CHAPTER II

HISTORY: ITS IMPRINTS ON EVOLUTION OF TOWNS

As noted elsewhere in this work, the effects of geographic factors on towns or on the total urban situation of the region have quite often been indirect, while the course of history the region has undergone in the recent past has produced more direct effects which are readily notable even today. The Geographical factors, however assume paramount importance by virtue of the fact that very often they profoundly influence the course of history itself, at least in its bold outlines.

GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS INFLUENCING HISTORY

The major geographical factors which have had profound bearing on the history of the region are as follows.

1. Its 'en route' position- All the major routes from North Indian plains or Hindustan to the Deccan and the important ports thereof on the Arabian sea coast like Surat, Broach etc. passed through the region. Vidisha, Ujjain and Maheshwar were the most important Malwa towns on one of these routes. This route has been of the highest importance in all ages, and even today, with only slight modification, it is represented by modern Agra-Bombay Highway (N.H. 3). Later, another more westerly route was opened via Dhar, Ratlam, Mandsaur and Chittore into Rajputana leading to Agra via Ajmer and Jaipur. This latter route was preferred during Monsoon season as it passed through areas of fewer rivers and scanty rainfall.

2. Fordableness of the Narmada river- The river Narmada, though formidable, was not quite unfordable at least on some
convenient points like Maheshwar, Nemawar etc. Similarly
the Vindhyan Range just to its north also provided a few
good passes to the plateau.

3. A hospitable country— For the most part, Malwa has good
hospitable topography where both the river plains as well as
their interfluves are quite suitable for human settlement.
Climate too is fairly good and comfortable, with sufficient
rainfall except in the extreme west. Soil mostly is amply
rich for major food and cash crops. Its revenue, therefore,
was next only to the celebrated, rich areas of Indo-Gangetic
plains.

4. Contiguity with Rajputana and Deccan— Rajputana throughout
has been the homeland of the celebrated warrior class called
the Rajputs, who were always much torn among themselves due
to internal dissensions. They, therefore, found a hospitable
host in Malwa. From late medieval times Deccan was the field
of Maratha activity. Originally for only tributes, and
subsequently due to imperialist ambitions, they early set
their eye on Malwa, which from 18th century became their play
field. Due to its position between Gujarat and Bundelkhand
on west and east respectively it also became a refuge and
haunt for refractory elements— Bundelas from east, Pindharis
from west, Rajputs from north and Marathas from south.

Thus, for reasons of both strategic and economic nature,
Malwa was an immensely covered province for all paramount
powers of Indian history.

Physical geographical personality of the region being
amicable, mild and hospitable rather than strong and stringent,
Malwa has been a well settled country from early times and till
the turn of the present century did not suffer from any major
natural calamity like famines, epidemics etc. Through this
long history of settlement the direct and more obvious effects
of geographic factors upon the urban situation have receded into distant background. The urban personality of the region today is, therefore, as much the product of accumulated effects of politico-historical accidents and human-cultural trends and processes of the past as of its geographic milieu.

In order to analyse and evaluate the forces which have been operative behind the evolution of present urban situation, it is but expedient to investigate "as to how far the present conditions are a legacy of the particular history the region has undergone, and to what extent they can be systematically explained in the context of the region's geographical setting". In other words, the problem resolves into the question: "Are the things largely accidental, consequent upon the particular course of history, or are they systematic and largely owe themselves to the specific natural geographical personality of the region" (Jain, J.L., 1974-5, p. 25).

As one will find in the sequel of this chapter, it is the peculiar course of history of the region, particularly in the last two and half centuries, that has profoundly shaped the present urban situation, particularly in its finer details. Being this conviction in mind, the history of the region has been dealt with in some depth and detail, particularly for its recent period.

Sources of Information

Though an attempt has been made to look into the historical past of the region in some depth and detail, the informations for this chapter, particularly for recent period, are mostly derived from published sources. By no means exhaustive, the following is an inventory of major sources of informations.

A monograph, 'The Malavas' by Dasgupta (1966) is an important source for early migratory history of the Malavas
and of the nomenclature. Mention must be made of the works of R.C. Mazumdar (1952) and R.K. Mukerjee (1956) on ancient period. A recently published work of K.C. Jain (1972) is almost an exhaustive work on the ancient history of this region. Similarly published thesis of Raghubir Singh (1936) and of U.N. Dey (1965) are the pivotal work regarding the history of Malwa. An humbler work by D.R. Patil (1952) is also an important source.

Of the multitude of works on Mughal history, Abul Fazl's 'Ain-i-Akbari' translated by Jarret and Sarkar (1949) and Moorland's (1962) 'Akbar to Aurangzeb' are of first order of importance. Sir John Malcolm's (1820) 'Memoirs of Central India' is important early source of informations. Much important information is contained in certain works concerned with Maratha history of which the early works by Grant Duff (1918) and of Sardesai (1946) deserve special mention. An article by Gordon (1969) on the process of multiplication and proliferation of states in the Malwa also has been heavily drawn upon. Aitchinson's (1864 and 1929) monumental collection is indeed a rare documentary record on recent history State Gazetteers by Major Luard (1908) are also of basic importance. Different volumes of Imperial Gazetteers and the District Gazetteers are general references.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Nomenclature- The name 'Malwa' is a direct derivative from the name of a people 'Malav' who in III and IV centuries A.D. came to occupy the region around Mandsaur. In early IV century, they rose greatly and extended their authority in south and east. When at the zenith of their political ascendancy in this region, they gave their ethnic name to this part of the country some times in the VI century A.D.

Dasgupta (1966) has traced the early migratory history of the Malavas. They are identified with Malloi or Malwai,
a distinguished corporate tribe of ancient India and best
known in the classical literature for the stiff resistance they
in confederacy with another people kshudrakas offered to
Alexander in the 4th century B.C. when they were occupying an
area in southern Punjab, between the rivers Cherab and Ravi.
In support of this point,Dasgupta (1966) mentions that,
(1) this region of southern Punjab is even today known as
Malwa, (2) the vernacular dience of that area seems still to
preserve the memory of association with this people; and
(3) the name, 'Malaviya' of a section of Brahmans is an
unmistakable preservation of the name of this people.

Subsequently, a large section of the people migrated
southwards most probably under the pressure of successive
Greek invasions, and in the 2nd century B.C. they had got some
footing in the south-east Rajputana with their strong hold at
Karkota nagar. Numismatic evidence amply suggests that they
had achieved a high political status, and their political
character was expressly republican 'Malav-gana-vishay' and
'Malava-namajaya' have been interpreted on their coins. In
subsequent centuries they were striving for more power and
expansion, with the Magadhan imperialists and scythian
imperialists called western kehatra. Extending southwards
they came to occupy the area around Mandsaur in the III and
early IV centuries, rose to the height of their political
ascendancy before they were subdued by Kumaragupta in the late
4th century A.D.

History of Malwa may be divided into the following
distinct major periods.
(1) Ancient period- From the earliest times to the end of the
13th century. Pre-Muslim period.
(2) Medieval Period- Muslim period-14th century to 17th century.
   (a) Under the Khalji and Tughlak Sultanate of Delhi-whole
   of the 14th century.
(b) Independent Muslim Malwa under Ghuris and Khalkis-15th and the first half of 16th century.

(c) Timurian Mughal period-later 16th and whole of the 17th centuries.

(3) Modern Period- whole of the 18th and 19th centuries and the first half of 20th century-Maratha and British Period.

(a) Maratha period- 18th century

(b) British Period- the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries.

ANCIENT PERIOD

Malwa has been a settled land for a very long time. Its early history is, therefore, shrouded in myths and legends. No factual information is available before the eighth century or even the sixth century B.C. As tradition has it, a line of Haihays Kings had its sway over Malwa and some adjoining territories to its south in the eighth century B.C. One of them was called Avanti, after whom, probably, this country came to be known as 'Avantika'. Later the Haihays Kingdom of Malwa was divided into two parts centred about Ujjain and Mahishmati. The King of Ujjain was murdered by his minister, Punika, who placed his son, Pradyota on the throne (Jain, k.c., 1972, p.98-99). And thus the Haihays were replaced by the Pradyotas in about the sixth century B.C.

Chanda Pradyota and his four successors ruled Malwa through the later half of the sixth century and almost the whole of the fifth century B.C. They were all continually at war with the early Magadhan imperialist the Sisunagas who ultimately vanquished the last Pradyota King, Nandivardhana, and Malwa came under the Magadhan imperialists.

The sceptre of Magadhan empire was borne successively by the Sisuna, as, the Nandas, the Mauryas, the Shunás and
the Kanvas from early fifth century B.C. to the first century B.C.; and they all held Malwa as one of their very important provinces. Under the super power of these Magadhan imperialists, Malwa was a highly important province. So much so that the Mouryan prince, Ashoka and later Shunga prince, Agnimitra, were the viceroy of Malwa, seated, respectively, at Ujjain and Vidisha. To quote Mukerjee, 'Vidisha, though a viceroyalty was rivalling with the imperial capital, Pataliputra, in its political and cultural status, as the second capital of the Shunga empire (Mukerjee, R.K., 1956, p.187). Towns of Malwa were highly thriving in commerce, culture and art, and copious trace was carried between the rich Gangetic plains of the north and the west Asian countries, through the flourishing ports on the Arabian coast via the important towns like Vidisha, Ujjain, Mahishmati etc.

Towards the close of the first quarter of first century B.C. the Shunga emperor was dispossessed of power by his minister Kanvas. The last remanents of Kanvas in Magadhan kingdom and of the Shungas in the Malwa kingdom were defeated by the surging power of Satvahanas or Salivahan empire of south India under their leader called Simukk, towards the end of the third quarter of the first century B.C. Shungas and Satvahanas had their sway only on eastern Malwa centred about Vidisha; and little is known about the western part about this period from the first century B.C. to the third century A.D. or from the Mauryas to the advent of the Malavas and the Kshatrapas. Probably some indigenous independent local powers were ruling over this part of the region (Jain, K.C., 1972, p. 155).

From the first century B.C., north-western parts of the Indian sub-continent were getting more and more under the sway first of the Seythian and subsequently and more importantly of the Kushan power. With the advent of the Kushan king, Kanishka, the Kushan power became almost boundless in its extent and might and it spelled an eclipse on the rising power of the Satvahana
empire. Kushan empire was deeply divided into provinces, called Kshatrapies. Of the three Kshatrapies known in the Indian region, one covering Rajputana, Malwa and Kathiawar Peninsula and centred about Ujjain was called western Kshatrapy. Not long after the death of Kanishka, the second kshatrapa of Kshaharat olan, called Nahapan, threw away the yoke of Kushan vassalage, and became an independent King, early in the second century A.D. About the same time these western Kshatrapas were facing a stiff resistance from the Malavas in Rajputana who had carved out a principality centred about Karkota nagar in southern Rajputana from the Kshatrapa dominion. These Malavas later moved southward into northwestern Malva—probably under the pressure of these Kshatrapas. Soon after the independence of Nahapan from the kushan suzerainty, the Satvahana power resurgèd tremendously under Gautamiputra Satkarni who snatched extensive parts of Malwa and other southern districts from the seythian possession at the turn of the first quarter of the second century A.D. However, the seythian arms once again prevailed almost finally against Gautamiputra under their ablest leaders—Chastana of the Kariddamaka family and his grandson, Rundradaman, some-time in the second quarter of the second century A.D. About this time, Malwas from southern Rajputana also entered the region and occupied the north-western parts around their strong hold of Dasharna or Dashpyura (modern Mandsaur). Thus the protracted deadly contest which began early in first century A.D. between the shakas and the Satvahanas for the hold on Malva, turned into the Shaka-Malava contest in the third century. Over these early centuries, when most parts of Malwa were frequently changing their masters some northern most parts largely Guna district and parts of Vidisha district, were a part of the more stable rule of the Nagas. Malwa contest continued long into the fourth century and the Malavas certainly had started gaining the upper hand lately, when all these provincial powers were humbled by the reviving Magadhan Imperialism under Samudragupta in the middle of the fourth century. Subsequently his son, Chandragupta II reduced Malwa to a Magadhan dependency in 390 A.D.
From this time onwards, Malwa was a province of the vast Gupta empire up to almost the close of the Fifth century. Even after the collapse of the grand Gupta empire after Skandragupta (455-467 A.D.), a line of Guptas was holding in Malwa, where the Malavas also were living in quasi-independent position in western or northwestern parts of it, which became their mainstay (Patil, 1958, p. 19-20). Towards the end of the fifth century A.D., the avalanching in roads of white Huns were culminating under their leaders, Toraman and his son, Mihirkula, who by about 500 A.D. possessed whole of the Malwa. However, whereas the Gupta chieftains—Buddagupta and Bhanugupta were defeated completely, the Malavas did not succeeded altogether and maintained a sort of semi-independence in their territory of northwest Malwa. The Malava leader, Yashodharman of Aulikara clan wedged a successful coup against the unbearable tyranny of Mihirkul, and in the decisive battle at Mandsaur in 528 A.D. crushed his power. This King Yashovarman and his successors rapidly mastered the whole of Malwa Plateau and some adjoining parts on the west. The malava power rose very high in later part of the sixth century. It was at the height of their political ascendency that the Malavas gave their ethnic name to the plateau they really mastered. Only some minor Guptas were holding in eastern part of Malwa as local powers. But like their ascendency, their fall too come with a phenomenal speed. Later Malavas were weak rulers, torn by internal dissidents. Early in the next century, a Gupta chief of eastern Malwa invited the wrath of the Vardhanas of sthaneshwar by killing Grahavardhana. Then, Harshvardhana crushed these weakling local chiefs, and brought Malwa and many adjoining territories under his dominion. In about the Vardhan period, the Malavas who had been living in a somewhat subordinate position for a long time, were befriended and Hinduized, and being a desirable hardy race of warriors, were promoted to the Kehatriya rank, and finally absorbed into the great Rajpoot families then evolving.
At the death of Harshvardhan of Kannauj in 647 A.D., his strong empire abruptly came to collapse and was soon divided into several principalities under earstwhile Rajput or other warrior class families. The Gurjar-Pratiharas of Kannauj were already wielding considerable influence in north India, and were successfully defending the country against Arab invasion of the late seventh and early eighth centuries, and their king Nagbhata grew very powerful indeed. Among other possessions, he also possessed large portions of Malwa and he ruled from Ujjain, while only some southern portions were under the sway of the Rashtrakutas of Deccan about the same time. Next important Pratihara a king was Nagbhata's third successor, Vatsaraj, who further consolidated his dominions particularly against the Rashtrakutas, late in the eighth century (Majumdar, 1952, p. 281). However, very soon the Rashtrakuta king, Dhurva drove out Vatsaraj from Malwa. This controversy for sway over Malwa and also over Kannauj, continued unabated through the whole of the ninth century and even early decades of the tenth century. Later in the tenth century both the rival powers of Pratiharas of the north and the Rashtrakutas of the south started a rapid decline, and in their wake rose the feudatory. Rajput houses of Kotchhawahas and the Parmaras, respectively. Parmaras were a feudatory of Rashtrakutas, who had lately moved from Gujarat. Through hard activity of over half a century, the Parmaras came to be the most influential power in Malwa. Sivaka II was the first independent Parmara king of Malwa. Among his successor, most notable was Munja (974-955 A.D.) and his son, Bhoja (1010-1050 A.D.). Apart from Ujjain, Dhar too became a great city to which place Bhoja had shifted his capital. He is also credited for siting the city of Bhopal. Later these kings brought Mandu in prominence.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD (From 14th century to the end of 17th century).
(a) Sultanate Period— After the final annihilation of Paramar in 1305, Malwa came under the Delhi Sultanate. For the whole of the 14th century the history of Malwa is rather unimportant with little activity other than the military operations of Allauddin Khalji. Khaljis were soon succeeded by Tughlaks in Delhi. The third Tughlak Sultan, Mohammad Shah (1389-94) appointed Dhilawar Khan Ghori and Zafar Khan as governors of Malwa and Gujarat, respectively, for their faithful services to further his cause of accession, almost simultaneously in about 1390-91.

(b) Muslim Period— Dilawar Khan Ghori was a man of high political sagacity and foresight. Seeing the occasion ripe, Dilawar declared himself independent when the Sultan of Delhi was reduced to only a fugitive King in 1401, and a ground chapter of independent Muslim Malwa was opened. He made Dhar his capital, though Mandu remained an important city.

Dilawar Khan was succeeded by his son Alp Khan in 1406, in the regal name of Hoshangabad, the founder of Hoshangabad. He shifted his capital to Mandu. He greatly consolidated the kingdom which he had inherited from his father in nascent state. He died in 1432. His son and successor Mohammad Shah began in 1432, but he was hopelessly fickle and incompetent, and was removed by Mahmud Khalji, the son of his aged minister, Malik Mughith Khalji, in 1436. And thus the Ghori dynasty, founded by Dilawar Khan, came to an end.

Through his vigorous military activity and unflinching tenacity, the talented and resourceful Sultan Mahmud Khan Khalji pushed the frontiers of Malwa to the farthest on all sides and marched against Gujarat, Deccan, Jaunpur, Mewar and even Delhi. With highest and widest principles of warfare, polity and diplomacy, he created buffer states on all sides, took meticulous care to see that the innocent people were not harassed during the march of the armies, and gave a benevolent administration.
In his reign when Malwa was at the height of glory with a stable and elaborate system of government, Malwa had good many buffer states around in a semi-independent state. Besides, there were strong frontier outposts—Mandsaur, Gagron, Chanderi and Kherla. The remaining kingdom was divided into Ujjain, Sarangpur, Vidisha, Hoshangabad, Mandu, Dhar and Nalucha divisions. Their headquarters were all important towns. He raised Malwa to the zenith of pride and prestige, next only to the achievement of the Paramar king Bhoja four centuries before. He may rightly be styled as the 'Akbar of Malwa'. He received diplomatic envoys from Egypt and Khorasan.

After a long, eventful rule of 33 years, Mahmud died in 1469, leaving his kingdom to his son Ghiyath-uddin. Unlike his father, Ghiyath-uddin took to life of ease and pleasure, Consequently all buffer states were lost, and the kingdom became vulnerable.

Ghiyath-uddin was deposed by his son Nasiruddin in 1500, who after a short troubled carrier died in 1511. His third son and successor Mahmud Shah II rose to the throne but he did not have a clear approach to the throne, which he could retain solely due to the Purabia Rajput, Medni Rai, who became his minister. However, Mahmud was ultimately taken prisoner by Gujarati king in 1531, which he had himself portended unwisely to put down the growing, formidable power of Medni Rai. A puppet, Mallu Khan, was made governor of Malwa who became independent in 1537 under the name Kadir Shah. Soon in 1542, Sher Shah Suri reduced Malwa and Gujarat, but soon returned without placing an administrative machinery. Shujal Khan was appointed governor of Malwa in 1543. His son and successor Baz Bahadur was ruling Malwa (1555-62), seated at Sarangpur (to which place Shujal Khan had shifted his capital in 1554) mostly devoting his time to music and to his Rupmati. In this condition, Akbar's Generals first ousted him to south in 1561, and finally in 1562, whereafter he became a musician in the court of Akbar. Thus came to an end a glorious chapter of independent Malwa kingdom which now came under the firm and stable rule of the great Mughals.
Mandu mostly was the capital and foremost town during this period, though Dhar and lately Sarangpur also served as the capital for some time. Ujjain, Vidisha, Raisen, Chanderi, Gagrona etc. were other important places.

In economy, agriculture was prosperous as it was later seen by Abul Fazl in Akbar's time (Dey, 1965, p.356). In industries and crafts, the glazed pottery works of Mandu was very famous. But textile was the most famous and widespread industry, particularly the ornamented brocade work. Silk-plain and coloured-with artistic gold wire work was also a thriving craft. Cotton textile of various kinds was also quite as prosperous. Fine cloth of Harilpur near Mandu and of Sironj deserve special mention. Chanderi was an especially prosperous town.

(o) Mughal Period— For the whole later medieval period of one and a half centuries i.e. from 1562 to 1707, when Malwa was continuously under the firm and stable rule of four generations of the great Mughals—Akbar to Aurangzeb— the history of Malwa was without any notable event of change. Only in the last decade of Aurangzeb, the political and administrative degeneration had crept in and the forces of disintegration were on a rapid tide. Thus the firm and elaborate administration laid by Akbar and his wise ministers, with great efforts kept the country thriving for four generations. Malwa was thus very alike in the later half of the sixteenth century and toward the end of 17th century. South of the Indo-Gangetic plains Malwa was the most important subah of the Mughal empire. It contributed about 7% of the total revenue of the Empire throughout this period. Agriculture was prosperous, comparatively

* Based on figures furnished by Moreland, W.H. (1962), From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A study in Economic History, p. 323, Oriental Reprint corporation, New Delhi. The figures for the three dates-1526, 1645, 1707- for which Moreland has given revenue data, workout very close to 7%.
undisturbed by famines, droughts etc. Abul Fazl found that, 'every part of it is cultivable. Both harvests are excellent and especially wheat, poppy, sugarcane, mangoes, melons, grapes.' (Jarrett and Sarkar, 1949, p. 207). Except for general betterment the agricultural position remained much the same as in earlier times. In industries, Malwa stood next only to Gujarat. Cotton and silk textiles were flourishing and fine muslin of Sironj was highly popular amongst nobility and royal houses, just as the 'chintz' of Chanderi was famous even abroad.

Mughal Malwa subah was divided into 12 'Sarkars' or districts and 309 'Mahals' or sub-divisions (Jarrett and Sarkar, 1949, pp. 206-31) of which one Bijagarh was transferred to Burhanpur subah in 1697. The other eleven sarkars were Ujjain, Raisen, Chanderi, Sarangpur, Manud, Handia, Gagron, Kotri Paraya, Garh, Mandsaur and Nandurbar.

Table : 2.1 Sarkar and Mahal headquarters in Mughal Malwa Subah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sarkar</th>
<th>Towns as 'mahal' hqs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UJJAIN 10 Mahals</td>
<td>Ratlam, Khachrod, Badnawar, Sawer, and Depalpur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANDU 16 Mahals</td>
<td>Dhar, Manawar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANDIA 23 Mahals</td>
<td>Tevas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANISAR 17 Mahals</td>
<td>Tal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOTRI PARAYA 10 Mahals</td>
<td>Alot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARANGPUR 24 Mahals</td>
<td>Agar, Bhorasa, Khilchipur, Shajapur, Susner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAISEN 31 Mahals</td>
<td>Bhilsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANDERI 61 Mahals</td>
<td>Guna, Pachhar (Ashok nagar) Sironj, Raghogarh, Kurwai, Mungaoli.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

192 Mahals
58 Mahals of Garh
Bijapur, Nandurbar and Gagron sarkars

Thus one finds that the main towns in this period were the same old ones. Raisen was given a notable leverage at the cost of a much more important town, Vidisha, which was made a 'mahal' of the Raisen 'Sarkar'. Besides, Dhar, another old important town, became a 'mahal' of the Mandu 'Sarkar', so was Dewas a 'mahal' of the Nandia 'Sarkar'. Other important towns which were 'mahal' placed are noted in Table 2.1.

MODERN PERIOD

Towards the closing years of the 17th century disruptive forces made a rather sudden appearance, and the grand Mughal empire started an unmistakable steady decline. Mostly due to religious fanaticism of Aurangzeb and his relentless tenacity in the infinitely long-drawn chase of Marathas in the Deccan, which consumed the cream of imperial power and resources and entailed a sheer neglect of other important provinces in the north, made the degeneration of the imperial rule almost imminent. This religious fanaticism embittered all non-Muslim sections and even some sections of Muslims. In the meantime the Marathas in the south were consolidating their power and crossed the Narmada in 1699. But for a decade or more there was a lull in the Maratha invasions due to their turbulent internal situation after the death of Maratha King Rajaram in 1700, and also due to conciliatory policy they temporarily adopted with the Mughal Emperor. Aurangzeb died in 1707. So unstable and so fickle had become the imperial rule over Malwa that from 1698, the turning point for a steady decline of the Mughal power, to 1741—when Malwa was formally and finally ceded to the Marathas, the governorship of Malwa shifted 18 times to 15 different persons. Of them Sawai Jai Singh of Amber who thrice occupied this office was the most notable. Next most notable governor was a Nagar Brahman, Daya Bahadur. He and his cousin Girdhar Bahadur gave the most stiff resistance to the Maratha invaders, but were both killed in the battle of
Amjhera in 1728 (Singh, R., 1936, pp. 199-207). From this date Marathas virtually overruled the southern Malwa. Another governor—Muhammad Fakr-ud-Din (1730-1732) also sincerely tried to stem the Maratha tide but he was removed from this office soon. In 1736 Marathas gave the final blow to Nizam, just north of Bhopal, who stood for the imperial cause. And with this successful blow, Marathas became the 'de facto' masters of whole Malwa, though the treaty concluded here could be ratified only as late as 1741, whereby the Peshwa was appointed the 'Deputy Governor' of Malwa. This appointment was only a diplomatic face-saving, to the point of mockery and farce. Subsequent to this, the singular, half-hearted effort to recover the province by the Mughals, in 1752, soon turned futile.

The Peshwa had already accorded extensive portions of Malwa early in thirties of the 18th century to his principal generals, viz. Holkar, Sinhia and a smaller portion to Udaji Pawar, the actual architects of his victories in north where from they could collect revenues for the maintenance of their troops. While Marathas were striving for an abiding hold on Malwa, an Afghan adventurer, Dost Mohammad Khan Rohilla was also active to carve out a state. His area of activity was in eastern part in the vicinities of Berasia, and later, Bhopal. Thus above the local chiefs mostly Rajputs the Maratha generals and the Afghan chief Dost Mohammad were the real power holders in Malwa from early 18th century onwards and continued to be so for the whole of this century. Amongst the Maratha generals, Malhar Rao Holkar was very active over extensive parts of western Malwa.

But this ascendancy of Marathas in Malwa did not bring any notable change for the good for Malwa itself. The Marathas only ensured, through a contract with local chiefs and 'zamindars' that revenue be regularly paid to them; but they
devoted most of their attention to Poona or Jaipur. Such a state of affairs continued for full two decades till the Maratha power was smashed, in the thunderbolt at Panipat, by Ahmad Shah Abdali.

The day of 14th January, 1761 spelled, in fact, the Doom's day upon the Maratha power, when the entire vast Maratha army with all its picked generals fell to the ruthless Afghan steel, and the imperial power of the Peshwa was almost annihilated. Only Malhar Rao Holkar could save himself, and Mahadaji Sindhia could escape lame and wounded. Utterly shattered, the Peshwa Balaji Baji Rao died within six months of this disaster.

Although, contrary to the common anticipation, Abdali did not move to the south into Malwa, this defeat for a time badly rocked the Maratha hold on Malwa, as numerous local chiefs rose in rebellion, aspiring to drive away the 'southern intruders'. Credit goes solely to Malhar Rao for sternly putting down all these rebels, and for restoring the prestige of Maratha arms, within a very short time indeed. Rajputs failed to take upon this golden opportunity, as their chief leader Madho Singh was defeated by the Holkar at Mongrol towards the end of November 1761. Right at this time, when the Holkar could have started a fuller administration, there started trouble in Poona which diverted his attention. Malhar Rao Holkar died late in May 1766 and with him also the supremacy of Holkar family as he left no able heir. Thus once again a void was created in Malwa. Lesser Maratha generals were only meddling with Rajputs chiefs of Rajputana and Buncelkhand and with the Afghan family of Bhopal.

The next three decades mark a period of eventful but steady rise of Mahadaji Sindhia - the real founder of the Maratha royal house of Gwalior in Malwa and in fact, in whole of Hindustan, the decline of Holkar house; a most benevolent
internal civil administration of Ahilyabai Holkar cover western Malwa, of incessant rivalry for the throne of Peshwaship between the established line of Bajaji Baji Rao (1740-1761), his second son Madhav Rao, third son Narayan Rao and the latter's posthumous son, Madhav Rao Narayan on one hand, and Raghunath Rao, the brother of Bajaji Baji Rao, and the former's son, Baji Rao II on the other, at Poona, which had profound repercussions on the history of Malwa.

In 1767 the widowed daughter in law of Malhar Rao Ahilya Bai succeeded him. She took charge of civil administration directly under her, and appointed one, Tukoji Rao Holkar as the commander of troops and incharge of external affairs. She provided the most benevolent administration with meticulous tender care for the common people. In the dark 18th century of stark maladministration and neglect of public peace and order, her civil rule is the singular brilliant star that kept her kingdom ablaze for full three decades, but her rule was confined to the western Malwa, while most other parts of the region were in utter anarchy and chaos. In her time, Indore rose to a great commercial city. Though herself residing at the religious shrine of Maheshwar, she did much to promote Indore and ordered the transfer of the seat of civil administration and Holkar residence from Kampel to Indore which was so far only a military cantonment of Holkars. And henceforth the office of 'Ranavisdar' became the cardinal mark of the townscape. Only it is unfortunate that she did not have in her court or in the family a talented diplomatic or military genius like the soaring Mahadaji Sindhia, with whom her military commander Tukoji Rao Holkar most imprudently fell in jealousy and came at loggerheads. The relations between the two important brother Maratha houses, therefore, remained always extremely sour, causing a great damage to both the houses to the Maratha cause in general, and above all to the peace and order of the region. These internecine feuds
culminated in many a skirmish in which the Holkar troops mostly suffered reverses the most notable and ignoble being the one at Lakeri on 29th May 1793. Holkar's and Sindhia's troops were thus ravaging each others territories and cities like Ujjain and Indore.

From seventies of the 18th century, the Poona royal house and its ministry entered a phase of stark intrigues and disintegration, which took an intricately chequered course of plots and counter-plots with the prime minister Nana Phandis, Sindhia and Holkar as important factors, apart from the Peshwa cousins.

In the last decade of the 18th century, the surging political genius, Mahadaji died, followed closely by Ahilya Bai, Tukoji Holkar and Nana Phandis, the veteran prime minister and care taker of Peshwa rule and dynasty; and the Maratha affairs including the Malwa affairs fell in the hands of their far less talented and competent successors. As the intrigues, plots and counter-plots continued, various parties, utterly blind to the larger Maratha interests, invited the British intervention, for which the British were eagerly waiting. Ultimately Baji Rao II, the son of Raghunath Rao, came to the seat, but there was no scope for restoration of peace, harmony, and administration either in the Deccan or in any possessions of the Marathas.

The condition of defunct rule of internal dissents and of stalemate continued through the first decade of the nineteenth century. The plundering hordes called the Pindaris also became more powerful, and grew out of control of their quasi-masters, particularly the Holkars and turned out for the common masses the scourge of devil. Later the Pathans also joined them. This involvement of the Maratha patronage with these most heinous, inhuman marauders so badly tarnished the image of
these Maratha houses that when the English forces entered Malwa in 1617 to put down the Pindaries and Pathans as well as to curb the Marathas finally, they came as god sent protators to the common masses. Through the 1618 treaty of Mandasaur, the Marathas as an important independent power ceased to exist.

The subsequent history of the region through the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries is rather uneventful, excepting, of course, the continued internecine feuds between various ruling houses and the tumults of 1857-8 revolt, after which some changes in the political set-up were effected. At the turn of this century, advent of the Railways was a major development of profound importance with far reaching repercussion on the towns.

Also, since the Central India was not under direct British administration, there being maintained various local ruling houses, albeit only for name sake, this region remained peculiarly isolated from the freedom movement led by the Indian National Congress in the present century. So much so, that this 'native state' disposition was maintained even after the Independence till 1956 when it was amalgamated with the new state of Madhya Pradesh.

Thus we find that the whole of the 18th century marks the dark age of the region, and this holds good also for India at large. Singh, R. (1936) has aptly described it as a century of anarchy. The first part of this century marks the dissolution of the Imperial Mughal power on Malwa subah and ascendency of the Marathas instead, while the second phase is largely the story of disintegration of the Maratha power, which tendency culminated in the first decade of the 19th century and led to their final liquidation in 1817-8 by the British.
POLITICAL SET-UP OF MALWA: HISTORICAL FACTORS BEHIND ITS EVOLUTION

During this critical period, what is of utmost importance and relevance to this work are certain peculiar trends and tendencies rather than the events, which eventually led to the evolution of a peculiar political set-up. Though in itself beyond any logic and rationality of systematic governance of the region, such a system definitely imparted certain notable traits to the urban situation of the region as it stands today. It is therefore, expedient and imperative for our purpose to analyse these trends and their driving factors. All these circumstances, trends and events were destined ultimately to lead in one general direction—the dissolution of a centralised and unified rule over the region under a single command, and instead, the mushroom-like growth of a multiplicity of petty states with a peculiar and haphazard arrangements and relationship amongst them.

These circumstances and trends are summarised below:

Even from early medieval times, the population of Malwa contained various ethnic groups which were corporate communities, disposed to soli-dey, plunder and pillage. They were led by the old Muslim and the old Rajput houses. Not only they, but even the primitive tribes like the Bhils on the south-western and the Gonds on the south-eastern hill tracts would raise their heads against the ruling power and try to gain a sort of internal quasi-independence. Not infrequently, the Rajputs held high positions in the Muhammadan administration and had their own strongholds. It was a prudent political policy of Muhammadans-Ghuris, Khaljis and, later, Akbar and his descendants to be friend the disaffected Rajputs of Rajputana, grant them fiefs and take them into service. Thus the strong tribes, old Rajput houses, Turks and Mughal and their new
Rajput allies all of ruling nature, were the ethnic components that comprised the baronage of Malwa towards the end of 17th century, which was also the end of the united Malwa subah.

Later as the Imperial Mughal power grew internally weak and decadent, these lesser power holders tried to consolidate their position, leading eventually to their own practically independent states.

Most of these lesser Rajput states, however, particularly the new ones, founded lately by Amrangzeb, were too small, nonviable and nascent to be of any avail for Mughal imperial cause, particularly against the Maratha invasions of the teens, twenties and thirties of the 18th century (Singh, R, 1936, p. 15-16). These invasions peculiarly synchronised with the internal decay of the Mughal power.

Throughout the 18th century, Malwa was torn by the predatory activities of the Marathas under several leading generals, striving in good concert against the Mughal power. Later on, their successors were fighting amongst themselves, or with the more stubborn Rajput houses. But rather than conquer a country completely and establish their own administration, "It was the policy of chief Maratha powers" notes Aitchison (1929 Vol. IV, p.5) in the preceding years of anarchy to reduce to subjection the petty Rajput chiefs within their influence", so as only to ensure regular payment of tribute without any involvement in the actual administration. This stark feudalistic system best suited their imperialistic designs as it afforded them both financial resources as well as time to devote to their more ambitious projects in north India. They readily purchased the loyalty and good will of as many local chiefs as possible who would side with them and pay tribute to them rather than to the provincial authority, by granting them more and more rights in local administration or by giving new fiefs. On the other hand, these chiefs too
also came to realise that it was safer and cheaper to pay-off the Maratha plunderers, rather than depend on, pay to, and fight along the provincial power. Thus this gross feudalism and the Maratha hold were gaining ground in Malwa side by side. All this created a most prolific socio-political climate for scores of petty principalities to grow to statehood. Gordon rightly emphasizes that, "The basic feature of the eighteenth century historical processes taking place (in Malwa) was the multiplicity of states, hundred by one count and as many as six hundred by another", (Gordon, 1969, p. 416-7).

After establishing their command on Malwa—formally as well as practically—the Marathas began meddling with the principal Rajput states of Rajputana and the Imperial Mughal court at Delhi till they were crushed in the fateful battle of Panipat in 1761. Even after recovering from the disastrous knock-out of Panipat, when they could have really set out to establish a real administration, the principal Maratha leader, Malhar Rao Holkar I died without an heir apparent. Though his widowed daughter-in-law Ahilya Bai gave a most glorious and benevolent civil administration but this was confined to limited parts of western Malwa, while other parts were in much chaos. Moreover, the rivalries between her appointed commander Tikoji Rao Holkar and the rising genius Mahadaji Sindhia flared up suddenly to the bitter extreme. Their continual feuds only ravaged the country very badly. Thus the Maratha ascendancy brought little peace and good order to the common masses of Malwa.

Due to this continual internecine warfare the position of principal Maratha powers was declining, resulting in mismanagement and dwindling resources, consequently in their inability to maintain sufficient strength of regular troops, so that local chiefs particularly in far flung areas, became progressively defiant. This situation forced more and more
of the larger stabilized states into instability, in the sense that regular revenue was insufficient to pay their troops. In his hypothesis of proliferation of states in the 18th century Malwa, Gordon (1969, p. 426-27) ascribes this drift to instability to the fact that due to improved modern warfare introduced by the British, the guerrilla type predatory tactics of the Marathas became much less effective and the hill forts provided no defense against the trained infantry and the artillery cannonade. More and more native states were thus forced to adopt this new military organisation, which costs four to ten times as much as native cavalry (Gordon, 1969, p. 427). Whatever the mechanism, the result was that some states, notably Bolkars and Sindhis, were driven to depend on unpaid troops who supported themselves by plunder and pillage of neighbouring states, and brought a part of the spoil to the patron state. Such freebooting, marauding groups were constituted primarily by the Pindaries, refractory Afghan adventurers, and certain local tribes like the Bhils. Before long, the power of these groups of expert plunderers and marauders by nature and profession, grew out of control of the patron-powers and became a menace to the latter who were compelled to grant them more and more rights in the territories of their activity, while this support and alignment brought immense infamy and unpopularity to the patron Maratha states. Thus there was not only the multiplication of petty states, but also a marked shift from predominance of relatively stable states to a mix containing a great number of marauding groups (Gordon, 1969, p. 426).

* Pindaries were the unpaid supporters of the Marathas from early times in Deccan, whose main source of support was the pillage of camps of defeated enemy troops (for details see Malcom, 1820 Vol.I, pp. 426-62)
When the heinous criminal activities culminated and Marathas, particularly the Folkars, were boasting chiefly upon this very intrinsic and intricate support of Pindaries, the British ultimately under took the stupendous talk of cornering and finally subduing the Pindaries, and also of curbing the Maratha power, which were both effected in 1817-18.

In order to restore peace and good order as soon as possible most of the local chiefs were recognised with a guarantee of a share in the revenue of a certain territory or a fixed 'tanaka', and some Pindaris and Afghan leaders were also similarly given fiefs. "The multiplicity of petty chiefs and the peculiarity of tenures on which they held their states, founded as they are on the measure adopted for the pacification of the country after the Pindari war" necessitated all the more the British intervention (Aitchison, 1929, Vol. IV, p. 4). But the British also adopted, inter alia, much the same feudalistic policy calculated towards enhancing the position of numerous lesser powers - Rajputs, Afghans a few complacent Pindaris etc. vis-a-vis the Maratha supremacy in order eventually to alienate them from the Maratha fold and bring them under their more effectual control. This was meant to undermine the Maratha position from below. Accordingly, the British recognised as permanent, and also enhanced, the rights of these local chiefs, subject to the maintenance of order, and reafirmment from bandifry, by compelling the superior Maratha powers to grant these plunderers some right on their land or an equivalent payment (Aitchison, 1929, Vol. IV, p. 5). Through this British intervention, there thus grew a large number of 'Mediatised states' and 'Guaranteed chiefships'.

Thus there was evolving in Malwa during the last two hundred years a political organisation, containing several superior powers, and a host of lesser states mediatised, guaranteed states/ estates etc., with a wide range of grades of
political status, all huddled together in most intricate, rather incomprehensible manner. There was a highly chequered motley of political relationships amongst them and all were held together under the overshadowing canopy called the 'British Paramountcy'. Moreover, to complicate the set up all the more some 'Guaranteed chiefships' had land-holding, from more than one superior power, or Barbars, while a few had some guaranteed and some unguaranteed land.

Such a political set up and its working revolved not on any principle of polity or administration, but singularly on the procurement of tribute. It was this feudalistic tenet which, over and above anything else, sustained such a political territorial organisation, in which there existed an unusually large multiplicity of states of all grades and status—some of them having suzerainty over the far-flung, detached parcels of land, in the territories of other states. In practical terms, the local chiefs of those outlying detached territories paid tributes to the superior power to which they are supposed to belong.

After rearrangements consequent upon the revolt of 1857-8, the region had 6 major states viz. Indore, Gwalior (its possessions in Malwa), Bhopal, Dhar, Dewas and Jaora and about 3/4 of a century of lesser states mediatised and guaranteed by the British against their respective suzerain Maratha or Afghan powers (Aitchison, 1864, Vol.IV, p.195). At the end of the third decade of the 20th century the region had again the same six major powers as treaty states and over 3 scores of lesser states/estates etc. of a wide range of grades of political status (Aitchison, 1929).

But leaving out the host of the mediatised or guaranteed chiefships, estates or other petty principalities, which for the purpose of administration counted for nothing, Malwa (leaving
only Sagar district) was, administratively covered by 3 large and 11 smaller states. They are A- large states: (1) Gwalior (Northern Cuna district, and other far flung possession of Sindhia in Malwa), (2) Indore and (3) Bhopal; B- small states: (1) Dewas senior, (2) Dewas junior, (3) Rajgarh, (4) Narsingarh, (5) Jaora, (6) Ratlam, (7) Sitala, (8) Sitamau, (9) Dhar, (10) Jhabua, and (11) Alirajpur (Luard, 1908).

The number of lesser estates is unusually large in the western part of the region covered under southern states of Central India and Malwa, which had Dhar, Dewas (junior and senior) and Jaora as major states and over two scores of lesser states. No wonder then, towns are usually smaller and more closely spaced in the western part of the region than in the Eastern part. States were progressively larger in size and fewer in number towards east and Bhopal was the biggest single contiguous state. The larger number of states in Western part of the region is largely due to the fact that in this area contiguous with Rajputana, Gujarat and Khandesh- there was much more of political anarchy and chaos. Not only were the Maratha powers particularly the Holkars, more active in this part with their feudalistic order, but later, the Pindaries who were attached with the Holkars, also became more active in this part. When at the turn of the 19th century, the British entered Malwa to quell down this chaos and to restore order and peace, there were many more local chiefs (mostly Rajputa) and professed free booter chiefs, whom the British pacified by recognising their rights or granting them fiefs. Later, these local chiefs became entrenched and were ultimately recognised as mediatised states under British guarantee. Thus we find that it is the areas of Holkar's suzerainty and Pindari activity that there grew the largest number of lesser states, which ultimately led to the occurrence of many small towns with closer spacing. It is, thus, the historical past of the region to which the present urban situation owes itself to a notable extent.
Considerations of space and subject orientation do not allow a further pursuit of this point. But there is copious documentary material, an analytical study of which readily reveals the step by step development of a political organisation of this nature. The monumental collection by Aitchison, 1864, 1909 and 1929 is by far the most important single source.

Even as late as on the eve of the Independence of India, Malwa which excepting for Sagar district, never was under the direct British administration, or, in fact, under any centralised direct administration, presented a political set up which virtually defies all rational logic regarding a systematic political organisation. The generalised extract of the Survey of India Map of Central India and Gwalior, 1948, in Plate 7, bears a ready testimony to this point.

POLITICAL SET-UP OF MALWA: ITS IMPRINTS UPON THE REGIONAL URBAN SITUATION

This multitude of states, chiefships etc. of highly varied grades of political status had each a headquarter—the seat of the chief, which obviously used to be the most important place and mostly also a town, the size and prosperity of which depended largely upon the prestige of the chief, resources of the state, and secondarily, upon the position of the place in relation to the state which was its hinterland. Now, as these states were only small ones with limited resource base, there naturally grew a large number of small towns (mostly their head-quarters) with a markedly close spacing. These small chiefships were amalgamated, or medium and large ones were organised with but moderate adjustment, as tahsils and districts at the time of the reorganisation of states in 1956, when the whole region became a part of the new enlarged state of Madhya Pradesh. It is quite understandable then why today
we find a rather large number of towns, mostly small of medium sized and essentially administrative headquarters of tahsils and districts, in central position in rich interlands, rather than in defensive inaccessible position. Having a political advantage over other places, these headquarters also became good central places, thriving in commerce. Thus administration or political seat gave most of these towns a definite degree of precedence, and their central location reared its advantages for these towns. They are thus, in essence the administrative or commercial central places.

In areas where the small local chiefships whose seats of chiefs could come up as towns, and which were amalgamated into a tahsil, there happen to be more than one town in that tahsil. Chanderi and Kungali; Alot and Tal furnish good examples.

The British guarantee to the small holders or chiefships against superior powers and from any outside powers also, further facilitated the siting of very many of these towns in central accessible locations, which point is elaborated in the chapter on locational analysis.

This logic of proliferation of numerous small states as the mechanism of occurrence of scores of small towns at a close spacing also remarkably explains one more fact regarding the urban disposition of the region, which constitutes in turn one more testimony to this hypothesis. Starting from the east towards west, one finds that the size of states reduces and the number thereof increases, culminating in the numerous petty states in the western belt of the region. This western Malwa has been the major arena of predatory activities of the Marathas and lately of their freebooting allies, mainly the Pindaries. Also, in the same area there were numerous petty Rajput chiefs. These factors naturally led to the growth of numerous petty
principalities, and these, in turn, resulted in the occurrence of numerous small towns at a close spacing. Thus one finds that towns are more numerous usually small in size, and more closely spaced in western Malwa, particularly in the areas of activities of the Bolkars and Pindaries, and also in parts of Sindhia's possessions in Malwa.

Moreover, this motley of petty states and the highly intricate fabric of relationships amongst them have significantly contributed to the fact that the structure of the urban system of western Malwa shows markedly higher degree of competition and overlapping in regards to the hinter lands of individual towns, as compared to the urban system of eastern Malwa. This point has been elaborated in the last chapter of 'Urban System'.

Though geographical factors also have contributed significantly to these differences in the western and eastern parts of Malwa, as elucidated in relevant chapter of this work, this study emphasizes that the peculiar recent history of the region has also been very important in shaping the urban disposition of the region more than is usually realised by geographers in general.

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