

MERCENARY SYSTEM

In this chapter an attempt has been made to analyze the nature and composition of the militia in 18th century Gujarat. The break down of the *mansab* system and the collapse of the Mughal Empire necessitated changes in the nature and character of the army. Thus, in the absence of a system of regular maintenance of contingents as was done by the *mansabdars*, the role of the mercenaries became important during this period. The mercenary system developed its own peculiarities in the course of time. The individual soldier during this period came to be called as *sibandi*. The *sibandis* were organized into different groups, each headed by a *Jama'dar*. The term *sibandi* for soldiers came to be used extensively during this period in the sources pertaining to Gujarat, as in the rest of India. In the Persian sources the infantry is referred to as *sibandi pyadah* and the cavalry as *sibandi sawar*. Even the British sources occasionally used the word '*sibandi*' for the *sepoy*.

The expansionist activities of the various 18th Century chieftains led to an increase in the demand for soldiers. In order to meet the challenge of the frequent Maratha attacks in Gujarat in the early 18th centuries as also to meet the challenge of the recalcitrant groups like the *girasias*, *kathis* and *kolis*, the local chiefs had to maintain suitable military contingents that were composed of the *sibandis*. The demand for *sibandis* appears to be on the increase

during this period as the *thanas* also had to be properly garrisoned. These *thanas* were manned by the *sibandis*. These soldiers were also employed the *girasias* for collection of revenue from their villages, especially when their revenue claims were officially accepted. In Dholka for instance, the *girasia* chief of Kounte had in his service a force of two thousand *sibandis* and 150 horsemen, the latter acted as the guards of villages, besides protecting the Raja.⁴⁶⁴ We also find a number of Arabs employed as *sibandis* by not only the various chieftains of the region but also by the 'fringe' groups. Jeeva Basawa, a *Bhil* 'marauder' controlling Rajpipla during 1810-15 had in his employment Arab and Sindhi *sibandis*.⁴⁶⁵

FUNCTIONS OF THE SIBANDIS

The *Sibandis* performed many duties during this period. Firstly, they worked as soldiers in the militia of various principalities. As various chiefs were constantly trying to expand their authority at the expense of another, there was always a demand for the *sibandis* to be employed as soldiers by them. They were given employment for short durations and were dismissed after their need was over after paying them their wages.

The second important function performed by the *Sibandis* was to guard the towns. In the prevailing political situation in the 18th

⁴⁶⁴ Walker-Selections XXXIX, Pp. 12-13.

⁴⁶⁵ Walter Hamilton, op.cit., P.713.

century, towns and *gasbas* needed to be protected from depredations. It is due to this that various towns in Gujarat and Saurashtra and Kutch were fortified during this time. The *Sibandis* were given the control of the city-gates and fortifications. Similarly, *sibandis* were employed to man the gates and look after general protection of the towns. It was a very important job and the *sibandis*, who were headed by a *jamadar* were thus men of influence and power. The charge of the city gate was given only to the *jamadars* of trust and confidence. In 1752, after the Maratha occupation of Ahmedabad, Shambharam, Mohammad Lal Rohilla and Ganga Jat, the confidant of Raghu, the Naib-Subah, (Sarsubahdar) got this charge.⁴⁶⁶ How important was it to secure the gates of the city can be gauged from an incident of 1725 regarding Bharuch. Pilaji Rao Gaekwad had conquered Bharuch and left a deputy there to administer it. After a period of nine months the deputy left the town on the receipt of false news regarding the death of Pilaji Rao Gaekwad. He left the defences of the town in the hands of the local Qasbati troops. On discovering that the news of Pilaji's death was a rumour, he returned but could not gain entry into Bharuch town. The Qasbati troops refused to admit the Marathas. They instead handed over the fort to Abdullah Beg, the Mughal Faujdar. The Marathas could never take complete control of the place thereafter.⁴⁶⁷

The *sibandis* at times used their strategic position to bargain for their demands like payment of unpaid salaries by besieging the authorities. In 1761 Sulaiman, an Arab Jamadar imprisoned Nawab Mahabat Khan of Junagadh in the fort of Uparkot. Sulaiman was

⁴⁶⁶ *Mirat*, P.782.

⁴⁶⁷ *GOB II*, P.76.

acting on behalf of the brothers of the Nawab, Muzaffar Khan and Fathyab Khan, who were demanding part of the territories for their subsistence. It was then arranged with the Jamadar to give a *jagir* consisting of Ranpur and Dhandhuka, along with 84 villages to them.⁴⁶⁸ Many other instances of *sibandis* taking control of Junagadh are mentioned in the *Tarikh-i-Sorath*.⁴⁶⁹

The *sibandis* were also used in the *mulkgiri*, the revenue collection expeditions. Since most of the areas in 18th century Gujarat had become *zortalabi* or *mewasi*, the chieftains had to deploy *sibandis* to collect revenues. The *Sibandis* were also employed by the village to safeguard the residents and their fields against depredations of their neighbours. They were paid from the resources of the village.⁴⁷⁰ Similarly, merchants and other men of wealth also employed the *sibandis* to protect themselves against the harassment of the officials such as the *faujdars* and the *Nazims* who tried to fleece such people on the flimsiest of pretext. Kapur Chand Bhansali, the *Nagarsheth* of Ahmedabad around 1719-20⁴⁷¹ and Kushal Chand, *Nagarsheth* during around 1733,⁴⁷² according to the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* employed *sibandis* to protect themselves against the Naib-Nazim's harassment. Similarly, in Surat Mohammad Ali⁴⁷³ employed thousands of *sibandis* and

⁴⁶⁸ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P. 145.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid. Passim.

⁴⁷⁰ Mountsuart Elphinstone, *Territories conquered from the Peshwa: A Report*, J.C. Shrivastava (ed), Delhi, 1973, P. 281.

⁴⁷¹ *Mirat*, P. 398.

⁴⁷² Ibid., P. 516.

⁴⁷³ Ibid. Pp. 457-458.

Ahmed Chelapi maintained around 2000 Arab and Rumi *Sibandis* as bodyguards.⁴⁷⁴

ORGANISATION

A contingent of *sibandis* was headed by a *jamadar*. The *jamadars* were of various ethnic groups: Arabs, Rohillas, Sindhis, Sidis etc. However, it was not always necessary that the contingent of a *jamadar* may also be composed of members of the same community. A *jamadar* being the head of the contingent was responsible for many things.⁴⁷⁵ He negotiated the salary and the terms and condition of service of the *sibandis*. Thus he acted as the representative of the *sibandis* and looked after their interests. The employer dealt with individual *sibandis* only through him. The *jamadar* also ensured payment of salaries to the *sibandis*. This is attested to by several instances where the Jamadars stood guarantees to the *Sibandis* ensuring payment of their salary.⁴⁷⁶ A *jamadar's* *sibandi* contingent consisted of 100 to 150 men.

The *jamadars* were inducted through the agency of the Vakil of the principality who would approach *jamadar* and enroll him by

⁴⁷⁴ *Mirat*, P.522.

⁴⁷⁵ He is called the 'jobber-Commander' by Kolff and Gommans who also trace the origin of the *jamadars* as playing a prominent role in the military labour market to the time of Sher Shah. See *Introduction* in Jos J. L. Gommans and Dirk H. A. Kolff (eds), *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia*, Oxford, 2001, P. 18.

⁴⁷⁶ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P. 187. The Arab *jamadars* Zubaidi, Salih Abdullah, Mohammad Mohsin and Hamid Nasir had in various instances stood security to the troops by the Nawab of Junagadh.

paying some amount of money. The *jamadar* would then raise the contingent of the *sibandis* and report for duty. This process is explained by Mr.Lambert, British commercial resident at Cambay in a letter dated Surat, 23rd September, 1757: *Received duplicates of letters from Mr.Lambert at Cambay. The bearer of (the letters) is a Jemmedar Kalee Khan to whom I have given a commission to enlist at Broach and the adjacent villages, where he is acquainted, a company of sepoy, & for this purpose have on proper security advanced him 200 rupees. His agreement is, that on his arrival with you, such of the people as he brings with him whom you like not, may be rejected, & the remainder you may entertain. Their pay is to commence, at the rates mentioned in the enclosed paper from the time you enrol them.*⁴⁷⁷

The *jamadar* was responsible for his *sibandis*. It is clearly brought out by various instances cited in our sources. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* has narrated an incident of the time of Momin Khan. When the Marathas from Ahmedabad ousted Momin Khan in 1758-59 and the latter set out for Cambay, one of his *jamadars*, Mohammad Lal Rohilla, who was the leader of the Rohilla *sibandis jamadars* at Ahmedabad, put forth claims of Rs. 80,000 before Momin Khan as arrears of salaries of the *sibandis* under his command. He proposed to Momin Khan that if the latter was unable to pay the whole amount, he would reduce the liability to Rs. 40,000 by Momin Khan, out of which he would raise Rs. 20,000 himself by selling his personal belongings while the remaining Rs. 20,000 should be paid by Momin Khan.

⁴⁷⁷ G.W.Forrest, Vol. I, op.cit., P. 329.

Mohammad Lal Rohilla Rohilla, however, had to leave Cambay on perceiving a threat to his life. The incident indicates the concern and a sense of responsibility that the *jamadars* felt for their *sibandis*.

COMPOSITION

The *Sibandis* in the region were of heterogeneous groups. They could be broadly classified into the local and indigenous, such as *qasbatis*, *kolis*, *rabaris*, *jutts* etc., and those who came from outside (non-indigenous) to seek employment in Gujarat such as Arabs, Marwaris, Sindhis, Baluchis, Rohillas, Sidis, Purabiyas, Mavlas, Gosains etc. By the middle of the Century the latter groups seem to have outnumbered the locals as they were recruited in all the major principalities in Gujarat in greater numbers. A major difference between the two categories of *sibandis* was that the local *sibandis* were tied down to land while the non-indigenous *sibandis* were mobile.

Amongst the non-indigenous *sibandis* the most sought after ethnic group was of that of the Arab who appears to have made their appearance in Gujarat from the first quarter of the 18th century. The first mention of an Arab being employed as a *Sibandis* in our sources is in relation to the contingent of Meher Ali Khan, a *mansabdar*⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ *Mirat*, P.402. Meher Ali Khan was a resident of Ahmedabad. With the appointment of Maharaja Ajit Singh as the Nazim in 1717 he became unemployed. By this time we can see a trend where the Nazims themselves appointed Faujdars and other officials of their own faction and mansabdars of other factions were left to fend for themselves. Meher Ali

Later, Shuja'at Khan, the Naib Nazim had in his employment seven to eight thousand *sawar* and *pyadah* including such categories as the Qasbatis, Arabs and Dakhanis.⁴⁷⁹ Momin Khan I of Cambay had a party of Arab and Rohilla soldiers.⁴⁸⁰ During the period when several functionaries of the state were trying to augment their military strength, they invited several reputed Jamadars to join their service. Mohammad Shahbaz Rohilla was one such Jamadar who had come to the region with 300 horsemen and infantry to Gujarat during the Nizamat of Momin Khan I Naj-ud-Daula. He became close to Muftakhir Khan⁴⁸¹ and later to Jawan Mard Khan. Jawan Mard Khan appointed him as the Faujdar of Dholka.⁴⁸² Similarly, Mohammad Rashid Beg, a Jamadar discharged by Nadir Shah was invited by Momin Khan II to join him at Cambay.⁴⁸³ Earlier, two Jamadars, Mir Nathu and Muhammad Salabat, were invited by Asaf Jah to join Hamid Khan in his fight against Shuja'at Khan. They had earlier served Nizam-ul-Mulk while the Nizam was in Malwa.⁴⁸⁴ The Marathas too employed these *sibandi* groups. Shripat Rao was said to have a contingent of Arab and Sindhi *sibandis*.⁴⁸⁵ Towards the end of the Century some instances of Gosains being employed in Gujarat has come to our notice.⁴⁸⁶ There is one instance of Pathans,⁴⁸⁷ Afghans

Khan is said to have employed Arab sibandis against the possible harassment by Bhandari, the Naib-Nazim.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. P.417.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. P.601.

⁴⁸¹ He later adopted the title Momin Khan II.

⁴⁸² *Mirat*, P.711.

⁴⁸³ Ibid. P.754.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. P.419.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. P.753.

⁴⁸⁶ *HSBSR IV*, Lt. 16, P. 479.

⁴⁸⁷ *GOB IV*, P. 326. The Pathans were 2000 in number and were armed with swords and spears. They also had 50 muskets and only 3 guns.

and Baluch *sibandis*⁴⁸⁸ (there is one instance of Sikh *sibandis*)⁴⁸⁹ finding employment in Gujarat. Marwadi *sibandis* were employed in Kutch and Palanpur.⁴⁹⁰ The Marwadis are not reported in other areas of Gujarat besides Palanpur and Kutch where they were found employed possibly because these two areas were close to Marwar.

It appears that the non-indigenous *sibandis* were regarded to be more efficient than the local ones. This is evident of from the reply of Ali Mohammad Khan to his father's query as to who will win in the war between Shuja'at Khan and Hamid Khan. Ali Mohammad Khan had replied that Shuja'at Khan had an army consisting of Gujarati *Qasbatis* who would never array themselves in a war nor remain steady in their support and would run away when confronted with the Marathas; Rustam Ali Khan had Arabs and other such *Sibandis* who have several times faced Pilaji Rao in the past and had adopted their mode of warfare.⁴⁹¹ Thus implied in the reply was the acknowledgement of the superiority of non-indigenous *sibandis*. Later, even Alexander Walker, in his observations on Saurashtra reiterates this sentiment. He says: "*Independently, however, of the indigenous soldiery of the country, there are many troops of mercenaries employed among the principal chieftains, who are generally composed of the adventurers from the Sea-coast of Arabia, Makran and Sind. These are the bravest and best armed, and the most*

⁴⁸⁸ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P.193.

⁴⁸⁹ *GOB IV*, P. 198. While Baroda's battle with Malhar Rao was proceeding 400 horsemen and 300 foot of the Sikh tribe entered into Babaji's service on the Arab Jamadars' security.

⁴⁹⁰ James Burnes, *a Narrative of a visit to the Court of Sinde; A Sketch of the History of Cutch*, Edinburgh, 1831, P.183.

⁴⁹¹ *Mirat*, P.418.

*formidable description of troops- they compose, indeed, the only infantry in the Country, unless Mhers and Meenas may be styled such; and generally comprise the principal part of the standing garrisons in the fortresses.*⁴⁹²

The indigenous *sibandis*, referred to as *qasbatis*,⁴⁹³ in employment with various principalities in the region lacked organization and skills. These Qasbatis were to be found in the whole of Gujarat but were most active in Saurashtra. In the mainland, the Qasbatis were employed from early in the century by Mughal *faujdars*. Gradually, however, the non-indigenous *sibandis* replaced them and they were confined only to the interiors of Saurashtra. They were most powerful in Dholka, Dhandhuka *parganas*, where they also acted as *manotidars*. Amongst the Qasbatis of Dholka we find the mention of one Bawa Miah who extended support to the Gaekwad army in 1800 with 200 followers to oust Aba Shelukar from Ahmadabad. He later helped the British army against Malhar Rao of Kadi in 1803.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² Walker-Selections XXXIX, P. 292.

⁴⁹³ There is some ambiguity as to the actual meaning of the term Qasbati. The 19th century British sources translate the term *Qasbatis* as the 'Muslim residents of the towns'. This would lead one to conclude that the nature of the indigenous soldiery during this period was not rural as suggested by Dirk Kolff but was urban. However, here we need to ponder over the meaning of the term *Qasba* itself. A *qasba* was wholesale market in a *pargana*. Surplus produce from the villages were brought here for sale and retailers from cities would also come here to buy it. Thus *qasbas* developed as important centres in the surplus distribution network. But a *qasba* was essentially rural. Thus, it is possible that the *qasbatis* soldiers were also peasants. This also explains why they were not mobile vis-a-vis the non-indigenous *sibandis*. The *qasbatis* who also worked as *manotidars* indicates that they were peasants with resources and therefore invested in *manotidari* or standing surety for revenue payments from the ryots. This also suggests that the Qasbatis were peasants with greater resources.

⁴⁹⁴ A.K.Forbes, op.cit., P.66.

In Saurashtra the Qasbatis are also referred to as *Patanis* though we do not know the reason for naming them so. Ranchodji Amarji, the author of *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, says that the Qasbatis of the region of Somnath-Patan were converted to Islam in some foregone times and since then they were called Patanis.⁴⁹⁵ In the 18th century, these Patanis seem to have spread within Saurashtra finding work as *Sibandis* in the various chieftaincies. Thus, they were to be found at Junagadh, Nawanagar, Bhavnagar, etc. The specific names of the Patani and Qasbati Jamadars mentioned in several instances do not always indicate their religious affiliations. Names like Attaji, Hansoji, Chand Chavda, etc only indicates their local origins. Perhaps these were one of the many groups that were only partially assimilated into Islam during the medieval times which was so common in Gujarat.

Another term that is used in the context of the Qasbatis is Purabiya. Early in the Century sporadic mention of the Purbiyas as a martial group is made in our sources. *Mirat* also mentions Purbiyas along with the Arabs and the Rohillas in generalized terms. Around 1725 Shuja'at Khan and Ibrahim Quli Khan both are mentioned as having a squadron of Purbiya *Sibandis*. However in the course of the Century the use of Purbiya as a distinct martial group in the sources is replaced by its use in an ambiguous way. This is especially true of Saurashtra. One Fakirchand Purbiya garrisoning the fort of Devra in Nawanagar is referred as Qasbati.⁴⁹⁶ Basant Rai Purbiya is again referred to as a Qasbati of Junagadh.⁴⁹⁷ It is possible that the Jamadars

⁴⁹⁵ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P. 66.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.* P.171.

⁴⁹⁷ *Walker-Selections* XXXIX, P.180.

above referred to were basically Purbiyas having a Qasbati following. Anyway by the mid Century the Purbiyas as a distinct martial group is no more referred to in our sources.

Besides the above-mentioned groups the local groups armed with local weapons like swords and sabres. They were potential soldiers who were employed by the local polities on a smaller scale. They otherwise lived on plunder. Amongst them were *Mhers* and *Rabaris* of Porbandar. The Mher soldiers were given the charge of the defence of villages in Porbandar along with the Rabaris.⁴⁹⁸ They could muster three to four thousand men in times of need.⁴⁹⁹ Their area of operation was however confined to Porbandar only. The *Patanwadia Kolis* of north Gujarat also worked as *sibandis* but otherwise frequently took to freebooting. The early British officers found them to be 'untameable plunderers', mostly active in the Rann of Kutch and on the banks of Mahi river.⁵⁰⁰ The *Jhuts* from the town of Warye in north Gujarat also worked as *sibandis* and could muster from 800 to 1000 horsemen well mounted and with sabres and spears.⁵⁰¹ Their area of operation was around the Dassada and Adriana stretch in North Gujarat. They usually had to confront the *Malliks* of Dassada who had established a degree of sovereign authority in this locality. Similarly, the *Meenas* and *Sodhas* in Kutch were used as *sibandis* in case of need.⁵⁰² Otherwise they survived on plundering the areas of

⁴⁹⁸ *Walker-Selections* XXXIX, P.168.

⁴⁹⁹ Walter Hamilton, op.cit., P. 666.

⁵⁰⁰ *Bom. Pres. Gaz. Population-Hindus*, Pp. 241-242.

⁵⁰¹ James MacMurdo, 'Journal of a route through the peninsula of Guzerat in the year 1809-1810', published as Suresh Chandra Ghosh (ed), *The Peninsula of Gujarat in the early 19th century*, New Delhi, P. 94.

⁵⁰² James Burness, op.cit., Pp. 135-136.

Wagad in Kutch and around Radhanpur on the mainland. The Kolis also fall in this category. They were employed frequently by all the chieftains of Gujarat to increase the numbers in an army. The kolis were generally not paid in cash but were allowed to plunder in lieu of remuneration.⁵⁰³

It is important here to take notice of a trend in the composition of the different categories of *sibandi* groups. The categorization was done on the basis of the ethnicity of a group like Arab, Sindhi, Qabati, etc. However within the group there does not seem to be a water-tight regulation regarding the *sibandis* enrolled. For instance, amongst the Arab *sibandis* discharged at Baroda in 1802, one-third of the *sibandis* were Hindustanis.⁵⁰⁴ Amongst the Arabs at Baroda the *Sibandi* composition did not always consist only of the Arabs from Arabia. It also included such Arabs who were said to have been migrated to India in some remote time and mingled with the local population here. The Jamadar in the control of the Lehripura gate in Baroda was one such Arab.⁵⁰⁵ We also find a greater differentiation being made within these categories in our sources as the century proceeded. Earlier in the Century the Arabs were referred to only as Arabs, while by the end of the Century the distinction between Masqati, Yemeni, etc is made. Similarly amongst the Sindhis, the Makranis are especially mentioned as a distinct category.

⁵⁰³ *Mirat. Passim.*

⁵⁰⁴ GOB V, P.230.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. Pp.170-171.

WEAPONS, ETC:

Our sources in this regard only give sporadic information, but some idea of the forms of weapons and artillery and the accessibility of the local Polities to advanced forms of artillery can be had from the information that we come across in the sources. During the Mughal times manufacture of guns was prohibited in the Subahs. The Mughal government had monopolized the manufacture of muskets and perceivably its use as well. Since the beginning of the Maratha rule, however, permission for making guns was openly granted on a charge of half a rupee as tax. Twenty such shops were opened in the city of Ahmedabad with kolis taking to musket manufacture.⁵⁰⁶ During Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad's rule one Mahadji Ravandal was manufacturing arrows, muskets, etc for him.⁵⁰⁷ It seems that arrows, swords and spears were the common form of and extensively used weapons and muskets were costly.

The indigenous weaponry however did not fulfill the demands of the local chieftaincies. The European artillery and war material was considered to be superior. The local chiefs often asked for such material from the Europeans especially the English. This demand for European artillery also gave the Europeans a hold over the local principalities to some extent. Thus, in 1740 Tegh Bakht Khan of Surat requested the English chief of Surat for 2 barrels of gunpowder and 15

⁵⁰⁶ *Mirat*, P.750.

⁵⁰⁷ *HSBSR II*, Lt. 63, P. 198.

mounds of lead. He was apprehending Maratha attack on Surat.⁵⁰⁸ At the same time he also asked the English Chief to not send any warlike material to the Ports under *Ganim* control as that could prove dangerous to him. The English consented to this request.⁵⁰⁹ The Nawab of Cambay made similar requests for artillery and gunpowder to the British at times.⁵¹⁰

The Gaekwads too turned to the English company in case of need for war material. Fatehsing Rao, while fighting his uncle Khande Rao his uncle, had asked for 10 guns and 2000 iron shots and good powder. In addition he also asked the Surat Chief to employ 200 young and brave Europeans, as soldiers. He left the matters of pay and other terms to the discretion of English Chief of Surat.⁵¹¹ During the struggle for power between Fatehsing Rao and Govind Rao Gaekwad both brothers made repeated overtures to the English to supply them artillery and men.⁵¹² In 1791 Manaji Rao Gaekwad asked his *chauthia* of Surat Jayaram Kashi to purchase 100 English guns at that port for the use of *sibandis* under one Shaikh Ismail Jamadar.⁵¹³ Three months later He again requested 100 maunds of English gunpowder and lead worth Rs. 4000 through the same channel.⁵¹⁴ Thus, although the information in this regard is not enough to reach a conclusion but it can be proposed that the European artillery and war material was

⁵⁰⁸ *GOB I*, P.41.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ *GOB II*, P. 151.

⁵¹¹ *GOB III*, P.161.

⁵¹² *GOB II*, P. 179 for FatehsingRao's request and *Ibid.* P.180 for GovindRao's request.

⁵¹³ *HSBSR II*, Lt.5, P: 290.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.* Lt.31, P: 318.

considered to be superior and was in demand amongst the local polities including the Marathas.

According to an observation made by Alexander Walker the chieftains of Saurashtra were not interested in the advanced types of war materials. He mentions that the general objective of these chiefs was to safeguard the towns and cities against the local predators than to combat troops provided with artillery. The forts of Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Nawanagar, Morbi, etc contained a large amount of artillery but were unfamiliar with its use.⁵¹⁵

Possession of weapons seems to be one of the criteria for employment of the *Sibandis*. This is attested by a statement made by Major James Forbes, an English officer in charge of Dabhoi. He quotes a letter from an English officer in the employment of an Indian ruler: *"I was yesterday not a little surprised to be solicited by several Bengal sepoys to give them employ. Upon enquiry I found out to my utter astonishment, they were all deserters, lately arrived from Bengal, with their arms and accoutrements complete. Upwards of fifty are already come & they expect more to join them shortly... At this rate the Marathas will have very little occasion to purchase European firelocks from any other nation, when they are so well supplied by your own people; In this respect they may bid you defiance in case of any future rupture; for to my certain knowledge they have now upwards of 70,000 of English arms in different depots belonging to the sarkar..."*⁵¹⁶ Alexander Walker also found the quality and type

⁵¹⁵ Walker-Selections XXXIX, P. 292.

⁵¹⁶ Oriental Memoirs III, Pp. 438-439.

of weapons to be a deciding factor in fixing the salaries of the *sibandis*.⁵¹⁷ The arms, accoutrements and clothing of the *Sibandis* were their personal property.⁵¹⁸

PAYMENT AND TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Information on this aspect is again not directly available in our sources but they give us some idea of the nature of remuneration and the conditions of employment that were current in 18th century Gujarat. It must be mentioned that because of the mercenary nature of military there were no set regulations. Indeed its organization was open ended. The terms of employment were arbitrary, the immediate need of the *Sibandi* groups and the paying capacity of the employer being the main considerations. The function assigned to the *Sibandis* was also a deciding factor. For instance in case of *mulkigiri* expeditions the *sibandis* were paid more as it was a temporary service. In addition there were prospects of plunder, the plundered articles belonging to the soldiers. On the other hand the *Sibandis* guarding the city-gates were paid less but their prospect of employment was relatively more steady. Let us consider some statistics that is available with us. In the Gaekwad army a *bargir*, a horseless soldier, was paid from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8 per month.⁵¹⁹ In 1782 Hamid Jamadar was paid Ra.24,000 for guarding the gates of Ahmedabad for four

⁵¹⁷ *GOB VI*, P. 186.

⁵¹⁸ *Fall of the Mughal Empire II*, P. 208.

⁵¹⁹ *Baroda State Gazetteer I*, Pp. 635-636.

months.⁵²⁰ The number of *Sibandis* employed under the Jamadar and other information is not mentioned in our sources. The gunners entertained by the Peshwa in 1764 were paid salaries ranging from Rs. 13 to Rs. 85 per month.⁵²¹ Clearly there is a lot of difference in the salaries from one gunner to another in this instance. According to another document dealing with the Peshwa a detachment of Cavalry under Ramoji Bhosle was paid as follows for the year 1742-43: There were 90 Bargirs including 44 musketteers and spearsmen who were paid @ Rs.413 combined for a month and a half. This comes to Rs. 4 ½ per soldier. In addition there were 610 Sawars and their combined monthly salary came to Rs. 4800 i.e, around Rs.8 per sawar per month.⁵²² During 1774-75 when the English laid siege to Salsette the Peshwa asked his *sardars* to recruit around 1000 men @ Rs. 8 each for a soldier and Rs. 15 to 20 for a Jamadar. A similar order was given to the *Sarsubah* of Ahmedabad Appaji Ganesh. He further made known his preference for the Arab *Sibandis* as they were considered to be good soldiers.⁵²³ Thus on the basis of the meager information it seems that the salary of a single *Sibandi* sawar generally amounted to around Rs. 6 to 8 and that of a horseless sawar or an infantryman was ranged from 4 to 6 rupees. The statement of Alexander Walker also supports our calculation. He states that the pay of the *Sibandis* is regulated by the caste of the people (by caste he probably means the ethnic category), the quality of their arms and also the reputation of their chief, the Jamadar. The pay of each *sibandi* is between Rs.6 to

⁵²⁰ *HSBSR II*, Lt. 132, P. 249.

⁵²¹ G.S.Sardesai, *Peshwa Daftar*- 45, op.cit., P.205.

⁵²² *Ibid III*, P. 266.

⁵²³ G.C.Vad & K.B.Marathe, *Peshwa Daftar, Sawai Madhav Rao Peshwa*, Vol. VI, Pt.II, Pp. 3-4.

Rs. 10 and that of the Jamadar from 100 to 150.⁵²⁴ In many cases the *sibandis* employed locally were not paid salaries as such but were allowed to plunder the areas invaded. This was true mostly for the Kolis and later pindaris. Some times when a ruler could not pay his *sibandis* due to paucity of resources he would take his *sibandis* on plundering expeditions in the countryside to satisfy their demands of arrears of pay.

It must be borne in mind that the salaries paid in cash were over and above the food and other basic emoluments that were customary to be provided to the *sibandis*. This is attested from a statement made by Charl. Gray, major Command of 75th Regiment of the British troops, while camping near Baroda on sept, 10th 1802. He says:

"... The representation without fully explaining to your Hon'able Board, the difference of the pay of the natives in Baroda, and the pay of our troops, and followers, will appear no doubt glaring; but it is to be considered, that under all native governments, the fluctuation in the prizes of Bazaar articles, makes no difference to them, as they invariably receive their pay (atleast a greater part) in grain and cloths."

In case of Baroda⁵²⁵ the *sibandis* were employed for two years at a time. Upon appointment a *sibandi* was given 1/3rd of his total two

⁵²⁴ GOB VI, P. 186.

⁵²⁵ The Sibandis at Baroda had to forego a large chunk of their salaries as deductions under various heads. Malpatti was deducted for the maintenance of the wrestlers, Dharmadaya patti for the maintenance of the Brahmanas, Aher Patti charged when the darbar was held on auspicious occasion, Chandela patti was given when the heir was formally acknowledged, Nazrana amounting to an year's salary, was given when the son of a sibandi succeeded to his post. For deductions were made as allowance for high officers like Khasgiwale, Majmudar, Fadnis, Bakshi, Jasuds, etc. *Baroda State Gazetteer*, Pp. 636-637.

years pay, which was called *Rozi*. The remaining $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ was given upon the expiration of the said two years. At this time the *sibandis* had the option of either taking their discharge or continuing in the same way.⁵²⁶ It seems that employment for at least four months was a custom adhered to by these polities. It ensured some stability to the *Sibandis*.

Another piece of information lets us glean into the terms of Employment. In a letter from Gopika Bai of Sankheda to Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad dated 1780, she asks Fatehsing Rao to talk to the Jamadars in her employment making it clear to them that the weapons lost or broken are never made good but only the loss of Horses are replaced.⁵²⁷ Whether Fatehsing Rao interfered or not is not known but in 1791 Sayaji Rao Gaekwad ordered his men to compensate one Jamadar Gulhala for the loss of men and Horses which was according to the practice. He further ordered to pay up for the loss of weapons as well.⁵²⁸ Thus one can say that the terms were rather arbitrarily decided and were subject to change according to situation rather than following a set of regulations as such.

In this atmosphere the salaries of the *Sibandis* were often not paid to them. Sometimes the pretext of non-payment was the failure of their expedition. Many recorded instances point towards this trend. Most 18th century principalities faced the problem of not being able to pay the outstanding salaries to the *Sibandis*. The acute paucity of resources seems to be the basic reason for this. In 1756-57 the salaries

⁵²⁶ *GOB V*, Pp. 174-175

⁵²⁷ *HSBSR II*, Lt. 116, P.235.

⁵²⁸ *HSBSR III*, Lt. 9, P.293.

of the *Sibandis* employed by Bhagwant Rao to conquer Cambay were in arrears. Bhagwant Rao failed to conquer Cambay and in the subsequent negotiations it was decided that the *Sibandis* should be given bills on Momin Khan II in settlement of their claims. However this amount could not be recovered despite the endeavours of Sadashiv Damodar, the *Sarsubah* of Ahmedabad and his *peshkar*, Tukoji.⁵²⁹ The Nawabs of Junagadh, Bahadur Khan, Mahabat Khan and Hamid Khan were repeatedly besieged and confined within the *darbar* on their failure to pay the *Sibandis*. Mahabat Khan once invited the Sindhis and Khants in ousting the Arab *Sibandis* who had turned violent demanding their salaries.⁵³⁰ They had to be pacified once the Arab *sibandis* took to plundering. Lack of resources with these rulers was a constant problem and Nawabs of Junagadh several times took loans from their Diwan, members of the Amarji family, to pay the *Sibandis*. The Naib-Nazim also faced the same problem.

The British officers frequently accuse the Arab *sibandis* of changing sides on the non-payment of salaries. For instance in 1774 when Fatehsing Rao Gaekwad was defeated by Govind Rao Gaekwad at Shuklatirth near Bharuch he fled with only a small party of soldiers. The remaining *sibandis* consisting mainly of Arab and Sindh *sibandis* negotiated terms for themselves and took to Govind Rao's service.⁵³¹ Later they were similarly entertained by Raghoba when Govind Rao could not pay their arrears. They however remained inactive in the decisive battle between Raghoba and the Poona forces which Raghoba

⁵²⁹ *Mirat*, P. 778.

⁵³⁰ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, op.cit, P. 187.

⁵³¹ *GOB III*, P. 182.

took to mean treachery on their part. This was again on account of arrears of salaries.⁵³² They were then engaged by Poona. Similarly the Gaekwad troops consisting of Sindhis refused to move into a battle while the second Anglo-Maratha war was being fought. For this Alexander Walker contemptibly states that the only object of these troops is to sell their services at the highest price.⁵³³ There are various such instances of 'treacheous conduct' on part of the *sibandis*. The priority of the troops undoubtedly was their pay. Infact this is borne by a conversation through letters between Mohammad Abud, one of the principal Jamadars of Baroda and Alexander Walker. Through an agreement made by the Arab *sibandis* with the English Abud had agreed to leave Gujarat and not join any enemy of the Gaekwads after the English takeover of Baroda. He defied this agreement and attempted to join Kanhoji Rao Gaekwad who had rebelled against Anand Rao, the Gaekwad chieftain. When asked to fulfill the terms of the agreement Abud replied: "...as I am a sepoy, should any one give me a seer of Bajri, with him will I proceed; and if you have any employment for me, I am ready to serve you...".⁵³⁴ This however does not rule out loyalty. Over and above the payment of their salaries the *Sibandis* always served their masters loyally. In case of Ranchodji Amarji the Arabs always sided with him in factional fights at Junagadh because he always paid their salaries promptly. The uncertainty of being paid by the chiefs concerned was the reason for the clamour for pay amongst the *Sibandis*. It should also be borne in mind that the *Sibandis* especially the Arabs and Sindhis used to

⁵³² Ibid. P. 242.

⁵³³ GOB VI, P.235.

⁵³⁴ GOB V, Pp.102-103.

migrate to Gujarat in the hope of procuring employment and making money, therefore payment in this case became important for them. After certain years of service they used to go back to their country.

NON-INDIGENOUS SIBANDIS AND BRITISH

CONFRONTATION

Amongst all the groups of *Sibandis* the Arab *sibandis* were particularly sought after by the rulers of 18th Century Gujarat. Their efficiency and valour comes to the fore in an incident of struggle for the region between Hamid Khan and Shuja'at Khan. While Pilaji was in alliance with Hamid Khan he looted the belongings of Rustam Ali Khan. Only the supplies kept under the guard of the Arab squadron was safe.⁵³⁵ By the mid century their demand over the other groups had risen considerably. The Marathas, local chieftains and English all sought to enlist Arab *Sibandis*. At Bharuch the regular army consisted of permanent and temporary *sibandis* divided into small units known as *Bairaq*s. Each *Bairaq* was under the command of a *Jamadar*. The permanent *sibandis* were mostly Arabs.⁵³⁶ In 1758 when the Cambay Chief was asked to enlist some Arabs as soldiers for Surat factory, the English found their demands 'very unreasonable'. The Cambay chief was ordered to discharge these soldiers in the most frugal manner and

⁵³⁵ *Mirat*, P.430.

⁵³⁶ *MD III* Lt. 34, 74, 143, 193, 196, 202, 207 & 233, in *HOB*, P. 134.

employ some native soldiers in their stead.⁵³⁷ A year earlier Surat chief complained to Bombay regarding the importance given by the Nawabs of Surat, Cambay and the Marathas to 'all sorts of people who are in the least acquainted with the use of arms' which made those soldiers enhance their prices and the English could hardly recruit any with their price.⁵³⁸ Another English traveller, an English officer in early 19th Century makes a fleeting remark that the Arabs have established their influence throughout Kathiawad and Kutch.⁵³⁹ When the British attempted to establish their hegemony in Gujarat the most formidable opposition came from the Arab *sibandis* playing an important part in all the major principalities of Gujarat.

Amongst all the Principalities, perhaps Baroda exhibited the highest concentration of the Arab *Sibandis*. Let us take a closer look at the configuration of the Gaekwad army. The army consisted of two parts (1) the regular army and (2) the *Sibandis*. The regular army consisted of different *pagas*. *paga* is something like a regiment with a *pagadar* as its head. These *pagas* consisted of Maratha soldiers who had followed Pilaji Rao and Damaji Rao and settled down in Gujarat. The *ain'huzurat Paga*, *huzurat chandi paga* and the *patki paga* were considered to be important and maintained by the government.⁵⁴⁰ Other than the Government *pagas* there were *Silahdars* who had their own *Pagas* maintained by different nobles.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ GOB I, P. 126.

⁵³⁸ Ibid. P.115.

⁵³⁹ Suresh Chandra, op.cit, P.64.

⁵⁴⁰ Baroda State Gazetteer, P.635.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid. P.636.

The second category of the Baroda army included the *Sibandis*. This section consisted of mercenaries from various ethnic groups, Chief among them being the Arabs and the Sindhis. The Arabs came to be employed regularly and on a large scale during the reign of Fatehsing Rao and Govind Rao increased their numbers. The Arabs in Baroda mainly consisted of two groups divided on the basis of the tribes to which they belonged viz., Yafees and the Harthees. Besides these there existed a variety of inferior and independent chieftains.⁵⁴² On the eve of the establishment of British hegemony at Baroda there were 7,000 Arab *sibandis*, horse and foot in Baroda town and 6,000 horse and 4000 foot with Babaji⁵⁴³. They were under the command of four principal Jamadars - sultan Jaffir and Yahya Bin Ahmad belonging to the Yafees tribe and Mohammad Mazkur and Mohammad Abud belonging to the Harthees group. The yafees were considered to be mild in temperament while the Harthees were aggressive.

With the death of Govind Rao Gaekwad and the imprisonment of Kanhoji Rao,⁵⁴⁴ the Arab *sibandis* became very powerful in the kingdom. They made Raoji Appaji (Raoba) *diwan*, increased the number of *sibandis* under their command and took control of the town-gates and fortifications in all important towns of the chieftaincy. They also kept the charge of Kanhoji Rao as a check on Raoba. The chieftains during this period did not pay the *Sibandis* directly. Their

⁵⁴² GOB V, P.149.

⁵⁴³ Babaji was the brother of Raoba and the mulkgiri commander of Baroda army.

⁵⁴⁴ Kanhoji Rao was the regent of Anand Rao Gaekwad, the successor of Govind Rao Gaekwad. The ruler was of a weak disposition. Kanhoji Rao attempted to reduce the number of Arab *Sibandis* and therefore the Arab Jamadars deposed and imprisoned him. They brought Raoba as *diwan* who undertook the administration on behalf of the chief.

salaries were discharged by the *shroffs* (bankers). These *shroffs* in turn were farmed the revenues corresponding to the amount of the salaries they defrayed. In fact all the revenues of the Baroda principality were farmed out on one or the other pretext. Thus the whole expenditure of the administration was defrayed by the *shroffs* instead of the rulers. There were mainly five *shroffs* during this time called *potedars* or State financiers who defrayed all the expenses of the administration. Amongst these five, two had taken precedence over the others viz., Shamal Parikh and Mangal Das. They were also the *vakils* of the Arab *sibandis* which made their power formidable. The Arab *sibandis* were known to be under the influence of these two *shroffs*.⁵⁴⁵ The two *shroffs* interfered much in the administration of the principality as well. The Arabs at Baroda were publicly distinguished as belonging to each of the two *shroffs*.⁵⁴⁶

The rebellion of Malhar Rao of Kadi⁵⁴⁷ provided a pretext whereby Raoba brought the British troops into Baroda. The British, on their part, had territorial interests in the region. They were given *chaurasi pargana* and the Gaekwad share of Surat *chauth* by Govind Rao before his death. The Raoba administration was delaying its cession under some pretext. The British decided to support Raoba upon receiving the above mentioned territories. The British were

⁵⁴⁵ GOB V, Pp. 164 & 167.

⁵⁴⁶ GOB IV, P.167.

⁵⁴⁷ Malhar Rao of Kadi was called as the Jagirdar of Kadi, a parallel line of the Gaekwads but subordinate to Baroda. Kadi was a district in North Gujarat which was given as Jagir by Damaji Rao Gaekwad to Khande Rao Gaekwad, his brother. The Jagirdar was liable to pay a tribute Nazrana to the Gaekwad chief of Baroda. Because of the usurpation of regency by Raoba and Kanhoji's imprisonment Malhar Rao refused to give Nazrana due for three successive years and also raised disturbances in the northern districts of the Gaekwads. This episode is referred to as Kadi rebellion in the British sources.

approached by both parties, Kanhoji Rao and Raoba, but the British choose to support Raoba upon considering the weak disposition of the chief and the amount of dependence the *diwan* would always have on the English to secure his own position.⁵⁴⁸ Raoba and the Bombay President also secretly agreed to reduce the strength of the Arabs after dealing with Malhar Rao. Initially the English tried to allay the apprehensions of the Arab *sibandis* through 'Idrussi syed, the religious head of the Arab *sibandis* in Gujarat who had considerable influence with them.⁵⁴⁹

Upon his arrival, Alexander Walker, the first British resident at Baroda, found that the expenses of maintaining the Arab *sibandis* were Rs. 36 lakhs. He further observed that to establish complete British hegemony the Arabs were the only 'material obstacle' and advised that they should not only be reduced but completely discharged.⁵⁵⁰ With the end of the Kadi war in may 1802, the exercise of discharging the Arabs was begun. The reduction of the Arabs took place in two phases in which the Company advanced 15 lakhs in the first phase and 6 lakhs in the second phase to the Gaekwad administration as it was unable to collect the required amount to pay the outstanding salaries of the *sibandis*. Walker also induced the local *shroffs* to advance Rs. 5 lakhs in the first phase and Rs. 6 lakhs in the second phase on the security of the Company towards the same objective.

⁵⁴⁸ *GOB IV*, P.104.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Pp. 18-19.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.* P.169; *GOB V*, P.185.

While this was in process, Walker also demanded to be handed over the charge of all city-gates in the control of the Arab *Jamadars* as well as the charge of Kanhoji Rao to the British residency. This alarmed the *sibandis* who perceived a threat to their power. They subsequently confined Anand Rao, the Gaekwad chief in his *darbar* and released Kanhoji Rao. Three of the Arab *Jamadars*, Yahya, Abud and Jafar also refused to hand over the charge of the city-gates, despite receiving their discharge. Anand Rao was being confined more severely since 29th Nov, 1802 and the *sibandis* in other towns also were creating disturbance. Thus, the British began armed action and attacked Lehripura gate⁵⁵¹ where all the Arabs had gathered to fight the British. The *Jamadars* realized their end and agreed to Walker's terms. The British troops took control of the fort and the chief was set free. An agreement was reached with the Arabs on 28th December, 1802, whereby they were required to (1) avoid all contacts with the domestic enemies of the Gaekwads; (2) Leave Gujarat upon receiving their outstanding salaries and (3) Surrender the control of all city-gates under their charge to the British troops. By the middle of January 1803 all Arab *Jamadars*, except a few that were retained, left Gujarat. Only Abud did not comply by the agreement and later joined Kanhoji Rao. Since then the Arab *sibandis* ceased to be important at Baroda.

Subsequently, in 1809 we find the British authorities wanting to disband the remaining number of Arabs from Baroda in what was termed as the 'reforms' at Baroda. Major Walker was against it and the reason in his own words was: "*they are undoubtedly the best*

⁵⁵¹ GOB V, Pp. 202 & 179.

*infantry in the service, and a few of them are probably necessary to give some degree of respectable efficiency to that part of the Gaekwad establishment where actual service may be expected, particularly in Kathiawad where also from their dispersed among the different chieftains of the country they are considerable use as mediators. There will however be no occasion to encourage their employment and without discovering any perceptible wish for the discharge of the few who are no longer formidable, they will be found gradually to disappear from the service".*⁵⁵²

At Nawanagar,⁵⁵³ Jam Jasaji, the chief of Nawanagar was unhappy with the imposition of British over lordship and being subject to British arbitration in disputes with Kutch. He resisted these attempts by the British and refused to acknowledge the security for revenue settlements given earlier to Alexander Walker. The Arab *sibandis* in Jam's service also were antagonistic of the British. The confrontation of the British with the *sibandis* of Jam took place in two incidents. This kind of animosity between the British soldiers and the Arabs was seen first in case of Baroda. While the Kadi episode was in progression two incidents took place where an Arab soldier killed an English officer.⁵⁵⁴ By this time this animosity seems to have increased. Here an English officer was attacked near Murpur, a fort in Nawanagar, by some Arab soldiers guarding the fort.⁵⁵⁵ The fort had around 250 Arabs. Even after repeated complaints the Jam refused to hand over the said Arabs. While things were in this situation the Jam

⁵⁵² *GOB VIII*, Pp.186-187.

⁵⁵³ A major principality in the North of Saurashtra.

⁵⁵⁴ *GOB V*, Pp. 159-160.

⁵⁵⁵ *GOB VIII*, Pp. 398-399.

attempted to take the bond of *fail Zamini* undertaken on his behalf by one Naji, an Arab Jamadar of some importance. Naji stood security towards its performance by the Jam and in return received the charge of one of the gates through British influence.⁵⁵⁶ The Jam now forced Naji to give away the bond to him as that would destroy the evidence of the Jam having undertaken such an agreement in the first place. The Jamadar refused to comply with the Jam's orders since he believed it not in accord with the Arab's character to back on a Security given and lessen his consequence with the British and the Gaekwads.⁵⁵⁷ Raghunathji, the *diwan* of Junagadh, who also had considerable influence at Nawanagar, mediated and settled the issue, but it proved to be temporary. With the renewal of dissensions with the British the Jam again asked the same thing of Naji. Thus, Naji left Jam's service and went to Dhrol on the advice of James Carnac.⁵⁵⁸ In the armed struggle that followed the Jam could not compete with the superior strength of the British and accepted their authority. Then the British asked the Jam to discharge the Arabs, the Sindhis, Makranis and other foreign *sibandis* in his employment.⁵⁵⁹ He was allowed only to keep 300 *chela* or Arab bodyguards.⁵⁶⁰ The British also took over the port of Sayla from the Jam. Around about the same time another such incident took place at Phelan where a Sindhi *sibandi* attacked another of the English officers. It was later found that the Jam was not a party to the incident and the Sindhi was not a regular part of his army. The *sibandi escaped* and the British did not pursue the matter

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. P.431.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid. P.446.

⁵⁵⁹ *GOB VIII*, P.452.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. P.462.

further.⁵⁶¹ In the final settlement with the joint Gaekwad-British *sarkar* the Jam requested to keep in his employment 20 barracks consisting of 10 to 12 Arabs and others Hindustanis in each barrack to administer his extensive dominions.⁵⁶² It was granted by the English on the condition that the Gaekwad chief shall be authorized to monitor the troops and in case of the *sibandis* being not required they would discharge them.⁵⁶³ This agreement took place in 1812.

In case of Junagadh the British had to confront the Sindhi *sibandis* before they could establish complete hegemony. In 1811 Bahadur Khan Nawab died leading to a succession struggle. On the one side was an alleged 'spurious',⁵⁶⁴ son of the Nawab who was supported by the Amarji family. Raghunathji was the *diwan* but has lost all his influence in the *darbar*. He had the support of some inferior Arab *jamadars*. On the other hand was the illegitimate son of the deceased Nawab and the accepted heir. He ascended the throne with the title of Bahadur Khan II. It seems that illegitimacy was not an impediment to sovereignty in case of Junagadh.⁵⁶⁵ He had the support of an important Arab Jamadar Umar Mukhasan who had Sindhi following. Immediately, Jamadar Umar Mukhasan took charge of all the forts of Junagadh chieftaincy and employed 10 to 15 thousand

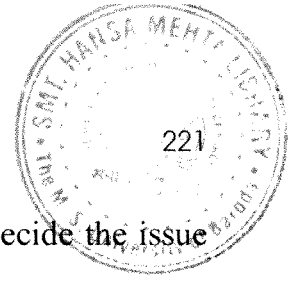
⁵⁶¹ Ibid. Pp. 477-478.

⁵⁶² Ibid. P.482.

⁵⁶³ Ibid. P.483.

⁵⁶⁴ Bahadur Khan II who eventually succeeded to the *masnad* of Junagadh was not a legitimate son of the deceased Nawab Hamid Khan. On the other hand the supposed legitimate son was found not to have been born to the Nawab in the Nawab's lifetime itself, therefore his pretensions to the *masnad* were set aside. GOB VIII, Junagadh Succession issue, Pp. 332-336.

⁵⁶⁵ GOB VIII, P. 341. Illegitimacy was not a problem because of established practice of illegitimate offspring succeeding to the *masnad* in case of no legitimate offspring being there.



new *sibandis*. Both parties turned to the Gaekwad to decide the issue of succession.

Subsequently, James Carnac, the Resident of Baroda, observed that the *mahals* and towns were being managed by the Sindhi *sibandis*.⁵⁶⁶ The British policy found it imperative to dispossess the Sindhis of power, since their being in power would deprive the Nawab of his 'rightful' authority.⁵⁶⁷ Although we are not informed as to the precise way in which this was done, but by 1814 the Sindhis were dispossessed of the control of the forts and lands they held as security to the payment of their arrears of salaries. The forts of Bucor and Mewar held by *Jamadars* Umardura Sindhi and Mohammad Umar Arab was handed over to the Government of Junagadh without any struggle. Similar negotiations were being carried on for the surrender of forts of Una and Delwada. Their arrears were settled in a similar way as that of the Baroda *Sibandis* and were discharged.⁵⁶⁸ In 1814-15 Jamadar Umar Mukhasan was dispossessed of his position in the *darbar* allegedly as he attempted to harm to the Nawab and was expelled from the town of Junagadh.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, the British eliminated another powerful section of the non-British soldiers and their hegemony was complete in Junagadh as well.

However following these developments a last attempt was made by the Arabs to undermine the British authority with the support of Triambak Rao Danglia, the Peshwa's *sarsubah*. In 1814 Peshwa

⁵⁶⁶ *GOB VIII*, Pp. 346-347.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.* P. 347.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Pp. 348-349.

⁵⁶⁹ *Statistical account of Junagadh*, op.cit., Pp.54-55.

refused to give *ijara* of his share of revenues in Gujarat as done earlier to the Gaekwads and sent his own *sarsubah*. However a tacit agreement was reached to the effect that the English would collect the revenues from Saurashtra and North Gujarat on behalf of the Peshwa, as settled in the revenue settlement agreements. It was also proposed that the *Sarsubah* should not intervene in the affairs of Saurashtra. The exact terms and conditions were still under negotiations. Danglia who was a staunch opponent of the English, attempted to stop the British from accruing the benefits of the revenue settlements. In 1814 the Jam Jasaji of Nawanagar died and was succeeded by his son. He was antagonist of the British authority in his kingdom. Danglia befriended the Jam. The Arab Jamadars who were discharged from the various principalities were also given service by Danglia. This came to the notice of the British officers through certain letters intercepted by them. He induced the Masqati Arabs in the Peninsula to rebel against the British aggression.⁵⁷⁰ The Arabs guarding the towns of Hariana, Kondorna and Pardhari forts in Saurashtra rebelled. The British undertook armed action against them and expelled them. They later took refuge in Jodiya bandar. Jodiya was being governed by the descendants of Mehraman Khawas,⁵⁷¹ who also enlisted a large number of Arabs discharged by Husain Mian of Cutch.⁵⁷² The chief of Wankaner also joined in this league against the British and ousted the Gaekwad officers in his principality. He further enlisted a number of Arabs and declared war against the Gaekwad.⁵⁷³ Danglia directed his

⁵⁷⁰ GOB IX, P. 111.

⁵⁷¹ Mehraman Khawas was the *diwan* of Jamanagar and enjoyed much influence there.

⁵⁷² GOB IX, Pp. 110-111.

⁵⁷³ Ibid. P. 111.

adherents to collect all Musqatis.⁵⁷⁴ Even in July 1815 the Masqatis were encamped at Jodiya and the British were contemplating attack on that area.⁵⁷⁵ Nothing however seems to have resulted from these preparations as Danglia was recalled to Poona by the Peshwa and soon got involved in the controversial murder of Gangadhar Shastri. Our documentation does not provide any further information as to how the British dealt with this situation. But it could be conjectured that large number of them, if not the whole, must have been discharged.

A general idea of the British policy towards these powerful foreign *sibandis* can be had from certain observations made by the British officers. During the second Anglo-Maratha war (1803) General Wellesley advised Alexander Walker, to employ *Sibandis* in his establishment. This was for two reasons. In the territories belonging to the Marathas there were many groups of people whose only mode of subsistence was military service. With the establishment of the British rule in various parts of Peshwa's dominions these people were left with no other option but that of plundering as rebels or seeking employment in other principalities who were the enemies of the British. With their local knowledge they could prove to be dangerous enemies. Secondly, the regular disciplined British troops were needed in the war against the Marathas. Replacing them with the *sibandis* for the mundane services would save expenses for the

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid. Pp. 45-46.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid. P.122. Also *HSBSR IV*, Lt. 82, P. 727. VithalRao Devaji, Gaekwad Sarsubah of Kathiawad, informs AnandRao Gaekwad about the quelling of the rebellion by the Masqatis by the English forces.

Company.⁵⁷⁶ Immediate to disbanding the Arab *Sibandis* and replacing them with the British battalions, Major Walker was of the opinion that the British should '*disgust them (the Gaekwads) with their own troops or render them useless and contemptible*' by providing the military assistance promptly, liberally and extensively on every occasion. He also apprehended that if there was any dissatisfaction on the part of the chiefs they could still employ other sources of military help viz, the *Sibandis*. In this case the influence of the Company would be endangered.⁵⁷⁷ He further says that even if the proposed measure was not fair, it would certainly benefit the British in this region.⁵⁷⁸

SOCIAL ROLE OF THE SIBANDIS

It has already been mentioned that the Jamadars especially Arab and Sindhi stood as securities in monetary and non-monetary transactions. Such transactions were between private persons as well as between the government and the people and at times between two principalities. The Arab Jamadars, not only of Baroda but also of other chieftaincies, several times stood security safeguarding the interests of the private parties in transactions with the government. First mention of a Jamadar standing security to enforce an agreement

⁵⁷⁶ *GOB VI*, Pp. 158-159.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid*, P.163.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

is made in connection of one Ghulam Husain Khan who got the post of Qazi at Ahmedabad on the payment of Rs. 2000 to Momin Khan II in 1756-57. He got the document attested by Mohammad Hashim Bakshi and Mohammad Lal Rohilla Jamadar.⁵⁷⁹ At Baroda a *sanad* was granted by Anand Rao Gaekwad to shankerji bin Sunderji, *desai* of *pargana* Balesar on 27th April, 1801, granting the *desaigiri* rights to him, the *zamin* was given by Yahya (Huya) ben Nasir Jamadar, Umaid ben Hamid, Mohammad Abud Jamadar and Sultan Jafar all four Principal Jamadars of Baroda.⁵⁸⁰ In the battle with Malhar Rao a group of Sikh *Sibandis* requested employment with the Baroda army. They were taken into Babaji's service on Arab Jamadars' security.⁵⁸¹ In 1802 a parwana dated 7th August was given to the Nawab of Cambay by AnandRao Gaekwad assuring the Nawab that no Gaekwad troops will invade his territories on account of the Gaekwad claim of Ghasdana. This parwana was signed by Arab Jamadars Mubarak Ben Said and Mohammad Abud.⁵⁸² At Bharuch the documents of securities given by Bharuch Nawabs was counter signed by the Arab and Qasbati Jamadars as witnesses.⁵⁸³ Similarly the Arab Jamadars of Junagadh also stood securities ensuring timely payment of salaries.⁵⁸⁴ Jamadar Umar Mukhasan stood security to an amount of money to be paid by the Nawab of Junagadh to the *shroffs* of the Gaekwad army.⁵⁸⁵ He also undertook to secure the provisions made for Bibi Kamal Bakht, wife of Nawab Hamid Khan of Junagadh for

⁵⁷⁹ *Mirat*, Pp.811-812.

⁵⁸⁰ *Aitchison, Vol-VI*, op.cit., P.335.

⁵⁸¹ *GOB IV*, P.198.

⁵⁸² *GOB VIII*, P. 494.

⁵⁸³ *MD III Lt.196* in *HOB*, P. 134.

⁵⁸⁴ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P.187.

⁵⁸⁵ *GOB VIII*, P.342.

her maintenance.⁵⁸⁶ In the agreement concluded between the Amarji family and Nawab Mahabat Khan of Junagadh the Sindhi and Arab Jamadars stood security to see its terms fulfilled.⁵⁸⁷ Similarly in 1802 Fatehsing Rao II, a younger brother of Anand Rao, who had left Baroda due to some problem earlier, was invited to come back. He was promised safety and the office of regent which agreement had the security of seven Arab Jamadars.⁵⁸⁸ It was this role at the social level that gave a certain degree of power to the Jamadars to dictate terms to the rulers and thereby augment their importance. It also reflects the amount of trust vested in these Jamadars and their ability to enforce the stipulated terms of a transaction. These conditions contributed towards making the *Sibandis* an important power group in the region.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. P.342.

⁵⁸⁷ *Tarikh-i-Sorath*, P.175.

⁵⁸⁸ *HSBSR IV*, Lt. 52, P. 509.