

Royals and Rasiks in the *Ram Rasikavali*

Over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Rasik Ramanandis went from being localized in Rajasthan, under the patronage of the rulers of Amber, to establishing their presence in key sites such as Ayodhya and Chitrakut in the gangetic plain of North India. They found new patrons in the Shi'ite nawabs of Awadh as well as in local Hindu kingdoms such as Benares, Dumrao and Rewa.

The princely state of Rewa became a center of Ramanandi patronage under the reign of the Baghela king Vishwanath Singh (1789-1854), who is said to have funded the construction of the 'pramodvan' or the pleasure grove in Chitrakut. My paper will focus on a text authored by Vishwanath Singh's son and successor, Raghuraj Singh (1823-79). The text, known as the *Ram Rasikavali* is in the 'Bhakatamal' genre. In the introductory matter, Raghuraj Singh pays the obligatory homage to Nabhadās's *Bhaktamal* and Priydas's commentary and presents his work as adding new information from new sources, both textual and oral. These sources are clearly Ramanandi, but to what extent is the text a Rasik text? The afterword to the main text includes a description of the Baghela dynasty, an extensive section on Vishwanath Singh and an enumeration of some key Ramanandi figures of the period. This section allows us to examine the link between the Ramanandis and their royal patrons from the perspective of the Baghelas. How does Raghuraj Singh negotiate his father's role as patron and bhakta? How did the Baghelas perceive their role vis-à-vis the Ramanandi sampraday?