Jafarabad and the Portuguese at Div too were in awe of him.<sup>509</sup>

The *Diwan* with his astuteness, strategy, diplomacy and amazing military prowess placed the *Nawabi* on a sound footing making Junagadh an enviably predominant state in *Kathiwad*. Perhaps this stature was not acceptable to the other emerging powers. In 1782 yet another conspiracy

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<sup>505</sup> *Ibid*, p. 165

<sup>506</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, p. 32 *Tarik-i-Sorath*, p. 165-66

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>509</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, p.168

was hatched in which the principal plotters were Kumbhoji of Gondal, Meraman Khawas the powerful minister of Nawanagar and Rana Sultanji of Porbandar. Besides these three were the Marathas who were particularly keen to settle old scores and make gains. Manaji Gaekwad, brother of Fatehsingh who happened to be in the peninsula agreed to collaborate. It is interesting to note that Sheikh Miyan of Mangrol stood by the *Diwan*. Eventually when no decisive outcome seemed visible the Marathas returned back to Baroda. This was followed by the chastisement of the conspirators.<sup>510</sup>

In these circumstances the *Nawab* Hamid Khan aged merely seventeen was provoked to such an extent against the ambitious designs of Amarji by Kumbhoji that he deviously put him to death in March 1784 while his brother Durlabhji and his son Ranchoji were imprisoned. It is fascinatingly noteworthy that the Arab Jamadars who had a high regard for their patron entreated upon the *Nawab* to free the captives. In this regard they even sought the help of the Marathas. Hamid Khan was compelled to yield when they demanded the payment of their dues. Amusingly they confined him in his palace. In face of this pressure, about a month later the captives were released.<sup>511</sup>

With the *Diwan* Amarji out of the scene the neighboring chieftains who had sought his elimination began extend their jurisdiction by occupying outlying districts. Like wise numerous refractory elements felt emboldened to assume independence. Very soon, the condition of this *Nawabi* was getting somewhat anarchic. The problems of the Arab Jamadars became a matter of serious concern. Hamid Khan felt compelled to recall the Nagars who had become quite indispensable. Both Durlabhji and Raghunathji were called back. However this was a

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<sup>510</sup> *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, pp. 168

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 172-76

temporary arrangement. Intrigues against them marked their exit. In face of pressure from the Arab militia the *Nawab* once again recalled his *Diwan* who shortly after assuming charge reestablished order. The abilities of this family or rather community is indeed amazing. Their able leadership transformed the new polity into a much more extensive and strong State. It is indeed ironical that the Junagadh Babis, placed no confidence in their *Diwans*. This is more than often illustrated which however gave a chance to their rivals to strengthen themselves at the expense of Junagadh. In the Gazetteer it is stated that "Although the Junagadh stated had been greatly benefited by the conquests and good management of the late *Diwan* Amarji and his brothers (Durlabhji and Govindji) and sons (Raghunathji, Ranchodji and Morarji ) after him, nevertheless the *Nawab* Hamid Khan was ever distrustful of them and ready to listen to the suggestions of their(*diwans*) enemies."<sup>512</sup> Principal among the rivals of Amarji was the Jadeja Kumbhoji, of Gondal besides jealous intriguing officials at the capital it is surprising that the *diwans* were dismissed to be reinstated in compulsive situations which made them indispensable. This aspect is amply illustrated in the *Tarikh-i-Sorath*. The subsequent period is a saga of intrigues, and insurgency despite which the *Nawabi* survived as a prominent native state.

While the vicissitudes of *Nawabi* at Junagadh were defined by numerous challenges both internal and external in Peninsular Gujarat, the remaining Babi *Nawabis* do not display many distinct shifts or changes except for the initial clash with the Marathas when they were consolidating their authority after the capitulation of Ahmedabad.. The Babis as Imperial bureaucrats' enjoyed hereditary *jagirs*. After the Imperial collapse they merely transformed these *jagirs* into personal

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<sup>512</sup> *BombayGazetteer*, p. 38

domains and assumed independent authority therein, which is manifested in their new appropriated stature of *Nawab*. They do seem to be meddlesome, desirously eyeing the rising prominence of Junagadh besides politicking in the vicinity of their polities whenever opportunities came by. The major challenge which they encountered was from the Marathas whose presence in the province had by this time become definite and increasingly pervasive.

In 1752, the partition treaty was concluded between the Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao and the Gaekwad chief Damaji whereby Damaji agreed to share his revenue rights in Gujarat.<sup>513</sup> Thus the revenues in both the mainland and the peninsula came to equally divided between the Peshwa and the Gaekwads which ended their rivalry.<sup>514</sup> This treaty however was the final blow to the Mughal rule in Gujarat. In 1753, Ahmedabad was besieged and subsequently captured by the Marathas. It is noteworthy that in response to a petition from Jawan Mard Khan an Imperial order was issued appointing him as the *suba nazim*.<sup>515</sup> However it was too late to retrieve the situation. At the time when Jawan Mard Khan received the orders he was in the process of working out the modalities of surrendering Ahmedabad to the Marathas.<sup>516</sup>

It may be recalled that Radhanpur had been assigned to Jawan Mard Khan II in 1729. During the subsequent period he figures very prominently in the political developments at *suba* capital Ahmedabad. For nearly a decade 1744-53 he reigned supreme at Ahmedabad. It is noteworthy that even when Ahmedabad passed under Maratha control

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<sup>513</sup> This agreement to sharing revenues which had been established with the undaunted efforts of the Dabhades and the Gaekwads was affected in very compulsive circumstances. Details are discussed in the Maratha sources. See, G. S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, II, pp. 309-12

<sup>514</sup> G. S. Sardesai, II, pp. 311-312; Gense and Banaji, I, p. 90, *Bombay Gazetteer*, VII (Baroda), pp. 178-79.

<sup>515</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 742-43

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid*, Coomissariat, II, p. 513

Jawan Mard Khan was well accommodated in the new set up. In accordance with the agreement that was drawn it was agreed that he would enjoy the sole possession of Radhanpur, Sami, Munjpur, Pattan, Vadnagar, Visalnagar and Vijapur.<sup>517</sup> Subsequently, however when efforts were being made to regain Ahemadabad, Jawan Mard Khan was suspected of being in league with the 'rebels'. Consequently, except for Radhanpur, Sami, and Munjpur, all the other mahals which had been granted to Jawan Mard Khan were confiscated. These areas remained under his descendants divided or merged depending on the number of heirs.<sup>518</sup>

Balasinor, another *pargana*, in the Ahemedabad *sarkar* had been the ancestral *jagir* of the Babis. It may be noted that this area was located on the main route from Delhi to Gujarat and was also an important stronghold of the *kolis*. Salabat Muhammad Khan had been assigned the charge of this area along with Virpur during the reign of Aurangzeb and after him Balasinor became the ancestral *jagir* of his descendants. After his death Sher Khan inherited this *jagir*. However when he departed for Junagadh he gave the charge of this place to his son Sardar Muhammad Khan. He too encountered clashes with the Marathas during the course of their consolidation.<sup>519</sup>

When Balasinor was attacked by the armies of Raghunath Rao, the *Nawab's* deputy, Sarasram agreed to share the revenues in order to preserve these *jagirs*. However, this scheme was not to the liking of the *Nawab* Sardar Muhammad Khan who dismissed him and in his place appointed a Habshi named Sultan as his *naib* who however proved to be too ambitious, striking a deal with the Marathas against the *Nawab*. In

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<sup>517</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, p. 745; the Hind Rajasthasn Part IB, p. 722

<sup>518</sup> Details on this polity are discussed in *The Hind Rajasthan*, pp. 721-25

<sup>519</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 884-86; *The Hind Rajasthan*, pp. 774-75

1758 Balasinor was occupied by the Marathas and tribute was demanded which the *Nawab* was unwilling to concede. However, he was compelled to pay a certain amount and the balance was to be paid later. Sultan Habshi was taken as hostage against the remaining payment.<sup>520</sup> When the *Nawab* defaulted in paying the balance amount, the Marathas attacked Balasinor, this time in collaboration with the hostage, the Habshi Sultan. In 1759 thus Balasinor came to be occupied by the Marathas. However they were not able to hold on for long and Sardar Muhammad Khan was reinstated at Balasinor in 1761. Significantly, he was assisted by the *kolis* and the other locals in re-establishing himself.<sup>521</sup> Thereafter his descendants continued to rule as *Nawabs*.<sup>522</sup>

During the subsequent period these Babis Nawabis, a survival of the Mughal era persisted as rulers of relatively less prominent native states: Junagadh Radhanpur and Balasinor, Ranpur and Bantwa.<sup>523</sup> In sharp contrast to the Nawabis of the Port towns, the patterns of the rise of the Nawabi regime at Junagadh involved a strong military dimension wherein the role of mercenary militia was indeed important. Further the strong Koli connection is significant at Balasinor.

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<sup>520</sup> *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 884-885

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*; The Hind Rajasthan, Part I, p. 775

<sup>522</sup> For details on Balasinor, see *Ibid*, pp.770-77

<sup>523</sup> Details on these *Nawabis* is available at length in the Hind Rajasthan, Part, II