Princely Anticolonialism from India to "Free America":
Maharaja Sayaji Rao III of Baroda and the United States of America, c. 1900-1935

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Introduction

Historians of Modern South Asia had long understood India's princely states as islands of tradition, as backwaters with no links beyond British India. Over the past ten years, however, new research has begun to uncover the far-reaching connections that linked the princely states with the rest of the British Empire and the world. In building these new connected histories of the princely states, a younger generation of historians has established that some Indian rulers moved—physically and intellectually—from their states to insular Britain and mainland Europe, but also well beyond these more well-known princely geographies. From the Arabian Peninsula to Japan, Indian princes shifted their gaze from imperial to truly global scales in pursuit of diverse religious, intellectual, and political goals. The global pan-Islamic connections of the princely states of Bhopal and Hyderabad, for instance, have been well documented (Beverley 2015; Green 2013, 2013b).

In the Mecca-Medina region, the Begum of Bhopal and the Nizam of Hyderabad owned houses in which outlawed Muslim Indians sometimes sought refuge (Alavi 2011, 1347). It is Japan, however, which was the most potent reference for several Indian rulers beyond the British

Empire and Europe. Under the Meiji restoration (1868–89), Japan emerged as the model Asian state that was able to industrialise its society while re-empowering cultural traditions and keeping European power at bay in India (Stolte 2012, 403-423), but also in spaces such as the Ottoman empire (Essenbel 2011; Worringer 2014) and the Malay world (Laffan 2003; Hussin 2008; Andaya 1977). After the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, Japan displayed even more confidence in its position in the world (Huffman 2010). Some Indian rulers and their high-ranking administrators kept a close eye on Asia's only imperialist power. Japan turned into a powerful model for several Muslim officials in the court of Hyderabad (Beverley 2015) while Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala visited Japan on his 1903–04 Asian tour (Green 2013a, 2013b).

The world beyond world the British Empire and Europe, in short, allowed some Indian rulers to participate in global religious projects and anticolonial politics outside of the Indian subcontinent. For princely anticolonialism, this was a significant displacement of political activity from India to the world stage just as British surveillance of "sedition" increased in both British and princely India.

This article explores a new perspective in our ever-evolving picture of global princely connections. It does so through an examination of the multiple engagements of Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III of Baroda with the United States of America over three decades, from c. 1900 to c. 1935. The Maharaja ruled the leading princely state of western India for over six decades, from his accession in 1875 until his death in 1939 at the age of 75. Baroda was one of the three most important states in India according to the princely hierarchy established by the British, along with the southern states of Hyderabad and Mysore. By the early twentieth century, the Maharaja had acquired a well-earned reputation among British colonial administrators as a committed social reformer in the domain of education, an inveterate traveller, whose annual international tours kept him away from his state for months at a time, and a fractious prince with anticolonial leanings, who could barely disguise his distaste for British rule in India. His movements and words were closely monitored by an anxious imperial administration (Segura-Garcia 2016, 2018).

On 30 December 1904, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad III of Baroda was in Bombay to deliver the inaugural address of the 18th Indian National Social Conference, a noted social reform organisation with links to the Indian National Congress (S. Gaekwad 1927, 172). The ruler's speech, 'Aspects of social reform in India', covered the familiar ground of social reform as a key tool for national awakening. This was a well-trodden theme in the writings of contemporary social reformers, and one

that had made frequent appearances in the Maharaja's own speeches and addresses since the late 1880s (Segura-Garcia 2015).

On this occasion, however, Sayaji Rao put forward an argument that was new to his writing. He began by asserting the superiority of Europe, which he saw as 'a fact of the present day' (S. Gaekwad 1927, 172). He then asked, however, whether this superiority was 'an eternal and unalterable law of Nature', since it was 'during the 300 years only that Europe has taken the lead over other parts of the world'. Given Europe's progress, there was 'no reason why we also should not progress if we follow their example' (ibid., 173). Sayaji Rao supported his theory on national stagnation and awakening with a contemporary example: in just two generations, Japan had risen 'from obscurity to so large a measure of economic and political importance in the family of nations' (ibid., 235). The ruler already had his eyes set on the East Asian state as a model for national regeneration in the Indian subcontinent.

It was inevitable that the well-travelled Maharaja of Baroda would visit Japan, just as he had visited many European countries to gain first-hand knowledge about social, political and industrial advancements he could then bring back to Baroda. In 1910, with the announcement of the Maharaja's first visit to Japan, a Baroda newspaper pointed out that his interest in the country stemmed from its recent military success: the victory of 'little Japan' over the mighty 'Russian bear' in the 1904–05 war (NAI HD Public B, May 1906, n. 120-21).

If Sayaji Rao's first visit to Japan only brought him to Yokohama, the second one was more extensive: in 1933, he visited Yokohama again, but also included Nagasaki, Tokyo, and Kobe in his itinerary (B. Gaekwar 1934, 66-72). Tokyo and Kobe in particular were host to sizable communities of Indian students, some of whom Sayaji Rao met (ibid., 69). These two cities not only attracted Indian students, but also Indian anticolonialists drawn to Japan by its reputation as a centre for international radicalism. British administrators in India—in the Baroda Residency, the Bombay Presidency, and the Government of India in Calcutta—had been deeply anxious over the ruler's meetings with and funding of diasporic anticolonial Indians in London, Paris, and Switzerland in the early 1900s.

There is no indication, however, that Sayaji Rao's activities in Japan aroused any suspicion among these agents of the British Empire. The ruler may have admired Japan's global rise to pre-eminence without an in-depth engagement with anticolonial politics on the ground. His varied and wide-ranging connections with the United States of America, however, turned out to be very different in their intensity and reach. It is these multiple, decades-long links that the article examines—first

through the ruler's travel to the United States, then through his remarkable policy of hiring American citizens who moved to Baroda to implement social, educational and financial reforms in the state and, finally, through the intimate encounters that brought the United States into the lives of the Maharaja and his closest kin. Taken as a whole, these diverse connections reveal the multi-layered ways in which India's princely states were inextricably enmeshed with transnational anticolonialism in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Four princely tours in "Free America"

While the most compelling reference for Indian rulers beyond mainland Europe and the British Empire was Japan, the United States of America did not benefit from a significant amount of attention from India's princely rulers and administrators. This is remarkable, since the United States was in fact an important reference for many Indian anticolonial activists, as part of a wider network of Indo-American entanglements (Slate 2012; Fischer-Tiné & Slate 2022). In this domain, the Maharaja of Baroda stood apart from other Indian rulers, as one the international connections he deployed more skilfully and extensively was precisely with the United States. He did so by touring the United States and establishing—some public and institutional, others very much private and intimate—with American citizens. Ideologically, the Maharaja's fascination with the United States originated from its political history.

In the first place, the country was born in 1783 out of an anticolonial revolution against the very empire that had colonised India. Secondly, while Japan's status as an imperial power was relatively recent, the United States had been putting its imperial ambitions into practice for longer—at least since the Spanish-American War of 1898. As in the case of the American Revolutionary War, it had done so at the expense of another European colonial empire. In 1898, the American victory entailed the dismantled of the Spanish Empire in Asia and the Caribbean, since Spain relinquished sovereignty over Cuba and ceded Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the United States. In this way, the United States provided a stronger case than Japan for the emergence of a new nation that could defeat European colonies empires and counteract European supremacy over the world.

In late 1894, the Gujarati- and English-language newspaper *Deshi Mitra* reported with alarm that the Maharaja of Baroda was planning his very first visit to the United States of America (BL-APAC, IOR, NNR, Bombay, 20 December 1894). The Surat-based weekly exhorted the Government of India to stop him from travelling to the United States and to wean him from his 'wandering Jew-like propensities' (ibid.).

Through the figure of the Wandering Jew—a character from Christian legends who often appeared in anti-Semitic tracts—the *Deshi Mitra* highlighted that, after five long international tours, the Maharaja was in danger of becoming an absentee ruler. For the Government of India, concerns around absenteeism—of a ruler so disconnected from the concerns of his subjects that he would stop being useful as a coadjutor of imperial rule in his state—mixed with anxieties around Sayaji Rao's anticolonial engagement with Indian exiles abroad.

In 1894, the *Deshi Mitra*'s call for a ban on the Maharaja's American tour became a reality, as the Government of India denied permission to travel to the United States, or, indeed, anywhere else. Sayaji Rao was not allowed to leave India again for six years (F. Gaekwar, 185-6). After obtaining permission to resume his international travel, however, Sayaji Rao visited the United States on four occasions: in 1905, 1910, 1933 and 1934. In his trips from Baroda to the land he called 'Free America' he found an opportunity to challenge British rule in India.

During his first trip to the United States in 1905, Sayaji Rao busied himself gathering knowledge on some of the areas of reform that most concerned him in the early twentieth century, so that he could apply them in his state. These issues were related to industrial and agricultural development, as well as to social reform through education. He made inquiries into America's industries and, after visiting Colorado Springs, made plans to start a papermaking industry in Baroda (Sergeant 1928, 118). He sought information on the latest agricultural advances and sent various types of seeds to Baroda so that they could be experimented with. He also collected information on American child-rearing practices and circulating libraries (ibid., 119). In 1907, after his first tour, he sent the Indian educationist C. R. Reddy to the United States to study the country's education system (Anjaneyulu 1980).

During the tours that followed he developed a strong interest in the American educational models, inspecting dozens of schools and universities (B. Gaekwar 1934, 60-61). He was particularly concerned with technical education. He met the noted black leader Booker T. Washington, whose Tuskegee Institute provided agricultural and industrial training to black Americans—a project that was not dissimilar to the Maharaja's own technical institute in Baroda, the Kala Bhavan, which he had founded in 1890 (Raina & Habib, 1991). The goal of this engagement with new developments in industry, agriculture, and education in the United States was to seek a non-European model of modernity that could be adapted to Baroda—a model that surpassed the colonial modernity of British India, thus establishing that Indians were capable of self-government.

Beyond practical improvements that could be implemented in Baroda, Sayaji Rao's first American tour gave him new ideological ammunition to critique British rule in India. These critiques were not based on his readings of the political culture or the history of the United States, but on his own observations on American soil. As he wrote to a British administrator in Baroda in 1906, 'I enjoyed immensely my visit to Free America. There is great freedom there which makes people contented and loyal' (Palande 1958, 562). To John Morley, secretary of state for India, he wrote: 'I have recently returned from my visit to America […] It is the right of man to have good Government; and in the present day, the people themselves demand it.' (ibid., 563).

Over the following years, the ruler also made clear his admiration for American ideas of progress and freedom to his subjects, sometimes mining unexpected sources. In March 1911, he concluded a speech at Baroda's Male Training College, a teacher training institution, with a few verses by William Cullen Bryant, a celebrated journalist and Romantic poet from the United States (Desai 1926, 30). Quoting Bryant's poem "Thanatopsis", the ruler exhorted Baroda's future teachers to not behave 'like the quarry-slave at night, I scourged to his dungeon.' The echoes of India's subjugation under British rule in his references to American freedom—whether in private communications with imperial administrators or in public declarations to his subjects—were clear for whoever wanted to listen to them.

During his early American tours of 1905 and 1910, Sayaji Rao established links with diasporic Indians in the United States and Canada. In 1910, the Bengali revolutionary Taraknath Das organised a meeting of Indian residents in Vancouver to welcome the Maharaja to North America (Sahay 1981). Sayaji Rao accepted Das's invitation and attended the event, feeding imperial anxiety over his engagement with anticolonialism (*United States of India*, Sep. 1923, 7). A few months later, Das's name was included in a list produced by the Government of India's Political Department that indicated the individuals the ruler was warned against meeting, due to their involvement with "seditious" activities. In the list, Das was identified as the driving force behind the *Free Hindustan*, described as a 'notoriously violent revolutionary publiccation' (NAI, FPD, Sec. I, Notes, Feb., 37-55).

Sayaji Rao's American connections were particularly troubling to British administrators at a time when not only was British world supremacy threatened by the United States, but Asian leaders from other countries were turning to the United States to plead their people's case against European colonialism (Bradley 2000, 10; Manela 2007). British administrators need not have worried in this regard, as the Maharaja of

Baroda did not make use of his tours to seek the support of politicians in the United States through informal diplomacy. His only meetings with American government officials took place in his later tours, in 1933 and 1934. Sayaji Rao's strategy of linking travel and anticolonialism experienced a significant shift, a shift that made it more palatable to British administrators. After his contacts with the anticolonial Indian diaspora brought him to the brink of deposition in the early 1900s, by the interwar period he retreated to more sedate politics. This withdrawal reflected a growing loss of relevance of Indian rulers as anticolonial agents in the 1920s and 1930s, as the anticolonial movement gained mass support across the subcontinent.

While Sayaji Rao's adaptation of American innovation had allowed him to establish Baroda as a "modern" state that bypassed European modernity, his presence in the United States served a very similar political purpose for the country, as a confirmation of the country's new position of strength vis-à-vis the British Empire. The British administrators who had first encouraged young Indian princes to visit Europe in the early 1870s had hoped these international tours would acquaint them with European notions of modernity in their original breeding ground. By the early twentieth century, the connection between princely travel and modernity took an unexpected turn in the United States: it was the very fact of receiving princely visitors from India that established the country as "modern".

In 1906, American commentators saw Sayaji Rao's first visit as a confirmation of the country's status as a world power. An American journalist remarked that Sayaji Rao had already been to Europe several times and that, if he was visiting the United States, it was because he believed that Americans could 'show him a thing or two' that Europeans could not (*Sunday Vindicator*, 29 May 1910, 22). At a time when the United States aspired to replace the British Empire as a global power, Sayaji Rao's visits confirmed to Americans that their country was superior to any European power—and especially to the empire they had won their independence from.

Given these political considerations, media coverage of the Maharaja's four visits to the United States was glowing. In 1910, New York welcomed the Maharaja 'with open arms', with journalists calling him 'the Roosevelt of India'—thus elevating a non-democratically elected Indian ruler with little interest in bringing democratic reforms to his state to the status of the US President who had left office just the year before. Sayaji Rao was also called 'the boss of Baroda', an expression that again rendered invisible his princely self in favour of a business owner-like persona. He dazzled with his 'perfect English', as well as his

'progressive ideas and well-fitting London clothes'. Newspapers were also equally likely to stress his 'romantic' journey from 'humble shepherd boy to ruling prince', referring to his unexpected accession to the throne after the British deposed and exiled his predecessor in 1875 (*Niagara Falls Gazette*, 24 Jun. 1935, 13).

Journalists pointed out, however, that 'in his own personal life his tastes are very simple', highlighting that he was an early riser and had a modest breakfast of coffee, toast, and fruit (ibid.). Sayaji Rao was a prince straight out of 'the glamorous East', yet a 'boss' with a Protestant work ethic and Spartan habits. The publications that covered his American tours also devoted a great deal of space to the two princely women who accompanied him: Maharani Chimna Bai II and the couple's only daughter, Princess Indira Devi (*Manchester Guardian*, 11 Jul. 1910, 14). The articles often contrasted their glamorous, bejewelled appearance with their earnest interest in learning about the culture, society, and politics of the United States. Anti-monarchism was central to the birth of the United States. In the case of these princely visitors from Baroda, however, disdain for monarchy as an institution was clearly set aside, to be replaced with a fascination for Indian princes as wonderfully wealthy representatives of "the East". This American glance towards the Maharaja of Baroda and his kin mixed Orientalist tropes with the language of progressiveness, business and hard work, creating a unique discourse on Indian rulers. This discourse emerged just as the United States media used the visits of these Indians as a marker of the country's global hegemony.

The media's enthusiastic embrace of the Maharaja and his closest kin in the United States took place as most Indians in the country faced a very different reception. An October 1910 article in *The Survey*, entitled "The Hindu, the newest immigration problem", reported on the influx of 'white-turbaned newcomers'—Indian labourers who were welcomed to the Pacific coast with the same racial antagonism and anti-Asian sentiment that met Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants. It was also during this period that the Asiatic Exclusion League emerged as the most significant organisation aimed at preventing and opposing the entry of Asians into the US. Sheltered from such discrimination by their class and their aristocratic rank, the Maharaja of Baroda shaped a different kind of discourse about Indians in the United States, a type of knowledge about India that was different from that of the poor and the dispossessed. The cultural encounter between Baroda and the United States, however, did not take place exclusively on American soil or on the pages of American newspapers. It was a two-way encounter, which brought many Americans to Baroda, creating spaces of contact that were

both public and private.

The making of an American circle in Baroda

Throughout his tours of the United States of America, the Maharaja of Baroda not only furthered his fascination with American political culture, visited schools and universities, and astonished American journalists. He also forged lasting links with American citizens, some of whom he brought to Baroda as state employees. By 1907, a British observed that Sayaji Rao had 'lately taken a fancy to having a good many Americans in his service' (Weeden 1911, 290). His American hires predominantly moved to Baroda to implement projects of reform within the domains of education, industry, and finance. The ruler was particularly concerned with establishing libraries and making them accessible to his subjects. To that end he employed the American librarian William A. Borden for three years to establish a Central Library in the city of Baroda, as well as a network of free circulating libraries that made books accessible to subjects living in more remote areas (Kudalkar 1919). To pursue industrial and financial reform he hired Ralph Whitenack, a graduate of Brown University, to advise him on economic and industrial development (*Brown Alumni Monthly*, Oct. 1911). In the 1910s, Whitenack became the prime architect of the highly successful Bank of Baroda (Chandavarkar 2007).

The Maharaja of Baroda's policy of hiring American citizens was striking, given the ready availability of Britons willing to take up handsomely paid positions in a wealthy princely state such as Baroda. The ruler's "fancy" to having Americans in his service did not go unnoticed by British administrators, who bemoaned that he had thrown himself 'into the arms of the Americans' (NAI, FPD, July 1903, n. 347-9). To the administrators, the reasons behind such a move were clear. As the Foreign and Political Department argued in 1903, the Maharaja was 'actuated by desire to separate himself as far as possible from British influences, since no difficulty is experienced by other Chiefs in securing British employés [sic] for similar posts' (ibid.). It added that the Maharaja's practice of hiring Americans should be discouraged, but warned that the ruler was 'most contentious' on this issue (ibid.). Indeed, the Maharaja did not stop employing Americans in Baroda. Three years later, the same department lamented that the Maharaja's hiring practices were still in place, 'undoubtedly' as part of the Maharaja's continued 'policy of cutting himself off from British influence' (NAI, FPD, Secret I, Nov. 1906, n. 12-17). Anxieties around the employment of foreigners were at a high in early twentieth-century Baroda, but they were far from being a new development in the Indian subcontinent.

British concerns about Indian rulers hiring foreigners dated back to an earlier phase of encounters between rival European powers in eighteenth-century western India. At that time, the competition between the British and the French in the subcontinent hinged on the establishment of alliances with local rulers, who often offered employment to European soldiers and officers—such as the French mercenaries who entered Maratha service (Cooper 2004, 327-334). While in the early twentieth century, the United States nursed no territorial ambitions in western India, as France had done in the eighteenth century, British administrators were nevertheless anxious about the presence of American citizens in Baroda—a state established by the Gaekwad dynasty in the early eighteenth century as a northern outpost of Maratha rule in Gujarat. While these fears had a historical precedent, they involved a very contemporary concern: the ascendancy of the United States as a new global power that could outshine a British empire threatened by anticolonial unrest in India.

Despite the complaints of the Government of India, Americans continued to be a common sight in Baroda, not just as employees, but also as visitors. In fact, Sayaji Rao had been hosting Americans in Baroda as state guests since the 1890s. In 1896, he extended an invitation to Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his pen name of Mark Twain, to visit the state as part of his tour of the Indian subcontinent. Out of the several princes Twain encountered during his tour, he thought Sayaji Rao to be the most intelligent and accomplished, as well as the most proficient in English (Twain 2006, 287). In terms that anticipated portrayals of the ruler in the American press during his tours, Twain saw Sayaji Rao as an 'educated gentleman' (Twain 1899, vol. II, 86). In the early twentieth century, the Maharaja received two further state guests from the United States: Charles Cuthbert Hall, a missionary from New York, and the missionary and Jeremiah W. Jenks, a professor of political science at Cornell University and special commissioner at the US War Department. Both were invited to visit Baroda and review its free and compulsory education system (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 19 Jan. 1907, 14; *The harvest field*, Apr. 1912, 134).

In 1902, Jenks visited the Kala Bhavan and praised the technical institute for its potential in bolstering industrial and economic development in the state, claiming would contribute to 'making Baroda independent of Europe' (*The Dawn*, Jun. 1911, 98). This American recognition of Baroda as a modern state that could thrive without European or British dependence further indicates the anticolonial character of the links that the Maharaja of Baroda established with the United States. While the encounters that have been examined so far unfolded in the

public worlds of education, industry, and finances, the links between Baroda and the United States also developed in intimate, private domains. They did so in ways that transformed the princely person in early twentieth-century Baroda, with important consequences for the princely couple, Sayaji Rao and Chimna Bai, and at least three of their adult children.

Intimate American encounters in a princely family

As the previous section established, the Maharaja's policy of hiring Americans created an American circle in Baroda. At the centre of this circle was a citizen of the United States the ruler had welcomed not just into his state but into his very household: Mary Elizabeth Maclean, who moved to Baroda in 1906 as companion to Maharani Chimna Bai II (Corwin 1920). The Maharaja placed the selection of his consort's companion at the hands of Hermon Carey Bumpus, the director of the American Museum of Natural History, who had shown the ruler around the museum during his visit to New York that very same year. Bumpus wrote to the Maharaja that he had seen 'several young ladies' who had applied to him for the position. He reported that one of the candidates filled nearly all the requirements.

Mary Elizabeth Maclean had graduated from the University of California in 1889. She had then worked as a teacher of English language and literature at a high school in San Rafael, California, and as a teacher of History and general literature at the Rayson Private School for girls in New York. She had just obtained a PhD from Yale, awarded in 1905. A thirty-two year old, she was 'a woman of excellent education and of refinement.' Bumpus reported that Maclean had 'travelled and studied for two years in Europe' and was 'accustomed to travelling', an essential requirement for a Maharani who often travelled with her husband (NAI, FPD, Sec. I, Nov. 1906, n. 12-17). Following Bumpus's recommendation, Sayaji Rao hired Maclean for two years, with a salary of 1,500 dollars per year and free furnished quarters.

British administrators in Baroda were wary of Maclean's presence at the very heart of the Maharaja's household. They lamented that 'the American companion to his wife will now always be at hand to confirm him in his ideas of British tyranny'. They were equally concerned that Maclean would write 'articles for the American magazines' precisely on the subject of 'British tyranny', thus potentially emerging as an anti-colonial spokeswoman for India in her home country (ibid.). Maclean wrote no such articles. Her every activity in Baroda, however, was regarded with suspicion. The Foreign and Political Department noted that she spent about an hour or two a day reading to the Maharani, but

seemed to devote most of her time to learning horse riding.

More worryingly, Maclean ran what the Foreign and Political Department called 'a kind of salon' in Baroda, which she led with her 'clever and amusing' character. She extended invitations to high-ranking and influential Indians in the Maharaja's service ('a Mohammedan Judge, the Court Painter, the Artistic Adviser'), as well as to other American hires, to discuss 'kindred topics' (Weeden 1911, 290). Maclean's "salon" was met with particular wariness by British administrators in the state, as it served as a space for the exchange of ideas between Indians and Americans (NAI, FPD, Sec. I, Nov. 1906, n. 12-17). In a few years, the intimate encounters within the Gaekwad princely household would run much deeper, extending from the Maharaja and the Maharani to the couple's children.

In 1912, yet another American citizen caused alarm among British administrators in Baroda. A young man called J. R. Mayer arrived at Baroda as a state guest at the invitation of Shivaji Rao, Sayaji Rao and Chimna Bai's third son. The two young men had become friends at the University of Oxford, where they were members of one of the university's most storied colleges, Christ Church (Weeden 1911, 47). Mayer's presence in Baroda heightened the Residency's concerns about close contacts between the Gaekwad family and American citizens (NAI, FPD, Est., Feb. 1911, n. 18). There was an additional factor, which amplified British anxieties about Shivaji Rao's friendship with the American: for over a year, British administrators in Baroda had suspected that the young prince shared his father's anticolonial standpoint (ibid.).

A few months earlier, the postmaster at Baroda intercepted four issues of *Bande Mataram*, Aurobindo Ghose's revolutionary newspaper, which had arrived addressed to Shivaji Rao. To the Foreign and Political Department, this was an act of 'sedition' which confirmed that the prince held 'extremist views' (NAI, FPD, Intl., Mar. 1912, n. 85, Part B). Shivaji Rao, however, was not the only child of the princely couple with American connections. His elder brother Jaisingh Rao had studied at Harvard and was reported to be 'very American in all his ways', even speaking with a strong American accent (Weeden 1911, 289).

In 1912, the same year that Shivaji Rao hosted J. R. Mayer, Jaisingh Rao made plans for several of his Harvard classmates to spend the summer in Baroda. *The New York Times* breathlessly reported that one of the young men was romantically interested in Jaisingh Rao and Shivaji Rao's younger sister, Indira Devi, after having seen a photograph of her in the United States. The newspaper added that Indira admired her American would-be suitor and 'the freedom accorded to the American wife', while Jaisingh Rao was reported to have often said that her sister

would prefer an American husband (*New York Times*, 19 Feb. 1912).

When in 1913 Indira Devi broke her engagement to Maharaja Madho Rao Scindia of Gwalior—against her parents' wishes—and sailed for London to marry a prince of her choice, Jitendra of Cooch Behar, American newspapers remarked that such a bold move was 'unique among the ruling families of India'. The New York Times was in no doubt about where such a display of female independence came from—it was the consequence of Indira Devi's 'unusual intimacy' with 'American customs and life' (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 3 May 1913, 4; *New York Times*, 4 May 1913). Through these multiple encounters, the American initially cultivated by the Maharaja of Baroda since the 1890s, but especially since the early years of the twentieth century, came to permeate the behaviours, relationships, and worldviews of the most important members of the Gaekwad family. This American-accented transformation of the princely person in Baroda was unique in colonial India in its reach and spread.

Conclusion

In 1903, a British administrator in the Bombay Civil Service noted with alarm the arrival of three American citizens in Baroda (NAI, FPD, Jul. 1903, n. 347-9). They were the American consul in Bombay and two missionaries. The three were in Baroda to meet Sayaji Rao and discuss the thorny issue of his jurisdiction over American missionaries and other American citizens in his state. This was a jurisdiction that the Government of India disputed, as the treaties established with the state in the early nineteenth century gave the Government of India the right to regulate dealings between the states under its suzerainty, foreign citizens and other polities.

The Bombay civil servant bemoaned that it was only to be expected that the Maharaja of Baroda, who as he saw it had spent the last decade opposing growing British encroachment on the affairs of his state, should 'emulate the frog in the fable and blow himself out to equal the United States bull' (ibid). The moral in Aseop's fable was that, just as the jealous frog exploded when it attempted to puff itself up to equal the bull in size, so too the poor man perished when he tried to imitate the rich and the powerful. Far from perishing, Sayaji Rao found in the United States a pool of knowledge and resources to further transform Baroda into a "progressive", "modern" state without resorting to the British Empire as a reference point. In this way, he joined a wider group of Indian rulers whose modernisation drives and political aspirations were intellectually powered not by British modernity, but by alternative references such as the 'interlinked Asianist networks' deftly examined

by Carolien Stolte (2012, 403). The Maharaja of Baroda was unique amongst them, however, in his focus on the United States of America.

Contemporary commentators recognised the role of the United States in shaping the Maharaja's anticolonial outlook. The 1911 Imperial Durbar, the first imperial durbar attended by a British sovereign, King-Emperor George V, provides a remarkable example of such recognition. Indian rulers from states large and small flocked to Delhi to participate in the event (*Coronation Durbar, Delhi 1911* 1911, 17-21; Martin 2012). This grand spectacle unmistakably established the subjugation of all Indian rulers to their overlord, the King of Great Britain and Emperor of India (Cohn 1983; Cannadine 2001).

Sayaji Rao watched as ruler after ruler approached the monumental dais, bowed thrice before George V and Queen Mary and stepped back without turning their back on the royal couple (NAI, FPD, Est., Feb. 1911, n. 18). When it was Sayaji Rao's turn to pay allegiance to the British monarchs, he performed one single half-hearted bow and sauntered away with his back to the royals, one hand in his pocket and the other one nonchalantly twirling a cane (ibid). The ruler's message was clear: the Maharaja of Baroda did not kowtow, literally or figuratively, to the Emperor and the Empress of India. Sayaji Rao's breach of protocol attracted a great deal of criticism across the British Empire, including calls for his deposition (Nuckolls 1990; Bottomore 1997). Keir Hardie, a Scottish Labour leader who campaigned for Indian self-rule, was a lone voice in praising the Maharaja for his actions (Hardie 1909; Stewart 1921, 253; Morgan, 1984; Hyslop 2006). Hardie framed them as the inevitable consequence of the ruler's political trajectory:

> Most of his fellow-rulers had been taught to grovel low before the Throne, as becomes all who go near such a symbol of imbecility, but he, *with his American tradition behind him*, kept erect […] The figure […] that the historian will depict as being alone significant [is] the calm and sedate, well-built man in the white robe of a bearer, who moved about with native dignity, doing all that was required of him as a gentleman, but remembering always that his country is in the dust, with the heel of the foreigner on her neck (*New York Times*, 18 Jan. 1912, 28). [emphasis mine]

Hardie's reading of the Maharaja's actions highlighted that his sustained engagement with the United States—'his American tradition'—rendered him incapable of ignoring India's subjugation to Britain. This was a tradition the ruler had been building during the past decade. Over the years, Maharaja Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad of Baroda deployed his 'American tradition' on several levels: to argue for the decline of the

British Empire as a world power in the face of growing American hegemony; to carve out a place for himself within the anticolonial movement in India and abroad as an Indian ruler who not only supported diasporic anticolonialism but was able to govern a modern, progressive state without turning to Europe for inspiration; and to give Baroda a global presence it could not have under the existing British treaties.

As the ruler's anticolonial aspirations crisscrossed the globe, however, they prefigured important developments in independent India. This is especially true in the area of social reform that was most important to the Maharaja: education. Sayaji Rao's insistence on providing scholarships for Indian students in the United States of America contributed to creating a community of Indian graduates increasingly trained in American rather than in British universities who played an influential role in the making of independent India (Bassett 2009 & 2016).

The Maharaja of Baroda's multiple American engagements were forged and sustained in the face of longstanding British attempts to restrict the establishment of diplomatic ties between India's princely states and the rest of the world. Far from being a facilitator of globalisation, the British Empire attempted to rein in the transoceanic aspirations of Indian rulers under its aegis. Through efforts such as Sayaji Rao's, the global links of the Indian princely states shaped the political and intellectual landscape of late colonial India. Through exchanges of people and ideas, the states not only asserted their aspirations to political autonomy but also contributed to broader dynamics of global interactions in the colonial period. Tracing these global connections highlights that the interplay between princely resilience and global connections shaped the subcontinent's transition from the colonial subjugation to independence. This exploration reveals the multifaceted nature of the princely states, challenging simplistic narratives and emphasising their active role in the world stage.

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