In the time of trees and sorrows : nature, power, and memory in Rajasthan/ Ann Grodzins Gold; Bhoju Ram Gujar; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002 (1-29, 328-334 p.)

1. THE PAST OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF THE PAST

These are small voices which are drowned in the noise of statist commands. That is why we don't hear them. That is also why it is up to us to make that extra effort, develop the special skills and above all cultivate the disposition to hear these voices and interact with them. For they have many stories to tell—stories which for their complexity are unequaled by statist discourse and indeed opposed to its abstract and oversimplifying modes.—Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History"

There is good reason to believe vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful.—Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*

This book relates some complex stories of a small place: the twenty-seven-village former kingdom of Sawar (Savar Sattaisa) in the modern state of Rajasthan in India. Differing from most accounts of the past in Rajasthan, our book describes conditions and events from the viewpoints of subjects, not rulers. We attempt to portray a critical and pivotal era—the 1930s through the 1950s—in the translated words of largely nonliterate farmers, herders, leatherworkers, and others who recollect the "time of great kings" (*rājā-mahārājā kā jamānā*).[1] Although occasionally we consulted persons who once held power, and also visited archives, the bulk and heart of our book is conversations with those who formerly endured a double oppression under colonial and regional rulers. Through these conversations we present not only

appraisals of past autocracy but experiences of the sudden and radical transformation to democracy and modernity as these have been incorporated and interpreted "below" the realms of power.

Early in 2000, Bhoju Ram Gujar proposed seven possible titles for our coalescing manuscript. One possessed rhyme, rhythm, and economy in the original Hindī, but translates rather awkwardly as "The Rulers' Story, the People's Testimony" (*rāj kahānī prajā kī jabānī*). Although we ultimately chose a different phrase, I would like to stress here the importance of Bhoju's deliberate equation in this formulation of "story" (*kahānī*) with "oral testimony" (*jabānī*).[2] We offer these stories, and they were offered to us, as a kind of testimony. By "story" we mean something that has been told, and that is worth retelling, with feeling. By "testimony" we mean something witnessed, stated, and affirmed to be true; another meaning given for *jabānī* is "affidavit."[3]

Urvashi Butalia evokes a similar conjunction of subjective experience with witnessed truth when she argues for the worth of her own work with memories in her book of oral narratives about India's partition. She considers any preconceived contrast between memory and historical fact as a misapprehension: "But to me, the way people choose to remember an event, a history, is at least as important as what one might call the 'facts' of that history, for after all, these latter are not self-evident givens; instead, they too are interpretations, as remembered or recorded by one individual or another" (2000:8). Each person's story has intrinsic value—not just as a crude source to be refined into data, but in the telling. Like Butalia, we do not weigh speakers' interpretations against supposed actuality. Rather, we layer multiple versions to achieve a textured, contoured narrative density.[4]

In the epigraph to this chapter, Ranajit Guha exhorts his fellow historians not just to exert "extra effort" in attending to small voices, but to realize the need to cultivate a "disposition" for such attentiveness. Anthropologists—however maligned they find themselves at present—might be permitted a fleeting satisfaction in this regard. Has not such attention been their bottom-line métier from the beginning?[5]

For me and Bhoju, listening has been a basic mode of operation, although our respective motivations and trajectories are disparate. For Bhoju these voices are after all from his own community; for me, as an ethnographer and a foreign guest, these voices are of people who

have not only taken pains to educate me more or less from scratch, but have made me feel at home among them. Certainly, Bhoju and I differ from Guha's presumed audience of Indian historians educated in a predominantly European disciplinary tradition. For better or worse, our capacity to hear small voices has been unimpaired by grand visions.[6] By this I do not mean to imply that either of us came to this work without plenty of preconceptions, but rather that by virtue of stumbling unaware and unprepared into history we had no sense of what the stories we gathered should reveal by way of the larger narratives in which they are, of course, embedded and by which they are to a degree controlled.

Our book is a product not only of our isolated and unique collaboration (a Jewish female cultural anthropologist born in Chicago in 1946, and a Gujar Hindu male schoolteacher, now headmaster, born in Ghatiyali in 1956), but of twenty years of sea changes in anthropology and social science that have filtered into our aims, methods, and styles. Three such changes are perhaps most relevant to this work. First is the shift from univocal to dialogic or polyvocal narration; from monologic claims for ethnographic authority to practices of coproduction, whatever the (considerable) risks entailed.[7] Our collaboratively engendered book gives pride of place to the words of elderly Sawar villagers who, as they sometimes put it, filled our tapes for us. These persons have lived through multiple, radical changes. Their memories include transformations from simultaneous subjection to both a well-known local despot and a remote colonial power, to participation as citizens of a modern, bureaucratic, and postcolonial democracy. Concurrently the Sawar elders have seen their landscape transformed from one rich in biodiversity of trees and wildlife to one where hillsides have been stripped of indigenous growth and are now dominated by a single alien species. Sawar residents experience and evaluate these and many other changes in varied, nuanced, and critical ways.

The second massive trend that influenced our work is the departure from assertions that each culture yields a coherent, systematic, elegantly chartable universe of ordered meanings and values. Some ethnographers now deny any such monolithic constructs, and replace them with sheer revelry in fraught negotiations, contested realities, and displays of cacophonous discourse.[8] We have accordingly at-

tempted to record individual Sawar voices with particular care, to situate persons as social actors speaking from unique life histories, and in general to avoid dissolving disparate identities and positions and to present multiple and sometimes conflicting versions of the same tales.

Finally, and most directly connected with the content of this work, are several strands rebinding anthropology with history and reworking ethnohistory, oral history, and environmental history or landscape memory into the mainstreams of ethnographic knowledge.[9] Originating separately from but eventually converging with and cross-fertilizing these efforts is the influential and vastly important work of the subaltern historians in the subcontinent.[10] From their inspiration, accomplishments, and impact we gather confidence in the worth of our endeavors, while remaining well aware that our project is genealogically different from theirs.

I would argue that all the changes I have evoked here are healthy ones; they keep anthropology worth doing. I sometimes hear colleagues of my generation (trained in the 1970s) express nostalgic yearning for the era of certainties—whether the crisp visions of E. E. Evans-Pritchard or the calm detachment of Louis Dumont. For myself, I am grateful to be a seriously rattled, insecure ethnographer at the millennium rather than a complacent authority of fifty years past. Moreover, it is a pleasure to observe a slightly newer generation flourishing, many of whom themselves belong from birth to more than one world. Their theoretical edges are well-honed and multiple, and they are more at home camping on shifting sands.[11]

Bhoju and I are in the middle. We are differently in the same middle—millennial anthropology; and we are similarly in middles that differ. That is, he in Ghatiyali and I in American academia are both between two generations, our seniors more sure of the terms on which life should be led; our juniors bred to swim in floods of change. Bhoju, too, sometimes sighs after consistency and laments the untamed multiforms of every story we hear. Yet ultimately he lives comfortably enough, as I too try to do, with double doses of multiple realities.

There might be a parallel here with the people of Sawar, who resoundingly prefer their unbalanced, slippery existence under the rule of votes (*voṭ kā rāj*)—despite its dismaying disorders and massive

disillusions—to the rule of great kings (*rājā-mahārājā kā rāj*) with its firm hand. They maintain their conviction that the present is happier in spite of the genuinely tragic losses of wooded terrain sheltering biodiversity and of community solidarity (losses far greater than any that social science may have suffered in losing its cherished paradigms). This preference for the present counters nostalgia with something quite other than contentment; it is an important theme in much that follows. In the village, too, a new generation is maturing. This book will not tell you much about them, but the future is theirs.[12]

Our framing question is straightforwardly descriptive: What was it like for poor farmers and herders and laborers during the time of kings (and empire)? All that we learned in this regard emerged from a prior inquiry: What happened to the trees? Our original impetus, then, was to learn the story of deforestation; in the process we found out a great deal about everything else, yet our expanded vision remains ecological in spirit. We seek to substantiate the answers to both questions through accounts of lived experiences located in space and time, often presented dialogically. Some of the qualities of these experiences—rendered as the exploitation and suffering of peasants in early-twentieth-century Rajputana—have been presumed to be generalized conditions for this region in many works of history. But actual recorded recollections are scarce, thin, and too often decontextualized.[13]

Our conviction is that the stories or testimonies gathered here have their most powerful impact as human expressions. To theorize them is not to enhance their worth, but only to locate them in fields of knowledge in order to aid readers in situating and understanding their meaning. Our book's value, then, lies not in making new arguments about human relationships with nature or the course of environmental history; about power witnessed from below; or about the realities of a remembered past. Our claims are considerably more modest: to contribute a few thoughts and a greater measure of grounded substance to three currents of academic discourse—nature, power, and memory. I would characterize these more expansively as scholarship concerned with envisioning nature and tracking environmental transformations, with subaltern consciousness and struggles, and with the relationship between individual recollections and historical truths.

Floating in the confluence of these streams, our work—to pun rather badly but meaningfully—remains an ethnographic craft. It is

fieldwork based, at heart an anthropological endeavor with all the baggage those terms have come to hold.[14] In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will briefly position our voices and labors as we navigate these fluid thought worlds.

Why Say "Nature"?

What is now an oral ethnographic history, made up of fragmented chronicles of dramatic change, began as a timeless study of value. Its impetus reflected my 1970s training at the University of Chicago permeated with romanticized visions of divine conservation (Gold and Gujar 1995), cross-fertilized over five-odd years by Cornell University's more pragmatic agendas in development sociology, natural resources, and environmental engineering.[15] I set out for Rajasthan in December 1992 to research, what I called "cultural constructions of the natural environment." However, my original conception had been to look at "religious constructions of nature." I ran an early version of a research proposal past an advanced graduate student of my acquaintance, and received from him many supportive comments, along with some polite but pointed advice: the project was great, but it would be preferable not to say "religion," and not to say "nature."[16] Fine, I thought; there is always virtue in less-loaded language.

I leave unexamined here the facility with which I was able to substitute "culture" for "religion" and never look back. But I shall have to tangle with the terminological dilemma surrounding "nature" because, having once docilely replaced it with "environment," I eventually returned to it. When in our interviews old people sketched past landscapes before our minds' eyes, we were stunned by the contrast with a denuded present. To understand what happened to the trees in Sawar we had to understand a whole passage in history. For this reason my research proposal for 1997 was titled, as is this chapter, "The Past of Nature and the Nature of the Past." And nature—with all its attendant perplexities—remains central to this book. From semantic issues I shall then turn to the intersections of our work with recent rethinkings of South Asian environmental history; that is, to the past of nature in the subcontinent.

In two often-cited meditations on the meaning of the English word "nature," Raymond Williams has argued both that it is "perhaps the

most complex word in the language" (1976:184) and that as an idea it contains "an extraordinary amount of human history" (1980:67). Many other authors have explored the meanings of nature in Euro-American culture in far greater detail than did Williams, but none, to my mind, with greater economy or eloquence.[17] To oversimplify radically the poetics, politics, and evolving historical meanings presented in multiple accounts, we may highlight two constructions that have dominated English speakers' understandings of this noun.

In one construction, nature is and by definition must remain "out there." It is separate from all that humans create and affect; it is, as Williams puts it, "all that was not man: all that was not touched by man, spoilt by man" (1980:77). The second view of nature, elaborated extensively in marxist thought but widely acknowledged, realizes that any pristine nature is only imaginary. Continuing to follow Williams's capsule imagery: "We have mixed our labour with the earth, our forces with its forces too deeply to be able to draw back and separate either out" (1980:83). In other words, any nature that is possible for humans to know they have also produced, even as it has produced them. These two opposing but complementary views have generated many debates in environmentalist thought, and they hold serious consequences for environmental policy and the conflicted politics that often surround it. Both areas are, fortunately, well beyond our present scope.[18]

As Bell's (1994) study of nature in rural England beautifully reveals, both of the views that Williams highlights coexist in commonsense, vernacular understandings—sometimes comfortably, sometimes uneasily. Every other year on the first day of my Syracuse University undergraduate course "Religions and the Natural Environment" I ask students to free-associate on the word "nature." After five or six responses, I invariably have written on the blackboard that nature is other than and beyond humanity, pristine and unspoiled; and that nature is a resource for people, but is endangered by their folly. Now and then the occasional Wiccan, or Buddhist, or, memorably, a Californian "raised by hippies" will help me to turn a corner by suggesting that spiritual life is inherent in nature, rather than garnered from it.

For anthropologists and historians of religions seeking to understand (and teach) cosmologies other than those posed in the three familiar monotheisms, both Euro-American paradigms are prob-

lematic. Whether pristine or imbricated in human labor and art, nature as an English term has—at least since the seventeenth century—been largely devoid of consciousness and agency.[19] Both of these concepts are regularly located either in humanity or in a nonimmanent creator. But there flourish many other religious worlds where elements of nature are more often animate—spirited, emotional, and willful.[20]

A second problem for cross-cultural meanings follows closely on any view of nature as devoid of conscious agency. Deeply embedded in the English semantics of nature is a presumed dichotomy with culture, a dichotomy of skewed value, often gendered.[21] Marilyn Strathern, among others, has argued that one of the many assumptions implicit in the nature/culture dichotomy is "the notion that the one domain is open to control or colonization by the other" (1980:181). And it is culture that western humans have traditionally viewed as the proper and inevitable colonizer.[22] That is, nature is to be disciplined, productive, and ornamental. In spite of many critiques lodged against any notion that such dichotomous and hierarchical ideas about nature and culture have universal validity, these ideas inexplicably continue to haunt social science.[23]

The Sanskrit term *prakṛiti*, often used as a translation of, and translated as, the English word "nature," suggests some rather different formulations. *Prakṛiti* can refer to an active, infinitely multiple, female cosmic principle, and a manifestation of divine female power.[24] Thus, as ecofeminist pioneer Vandana Shiva proclaimed in the first of her many books, third-world women "have challenged the western concept of nature as an object of exploitation and have protected her as Prakriti, the living force that supports life" (1988:xvii). Such a definition might immediately throw into question the dichotomous devaluation of nature, as opposed to culture, and open to colonization by it.

Shiva's rhetoric has been roundly and repeatedly critiqued—perhaps most devastatingly by feminists rightly suspicious of the way ecofeminism essentializes "women" by equating them with nature, even when their intention is to valorize female power.[25] Nonetheless, Shiva calls attention to some very good reasons to beware (as my friend advised me) of loosely employing the term "nature" when talking about Rajasthani interactions with the earth, its atmosphere,

creatures, and products. Why then—when it is clearly inappropriate in multiple ways—would Bhoju and I evoke the idea of nature in our accounts of geophysical and social transformations in Rajasthan? I answer this in two explanatory steps dealing with alternatives and translations, followed by a sweeping statement.

Possible alternatives to the term "nature" might include "landscape," "environment," and "ecology." Each word carries a semantic weight that is contextually helpful, and in fact I freely deploy all three throughout this work to convey particular messages. "Landscape" might be the safest word, because it has everything to do with viewpoint and representation, with "traditions of perception and perspective" (Appadurai 1991b:191).[26] Often enough (but not always), I can use "landscape" to talk about transformations in the environment as envisioned and interpreted by Sawar residents, without wishing to imply anything more far-reaching.

In earlier work I used "environment" specifically in order to avoid the cultural baggage of "nature"—it seemed to be a more neutral and prosaic way of saying almost the same thing. Several authors have argued convincingly, however, that "environment" holds specific meanings that "nature" does not. These meanings derive from its etymology as "surroundings." What is surrounded? People. And "environment" is conceived as that which affords them uses (Ingold 1992).[27] In the chapters that follow, those instrumental meanings are often arguably just the sense we require: we are concerned with trees as fuel and fodder, with rain as making crops grow, with wild animals either as edible objects of desire or as agents of economic ruin. This is something flatter and more instrumental than the view of nature as inevitably mixed with human labor. Missing from "environment" and its implications is any larger understanding beyond the anthrocentric and the functionalist/materialist.

The term "ecology," in direct contrast to "environment," effectively decenters our understandings from human needs. More important, ecology suggests whole systems, fragile and multiply interdependent. For me the term implies a highly sensitized causal web. Sawar villagers gave me this weblike vision, although they had no single word for it. They also taught me its moral dimensions, and I have roughly translated my derivative understanding with the abstraction "moral ecology."[28]

In Sawar residents' interpretations, biophysical well-being or ill-being depends on soil, livestock, grain, and weather, but it is also in mutual formation with human temperaments and behaviors—whether generous or selfish. Interviews portray the tree-covered hills of the past as completely intermeshed with the bygone rule of kings. To evoke only a few of the factors at play: the past was a time of less dense population, less intensive land use, more cattle and milk, organic fertilizer, coarser but more nourishing and tasty grains, stronger digestions, greater compassion, more leisure to tell stories, and many fewer consumer goods to crave and to arouse envy.

Among other things, such a complex vision helps us to understand why ecological recovery may seem a remote prospect in Sawar villagers' views. The visible ruin of nature is tied not only to the equally visible and highly appreciated freedom from despotic government, but also to the invisible and highly deplored corrosion of ordinary human goodness. Some Indian scholars and activists argue persuasively that South Asian environmentalism differs from American movements in making social justice an absolute requirement in any plan for conservation or regeneration. Their positions take a stance that reveals in urban political terms some of the same moral discourse I heard in Sawar—insisting that the fate of the earth and the character of human society are inextricably interlocked.[29]

Turning to issues of translation, we immediately acknowledge that in the interview texts that are this book's chief substance, readers will find scant talk of nature, landscape, environment, or ecology. Not one of these terms has a precise equivalent in the everyday local language of Sawar. Rather, they are all part of the academic prose with which we elaborate meanings.

While Shiva's vision of *prakṛiti* as a divine force manifest in nature may well convey something akin to Rajasthani understandings, in Sawar villages we encountered the word *prakṛiti* only in the Sanskritized language of the learned. Most others spoke of trees, or animals, or grass, or weather, but rarely required a concept embracing them all. If they wished to refer to all of "creation" or "nature writ large," Hindus as well as Muslims were more likely to use the Urdu/Perso-Arabic word *kudarat*.[30] Like *prakṛiti*, *kudarat* implies creative power. In Islam that power would be associated with male divinity understood as singular, while *prakṛiti*, by contrast, would imply activity, proliferation, and plenitude—all expressions of the goddess who is herself multiform. In common, however, *kudarat* and *prakṛiti* imbue the natural world with value and meaning beyond human purpose or calculation—the main import with which they were charged. All told, with the exception of schoolteachers, neither term was spontaneously produced in more than half a dozen interviews.

Another word derived from Sanskrit, *paryāvaraṇ*, has begun to move into common speech largely due to government efforts to introduce "environment" as a subject in primary school curriculums. *Paryāvaraṇ*, like the English word "environment," literally means "surroundings" and conveniently lacks the religious or philosophical implications of *prakṛiti* or *kudarat*. I found that by 1997 this word—traveling via teachers and schoolchildren—had gained some currency, but not among the elderly, who were our chief sources.

I retain the term "nature" in my interpretive writing not for accuracy but for ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty. I use it willfully, at the metalevel, to evoke something more richly meaningful and potentially confusing than landscape or environment or ecology in the minds of academic readers. With "nature" I call on that culturally posed, nonexistent abstraction of something out there that is beautiful, fearsome, and untouched by humans yet intrinsic to their beings and of great worth to them. I want to remind us of ongoing, accelerated histories of use, exploitation, degradation, and extinction that are transnational and transcultural. Above all I use "nature" as a word that will allow readers to connect the barren hills of Sawar with all other places on the earth where trees once grew.

If one significant aspect of Euro-America "nature" is its utterly separate existence, the work of environmental history, according to one of its better-known American practitioners, deals exclusively with the other vision—that is, "the role and place of nature in human life." According to Donald Worster, the main task of environmental historians is to analyze "the various ways people have tried to make nature over into a system that produces resources for their consumption" (1990:1090). Most significantly for us, Worster goes on to observe that in the process of transforming the earth, "people have also restructured themselves and their social relations" (1090). Large and some-

times heated debates have swirled around how to interpret such environmental transformations and social restructurings in the South Asian subcontinent, focused on the impact of colonialism.

Indeed, Ramachandra Guha in his cogent update on these debates speaks of "The Great 'Ecology and Colonialism' Debate" (2000:215–20).[31] At issue is whether or not colonial environmental interventions were a "watershed," unleashing destruction unprecedented in India's environmental saga, as Guha believes to be the case. Others, notably Richard Grove, have doubted this narrative's total vision, without seeking to whitewash imperial impacts. Guha calls attention to a recent spate of monographs on India's environmental history that have massively documented not only colonial policy but also how attempts to implement it met with varied local responses.[32] These works provide strong evidence for what Ajay Skaria has called "the violence of colonial environmentalism" (1999:192).[33]

Our own intentions and capacities are not to judge whether or not colonial legacies were purely exploitative and uniquely devastating. Chapter 3, which in part draws on archival investigations, discusses some of the policies established by the colonial power in Ajmer that would have had significant impact on Sawar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. And we shall sometimes point to some of the ways that some British ideas about environment, especially about forests, affected this single, small locality with its idiosyncratic history. However, in our interviews within Sawar's villages, we heard little about the forestry agenda of the British Raj. This was in part doubtless a result of the Sawar Court's largely successful strategy of keeping the English well beyond arm's length. The marks of colonialism on Sawar's environmental circumstances and policies will be readily apparent, but we treat them largely as context rather than subject.

We have learned much from some of those meticulously documented histories of environmental change that, as Guha points out, are the fruits of at least a decade of extraordinary interest in these issues. Political energies have infused scholarly labors in this field, under the merged pressures of increased awareness of environmental deterioration and dramatic conflicts over environmental management.[34] Although comparative analysis is not our aim, we draw occasionally from these works to contextualize Sawar's stories more broadly. One important observation to emerge is that the ways that

elements of nature have been viewed and treated in different eras and regions are highly variable according to local political and ecological specificities.

Taken together, for example, monographs by Skaria and by Sumit Guha complicate previous understandings of South Asian environmental history. Drawing on oral narrative traditions of Dangis in western India, Skaria is able to track transformations in configured relationships among power, identity, gender, and what he calls "wildness" in the Dangis' own historical understandings. Juxtaposing these to outsiders' views, he achieves a multifaceted portrait of politicized environmental history. Skaria shows how Dangis identified wildness with power, although that power was ambivalently construed. He observes that their relationship with wildness as power changed with changing circumstances in surrounding political and social structures that in turn impacted the internal political dynamics of the Dangis. Thus Skaria offers us the "complexities of wildness, and the many sites at which it was produced" (1999:43).

Sumit Guha's historical study of environment and ethnicity is based in western India as is Skaria's, but it ranges more widely, both geographically and historically. Like Skaria, Guha is interested in, among other things, the relationship between kingship and ideas about forests and their inhabitants. In legendary accounts of regional history, he finds a clear message: "Pushing back the jungle and subduing jangli [indigenous forest peoples] were central elements in the kingly role" (1999:154). Forest-dwelling Dangis in Skaria's study once thought their power continuous with untamed wildness; Guha shows us kings who located their royal identity in part in their capacity to tame a dangerously wild landscape and its inhabitants (which would include Dangis). Guha also notes an affinity between "dominant forest communities" and warrior/rulers that intersects with and corroborates those ideas of power and wildness that Skaria portrays.

From these two important studies we may gather that configurations of power, forest, and wildlife, and relations between forest and farming peoples, may vary widely within a single region according to internal situations and external pressures. Still greater are variations ensuing from varying climates and polities. Elsewhere on the subcontinent, royal identity has evidently involved fostering and protecting endangered wildness, rather than overcoming the double threat of

wild spaces and their human and animal inhabitants. In semiarid Rajasthan, this has often been the case. In several kingdoms, not all as small as Sawar, rulers may have hunted dangerous beasts, but they also guarded woods and wildlife with vigilance, as did Sawar's own fabled Vansh Pradip Singh, who reigned from 1914 to 1947.[35]

When I began to write this book, I felt at first uneasy that a tension or confusion lay between our initial focus on deforestation and the broader historical processes we eventually took as our task to comprehend. But increasingly I have come to see the tale of Sawar's dwindling jungle as a tale of conjoined natural and social transformations.[36] Moreover, I am convinced this merging is less an accident of Bhoju's and my stumbling research path than a global actuality we inevitably came to realize (Gold 2001a). In Sawar, the time of nature's abundance was also the time of abundant sorrows endured under the rule of kings who protected the trees.

We hope to portray the ways that nature—as trees and grasses, as berries, wild pigs or rain—was experienced, produced, and internalized in the twenty-seven villages, not only as sustenance but as meaning, not only as goods but as identities and tales. Elements of the environment become emblems of satisfaction and deprivation, submission and confrontation. One person recalls blistering his feet in the dry riverbed on a frivolous errand for the king; another remembers the exquisite thrill and dire risk of poaching and consuming savory wild boar. Experiences of power impinged upon experiences of nature; the king's passion for trees made it harder to get firewood, but never impossible.

Voices from Under a Stone

As a schoolteacher and research assistant, Bhoju was fully aware that books on the Rajasthani past are filled with the deeds, words, and affairs of kings and armies. In 1993, as our history work first unfolded, he began to formulate a concept of largely uninscribed pasts, of submerged voices and lives such as those of his neighbors, his relatives, and his own mother and father. He called these "voices from under a stone" (Gold with Gujar 1997). Although Bhoju had not encountered the writings of the subaltern school of historiography, his understanding expressed in this phrase is something close to subalternity. It

was not only that the words and views we taped were rarely heard beyond village courtyards or caste meeting spots, but that during the past era not just these elders' voices but their very beings had been suppressed. At the same time their capacity to speak was indisputable, and their lively tongues articulated not only what they had endured but how their spirits had not been crushed by it.[37] It was with an increasing sense of urgency that Bhoju worked with me to elicit and record these memories. Both of us were gripped not only by accounts of past suffering, but by lucid appraisals of power's insidious workings.

The subaltern studies editorial collective began publishing anthologies of historical essays in the early 1980s. Rapidly overflowing the outdated boundaries of area studies in unprecedented fashion, their contributions have had a profound impact on the disciplines of history and anthropology, and have cross-fertilized the burgeoning field of postcolonial studies, striking chords with recent foci of theoretical interest including resistance and creative cultural hybridity. Subaltern scholarship set out to locate and listen to the nonelite voices of history—voices that countered hegemonies both of colonialism and of the indigenous elite. However, as Dipesh Chakrabarty put it in one much-cited essay, in that "ruling class documents" have constituted the major sources for the historian's craft, often it was not speech but "silences" that had to be interpreted (1988:179). Much of the subaltern collective's work has been to highlight and interpret elusive traces of recalcitrant subaltern consciousness, in vivid descriptive and incisive analytic strokes. Expanding their scope well beyond rulers' records to other textual sources such as regional literatures, they have called attention to multiple resources for new understandings of historical processes.[38]

When scholars associated with the subaltern studies project have included oral testimonies in seeking to understand the more recent past that is also the remembered past, tropes of silence give way to vibrant voices and contesting narratives. Authors such as Shahid Amin (1995); Saurabh Dube (1998); Shail Mayaram (1997); Gyan Prakash (1990); and Ajay Skaria (1999) brilliantly interweave oral historical material with archival work to portray nuanced complexities of consciousness in full-bodied ways that could not easily be imagined if their research had been confined to written sources. In these works,

multiple versions and visions are portrayed, and the quest for a single plot or a truer truth is relinquished. Amin, for example, writes: "Incongruence with known facts has not been construed as a lapse of memory, but rather as a *necessary* element in the stitching together of the story" (1995:197).

Our work, as we have already shown, has its separate hybrid genealogy. We only stumbled inadvertently into history; thus our project was not originally framed either in historical perspectives or methods. However, over the past seven years, subaltern histories have increasingly influenced us so that we might, after the fact, claim some affinity to them while acknowledging our deficiency in their two highest achievements: broad theoretical visions and meticulous archival craft.[39] The strongest evidence of this affinity emerges when we encounter the experiences of radically disempowered persons. In Dube's study of religious transformations within an untouchable community in Chhattisgarh, for example, critical voices from the bottom of the social hierarchy speak of landlords in a fashion very similar to the way Sawar people speak of the king's men. That is, we hear appraisals from below of power's workings, framed sometimes in terms of helplessness but incorporating astute understandings of the structural conditions under which that helplessness is perpetuated.[40]

In the era before Independence, most of what is now Rajasthan was composed of princely states and existed under that particular configuration of royal and colonial power that the British called paramountcy. However, the administrative district of Ajmer-Merwara, where Sawar is located, was under direct rule, with consequences we shall briefly address in chapter 3. European historians' fascination with India's princes has resulted in much scholarly attention to the pinnacles of power in Rajasthan. This may be one reason that, until recently, there has for this region been less writing focused on subaltern perspectives.[41]

Mayaram's richly textured study of community memory in Rajasthan, however, provides a source of particularly insightful interpretation. She shows the ways that different forms of power—colonial, princely, and nationalist—have impinged on Meos, her central research focus, and have been interpreted by them. Mayaram writes that she examines "the construction of sovereignty in terms of the perceptual understanding of the reflexive subject" (1997:13). In recording

and presenting memories from the kingdom of Sawar we do not focus on sovereignty, but our interests have been in just such perceptual understandings. Power relations at local, state, national, and transnational levels all condition what has most captivated our attentions: the ways that everyday lives, including pressures from above, are experienced and interpreted. It is this experiential level that we feel equipped to portray and convey: textures of a life-world in which power's subtleties are rendered vivid in memories.

In chapter 9, for example, Kalyan Mali as an old man recalls the slight provocation that pushed him from complaint to action and mobilized a brave and successful act of protest. This was no more than the king's chief minister familiarly clapping him on the shoulder while he was expressing his outrage over the wild pigs that were damaging his crops. Relived fifty years later that patronizing gesture provokes him to rage, and one of his listeners responds by commenting on the brutality of the man who made that insolent gesture: "He had no pity."

Just as our portrait of environmental history has not centered on colonial policy, our general portrait of Sawar subjects, unlike much writing within the field of subaltern studies, has not highlighted colonial circumstances. Subalternity in Sawar was always multiply mediated. Sawar residents were fully aware of the machinations of the English in Ajmer, but the majority did not foreground imperial pressures when describing the "time of kings." I had to comb through scores of recorded interviews to locate a few mentions of the "double administration" and its impact on farmers and herders. Interestingly, when the English were discussed the assessments were not consistent; some saw them as potentially more benign than the kings, while others portrayed the kings as squeezed from above and squeezing below in turn.

Rup Lal Khati, a carpenter with an astute understanding of history, put it this way: "It was their time, the great kings' time, and that's why we were afraid. We were not afraid of the English. At that time there was a double administration [*doharā śāsan*]. If the Rajputs did something bad you could complain to the English and they would do something about it, but no one would [complain], because of fear of the Rajputs—because we had to live here, and complaining outside would only get them more angry."

A Brahmin man, by contrast, directly blamed the English for the kings' exploitative behavior—a valid position, but one we rarely heard so blatantly expressed: "Before the English came, the kings would help the people, but at this time the British collected a fixed tax, and the great kings collected the grain tax, and no one took responsibility (*zimmedārī*)." In both of these statements, the English power is realistically placed at a remove from local impact. It was in the end the king and the kings' men with whom people had to live on a day-to-day basis; the benign colonial power was impotent; the malign colonial power was mediated through local force.

In his call to attend to small voices, Guha also stresses the power these voices may have to disrupt the master narratives of history: "If the small voice of history gets a hearing at all . . . it will do so only by interrupting the telling in the dominant version, breaking up its storyline and making a mess of its plot. . . . Insofar as the univocity of statist discourse relies on . . . order, a certain disorderliness . . . will be an essential requirement for our revision" (Guha 1996:12). Guha sees the advent of disorder and polyphony as an inevitable consequence of admitting small voices to historical understandings.[42] Thus history, not unlike anthropology (if perhaps somewhat later), comes to question clean models and admit discord if not incoherence.[43]

Along with the effort to attend to small voices, whatever confusion that may entail, some participants in the subaltern collective project have also urged a shift from concern with "flashes of rebellion" to "quotidian consciousness." Thus Partha Chatterjee proposes: "In the long intervals between open, armed rebellions by peasants or the spread of the great heterodox religious movements, one is likely to notice, if one looks for it, a continuing and pervasive struggle between peasants and the dominant classes in everyday life" (1993:170). He goes on, however, to argue that because "the domain of the quotidian" is also "the domain of the seeming perpetuity of subordination," historians still need the "flashes of open rebellion" to convince themselves of an "undominated region in peasant consciousness" (171). This is the magic appeal of Kalyan Mali's tale of three days of pig slaughter—the denouement of his story presented in chapter 9. From the moment I first heard it I was thrilled by the "flash of rebellion" it revealed.

I recorded dozens of accounts showing that for long years prior to this gleeful moment, most farmers had resentfully adjusted their work

routines to deal with the increased population of wild boars. Camping in their fields was the only way to maintain damage control. The king punished anyone who hurt a pig, and at the same time he made every effort to increase the wild boar population within his domain. I would like to think that these accounts of quotidian accommodations, no less than of that one rebellious flash, also display undominated consciousness—if what we mean by that is the capacity to think critically and to have a sense of self unblighted by unfortunate circumstances.

I am therefore less willing than Chatterjee to name the everyday the "domain of the seeming perpetuity of subordination" unless "seeming" were to be italicized. Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff suggest that all kinds of creative possibilities may lurk in the everyday. Although they characterize the everyday negatively as "not the extraordinary or the mythic; . . . not the macrocosmic or the transcendent, the philosophical or the heroic" and as "frequently situated beneath the level of philosophical reflection or historical self-consciousness," they declare it nonetheless rich in potential with a significance that "lies in its paradoxes, in its absent presence" (1997:31). It is a space where subtle but genuine transformations may insinuate themselves. These transformations would not be flashes of rebellion, but neither are they dull and perpetual resignation.

I might borrow again from Ranajit Guha, a master of language, and describe conditions under the great kings as "dominance without hegemony." Guha defines hegemony as "a condition of Dominance" where "Persuasion outweighs Coercion" (1997:23). However, in Sawar (and elsewhere, as Guha of course discerns and elucidates) the distinction between coercion and persuasion turns out to be surprisingly elusive. Is it a distinction between externally and internally imposed controls, between physical and psychological forces?[44] In the first half of the twentieth century in Sawar the rulers had no institutionalized military or police force. Thus, as chapter 5 explores in detail, Sawar's rule might appear to be a perfect example of hegemonic dominance.[45] It seems that Sawar people by and large obeyed a cruel regime that rarely if ever carried out threatened coercive measures, and that even its threats were more about damage to honor than anything corporal.

But we would argue that those whose lives were regulated by threatened sanctions from the Court simultaneously saw through the

ruses of those who threatened them, and despised and often successfully manipulated them in return. Many of them also revered the ruler and exonerated him from blame for their sufferings. Was their consciousness dominated or undominated? Or might any attempt to create such categorical distinctions result in misunderstandings of the complex sources motivating human beings as they struggle to have good lives. The Comaroffs's views are germane when they write: "Not only is hegemony never total . . . it is always threatened by the vitality that remains in the forms of life it thwarts. It follows, then, that the hegemonic is constantly being made—and, by the same token, may be unmade" (1991:25).

That remainder of vitality is at the heart of Sawar narratives. The unmaking of hegemony in everyday forms of resistance, of which James Scott's work (1985, 1990) especially has made us so aware, is evident in multiple tales of the kings' time. Beyond these small defiances perhaps, are the still larger undominated regions of dignity and struggle.[46] In picturing Sawar people's description of their lives in the time of kings, as "voices from under a stone" we reiterate that it is the voices, not the stone, that captivate us.

We hope it is not too large a claim to make if we say we have attended to small voices, and that we have heard in them an "undominated region in peasant consciousness" rooted in the quotidian. By no means is this a unique accomplishment; the kinds of critiques we recorded in Sawar have been recorded wherever the views of disempowered subjects are elicited (for example, Dube 1998; H. Singh 1998; Pande 1988; and Sundar 1997). But we have given rather more space to "the people's testimony" than have many other accounts. By thus expanding the play of voices we have necessarily and quite consciously made short shrift of other sources. We make no claims for thorough coverage here of economic and bureaucratic structures, of ecological conditions, or of political transformations. By providing textured, layered, and multiple recollections we hope modestly to supplement larger projects of historical understanding.

Pivotal Memories

When I returned to Rajasthan at the end of December 1996, four years almost to the day after initiating my research on cultural constructions of the environment, my topic at last had a name that translated perfectly: history (*itihās*). Bhoju and I told people that our work this time was to learn and record nothing less than "the history of Sawar." But, we would always add, *this* history would not be the tale of the ruling Shaktavat clan's battles, marriages, and edifices; rather, it would be the experience of the great kings' rule viewed from below; or, to use a term that has become part of Rajasthani even among those whose vocabularies contain almost no other borrowed English, the views of the *publik*.

I was stunned and awed by the instant rush of memory our questions evoked. Perhaps it should not have been a surprise. When my son at age fourteen interviewed my mother at age seventy-nine for his eighth-grade social studies oral history project, she spoke almost as readily (unaccustomed as she was to being taped) of victory gardens and rationing during World War II as did the Sawar elders about their past. In general she was not prone to reminisce in this way, and neither were the old people in Sawar. For elders in our shared millennial present, it may be that just to be asked to recollect is a powerful release.

I take it that recollections of the past are common to all human beings and all societies, and that we can therefore talk about memory, loosely to be sure, across many human contexts. Certainly the Hindi *yād* or *smaraṇ*, the Rajasthani *har*, and the English "memory" do not cover identical semantic fields. Nonetheless, when we asked someone, "Do you have memory (*yād*) of the kings' time?" they understood our question and responded to it in a fashion very similar to the way my mother understood and responded to a question about what she remembered of World War II.[47]

Ghatiyalians of Bhoju's age—familiar with the barren landscape and pompous, ineffective government servants—may only vaguely conceive of the lush woods and abusive royal agents their elders knew so intimately. Even so, in the overstocked and overfed surroundings of America today, I am not easily able to envision people waiting in line for hours for poor-quality meat, as my mother recalls from the war years.

Most of the content of this book is transmitted through memories and composed of memories.[48] In working with this material, we join other postcolonial fieldworkers for whom memory allures as a cura-

tive potion (Gold with Gujar 1997). Speaking memories, the voices from whose testimonies ethnographers have ever woven synthetic fabrics of meaning and knowledge, cannot sound frozen in time.[49] An anthropological turn to memory allowed ethnographers to accommodate history while retaining the essence of their disciplinary identity. One facet of ethnographic identity lies in the fragile, vulnerable heart of anthropological practice: fieldwork experience generating intimacies, dependent on human interactions.[50] Another facet of our discipline remains bound to a quest for patterns. From divergent, even clashing, memories within a single community there may emerge not only vividly positioned views of reality, but some of those designs with which anthropologists remain concerned, in spite of dissolution, fragmentation, and globalization.[51]

Well beyond anthropological predilections, memory emerged in the 1990s as thematically "hot" and politically fraught throughout the humanities and social sciences. It became a focal lens for recovering lost histories—usually painful and suppressed—including those of African American enslavement and of the social universe of Jewish society in Eastern Europe and the horrific truths of its annihilation.[52] Displaced persons and transformed landscapes are another main current flowing into the rapids of memory.[53] As we have seen, environmental histories, finding ample documentable substance in colonial forestry records, have begun to tap living memories as well, particularly in South Asia and also in Africa. In most of these studies loss predominates, as it does in the ecological history of Sawar's jungle.[54]

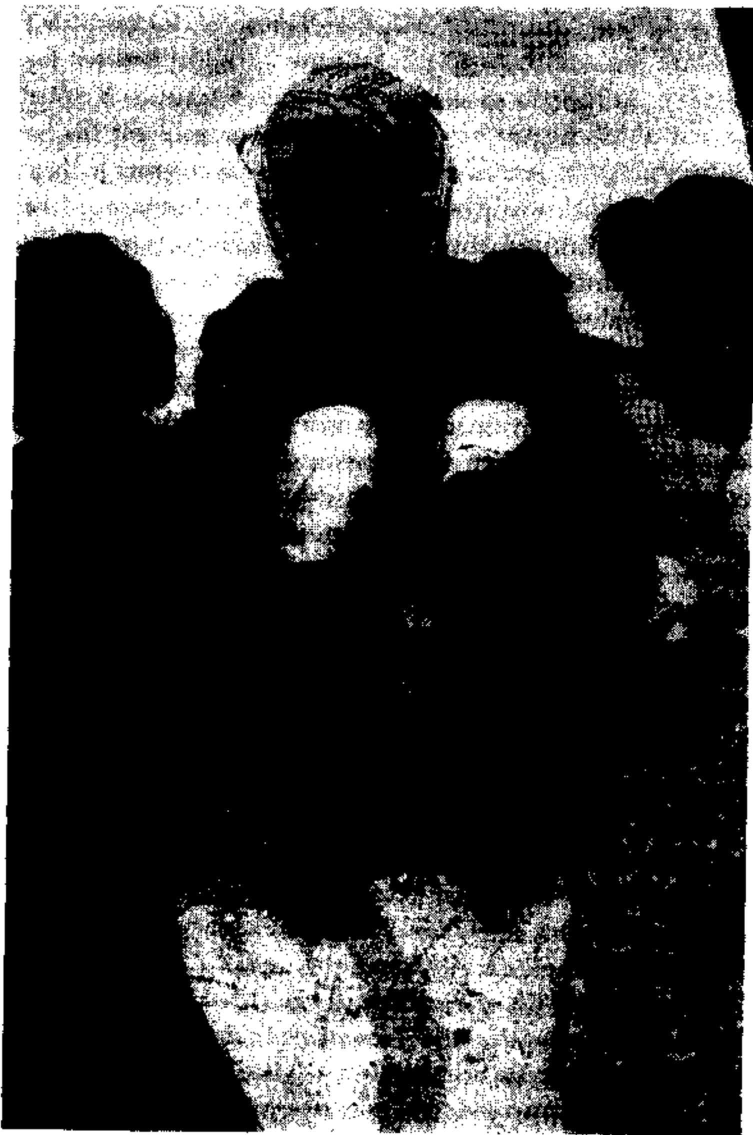
It is understandable that memories of struggle, crisis, violence, and displacement are those most invested with academic and emotional attention. In the South Asian context, Amin (1995) takes a pathbreaking approach to memory in his study of the complicated causalities and repercussions of a single pivotal and violent event: an antipolice riot in 1922 in which twenty-three policemen were burned to death. One immediate result was Gandhi's decision to suspend civil disobedience. Amin shows how this violent disruption of nationalism's narrative has been subject to a kind of erasure, losing its "distinctiveness and specificity and multiple peculiarities" in the process (9). All of these he is able to restore through careful memory work. Other recent oral history and memory studies have centered on partition, and the communal violence that accompanied it (Butalia 2000; Menon and

Bhasin 1998; and Pandey 1999).[55] These are limited foci for articulated memories and sometimes poignant silences—standing here not for imperfect recall but for an anguish that disrupted language itself (as Das and Nandy [1986] have argued).[56] In Sawar no event was so sudden, radical, or terrifying. Sawar memories are poignant in their ordinariness, making vivid what Sherry Ortner has described as "the intricate webs of articulations and disarticulations that always exist between dominant and dominated" (1995:190).

I have asked myself why memory was suddenly so important, not just to me but to so many people. My intuitive answer began with two broad commonsense notions. The first has to do with our times: a generation of people (including my own parents) who have been witness to extraordinary geopolitical and sociocultural, technological, and ecological changes is gradually passing. All over the globe from Tibet to South Africa, from Germany to Bali, from Chicago to Rajasthan, unimaginable changes have taken place between the 1930s and the 1990s. Social and cultural landscapes, as well as geophysical ones, are transformed sometimes beyond recognition. Margaret Mead observed that "everyone born and bred before World War II is . . . an immigrant in time" (1970:56). Mead's specific concern was that the new generation's knowledge exceeded their elders'. She asserts persuasively: "Today, nowhere in the world are there elders who know what the children know, no matter how remote and simple the societies are in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any children in terms of their experience of having grown up within a cultural system. Today there are none" (60–61).

Our work, and that of many others who gather memories, deals with the other side of this coin. If the young know "more" than their elders, their knowledge is of a different "place" in time.[57] To them knowledge of the past could seem both irrelevant and incomprehensible. But with this knowledge something is lost. So-called salvage anthropology has a bad name, but we would be dissembling if we did not admit that recording what could otherwise be lost was part of what drove us to create this book.

My second notion is squarely within academia, where various suspicions have converged in recent years. These include the postmodern suspicion of any entity labeled factual or real as well as the postcolonial



Generations: Mangi Lal Kumhar and granddaughters (Mehru, 1997).

and feminist suspicions of master narratives. I have already noted that Bhoju's and my work is part of the disciplinary turn to privilege polyvocality and highlight contested or negotiated realities: in short, following Guha's admonition with which we began, to admit discord to disrupt monolithic, reductionist accounts. It follows naturally that this turn should favor memory over document; subaltern over rulers; and multiple, fractious voices over omniscient observer. It distrusts records and listens to stories, as we have done—stories of abundant trees and multiple sorrows.

Chapter 2 in this volume, "Voice," addresses Bhoju's and my joint authority, ethnographic methods, and collaboration in order to foreground them as integral to any knowledge we have to offer and to treat them as issues rather than givens. We attempt to disclose our collaborative practices, and to expose the ways this book emerged as a product of two minds and lives that, while originating in very different places, have come to be closely intertwined. In chapter 2 I detail some of the ways physical, emotional, and interpersonal conditions of fieldwork have shaped and informed our project, and Bhoju summarizes what this work means to him, in practice and in principle. He speaks both as a member of the community being researched, and as an experienced observer of its collective and individual behaviors.

Chapter 2, then, is about the collaborative process of gathering voices and learning from them, motivated by our aspiration to create responsible representations of their vivid, gripping cadences. My perilous choice of loaded words—"representation" and "create"—is deliberate. Much as I would prefer to be nothing but a channel, I am extremely conscious of acting as a mixer and synthesizer. Writing from a very different context, Nancy Scheper-Hughes affirms the worth of such imperfect efforts as ours: "And though I can hear the dissonant voices in the background protesting *just this* choice of words, I believe there is still a role for the ethnographer-writer in giving voice, as best she can, to those who have been silenced" (1992:28). To counter the inherent possibilities of claiming authority we do not have, without surrendering to postmodern paralysis and postcolonial angst, she recommends "an ethnography that is open-ended and that allows for multiple readings and alternative conclusions" (30), as I hope ours does.

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In "Place," chapter 3, I sketch some geographical, ecological, and historical contexts for the locality in the Banas River Basin, colloquially called Sawar Twenty-Seven. These sketches provide backdrops or frames in which the recounted experiences that follow are set. Chapter 4 treats memory as subject and practice. This book is nothing but memories, but when in 1993 I began the project that would bring it into being, I never set out to collect them. When I found myself collecting them, I was sure Bhoju and I had stumbled on this mode of fieldwork by sheer happenstance. When I returned to the United States in autumn 1993 with tapes, disks, and notebooks loaded with old people's memories I was astonished to find a proliferation of seminars, conferences, and volumes on memory and history. Moreover, within this scholarly efflorescence, ecological memory—with which I was most particularly concerned—was an important subfield and genre.[58] However baffled I was by this coincidence, in chapter 4 I humbly acknowledge zeitgeist—and locate myself within it. The chapter closes with an extensive interview with Jamuni Regar, an old leatherworker woman who releases a stream of linked memories that presage all that follows.

In chapters 5 through 9 lie the substantial heart of these oral histories. Each chapter attempts, largely through the medium of transcribed interviews, to convey a selected set of recurrent themes in memories of "that time" under the great kings' rule. Taken together, these themes form a fragmented and partial political, economic, environmental, and social history of Sawar. Although only a few of these recollections are specifically dated, most speakers vividly recall three decades—the 1930s through the 1950s. Vansh Pradip Singh's death in 1947 is the watermark, the end of an era, but not quite the end of our focal period.

These chapters are preponderantly concerned with the old days—when Sawar's Court, in the person of Vansh Pradip Singh, was alive and radiated power.[59] Nonetheless, ruminations on things past, expressions of vanished circumstances, are sometimes made most vivid through contrasts with the experienced present.[60] In this memory collage we find persons—king, kings' men, farmers, herders, artisans, laborers, males and females, elders and juniors—interacting with one another. Thus we hear of situated persons in various settings transacting power through different, varying strategies and media. We often

heard of love and generosity, playfulness and cooperation, as past modes of sociability. But the nature of our inquiry, our initial curiosity about the vanished jungle and our subsequent exploration of royal authority that protected it, conspired to focus our findings on power relations.

The portrait of "that time" that emerges is by no means a complete social history. For example, we attend only slightly to patron-client relationships (the famous "Hindu *jajmānī* system"), in spite of their pervasive influence on village economy and ritual during the time period under scrutiny. We also speak little of the village counsel (*panchayat*) and its operations. We have truthfully followed those recurrent themes reverberating through our recorded interviews. We are aware and remind readers of a selection at work that came synergistically from interlocutors and respondents.

It will be evident that each chapter's thematic focus—shoes, Court, homes, fields, and jungle—is a strand thoroughly intertangled with the other four, despite my authorial efforts at grooming them. But so indeed are the themes of ecology and polity; herding and farming; woods and fields; rulers and ruled; center and hinterlands; men and women; parents and children; domesticity and political economy. An ecological history by definition recognizes the mutual impingement of causalities. For example, wild pigs may belong in the jungle, but pig stories figure often in character sketches of the Court, as well as in talk about crops and grain taxes.

Spatial configurations are the chief ordering principle for chapters 6 through 9. Each has a particular kind of setting as its focus: Court (Sawar itself, the center place, embodied in both ruler and administrative apparatus), homes, fields, and jungle. Preceding these contextualized examinations, chapter 5 attempts to portray power itself. Although power was from time to time expressed in sanctions or laws, these by no means confined its play. Power seeps through interstices, pervading all localities, as something akin to climate or atmosphere; the inquiry is not localized. Chapter 5, then, introduces subtle and gross persuasions of rank, honor, and force; it confronts as prior a gross and subtle violence of the everyday. Direct analogies and reflected behaviors link the Court's power over farmers, herders, and laborers with those of men over wives, sisters, and daughters-in-law. In short, chapter 5 is about shoes. It dwells on this singular image with

multiple ramifications. Issues of rank attach themselves to shoes in Sawar, like iron filings to a magnet.

Chapter 6, "Court," details the former ruler's legendary persona, his conspicuous consumption, his self-respect and occasionally soft heart, and his hunting prowess and excessive love for animals and trees. It examines the bureaucratic apparatus and the system of *begār,* or conscripted, unpaid, enforced labor on which much of the ruler's government and lifestyle depended. Chapter 5 closes by detailing the death of the Court and its multiply conflicted aftermath. These are the pivotal moments when everything changed for the people of Sawar.

Chapter 7, "Homes," turns from governance to domesticity. It looks at individual lives, families, work, and gender roles. These contexts and subjects might appear to display the most evident continuities between past and present in that health, wealth, and progeny, along with weddings, births, and funerals equally are concerns of both eras. However, the Court's agents once stomped into kitchens and conscripted more than labor, as we shall see. The change of rule from kings to votes entailed many transformations beyond the political.

In "Fields," chapter 8, we talk about agriculture and herding, then and now the sources of village livelihood. Recollections of the time of kings stress the multiple harassments of farmers by relentless taxations of crops and subtler degradations. We trace the oral history of a dispute over a farmer's right to the tree growing in his own field. Herders were less afflicted than farmers, but they too had to cope with royal taxations and controls on their flocks; they too have tales to tell of resistance.

The predations of tax collection often merge in farmers' talk with those of wild animals, to which we turn in chapter 9. This chapter, "Jungle," treats the Court's conservation practices, which were evidently more in the service of the king's pleasure, reputation, and corporal identity than any dream of wild nature or posture of benevolent governance. No wood was available, we were told, without requesting the Court's permission and rendering a share to the fort. The only exception, an ironic generosity, was fuel for the cremation fire—always "free of charge." From the Court's vigilance over trees we turn to pig tales, which are legion. Chapter 9 concludes by chronicling how deforestation accelerated madly after the ruler's death, presaging chapter 10, which concerns altered landscapes and lives.

"Imports," the final chapter, turns from a focus on the past to appraisals and apprehensions of present and future. The same old people who described to us the time of great kings epitomize transformations they have witnessed and their experience in the present, expressing both strong appreciation and strong dislike for different elements of their current circumstances. In concluding we evoke the future, embodied in children as they happily participate in replanting indigenous species of trees.

1. *The Past of Nature and the Nature of the Past*

1 In Sawar the most common way to refer to the former rulers and their kind was to speak of them as "great kings" (*rājā-mahārājā*). It follows, for me, that if the rulers are kings, the place they rule must be a kingdom, however small. Thus in speaking of kings and kingdoms I follow the conventions of local language. It could be more appropriate to refer to Sawar's former rulers and similarly situated potentates as "princes" or "petty princes," or even as "chiefs" or landlords, for their small dominions were not even numbered among the "princely states." However, local history books call them kings and speak of their ascension to thrones (see chapter 6).

The British practice of labeling Rajput rulers "princes" or "chiefs," it seems to me, intentionally diminished them. The English word "chief" has, of course, tribal, uncivilized connotations. And although Rajput, the name of the ruling caste, means "king's son," the common word for prince in Rajasthani—*banā*—in no way bears the masterful, divine connotations of "king" or of several other respectful titles used for the rulers of small kingdoms, including *ṭhākur* (master), *darbār* (Court), *mahārāj* (great king), and *anndātā* (grain-giver)—all of which are also regularly used for God. There are, of course, context-dependent shades of meaning for all these terms.

Although the terms "princes" and "princely" enter this work via other published sources, when faithful to oral history I retain local usage—believing that, even if it is employed merely as convention, it ought to be taken seriously.

2 As explained in the preface, the first-person singular in this book is normally Gold's voice. Gold writes of Gujar in the third person, and uses the first-person plural deliberately when speaking of both authors' shared work, aims, strategies, and experiences.

3 As an adjective *jabānī* (derived from *jabān*, "tongue") may mean unwritten or traditional, but as a noun it refers to transcribed oral testimony, such as an affidavit. In that sense Bhoju hit upon the perfect word for what we have compiled here.

4 In introducing his book, Amin makes a similar point, juxtaposing but not opposing memories with other records: "But for me it was not a question of counterposing local remembrance against authorized accounts: the process by which historians gain access to pasts is richly problematic, as is the relationship between memory and record, and the possibilities of arriving at a more nuanced narrative, a thicker description, seem enhanced by putting the problems on display" (1995:4).

5 At least this tradition would stretch from Malinowski (1961) on the "imponderabilia" of everyday life to Geertz (1983) on "local knowledge."

6 See Chakrabarty 1997a for lucid reflections on the several predicaments of Indian historiography at the present juncture.

7 For a few of the numerous explorations of dialogue and collaborative research, see Clifford 1988:55–91; Humphrey and Onon 1996; and Tedlock and Mannheim 1995. See Marcus on the "uses of complicity" (1998: 105–31); he offers a valuable critical perspective on this entire enterprise. See also Jackson (1998) on the fundamental importance of intersubjectivity to ethnography, not only in fieldwork practice but in philosophical underpinnings and textual expressions.

8 For measured theory, see Abu-Lughod 1991; for experimental praxis, see, among others, Hajj, Lavie, and Rouse 1993; Lavie 1990; and Pandolfo 1997.

9 Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) remains my favorite account. Other discussions and exemplifications of the project of ethnographic history or the wedding of history and anthropology that were particularly helpful in the conceptualizing stages of our work include Cohn 1987; Dening 1991; Dirks 1987; Hastrup 1992; O'Brien and Roseberry 1991; Ortner 1989, 1994; R. Price 1990; and Roseberry 1989. Adenaike and Vansina (1996) present historians doing fieldwork. Stevens (1993) deals with ethnographic history of environmental transformation. More recently, Abercrombie (1998) and Sutton (1998) offer fine examples of ethnographically based and politically alert memory work in the Bolivian Andes and the Greek Islands, respectively. Of special value is Dube (1998), who not only insists that the splits between history and anthropology, archival research and fieldwork, myth and history, and orality and textuality are deeply ideological ones, but in his own study of "untouchable pasts" beautifully exemplifies the multiple virtues of transcending these splits.

10 There are now ten volumes in the *Subaltern Studies* series, published by Oxford University Press, Delhi, along with two selected essay collections published in the United States (Ranajit Guha and Spivak 1988 and Ranajit Guha 1997). Of course, historians associated with the project have also published numerous monographs. The work of the subaltern collective has had an extraordinary impact on theoretical writing in history and anthropology that goes well beyond South Asian area studies. For critical appreciations and appreciative critiques, see O'Hanlon 1988, 1997 and Ortner 1995. Sarkar (1997) is rather more critical, especially of the collective's more recent work.

11 I am thinking, among others, of Gupta (1994, 1998); Khandelwal (1996); Lavie (1990); Narayan (1993, 1997); Tsing (1993); and Visweswaran (1994).

12 For some preliminary work on children's perceptions of environmental change, see Gold and Gujar 1994.

13 Ranajit Guha's landmark book *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983) offers an insightful and beautifully exemplified discussion of such decontextualization and its causalities in historical writings.

14 See Gupta and Ferguson 1997 for a discussion of fieldwork-based knowledge and its limitations; and of location as crucial in anthropology.

15 The discussion of language that follows here owes much to conversations held by the Working Group on Governance and Nature, at the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University, in which I was fortunate to participate for about two years (1997–1998). I am especially indebted to Ron Herring, the group's convener, for much of my understanding of terminological matters.

16 Brian Greenberg (personal communication, 1991).

17 These works are too numerous to list exhaustively. I have found illuminating Glacken's 1967 classic in cultural geography; Simmons 1993, a modern geographer's exploration; and Soper 1995, a philosophical approach. More recently Coates 1998 offers complex literary and political vistas. Bell 1994 offers a sensitive sociological study of the meanings of nature to residents in rural England, an ethnographic work that reveals ambiguities in European understandings as they mesh with self-conscious country life.

18 For a positioned primer on attitudes toward nature and their political consequences,

see Merchant 1992. Peet and Watts 1996 contains more complex discussions of theory for political ecology, and a number of case studies in scattered world regions. For a wide-ranging exploration of one issue—the "wilderness debate" on an international scale—see Callicott and Nelson 1998.

19 Relevant here is a large body of literature concerned with the "death of nature" (for example, Merchant 1990), which is also construed as the "disenchantment of the world" and possible routes to "re-enchantment" (for example, Berman 1981).

20 Virtually countless ethnographies exist from many different localities; see, for a few examples, Brightman 1993 (North America); Devisch 1993 (Africa); Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996 (Amazonia); Rose 1992 (Australia); and Roseman 1991 (Malaysia). There are also numerous works focused on religions and the environment that expand on these contrasts; for examples of a textbook and an anthology, see, respectively, Kinsley 1995 and Tucker and Grim 1993.

21 Ortner's provocative essay (1974) and the many subsequent objections to it (for example, MacCormack and Strathern 1980) are relevant. Ortner later takes these critiques into account and updates her own position (1996:173–80).

22 The inversion of this proper pattern—for nature to invade, co-opt or unseat culture—is delightfully horrifying to western imaginations. Such inversions tend to be associated with tropical climes and have pervaded invidious imagery of Europe's colonized others (Inden 1990). The episode in Kipling's *The Jungle Books* titled "Letting in the Jungle" is a dramatic representation of the power of untamed tropical flora and fauna in the South Asian setting that its author knew so well. This florid scene of devastation seems at once to represent an absolute battle between wild and tame (relentlessly stressed in the movie version). At the same time, reflecting perhaps Kipling's own multicultural perspectives, the wild jungle actors are all speaking, conscious companions of the half-wild wolf-boy Mowgli, whose hatred of the village is the source of their enacted fury; see Mowgli's "Song against People" in Kipling 1895:85.

23 In anthropology this is part of the specific legacy of structuralism and its binary vision of all human thought. As recently as 1996, Descola and Palsson devote the first major segment of their introduction to an anthology of anthropological perspectives on nature and society to arguing that "nature-culture dualism" is inadequate (1996:2–9). That they feel the need to belabor this conceptual inadequacy is proof of its stubborn persistence in anthropological ideation.

24 For *prakriti* in the theology of the Hindu goddess, see Coburn 1996.

25 See Agarwal 1991 and Sinha, Gururani, and Greenberg 1997.

26 "Landscape" may also offer a bridge to modernity, if we follow Appadurai's more recent discussion of various "scapes" in global culture. He proposes several neologisms sharing the suffix "scape": "These are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors" (1996:33).

27 Ingold says: "The environment, as distinct from nature or the 'physical world', is the same reality constitute[illegible] relation to a subject, or group of subjects, in their active engagement with it. . . . It is by their action in the world that people know it, and come to perceive what it affords" (1992:48). Ingold goes on to argue against the cultural construction of the environment in a fashion I find unconvincing.

28 But see A. Gupta's interrogation of the term "ecology" as applicable to North Indian "peasant understandings of the relationships between the soil, plants, air, water, and humans" (1998:235).

29 Kothari and Parajuli in "No Nature without Social Justice" (1993) make the case with powerful rhetoric; see also Gadgil and Guha 1995; Gold 1998c; Ramachandra Guha 1989; and Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997. See Harvey 1996 for insights into the union of morality and environmentalism in some American activist positions on environmental justice. Harvey evidently sees this union as strategic rather than intrinsic, but nonetheless finds virtue in "a nonnegotiable position of intense moral rectitude untouchable by legal, scientific, or other rationalistic discourses." He also points out, using the famous Indian case as an example, that "the very grounding of the discourse in a language of sacredness and moral absolutes creates a certain homology between, say, struggles over exposure to environmental hazards in urban areas, nativist beliefs on the relation to nature and peasant movements through the developing world such as that of the Chipko" (389–90).

30 Bhoju and I occasionally tried to elicit definitions of *prakriti* in some early interviews, but most often met with blank responses. Memorably, one younger man said, without hesitation, "God's grace."

31 See Grove, Damodaran, and Sangwan 1998 for a fairly measured alternative account of the debate.

32 Grove's aim (1995, 1998) has been to document the interrelations between colonial power and environmental changes in colonies on a broad scale, arguing that the processes he has called "ecological imperialism" require a less localized scope because of a "fateful globalisation" resulting from the widespread nature of colonialism's impacts (1998:4). In this sense, his work could be viewed as a valuable complement to the smaller-scale studies.

33 Besides Skaria's wonderfully executed study based in western India, Ramachandra Guha's own *The Unquiet Woods* (2000) chartered this rich field of historical research in the Himalayan region. Other recent illuminating works on India's environmental history and politics include Murali 1995 on Andhra; Rangarajan 1996 on the central provinces; Samaddar 1995 on the region of eastern India called Jangalmahal. Sundar's book on Bastar (1997) unites ethnographic with archival work, considers oral traditions vis-à-vis colonial records, and gives attention to the meanings of nature. Sumit Guha offers a fascinating history of environment and what he calls "ethnogenesis" in central and western India "on the margins of agriculture" (1999:1). A study by Sivaramakrishnan (1995) helpfully discusses colonial forest policy and its self-interested appraisals of indigenous practice; his 1999 monograph expands in detail the Bengal case. For Rajasthan, see Mayaram 1997:75–82 for a detailed and incisive account of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century interactions among colonial government, princely states, and environment in Alwar and Bharatpur.

34 The highly charged, ongoing conflicts over large dams such as the Sardar Sarovar project would be one huge example; Baviskar 1995 offers a sensitive ethnographic

account of some aspects of this struggle; see also W. F. Fisher 1995. Conflict over land use in parks is another major area of contest; for attempts to steer a path, see Kothari, Singh, and Suri 1996 and Kothari et al. 1997.

35 Chapter 9 takes up the theme of royal forest protection, but note that we have neglected to treat the Bhils of Sawar, a very small remnant of a forest people who live as laborers, almost in bondage to the Court, even today. See McGee 2000 for kings and trees in Sanskrit texts on governance.

36 David Arnold distinguishes environmental history from ecological history in that the former is "more often understood as the story of human engagement with the physical world, with the environment as object, agent, or influence in human history" while the latter would avoid such an "unashamedly" anthropocentric approach (1996:4).

37 The problem of subaltern speech has always had to do with who was listening and what competing voices filled the air (Spivak 1995).

38 Witness Kaali's chapter in the most recent volume of the series where he refers to "subaltern spatial manipulations" in Tamilnad as "the expression of a not-for-a-moment silent subaltern politics" (1999:164). For a particularly fine example of combing rulers' records for a subaltern voice, see Ranajit Guha's "Chandra's Death" (1987). For an insightful exploration of subaltern views in vernacular literature, see Bhadra 1989.

39 Of course, historians also question giving priority or special validity to archival sources. See Amin for a moderating perspective on the uses and value of archival documentation for social historians for whom, he writes, "there is no running into the comforting lap of hard evidence" (1994:9). For insights into historians' attitudes toward oral sources versus documents, see also Wallot and Fortier 1998. For archives, Spivak 1999:203–5 is provocative.

40 One person says to Dube: "What could a poor man do? The orders had to be followed. A rich man may have done otherwise. He was in a position to withstand pressure. But a poor man? And our caste people have been poor. Ninety-five out of one hundred are poor. Our ancestors were poor. Our caste was oppressed. One Brahman *malguzar* could take care of a large Satnami population. Why? Because they had the weapon [of writing]" (1998:94).

41 Two recent books go a long way in improving this imbalance: H. Singh's *Colonial Hegemony and Popular Resistance* (1998) and K. L. Sharma's *Caste, Feudalism, and Peasantry* (1998). Both volumes deal, as we do, with power in Rajasthani states in the years before and after Independence; both discuss conscripted labor, grain collection, intercaste relationships, and other topics overlapping and intersecting with some major themes in our Sawar accounts. But even in these fine works the space given to the actual voices of farmers and herders is very limited. Other works focused at least partially on the same historical period have illuminated power structures in Rajput-dominated kingdoms; these include Tambs-Lyche 1997 and Vidal 1997.

42 I state the obvious to acknowledge that anthropology has had to relearn history, embarrassingly late in its own game (as did I embarrassingly late in my own work).

43 From the chapter "History" in her most recent book, I gather that Spivak has shifted to emphasize the need to listen, but she also stresses that "the decision that we can hear the other" is a risk; "anguish" might result from listening (1999:198–99).

44 This situation has its parallels in gender hierarchies; see Gold 2000a and Raheja and Gold 1994 for discussion of issues and literatures.

45 See Comaroff and Comaroff for a discussion of hegemony as "that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies—drawn from a historically situated cultural field—that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it" (1991:23).

46 Bhadra (1989) has written of a "process of struggle" in which neither dominance nor subordination are complete. See also Wadley 1994.

47 See Sullivan 1995 for a religionist's discussion of these issues and the admonition not to forget "sociocultural origins and contexts" when writing about memory.

48 For carefully surveyed approaches to the relationship between memory and history, I found Hutton 1993 most helpful. Other articulations of this juncture from which I have gained understanding include Burke 1997:43–59; Connerton 1989; Dening 1991; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Halbwachs 1992; and Irwin-Zarecka 1994. Lambek nicely captures the anthropologist's fascination: "It is this kind of opposition between history (the dispassionate representation of the past) and memory (the subjective continuity with it) to which the experience from non-Western historical fields, such as that of the Sakalava [his research community], invites alternatives" (1998:111). See also Bloch's healthy cautions against the loose ways memory is used in recent historical and anthropological literature (1998:114–27).

49 In recent years important critiques deconstruct the ways much colonial and postcolonial historiography and anthropological discourse have denied or flattened other peoples' histories by positing timeless traditional cultural worlds. For the big picture, see, of course, Fabian 1983 and Wolf 1982. Roseberry 1989 helpfully rethinks Wolf. Both A. Gupta 1994 and Chakrabarty 1997b offer important discussions of time and history in orientalist, colonial, and postcolonial representations of India.

50 This intimacy has been the subject of countless ruminations in the last fifteen years or so, stimulating another vast discussion to which no footnote can do justice. See Behar 1996 for one attempt to synthesize it, confessionally. Also, I have found Abu-Lughod 1993 to be encouraging.

51 See Appadurai 1981:202–3 for cultural organization of debate about the past; see also Sahlins 1985 for culture, history, and contact situations depicted with meticulous scholarship and theoretical flair.

52 On enslaved women's narratives, see Fleischner 1996; on Jewish history and "Shoah," see Boyarin 1991, 1992; Irwin-Zarecka 1994; LaCapra 1998; Langer 1991; and Videl-Naquet 1996. Spiegelman's comic book rendering of the process of eliciting memory from his father rings true (1986). Other recent cultural histories of displacement based on memories include Jing 1996 on a case of forced dislocation in China, and Slyomovics 1998 on a Palestinian village. See Sturkin 1997 for the politics of memory, especially in relation to forgetting, in American culture. Less directly relevant to our Sawar project, but nonetheless germane to gathering oral history from the disempowered, are debates

in psychology on the truth of childhood memories (made compelling in the context of American public culture's revelatory searchlight on childhood sexual abuse).

53 On landscape and memory see, of course, Schama 1995. Casey also discusses the mutual formation of the two: "Landscape contributes to place's memorial evocativeness in three primary ways: by its variegation, its sustaining character, and its expressiveness" (1987:198). Other important works of environmental history include Basso 1996 on Apache; Cronon 1983 on New England; and Peluso 1992 on Java.

54 See, however, Krishna 1997 and Poffenberger and McGean 1996 for work on recovery and regeneration in South Asia and elsewhere.

55 Pandey sums up important results of the turn to memory: "To take account of other, different kinds of articulations of the past is to open up the area of historical enquiry: to accommodate the malleable, contextual, fuzzy, 'lived' community (and this should now include the 'nation'), and to recognize how the community (the subject of history) is forged in the very construction of the past—in the course, one might say, of a historical discourse" (1999:49).

56 See also Daniel 1996:194–212 and Mayaram 1997:192–208.

57 See Lowenthal 1985 on the translation of distance in time to distance in space.

58 Chapter 4 selectively reviews recent literature on memory, history, and landscape.

59 I shall follow local semantics in using the English word "Court," as Rajasthanis use the word *darbār*, to refer both to whatever individual person is current ruler as well as to the institution of royalty and its collective personnel. As a term of reference Court may be applied to rulers of large or small kingdoms in Rajasthan.

60 See Zonabend 1984 on how the remembered past—in a French village—is by definition in contrast with the present. Other European village-based ethnographic studies of past and present include Behar 1986 and Sutton 1998.