

GAZETTEER OF AJMER-MERWARA.

1873.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.*

AJMER-MERWARA is a district of British India surrounded by the Native States in Rajputana. Ajmer is bounded on the

Boundaries.

north by Kishangarh and Marwar, on the south by Merwara and Mewar, on the east by Kishangarh and Jeypoor, and on the west by Marwar. It lies between north latitude $26^{\circ} 41' 0''$ and $25^{\circ} 41' 0''$, and east longitude $75^{\circ} 27' 0''$ and $74^{\circ} 17' 0''$, and contains, according to the revenue survey of 1847, an area of 2,058.28 square miles. Its population, according to the census of 1872, is 246,798 souls.

The tract called Merwara is bounded on the north by Marwar and Ajmer, on the south by Mewar, on the east by Ajmer and Mewar, and on the west by Marwar. It lies between north latitude $26^{\circ} 11' 0''$ and $25^{\circ} 23' 30''$, and east longitude $73^{\circ} 47' 30''$ and $74^{\circ} 30' 0''$, and contains a population of 69,234, with an area, according to the revenue survey, of 602.23 square miles.

The united district contains an area of 2,660.61 square miles, with a population of 316,032, or 119 to the square mile.

The basis of this Gazetteer is the report on the settlement of Ajmer-Merwara for 1874, much of which has been bodily transferred to the Gazetteer. Other sources whence information has been derived are Colonel Hall's sketch of Merwara, 1834; Colonel Dixon's sketch of Merwara, 1848, and Colonel Dixon's report on the settlement of Ajmer-Merwara, 1850. The principal authority for the chapter on history is Colonel Tod's *Rajasthán*. Colonel Briggs' *Ferishtah*, and Sir H. Elliott's *Musalman Historians* have also been consulted. Mr. W. W. Culceth, Executive Engineer, furnished a note on the stone products of the district; and Mr. Moir, Assistant Conservator, one on the forests. Chapters IX and X have been compiled from the Commissioner's administration report for 1872. Captain Loch, Officiating Commandant, wrote a note on the Merwara Battalion; and Dr. Murray, Civil Surgeon, has supplied that part of Chapter XII which relates to the medical aspect of the district.

* The statistics of the census of 1872 cannot be accepted as final, and a fresh census will be taken in 1875. The area also probably requires correction, and cannot be given with certainty till the result of the Topographical Survey now in progress is known. The Revenue Survey of 1847-48 was very hurriedly done, and in Merwara only one out of seven parganas was surveyed in the ordinary way: six were laid-down trigonometrically. The recent settlement survey did not extend to the istimrar estates, and the hills in Merwara were laid down with the plane table. Hence the statistics of the total area cannot be implicitly accepted. By this survey the area of the khalsa portion of Ajmer is 561 square miles, of the jagir villages 235 square miles, of Merwara 677 square miles; while the area of the istimrar villages, according to the Revenue Survey, is 1,280 square miles. The total area is thus 2,753 square miles instead of 2,661, and the correct area is probably intermediate between the two.

they came in sight of the Khwaja remained rooted to the spot, and though they tried to ejaculate *Rám Rám*, could only articulate *Rahím Rahím*. In vain did the idolaters, led by the great sorcerer Ajipál, and the *devta* Shadideo, renew their attacks. They were defeated on every occasion, and finally begged forgiveness of the Khwaja, and invited him to come and take up his abode in the town. He consequently chose the site of the present dargáh. Shadideo and Ajipál became Muslims, but the Raja refused to be persuaded in spite of the miracles, and it was owing to a dream in Khorásán, in which he saw the Khwaja calling to him to come over to India and help him, that Sháháb-ud-dín was induced to march into Hidustan and complete the ruin of the infidel king.

The Khwaja was twice married, and his eldest lineal descendant, called the Dewanji, is the spiritual head of the shrine. All descendants of the Khwaja enjoy great consideration throughout India. The Nizám of Haidarábád, they say, will not sit in their presence, and the Máharajas of Jaipur, Gwalior and Jodhpur place them on a seat with themselves.

The dargáh is built on the southern side of the city adjoining the city wall which runs at the foot of the Taragarh hill. The residence of the dewan is to the east of the shrine, and west of it is a quarter of the city appropriated to the khadims or servants of the dargáh. The first object on entering at the main gate is the *Nauhal-Khana*, containing two huge drums which were presented by Akbar after the capture of Chitor, and just beyond this is a high arched gateway very tastelessly decorated with flaring colors and with stairs to the top. Here is treasured a gong, also portion of the spoils of Chitor, which is beaten 64 times in the 24 hours. To the right of this arch is a spacious courtyard where the *Mahfil* is held, and further on a large mosque built by Akbar, now partially in ruins. Proceeding onwards to the holier part of the shrine, called the *Blátar-ka-ástána*, the visitor sees on the right a white marble mosque built by Shahjehan, still as perfect and fresh as on the day it was finished. On the left is the tomb of the saint with the tombs of his two wives on the north side, and the tombs of his daughter, Háíz Jamál, and of Chinni Begum, said to have been a daughter of Shahjehan, on the south. The tomb of the Khwaja is a square-domed building, with two entrances, one closed by a pair of sandalwood doors, part of the spoils of Chitor, and the other spanned by a silver arch presented by Siwai Jai Singh of Jaipur.

From the first to the sixth day of the month of Rajab in each year a holy festival called *Urs Mela* is held at the dargáh. The festival lasts six days, for it is uncertain on what day the saint died. The proceedings consist for the most part of recitations of Persian poetry of the Sûfi school, at an assembly called the *Mahfil*. These recitations are kept up till 3 o'clock in the morning, by which time many pilgrims are in the ecstatic devotional state technically known as *Hálal*. One peculiar custom of this festival may be mentioned. There are two large chaldrons inside the dargáh enclosure, one twice the size of the other, which are known as the great and little "deg." Pilgrims to the shrine according to their ability or generosity propose to offer a deg. The smallest amount which can be given for the large deg is 80 maunds of rice, 28 maunds of ghi, 35 of sugar, and 15 of almonds and raisins, besides saffron and other spices, and the minimum cost is Rs. 1,000. The larger the proportion of spices, sugar, and fruit, the greater is the glory of the donor. Thirty-two years ago the Nazir Ilmás of Jodhpur offered a deg which cost Rs. 2,500, and its sweet savour is still redolent in the precincts of the dargáh. The

PREFACE.

The Gazetteer of Ajmer-Merwāra compiled by Mr. J. D. (now Sir James Digges) LaTouche in 1875, is the basis of the present work. The arrangement has been altered in accordance with Government's general scheme for the new District Gazetteers, and it has been brought up to date, but except where recent investigations have thrown new light on any subject, the matter, and in many cases even the wording of the original have been retained. I am indebted to Mr. R. C. Bramley for the use of material collected for his article on Ajmer-Merwāra in the Imperial Gazetteer at present under issue, to Colonel Melvill for helpful criticism and advice, and to many members of the District Staff for useful notes on various subjects. My clerk Munshi Kanahaya Lal has given much assistance throughout.

C. C. W.

Abu, 21st August 1904.

Akbar included Ajmer in a *sūbah* or province, which gave its name to the whole of Rājputāna. The great importance of the fort and district of Ajmer as a *point d'appui* in the midst of Rājputāna was early recognized by the Muhammadan rulers. It commanded the routes from northern India to Gujarāt on the one side, and to Mālwa on the other. Ajmer itself was a centre of trade, with a well-nigh impregnable fort to protect it. The situation was strong, central, and picturesque, and was well watered as compared with the arid tracts around. The Mughal sovereigns, like their predecessors, were not slow to grasp the advantages of the place, and Ajmer became an appanage of the royal residence.

Akbar had made a vow that, if a son were born to him and lived, he would go on foot from Agra to Ajmer, and offer thanks at the tomb of the saint Muin-ud-dīn Chishtī, a holy man who came from Gor to India in 1143 A.D., and whose tomb, known as the Dargāh Khwāja Sāhib, has been a place of Muhammadan pilgrimage for several centuries. Salīm, afterwards Jahāngīr, was born in A.D. 1570. Ten years later Akbar built a fortified palace, the Dar-ul-Khair, just outside the city. Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān both spent a considerable portion of their time at Ajmer, and it was here that the former received Sir Thomas Roe, the Ambassador from King James I, who reached Ajmer on the 23rd December 1615. He had his first audience with Jahāngīr on the 10th January 1616, and was received by the Mughal Emperor with "courtly condescension." Near Chitōr, on his way to Ajmer from Surat, Roe met the eccentric Thomas Coryat, whose mania for travelling brought him on foot from Jerusalem to Ajmer. The "World's foot post," as he describes himself, wrote a pamphlet, "From the Court of the great Moghul, Resident at the Town of Asmere in Eastern India," which is a quaint and early specimen of travellers' tales. Roe himself remained at Ajmer until November 1616, and afterwards accompanied Jahāngīr in his March to Ujjain. Although it appears doubtful whether he managed to obtain any substantial advantage for the East India Company as a result of his mission, his Journal has left us a vivid picture of the life both in Ajmer and in camp. It was at Deora, near Ajmer, that in A.D. 1659 Aurangzeb crushed the army of the unfortunate Dārā and forced his brother into the flight which was destined to terminate only by his imprisonment and death. The celebrated traveller Bernier met and accompanied Dārā for three days during the flight, and has given a graphic description of the miseries and privations of the march. During the war with Mewār and Mārwar, which was brought about by the bigotry of Aurangzeb, Ajmer was the head-quarters of that Emperor, who nearly lost his throne here in 1679 by the combination of Prince Akbar with the enemy.

On the death of the Sayyids in 1720 A.D., Ajit Singh, son of Jaswant Singh of Mārwar, found his opportunity in the weakness consequent on the decline of the Mughal Empire to seize on Ajmer, and kill the Imperial governor. He coined money in his own name and set up every emblem of sovereignty. Muhammad Shāh collected a large army and

talking and smoking. The village children play games similar to those in urban areas.

Festivals.

The principal festivals are the Holi, the Dewālī, the Ganger and the Tejā-jī-kā-mela (the fair of Tejāji) among Hindus, and the Moharram, the two Ids, and Urs Dargāh Khwāja Sāhib among Muhammadans. The Holi and the Dewālī are the two great festivals, held all over the country when the spring and autumn harvests are ripe. The Holi festival is attended with some local peculiarities of an interesting nature. The Oswāls of Ajmer have a procession, which they call *Rāo*; a man dressed as a bridegroom and seated on a cot is carried in procession through the Oswāl quarter. Men and women play on the *Rāo* with long syringes, in which they use water and the red powder (*gulāl*), which is the distinctive feature of the Holi. Women from the tops of houses use their syringes very effectively, while the *Rāo* carries an open umbrella to ward off the deluge. In Bāwar there is a procession of a much more dignified nature, known as *Bulshā*, in which a man dressed as a Rājā is carried through the streets, with people dancing and singing and occasionally throwing red powder. After passing through the town, the Rājā is taken to pay his respects to the Assistant Commissioner, Merwāra.

Another peculiarity of the local celebration of the Holi in Merwāra is the game called *ahara*, which is held on the first and last days of the festival. A whole village turns out into the jungle, each man armed with two sticks about a yard long, called *pōkheri* or *kutka*. The people then form a line and bent for hores and deer, and, as they start up, knock them over with a general discharge of sticks. The village headmen provide opium and tobacco, and the bag is cooked and eaten at the least which ends the day.

The festivals of Dewālī and Dasahra are the same as in other parts of the country. The Ganger festival, which is celebrated by Mahājans, begins a week after the Holi and lasts for 20 days. It is held in honour of the return of Pārvatī, wife of Shīva, to the home of her parents, where she was entertained and worshipped by her female friends. Images of Shīva and Pārvatī are paraded through the streets with music, and the places where they are kept are illuminated at night and worshipped. The festival of Tejā-jī is confined to the Jāts. This fair is held about September. The Jāts, both men and women, keep awake the whole of the previous night, and worship the deity by singing songs and bringing offerings of cooked rice, barley and fruit.

The principal Muhammadan festivals of the Moharram and the two Ids are the same as elsewhere. But an exciting spectacle is added by the sword dance of the Indarkotīs, the inhabitants of the Indarkot *mohalla* of Ajmer city, in which 100 to 150 men, armed with sharp swords, dance and throw their weapons about in wild confusion. The Urs Khwāja Sāhib is a fair held at the Dargāh in the Muhammadan month of *Rajab*, and lasts for six days. Muhammadans came from all parts of the country to worship at the tomb of the saint, Muin-ad-din Chishti, and the yearly number of

pilgrims approaches twenty-five thousand. The proceedings consist for the most part of recitations of Persian poetry of the Sufi School, at an assembly called the *mahfil*. The recitations are kept up until 3 o'clock in the morning, by which time many pilgrims are in the ecstatic devotional state technically known as *hāl*. One peculiar custom of this festival may be mentioned. There are two large cauldrons inside the Dargāh, one twice the size of the other, which are known as the great and little *deg*. Pilgrims to the shrine, according to their ability or generosity, propose to offer a *deg*. The smallest sum for which enough rice, butter, sugar almonds, raisins and spices can be bought to fill the large *deg* is Rs. 1,000. Besides this, the donor has to pay about Rs. 200 in presents to the officials of the shrine, and in offerings at the tomb. The small *deg* costs exactly half the large one.

When the gigantic rice pudding is cooked, it is looted boiling hot. Eight earthen pots of the mixture are first set apart for the foreign pilgrims, and it is the hereditary privilege of the people of Indrakot, and of the menials of the Dargāh, to empty the cauldron of the remainder of its contents. After the recitation of the *Fātiha*, one Indrakotī seizes a large iron ladle, and mounting the platform of the *deg* ladles away vigorously. All the men who take part in this hereditary privilege are swaddled up to the eyes in cloths to avoid the effects of the scalding fluid. When the cauldron is nearly empty all the Indrakotīs tumble in together and scrape it clean. There is no doubt that the custom of "looting the deg" is very ancient, though no account of its origin can be given. It is generally counted among the miracles of the saint that no lives have ever been lost on these occasions, though burns are frequent. The cooked rice is bought by Mahājans and others, and most castes will eat it.

Unlike the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, where three names are in general used for the identification of a male, the proper name, father's name, and family name, in Ajmer-Merwāra as in all northern India, the practice is to use one name only. Occasionally it happens that two persons with the same name but of different castes, add their fathers' names for distinctive purposes; but this is rare. Each person has his *zāt* or family name, which in rare instances is derived from the place of his ancestors, but it is not used in addressing him either by speech or by letter.

Every male of the "twice-born" classes has two names (*a*) the *janam-rāsi-nām*, only used at weddings, at death, and when the stars are consulted, and (*b*) the *bolta nām* by which he is generally known. The system of nomenclature is simple, and the names are generally of religious origin, or are given out of affection or fancy. Instances of the former are Har Lāl, Rām Singh, Shiv Charan, and of the latter Sundar Lāl, Gulzāri Lāl, and Pritam Chand. But there is an almost infinite variety of such names. Among the usual suffixes attached to names it may be remarked that Chand, Mal, Bhān, Pāl and Karan are principally used by Jains. On the other hand Datt (given) is exclusively a Brahman suffix.

Names and
Titles.

declined 12 per cent. In the last two famines active measures of relief have largely reduced the deaths from actual privation, but epidemics of disease and especially the autumn fevers proved excessively fatal. The effects upon the social condition of the survivors have been equally apparent, and it will be long before the previous standard of comfort is attained by the cultivating classes. A tendency towards loss of self-respect and reliance has also been remarked and each succeeding famine finds the poorer classes more ready to clamour for and accept relief from Government. During the famine a loosening of family ties was sometimes evident; children were found showing greater signs of privation than their parents, while child desertion was a deplorably common feature among the wanderers from Native States.

Protective measures, properly so called, are extremely hard to find in Ajmer-Merwāra. Irrigation can only be perfectly protective where the water supply is beyond being effected by the vicissitudes of rainfall. But the province has no large perennial rivers, and natural springs are rare. Increase of tanks and wells may do something, but most of them are dependent upon the monsoon for their water, and where that fails, remain dry and useless. What can be done, however, in this direction is being effected by loans under the Land Improvement Act of 1883. An attempt is being made to store grass in the forests as a provision against famine, and each villager contributes a head-load yearly. Such measures, however, can be only palliative in the face of severe scarcity. Fortunately the province is now well served by railways, and will shortly be even better. Importation of grain to meet local scarcity is easy, and unless famine is wide-spread throughout India, prices need hardly be affected. When the crops have failed, the further measures for protection of the people are prescribed in the Ajmer-Merwāra Famine Code, now revised and improved according to the teachings of past experience. If the local officials are watchful and energetic they can hardly fail to be successful.

Ordinary private charity in times of famine cannot be much counted upon to supplement Government aid. This is due not so much to deficiency in quantity as to complete want of organization in distribution.

An exception is, perhaps, the institution attached to the Dargāh Khwāja Sāhib at Ajmer, known as the *Langar-khāna*, the only permanent poor-house in the district. Two maunds and six seers of grain with six seers of salt are cooked and distributed to all comers before day-break in the morning, and the same quantity before 5 o'clock in the evening. The average daily attendance is about 900: no enquiry is made as to recipients. The expenses of the morning distribution are chargeable to the income from the Dargāh *jāgīr* villages, while those of the evening meal are met from a *jāgīr* given by the Nizām of Hyderabad. Besides the 1,570 maunds of grain which are thus yearly consumed, 644 maunds are annually distributed to infirm women, widows and other deserving persons at their own houses. During the last famine an extra amount of grain was added at each distribution, both morning and evening. Rs. 1,644 per

Langar-khāna
of Dargāh
Khwāja
Sāhib.



year are spent in fees to *hakims* and doctors for attendance upon the poor sick. The normal cost of the charity is about Rs. 5,000 per annum. It is controlled by two *dāroḡās*, under a manager appointed by the Dargāh committee. They receive their pay from the funds of the Dargāh. The cost of supervision is a somewhat high percentage of the total expenses.

The Indian Charitable Relief Fund, supplemented by local subscriptions and distributed by Government officers, did much to relieve distress during the recent famines.

Presented to the
Ajmer Museum
by the
Ajmer Museum
1926

WITH KIND PERMISSION

OF

Lt. Col. R. J. W. Heale, O. B. E., I. A.,
Commissioner, Ajmer-Merwara.

DEDICATED TO

Captain W. F. Q. Shuldham, I. A.
Assistant Commissioner,

AJMER.

By the author.

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1926.

114. *Kharekree*.—This family is originally of the Chohan extraction, but was converted to Mohamedanism by the Emperors of Delhi. This village fell in the share of Jamalshah, the ancestor of the family, at the time when his brother Allah Bux partitioned his estate (which included the villages of Ajesur and Khaekice) between himself and his brother. The Khan pays Rs. 212-15-6 on account of Government tribute annually.

115. *Nosar*.—This family is originally of the Chohan extraction, but was converted to Mohamedanism by the Emperors of Delhi. It is said that Dilawar Khan, the ancestor of the family, was settled by the Moghul Emperors for the protection of the Pushkar Pass.

116. *Kotri*.—This village was donated by Raja Keransen, the ancestor of the Bhinai family, to Bhawaneedan Charan at the time when he occupied the pergunah of Bhinai by turning Madlia Bhil out of the village. The Charan pays Rs. 123-6-9 on account of Government tribute annually.

Diwan Durgah Khwaja Sahib.

117. *Sajjadda Nashin*.—Lineal descendant of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, who came to Ajmer in A.D. 1195 from Sanjar in Khurasan.

The Dargah belongs to the Sunni sect and is endowed with 18 villages bringing in a Revenue of about 25,000. Emperor Akbar in company with his empress performed the pilgrimage to this temple on foot in expiation of a vow he made when entreating Heaven to grant him a son. The founder is said to have died at a great age in the year 1235 A.D. The Dewanji is the spiritual Head of the Dargah and besides large offerings, which he shares with the servitors of the shrine he holds 3 villages in Ajmer, besides Jagir in Hyderabad (Deccan) and Jaipur States for his own support. The great fair of the "Urs" in the month of Rajab at Ajmer to which Mohamedans from different places flock, is held in commemoration of the 7 days retirement of the saint, at the expiration of which term he was found dead in his cell. The Dewan is known to all Indian Mohamedans as "Wali-ul-Hind".