SWORDS OF ŚIROHĪ*

Rajasthan occupies a glorious place in the annals of medieval India (1300-1800 AD). This is due to the valour and the fighting spirit of the Rajputs and also their art of warfare. There was a long and glorious tradition of making excellent weapons especially swords, which constituted the chief weapon both for the Rajput infantry and cavalry.

The antiquity of iron in Rajasthan is quite old. The site Noh (Bharatpur District) had been a good source of iron ore deposits. The availability of iron ore provided opportunities to the rulers of Rajasthan to make various kinds of war implements because it was a natural necessity of the political situation of medieval Rajasthan. But no remarkable work has been done on the art of making war implements by the various states of Rajasthan expect the Alwar.

Verhoeven, Pendary and Dauksch have worked on Alwar Armoury1. G.N. Pant has also noticed two dozen bars at the Alwar Armoury with a special identification marks. He further states that these bars had been forged from Indian wootz cakes in Persia and then sent back to India2. The arms of Śirohī, especially the swords, are still very popular in oral traditions. Here, an attempt has been made to report on the swords of Śirohī.

A book on Armoury was written by Manik Rao and published by the Government Press on ‘Baroda’ in 1942. It provides very useful information about the swords. The book is in Marathi and the script is Devanāgarī. The book narrates that thirteen places were identified for the faulad (pulad), one of these places is Śirohī. It is very interesting to note that the Loha and Faulad have been clearly differentiated in the book.

The two kinds of swords of Śirohī were famous during the 15th and 16th century AD. These were known as Lakhāsāhi2, Mānasāhi3 and Pāvāsāhi4, names after the kings and the feudal lords of Śirohī state.

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The Lakhāsāḥī swords (Fig. 1) was made for Lakhasisingh in 1451 AD. It is about 35.7 inch long and its breadth is about 1.3 inch. Its total weight is about 108 tola.

The sword, which is known as Mānasāḥī (Fig. 2.), was made for the ruler Mānasingh of Śirohi in 1562 AD. The writer narrates that it was made by the local blacksmiths. The special features of this kind of sword that it has been made by the two types of faulad, one is of Śirohi and other is of Rampur. It has one single edge on its blade which is called Masūrī. It also has the Jodhpurī guard (handle).

Pavāsahī swords (Fig. 3) had been made during the reign of Pa vasingh who was probably a samant (feudal). This type of sword has a narrow depressing in the middle part of the blade. Its upper part is pointed, double edged. Its guard (handle) is called Jodhpurī. It has also a curve at its end.

The swords of Śirohi were tested also from their colours. The swords of blue, balck, grey and buff were considered the best. The word Bhūmi has been also used in term of sword. Bhūmi refers to a place where the sword was made. In this context it has also been referred as divya loha (available to ‘gods’ only) and is considered the best. Therefore, the iron of Bhūmi is the best for making swords.
During the process of sword making it was also considered that it will be used either by the infantry or cavalry. Sword was the most important weapon of the medieval warfare, therefore, all the possible measures were taken in making the sword to be of best quality.

References
