Apart from Halhed’s account of his mission to Sindouse and the subsequent attack, there are also the thugs and villagers’ version(s) of what took place, which set the events in a different light.¹ Not surprisingly there was a whole sequence of events surrounding the affair, of which the British were only partially aware. In the late summer of 1812 the thug Ghasee Ram returned to Sindouse from an expedition and fell out with Tejun, in whose share he lived, and Ghasee Ram subsequently left with his family and moved to Laljee’s tenement.² This constituted an economic loss to Tejun who, in turn, accused Laljee of taking his tenants and he eventually made a complaint about Laljee before Halhed and gave information about the thugs in Sindouse. As a result Halhed requested Laljee to answer to the accusations, which the zamindar naturally refused to do, claiming that Halhed’s informant had spoken falsely to serve his own purposes. Shortly afterwards Halhed went to Sindouse with his military escort. We know that Halhed’s mission to Sindouse was not prompted merely by Tejun’s information, but the fact that Halhed had been specifically warned against Laljee does lend some credibility to this account.³ Apart from Laljee, Halhed had also been warned against Sohbut and Chutter, the two other shareholders of Sindouse, and if the information did indeed come from Tejun, this might indicate that he was trying to get rid of all the competition.⁴ This adds a further significance to the events that followed, infusing the British hunt for the thugs and the implementation of revenue and police, with local zamindari feuds over land and retainers.

By October 1812 it would appear that news of Perry’s operations against the Shekohabad thugs on the other side of the Jumna river, had reached...
the inhabitants of Parihara.\textsuperscript{5} Earlier in 1812 the darogha of Sindouse had also apprehended two suspected thugs who had been sent to Mainpuri for trial and thus the zamindars and their thug retainers in Sindouse would have been expecting the worst from Halhed’s presence in the area.\textsuperscript{6} According to his own deposition, Laljee fled from Sindouse when people said that Halhed was coming for him because he harboured thugs: ‘they called me chief of the village and the sirdar of the thugs, which made me run away.’\textsuperscript{7} Laljee’s brother also fled from Sindouse along with 15 or 20 others, and later stated that: ‘We were alarmed – we had heard that Halhed had come to destroy us.’\textsuperscript{8} Laljee first took refuge with Raja Madhoo Sing of Rampura who, however, turned him out when Halhed issued a warrant for him.\textsuperscript{9} Many of the zamindars of the area were protecting thugs but since Laljee ran away, he alone got the blame and when he subsequently went to Murnae, he was turned away because the inhabitants were afraid of being associated with him.\textsuperscript{10} Instead, Laljee was allowed to hide in the village of Khera where the zamindars were Kachwaha Rajputs like he was.\textsuperscript{11} The zamindars of Murnae were also Kachwaha Rajputs, but the earlier migrations of the thugs between the villages across the border might have given rise to discord amongst the zamindars, and the inhabitants of Murnae would have been averse to getting involved with a fugitive on the run from the British. Khera, on the other hand, was located within the Company jurisdiction and faced a similar situation to that of Sindouse respecting Halhed’s visit and the zamindars’ patronage of thugs. Thus the significance of the clan divisions among the Rajput landholders came to the fore when the community was under threat but so too did kinship and local solidarity.

When Laljee fled, he took with him his family and dependants and this turned into a full-scale panic and many villagers, expecting to be attacked, fled the area. The people who were tied to Laljee through kinship and service profited from his protection in times of peace but when his position crumbled most of them were dragged down along with him. Other issues also had a bearing on the turn of events and the zamindar Sohbut Rae, who had 1/8 share of Tejun’s division of Sindouse, fled along with Laljee, but he did so because Tejun had raised his rent by Rs 25. This suggests that the general confusion and turmoil caused by the coming of Halhed was seized by some as an opportunity to avoid common unpleasantness such as an increase in rent – which did not make the affair any less complicated. A further and not insignificant feature of the conflict, of which the British only later became aware, was the role of the local tahsildar. When the British took possession of Parihara in 1809, they put a tahsildar named Ahmed Hussain in charge of collecting revenue, and by all accounts he abused his position and