

**RURAL URBAN RELATIONS :**  
**QASBAS IN EASTERN RAJASTHAN**  
**( 17<sup>th</sup> –18<sup>th</sup> Centuries )**

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## Certificate

Certified that the dissertation entitled Rural-Urban Relations: Qasbas in Eastern Rajasthan (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries) submitted by Saguna P. Singh is in partial fulfillment of the Master of Philosophy Degree of the university. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*To My Beloved  
Anurag*

# CONTENTS

Page No.

Acknowledgement

Abbreviations

Introduction	1
1. Geographical Setting	26
2. Agricultural Production in Qasba	33
3. Agrarian Trade in Qasba	67
4. State and Rural Urban Trade in Eastern Rajasthan	88
Conclusion	112
Bibliography	117

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*Saguna.*

SAGUNA P. SINGH

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

PIHC	Proceedings of Indian History Congress
PRHC	Proceedings of Rajasthan History Congress
IHR	Indian Historical Review
ICHR	Indian Council of Historical Research
RSAB	Rajasthan State Archives Bikaner
IESHR	Indian Economic and Social History Review
CEHII	Cambridge Economic History of India Vol. I
VS	Vikrami Samvat

**RURAL URBAN RELATIONS :**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Approaches to the study of urban and rural society in pre-colonial India have led mainly to the juxtaposition of rural and urban societies. Just as village studies tended to deal with intra village structures and institutions, urban studies tended to deal with intra town structures and institutions. It is necessary, to go beyond such juxtaposition, and to study the structures and institutions that link the two – which are supra village and supra town, or the networks linking the two.

Historians have already written about extraction of surplus from the villages by the urban-based ruling class, supply of food grains and raw materials to the towns, in other words, a one-way traffic of goods and services, with villages receiving not much in return. This view fits into the 'village self sufficiency' theory of Indian village community propounded by such influential scholars as Thomas Munro, Charles Metcalfe, Henry Maine, Karl Marx and some of their modern followers including Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narain. This view however, needs to be examined more carefully<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> There is now an extensive debate on this issue. For an earlier statement from sociologists, one can see M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah 'Myth of Self Sufficiency of the Indian village', *Economic and Political Weekly* 12(1960) pg. 37. Also see Eric Stokes, 'Return of a peasant to the South Asian History', *South Asia* (old series) (1976) and Ravinder Kumar, 'The Changing Structure of Urban Society in Colonial India, in Ravinder Kumar (ed) *Essays in Social History of Modern India*, Delhi, OUP, 1983.' Philip Abrams and E.A.Wrigley eds. *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978; and Dipankar Gupta & K.L.Sharma ed. *Country - Town Nexus*:(Studies in Social Transformation in Contemporary India), Rawat publications 1991, also provide a fresh insight in rural urban relations.



Based on the study of archival sources as also a host of secondary sources pertaining to Eastern Rajasthan, the present study arose in the context of increasing attention paid by historians to study inter regional trade with relatively lesser emphasis on its intra-regional trade. This was partly due to paucity of historical sources and partly also due to the unstated assumption of intra-regional uniformity. However, as a matter of fact, there was a great deal of geographical diversity within Rajasthan, as also considerable specialization of agricultural production. Eastern Rajasthan produced not only different commercial crops, such as indigo, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, spices and oil seeds, but also food crops such as paddy, wheat and barley. Such specialization in agricultural production encouraged trade between one agricultural tract and another. Frequently the rural dignitaries (*zamindars*, *jagirdars*), artisans and cultivators, having substantial marketable surplus, themselves carried their produce on head, on pack animals or in carts to sell directly to rural market centres.

These rural dignitaries, along with the artisans and cultivators, also sold a great deal of produce to traders in the nearby town (*qasba*), in the weekly market (*hat*), or in a fair, to retailers, who in turn marketed it to other towns and villages. This point needs to be emphasized because although the old 'theory of self sufficiency' of each individual Indian village has virtually died, it has been substituted by the theory that the rural sector as a whole was self-sufficient<sup>2</sup>. In subsequent chapters, we will attempt to examine the

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<sup>2</sup> Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and Irfan Habib eds. *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol VI c.1200-1750, pg 83,247,248 and 327. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

validity of this concept of 'rural self sufficiency' with special reference to qasbas<sup>3</sup> in Eastern Rajasthan during the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

However, before moving to our discussion it is necessary to study the theoretical construct surrounding the discussions on rural-urban relations.

### **Historiographical Construct**

The value and importance of urban history has already been recognized among historians and sociologists alike. But the nature of work done in the field till independence was hardly substantial. However since Independence, interest has certainly been increasing and some extremely important studies have been undertaken in this field. Prof. Grewal and Prof. Indu Banga<sup>4</sup> undertook study of Batala in which they had thrown light on the problems of urban history. Among the earliest scholars to take up the study of grown and classification of towns during this period is Dr. I.P. Gupta<sup>5</sup>, who started his work under the guidance of Prof. Satish Chandra. Soon after that came the work of H.K. Naqvi. Prof S.C. Misra literally and metaphorically exposed new avenues of research where he took up with his colleagues the excavation and the interpretation of the ruins of Champaner .Prof.

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<sup>3</sup> For our study, we have primarily relied on the information available from the qasbas of Sawai Jaipur / Amber, Chatsu, Malarna, and qasba Sanganer.

<sup>4</sup> J.S.Grewal and Indu Banga eds., *Studies in Urban History*. Amritsar, Dept. of History, Guru Nanak Dev University.

<sup>5</sup> I.P.Gupta, *Urban Glimpses of Mughal India: Agra, The Imperial Capital 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Delhi, Discovery Publication House, 1986.

H.C.Verma<sup>6</sup> threw interesting insight in urbanisation in the Sultanate period, while R.Champaklaxmi<sup>7</sup> explored urban dimensions in South India. Recently B.L.Bhadani<sup>8</sup> has given fresh arguments on formation of towns/qasbas in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. A few other scholars have published interesting studies on urbanisation in medieval India. Though these are excellent works, yet this is a field which requires a far more intensive study than has been undertaken so far.

An in depth studies of urbanization of medieval India would, in fact, significantly improve our understanding of medieval Indian economy, society and culture. As Prof. S. Nurul Hasan<sup>9</sup> has rightly pointed out 'The medieval civilization was pre-eminently an urban civilization in the sense that its cities were the expression, the chrysalis of its heritage'. Though we have an idea of the society, the upper class culture that came into being, yet we have little understanding of the dynamics of a medieval town, distinctive growth of its urban centers, specializing in craft, industries, in trade, and in pilgrim traffic. In fact, our knowledge of smaller towns of medieval India is negligible as compared to our knowledge of large towns and urban centers. In his account of '12 subahs', Abul Fazl refers to 2737 qasbas. However not much work has been done on these townships although it is a recognized fact that these were *vital links between a village and the medieval metropolis* (emphasis mine).

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<sup>6</sup> H.C.Verma *Dynamics of Urban Life in Pre-Mughal India*,. New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publications, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> R. Champaklaxmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanisation: South India 300BC-AD1300*. Delhi,OUP, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> B.LBhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs: Economy of Marwar in 17<sup>th</sup> century*. Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Prof. S.Nurul Hasan, *Foreward in City in Indian History:Urban Demography, Society and Politics*,.ed. by Indu Banga, New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 1991.

Our study in fact is a response to this need for studying and exploring the medieval townships- qasbas.

Any discussion on the qasbas would necessarily revolve around two parameters, which are:

- (a) The origin of the qasbas.
- (b) The nature of rural-urban/village-qasba relationship, i.e. were the qasbas, actually urban and parasitic, based on the exploitation of a relatively self-sufficient rural sector?

Below we briefly analyze the historiographical trends surrounding these two issues.

- (a) Regarding the origins of towns, the French traveller Bernier<sup>10</sup> had stated that medieval town or urban centers suddenly expanded when the imperial camp was established there and became deserted when the emperor left. However many modern scholars who instead have satisfactorily proved that the Indian cities and towns during the medieval period were fairly stable did not accept this concept of Bernier that Indian cities were merely 'military camps'.

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<sup>10</sup> Francois Bernier, *Travels in Mogul Empire 1656-68*, ed. tr. A. Constable, London, MDCCCXCI  
Page 5 of 130

Another interesting conclusion that emerged from the studies of urbanization was that the extent of urbanization in India during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It is considered to be much higher than what it was in British India at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, according to a thesis, referred by Satish Chandra, the percentage of urban population in Northern India worked out to be over 15 %<sup>11</sup>. Professor Irfan Habib<sup>12</sup> has estimated it to be 12.5 to 15 % of the population of the Mughal India.

Not only Bernier's statement, but also unfortunately, the repetitions of the idea by Marx in his letters that the cities in India were mere military camps has for long become a barrier in the growth of urban studies in India. Even now, some of our notions rest on the models of economic and urban growth put forward in Europe in the 1940's. The model of development of medieval Europe put forward by Henri Pirenne<sup>13</sup> believed that towns grow with the growth of trade, and secondly that the entire growth of a new social order, the capitalist order is predicated on a kind of a division of labour between the cities and the towns, industries/handicrafts being concentrated largely in the towns of the countryside merely supplying raw materials and the foodstuffs. In other words, it postulated what might be called a kind of internal colonial structure where the dynamic developmental factors were concentrated in the towns and the peasants merely were, as Leon Trotsky once observed, 'the pack mules of history'. However, the role of agricultural

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<sup>11</sup> Indu Banga ed. *City in Indian History*

<sup>12</sup> Irfan Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", *Enquiry*, NS, Vol. III, no.3 (1971), pg. 1-56.

<sup>13</sup> Henri Pirenne, "*Medieval cities, their origins and revival of trade*". Double Day Anchor Books, New York.

production was largely ignored in this model. In fact, it was virtually assumed that agricultural productivity remained static during the medieval age. And demographic factors were also not taken into account.

With much greater information on medieval times, both the agricultural and the demographic factors have been woven into the new studies. Writers such as Guy Bois, have shown that demography and prices, had a direct effect on expansion of land under cultivation, with productivity declining on account of cultivation of marginal lands. When population outstripped production, famines reduced population, land fell out of cultivation and production rose. This cyclic movement had a direct impact on urban population and urban industry.

It's interesting to note in some of the early western writings on India, the fact, that the towns were not the foci of industry, had been emphasized. That the towns in India did not have a separate juridical entity, like the towns in Europe, was used as another argument to prove that the towns in India were merely exploiters, and thus to underline that the totally stagnant oriental society as a whole was incapable of developing. When we look at the processes of development in our society, we have to first discard these ideas and models, which have been discarded in the west, but unfortunately continue to influence thinking in our country.

Fortunately, we are now moving away, from excessive dependence on long distance trade, as a vehicle of social and economic change. This point,

Page 7 of 130

has been brought out in the Indian History Congress, in 1984. Dr. Nandi has pointed out, that the towns in India started reviving in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and that, feudalisation in early medieval period, did mean a considerable growth of agriculture. Feudalism, according to Satish Chandra, implies a society, in which cultivation is exploited by extra economic means, by a class that does not work on the land itself.

However according to Prof. Satish Chandra <sup>14</sup>“exploitation could not have increased without production growing simultaneously. So when we try to understand the process of growth of towns, the growth of agricultural production, the manner in which agricultural surplus is distributed, the structure of village society, the developmental as well as the inhibiting factors, all become important.” What precise role the growth or decline of long distance trade play in the process needs detailed examination?

Professor R.S. Sharma has argued in his extremely valuable work<sup>15</sup> about the growth of feudalism in India, that growth of localism, was linked on the one hand, with the process of giving grants of land to the Brahmins and political decentralization, and on the other, with the decline of long distance trade. He has further traced the absence of gold coins in North India between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Century to the decline of long distance North-South trade in India. Perhaps this thesis would have been fully accepted had there been, a decline of town life, all over India during the period. While some of the bigger towns

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<sup>14</sup> Satish Chandra, article, “Some Aspects of Urbanisation in Medieval India” in “*City in Indian History*” ed. Indu Banga.

<sup>15</sup> R.S.Sharma, *Indian Feudalism, c.AD300-1200*.Macmillan, India, 1985.

declined, the extent of the decline of town life all over India, is still a debatable question.

In his address, Dr. Nandi had also emphasized, the decline of coins, of smaller denomination . Quite obviously, coins of small value, had much greater implication, for the smaller towns, for local trade, and for local transactions rather than for long distance trade.

Some historians have a tendency to link political divisions too closely with the process of growth of towns. Thus, the arrival of the Turks was seen as helping in the process of political integration by breaking down localism, and in opening over land commerce between India, Central Asia and West Asia. These were important factors, in the process of growth of towns in India, in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, the process of the revival of towns, starts not in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and thus the entire matter would have to be reconsidered.

The argument, that the period before the arrival of the Turks, in India, was a period of political disintegration and one during which the growth of towns was not possible, can be equally applied to the period after the fall of the Tughlaq rule in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is in general, a period of political disintegration, especially in Northern India. But Satish Chandra, is somewhat doubtful, of its also being a period of the decline of towns. The Sultanate of Delhi, shrank to half its former size, under Feroz Shah Tughlaq. Yet there is no shrinkage of towns, in the subsequent period. The period witnessed, in fact,

Page 9 of 130



the establishment of many new towns. It is clear, that the entire growth of towns, during the time of Feroz Shah Tughlaq, is closely linked with agricultural expansion, with canal network and improvement of horticulture, and the establishment of large numbers of gardens, all around the towns.

In fact, according to Prof. Satish Chandra, the role of Afghans in the agricultural expansion also needs to be rethought. The very fact that the Afghans, as distinct from the Turks, settled in the countryside, suggests that they must have had something more to do with agriculture, not merely as people who in one way or the other extracted surplus. So, if we were to broaden our earlier understanding and to link the growth of towns not only with the growth of trade and industries, but also with the growth of agriculture, the so called period of decline and disintegration would perhaps emerge in a new light.

Prof. S.C. Mishra in his article<sup>16</sup>, too states a similar viewpoint. For him “The social transformation which brought the town into existence was, of course, due to the surplus which was created by sedentarisation”. Urbanization, thus, is contingent on a relatively advanced mode of production, on a relationship between the economic urbanization of society and the level of technical theory, which in turn determine the rate, the volume and the direction of resource utilization.

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<sup>16</sup> S.Chandra, article, “Some Aspects...”  
Page 10 of 130

More recently, B.L.Bhadani in his article<sup>17</sup> has given a new analysis for explaining the formation of qasbas in Rajasthan.

Observing the evolution and functioning of qasbas newly established during this period one can classify qasbas into five types as follows: -

- i. Qasbas that were large villages originally and continued to be State Headquarters after becoming qasbas, for example, qasba Lalsot, qasba Chatsu.
- ii. The qasbas, that were once villages and later became new headquarters of parganas, replacing the previous pargana headquarters.
- iii. Qasbas, which were a market town, with the suffix of 'ganj'. There were two types of market towns, one originally established as a qasba and the other, which developed into one from a village market, for example, qasba Sanganer.
- iv. The fourth type of qasba was a town with a fort. It may be said that a village that was attached to the fort, became a qasba but not the fort to a qasba. The reason why, the village became a qasba, must have been, that the village developed its economy under the protection of its fort, for example, qasba Sawai Madhopur, qasba Ranthambore.
- v. Yet another type, of qasba, was the most common during this period. They were neither pargana/administrative headquarters nor fortresses but had commercial / industrial character. From their revenue records,

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<sup>17</sup> "The Formative Process of towns and Market towns/villages in Southern Rajasthan": 1650-1950 A.D. in *Economy and Polity in Rajasthan* ed. by B.L. Bhadani and Masanori Sato. Jaipur Publication Scheme, 1997.

we know, that here resided many merchants and artisans besides agriculturalists. The 'chak' of qasba (town area) was very large compared with other types of qasbas already mentioned, for example, qasba Sanganer & qasba Sawai Jaipur.

According to Bhadani, "judging from an examination of the creation, function and character of these five types of qasbas, we can say with fair certainty that the appearance and formation of new qasbas of this period was mainly due to economic developments."<sup>18</sup>

A.M. Shah, has highlighted three basic factors, all of which according to him, played varying roles in making of an urban center, in pre-industrial India. These were economic (trade and commerce), political (court and administration) and religious (pilgrimage). He has further argued that although there could be one dominant factor-economic, political, administrative or religious – in making of a town, other factors co-existed with it, in a dynamic relationship. Any attempt, to define a city or trace its origins, in terms of a single factor, is a futile exercise.

In retrospect thus, while analyzing the origins of qasbas or small towns of medieval period, a great deal depends upon .... as Dr. Satish Chandra has stated .... "*the basis upon which a city or a town was first selected, or emerged*

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<sup>18</sup> A.M. Shah in his article 'Rural-Urban Networks' in K.L.Sharma and D.Gupta ed. *Country Town Nexus*, Rawat Publications 1991.

*as an administrative center, whether it had an agricultural hinterland, or the advantages of communication and transportation.. and so on and so forth”.*

Another significant point, that relates to the origin of small towns, is their regional basis, for the pattern of small towns differed from region to region. The growth of qasbas, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, is especially emphasized, by most medieval historians, working on this field. However, whereas in the Sultanate period, a qasba was a village with a fort, in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, a qasba, was a village with a market. Thus the entire concept of qasba itself kept on changing.

- (b) As far as the historical trends of rural-urban relations are concerned, social scientists over the years have largely studied urban and rural area as ‘discrete objects of social analysis acting autonomously as causal forces’. In fact, the town country distinction and the differentiation of the ‘urbane’ and ‘progressive’ from the ‘rustic’ and ‘backward’ provided the conceptual basis for the ‘Whig Theory of History’ in which an ascendant, civilized, urban, particiate, operating from dynamic capital cities is at the center of cumulative social progress. The separation of town and country in the commercial stage of civilization became the benchmark for the proponents of the new and revolutionary ‘conjectural’ history of ‘civil society’<sup>19</sup>. Karl Marx, for instance, defined the town and country relations, either in terms of an ‘undifferentiated

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<sup>19</sup> J. Merrington ‘Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism’ in Rodney Hilton ed. *‘The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism’*, NLB, London 1976.

unity' as observed in Asiatic history or as an 'opposition or separation' which became the foundation of social division of labour in the western societies.

The same line of argument recurred in the Maurice Dobb - Paul Sweezy debate, on the origins of capitalism, wherein, the town-country opposition was seen as an opposition of economic-corporate spheres of sovereignty<sup>20</sup>. For Henri Pirenne<sup>21</sup> and Max Weber<sup>22</sup> on the other hand, the town and country were opposed as spatial and structural forms and as cultural patterns only in feudal societies, the opposition being obliterated in industrial societies<sup>23</sup>.

The town and country relations have also been seen as one of the dominance of the town<sup>24</sup>. The dominance, it is variously argued, emanates from the capitalist control of production, that subordinates the country to urban capital. It may also result, from political hegemony, or arise from a concentration of decision-making or bureaucratic crowd in urban centers (F.

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<sup>20</sup> Maurice Dobb *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946.

<sup>21</sup> Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, Double Day Anchor Books, New York.

<sup>22</sup> Max Weber, *On Capitalism, Bureacracy and Religion: A Selection of Texts*. ed. and tr. Stani Slav. London, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> According to B.R. Grover, in his article "An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the Rural Society of India during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Indian Historical Records Commission*, Vol 37 (1966), pg. 121-153... "The concept of village self-sufficiency has been well exploded. In fact in a vast country like India, with a great diversity of geographical and topographical conditions and varying degrees of socio-economic development, its basically incorrect to talk of an Indian village in general terms for the stage of economic development of a village may differ from one Subah to another and may even vary from one region to another within a Subah."

<sup>24</sup> According to F. Braudel, in his book, *Civilisation and Capitalism, 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century*. London, Collin, 1981. pg. 53.. "the towns were all seats of political power and in that sense represented a particular characteristic of 'domination', which according to him was essential to the town. In addition to their position as political centers, these towns were often places where the presiding deity of the state resided. The political power and religious authority thus came to be concentrated in what was in reality the solitary town in the kingdom."

Braudel, J. Merrington) the classic objective of revolutionary socialism hence becomes the abolition of the anti-thesis between town and country (G. Hoppe and J. Langton, *Countryside and town in Industrialization*).

The success of this idea of 'rural-urban divide' prompted its exportation to certain European and Third World Countries. This varied application, however proved the inadequacy of these concepts and by the end of 1960's, the notion of rural urban differentiation was considered theoretically bankrupt. This dissatisfaction had stemmed from the primarily dualistic nature of formulations and from the fact that they failed to include an adequate classification of urban and rural types so essential for societal analysis<sup>25</sup>. The fallacy of using urban and rural, as generic terms, also became apparent when one was confronted with discordant, imperial, material collected in trans-historical, cross cultural context.

Quite obviously thus, the more recent literature on rural urban diffusion and transformation suggests that supra local linkages between the town and the country need to be deciphered or adequately understood in any serious analysis of societal process specially in the developing countries where the rural urban linkages both functional and spatial are in a flux.

As far as India is concerned, in the studies conducted prior to independence, it was assumed that urbanization in India was itself a new process. In fact, scholars went to the extent of branding Indian towns specially

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<sup>25</sup> T.G. McGee, *The Urbanisation Process in the Third World*, G.Bell and Sons, London 1971  
Page 15 of 130

small towns and qasbas as 'extensions of villages/overgrown villages'. Terms such as 'rural town', 'rurban town', 'rural urbanite' and 'urban ruralite' were used to describe people in society of small towns.<sup>26</sup> Further the Indian village was considered as a 'closed' and 'isolated' system. It was characterized as monolithic, atomistic and an unchanging entity. Metcalfe describes village communities as 'Unchanged, Unshaken and self sufficient little Republics'<sup>27</sup>.

Erroneously, as in west, the autonomy of tribal/ rural settlements were taken for granted in such studies to be also applicable to the Indian society, without recognizing its civilization base and institutional linkages developed over several millennia.

Subsequent years however saw the growth of urban studies based largely on the methodology of social surveys. These generated some useful empirical statistical data but without much sensitivity in respect of organic linkages among social systems within the city or between country city inter-relationships.

Further Sociological and social anthropological researches from the middle of the 1960's onwards increasingly demonstrated the concern for explorations of relationships among institutions and subsystems of society. Even the writings of European and American socialists on India can be observed to have shown this orientation. Louis Dumont, Milton Singer,

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<sup>26</sup> A.M. Shah, 'Rural Urban Networks in India' pg 65.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard S. Cohn, 'Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture' in Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn ed., *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Chicago. Aldine Publishing Company, 1968, Pg 7-23.

Bernard Cohn among many others recognized the need for a historical, comparative and systemic approach for understanding of specific institutions such as caste and kinship, town and country and economy and culture in India. These studies reinforced the work of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists who had already been using macro-sociological and comparative theoretical perspective in their studies. In most of these studies, not only the assumption of autonomy of the village/city as a social unit was challenged but doubts were also expressed on the validity of these as sociological categories. A momentum was thus created for adopting macro sociological and comparative historical perspective in the studies of social structures and cultural elements of the Indian social system.<sup>28</sup>

In early 1970's, the Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, Shimla organized a national seminar of sociologists and social anthropologists with the theme 'The Macro Sociology of India' and its proceedings are appropriately titled 'Beyond the village ; Sociological Explorations ' . Though the seminar did not directly deal with the country town relations, it made consequence for the country town relationships. In so far as underlined the dependence of modern agriculture on urban industrial inputs, banks, market and pricing mechanisms etc.

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<sup>28</sup> Yogendra Singh, " Country-town Nexus: Social Transformation in Contemporary Indian Society", in K.L. Sharma and D. Gupta eds "*Country.....*"  
Page 17 of 130



However, as Indra Deva<sup>29</sup> has stated the existence of a relationship between peasants, villages and towns is not a new phenomenon for it is not the modern means of transport and communication that have related the peasant village to a town for the first time rather institutional, cultural, religious, political and economic ties have existed between the peasant villages and urban cultures since the beginning of historical times. In fact, cities and towns could not have come into being or continued to exist without this relationship, the urban centers had to depend necessarily on the village for agricultural products and other rural surpluses. Even for the continuance of these primary supplies, a stable pattern of rural urban relationships was a prerequisite. The basis of this relationship however was much wider. The bonds were not only economic but also political and cultural. A majority of town dwellers as well as wagers of the adjoining regions shared one and the same cultural tradition. It would be utterly erroneous to think that tradition of folk culture was confined to villages. A large majority of the urban population as well were its active bearers. Apart from the stream of folk culture that bound up the rural and a large section of urban population, the elite traditions have themselves not remained unrelated. They were based on a fundamentally common worldview, which resulted in essentially similar manifestations in the two domains.

Apart from cultural links, the rural and urban sectors have also been related through established pattern of institutional relationship. Thus ever

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<sup>29</sup> "Country town Nexus and the Study of Rural Change in India" in D.Guptas and K.L.Sharma eds. *Country Town Nexus in India*  
Page 18 of 130

caste normally includes people living in towns as well as villages of the region. The kinship bonds too extended far beyond villages and most families living in traditional urban cultures had some relatives in the countryside too.<sup>30</sup>

To cap it all, village exogamy, migration, inter-village economic ties, education needs, dependence upon towns for markets, division of labour, law and order, political authority and governmental control, social and communal gatherings, religious ceremonies – all linked members of a village with other villages and towns<sup>31</sup> -

Thus there have been traditionally established bonds between villages and towns in all-important spheres of life. It has to be clearly seen that these bonds cannot be regarded merely outside influences on the Society and the culture of the village. They have been integral parts of the socio cultural system of the peasant civilization that included the rural and urban aspects as its dimensions.

In view of these vital and ever existent linkages, historians have come to reject the idea of 'village self-sufficiency'. However, the theory still persists in the mind of people that the rural sector, as a whole was self-sufficient. This idea however needs critical examination (and in fact is the essence of our research). Firstly, this concept assumes that the rural sector, as

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<sup>30</sup> A.M. Shah, 'Rural-Urban...' pg 68

<sup>31</sup> K.L. Sharma's, "Country Town Nexus : A Macro view" in K.L. Sharma and D. Gupta ed. *Country Town Nexus*  
Page 19 of 130

a whole was undifferentiated. In fact in reality it was highly differentiated.<sup>32</sup> Every village was divided into a number of castes. The specialized occupations of a number of castes required tools and raw materials and to procure all of these they had to necessarily go to the town. In view of this, thus it becomes important to study the non agricultural groups in the village society in India an idea which has been by and large ignored by most of the historians as a result of which it led to the branding of the rural society as simply an agrarian or a peasant society.

Secondly, there was a visible inequality of property in income amongst agricultural groups in the rural society and its full implications need to be therefore worked out. The richer agricultural families must have exhibited their wealth in diet, clothing, housing, pots and pans, gold and silver jewellery and so on and all of these must have involved goods purchased from the towns. Besides the differentiation of caste and class, there was differentiation of yet another kind whether rich or poor every villager's life was marked by rites of passage and other special occasions such as birth, initiation, wedding, death, festivals, religious ceremonies and so on. Such special occasions required special foodstuffs, special clothing's and many other special things. Many of these things had to be purchased from the town.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> According to analysis of Dr. Dilbagh Singh in "Caste and Structure of Indian Society in Eastern Rajasthan during 18<sup>th</sup> Century", *Indian Historical Review* Volume 2 No. 2(1976) Pg 299-311 – "The population of a village in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Rajasthan constituted 14.46 % riyayatis and 57 % raiyatis"( the privileged and less privileged cultivating classes.) Such details are not available for towns, though Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, c.1770-1870*.Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983....believes that the merchant class represented 20-30% of urban population of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century in North India taking into account brokers, money changers and so on. These data do seem to suggest that the agrarian society was more diversified than assumed to be by most scholars.

<sup>33</sup> A.M. Shah "*Rural-Urban Networks in India...*"

Finally there were need of the village community, caste group and lineage group as collectivities; village, caste and lineage temples; festivals of village gods and goddesses; the village council house and the charitable institution of the village, all of these involved purchase of goods and services available in the town. In other words, every town or qasba had something to offer to the villager for his use. The villagers either went to a town; a weekly market or a fair to purchase these things or the traders from the town itself went to villages to sell them at villager's doorstep. Thus, the rural sector in general, was certainly not as self-sufficient as it is assumed to be by many scholars.



As is clear from the above analysis, there existed multifarious and multi faceted link between the rural countryside and its urban counterparts. However due to paucity of time and space, we have restricted ourselves, largely to the economic linkage between the villages and qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan. Using the analogy of rural-urban grain trade, we have tried to show that the rural sector was certainly not self sufficient and isolated, rather it had dynamic links with the qasbas or the urban centers and both villages and qasbas were active participants in a mutually beneficial relationship.

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We have dealt with our theme by dividing our thesis in four chapters. In the First Chapter, we analyze the geographical and regional constraints on agricultural production on qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan. Based on the evidence from *Arhsattas*, as also information from the works of S.P. Gupta, B.L.

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Bhadani, Dilbagh Singh and Madhavi Bajekal, in the Second Chapter we've tried to show that the seasonal and geographical constraints nevertheless the qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan were able to produce substantial agrarian and non agrarian surplus to sustain the rural and urban sectors. In fact, this volume and variety of production are itself dependent largely on the contribution – financial and material – from the bankers, traders, moneylenders and state authority based in qasba.

Its important to mention that grain trade occupies a significant place in the agrarian economy of Rajasthan and it is this rural-urban grain trade, which becomes the focus of our research in the Third Chapter. Various scholars have emphasized the importance of grain trade as a linkage between rural and urban sectors.<sup>34</sup> Two factors however assume significance in the grain trade viz. the mechanism of procuring grain from the countryside and the organization for its disposal. It's broadly these two parameters on which we are going to focus in this chapter.

Needless to say, the agrarian production as well as agrarian trade generated sufficient sources to fill the coffers of this state. The extraction of

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<sup>34</sup> see Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India: 1556-1707*. Revised edition II, New Delhi, OUP, 1999. pg 75-77; and Tapan Ray Chaudhuri "Inland Trade" in *CEHII*, Cambridge, 1982, Vol VI, ed. Tapan Ray Chaudhuri and Irfan Habib pg 325-359; S.P. Gupta "*Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan, c. 1650-1750*, Delhi, Manohar Publications, 1986.." pg 92, 115; Madhavi Bajekal "The State in the Rural Grain Market in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Eastern Rajasthan", in *Merchants, Markets and State in early Modern India*. Delhi, OUP, 1990. ed. Sanjay Subramanyam, Delhi 1990, Pg 90-120; B.L. Bhadani, "Land, Tax and trade in agricultural produce in 17<sup>th</sup> century western Rajasthan" *IESHR*, 29(2)1992 pg 215-225; and his recent book "*Peasants, State and Entrepreneurs 1999*" Rajat Dutta, "Merchants and Peasants, a study in late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bengal" pg 139-162; KumKum Banerjee, "Grain Traders and East India Company; Patna and its hinterland in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Sanjay Subramanyam ed. *Merchants, Markets...* pg 163-189. For early medieval Rajasthan, see B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "*The Making of Early Medieval India*" pg 89-119.

agricultural surplus (through land tax in cash and kind) as well as dynamics of rural-urban trade (with its series of taxes, tolls and levies), provided resources necessary for maintenance and sustenance of state apparatus. However, the role of state was definitely not that of a “Wet Sponge” which aimed at draining away the rural sector to sustain itself – far from that in fact, right from the stage of agricultural production in countryside, transportation – to its marketing and distribution among the final consumers, the state played an integral role in the entire agricultural setup. Significantly in fact, even in the domains of welfare and relief measures (for agricultural sector) in the form of “*taccavi*” loans and price determination of agricultural and non-agricultural goods, the state played an indispensable role – it is this role of state in rural-urban trade which becomes the focus of our Fourth and the last chapter.

The present study is based on the evidence of primarily the following sources as mentioned below.

### **SOURCES:**

If there is one region where the local sources for the Mughal period is so massive as to enable us to construct a picture on that evidence alone its Rajasthan, and within it especially Eastern Rajasthan. The archives of Amber/Jaipur administration from about mid 17<sup>th</sup> century have survived to a degree unparalleled in North India. These are now preserved practically in their entirety in Rajasthan State Archives Bikaner. The period of our study, for

which these sources have been consulted, is late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> Century (i.e. 1650-1750) since it's for these 100 years that the evidence is rich.

The documentary evidence, consulted for the preparation of this work, may be categorized as follows: -

(A) Documents, giving various village level details, area, tax on individuals etc such as *khasra*, *raqba-bandi*, *Yaddashti* documents of *hal* and *bail* provide information on number of agricultural assets available per household caste wise. Likewise *Yaddashti* document of *ghari* give information on number of households and caste wise distribution of households.

(B) *Muwazana and Taqsim* documents, which furnish information on spatial limit of the qasba and classification of land to discern the pattern of land use in qasba.

(C) *Arhsattas*: furnish information on taxation in a pargana. This information is available for individual villages as well as qasbas on agricultural production, cropping pattern, value of crops, and non-agricultural pursuits.

(D) Administrative manuals, such as *dastur-ul-amal*, *amal-dastur* etc.

These along with *maapa rahdari* and *Roznama chabutra kotwali*

furnish information on taxes levied on trade and handicraft production in the qasbas and villages.

(E) Collection of letters and documents issued by officials, such as *chittis*, are the most important category of documents which offer a great deal of information on trade and commerce, money lending, trading communities, economic transactions between a qasba and the village, professional organization of merchants and artisans such as panchlohars, panchzula, panchsonar in qasbas.



# **Chapter 1**

## *Geographical Setting*

A regional study of rural urban trade must begin by placing the region within the context of its natural resources position. It is in this context that a discussion of the topography, soils availability of water, rivers and a climate of the region under study becomes pertinent.

Eastern Rajasthan comprising the present districts of Jaipur, Alwar, Sawai Madhopur and Bharatpur forms a distinct ecological niche, different in temperature, soil pattern, rainfall, irrigation facilities from dry/arid western Rajasthan. The semi-aridity of the region makes it also a problem zone with extremes of temperature and uncertain rainfall. Water is the main limiting factor making the rain dependent farming a fluctuating one.<sup>35</sup> However the rainfall though sporadic is relatively heavier here giving rise to different variations of soil; from light sand of the West to the richest alluvial loam with extensive tracts of black mould, producing excellent crops of wheat and barley without artificial irrigation. Also water here is nearer the surface and numerous wells, rivers and streams exist and a 2-crop economy is a rule rather than exception.

According to Madhavi Bajekal<sup>36</sup>, however is this very fertility of soil and capacity to grow diverse crops, which made the economy far more reliant

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<sup>35</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Rajputana* : Vol XVIII, New Delhi Publications. 1908, Pg. 42

<sup>36</sup> Madhavi Bajekal, Ph.D. Thesis(Unpublished) *Agricultural Production in 6 selected qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan ( C.1700-1780)* JNU August 1990

on agriculture, resulted also in its more precarious balance with the environment. The same harvest failure that in western Rajasthan could result in the peasants increased dependence in pastoral activities, spelt a different and in most cases an intense crisis for the *raiya* here.

Coming to the details, the region is well irrigated by river 'Banas', which is a perennial river. Numerous other rivers like Mashi, Ban Ganga, Morel, Gambhiri, Mitha, Sabi, Sota also exist although they are all seasonal and most of them run dry soon after the monsoons, leading to greater dependence on artificial means of irrigation. The region moreover receives rainfall ranging from 50-100 cms annually, which is of erratic nature <sup>37</sup> resulting in scarcity and crop failures in harvest. The position is further intensified by the prevalence of strong dry south west winds, which blow here with great force during the critical months of sowing, causing crops to ruin. Thus from pargana Amber in 1705 A.D. Purohit Harsaram reported that from Sawan Vadi 7 to Sawan Sudi 1, there were very less rains in pargana and along with it strong winds blew, because of which no ploughing was done and production of grains fell severely.<sup>38</sup> Similarly in qasba Chatsu, it was reported that some rains had fallen on Sawan Sudi 11 due to which *moth* etc. were grown. After this however, there were no rains and the strong winds hardened the lands, causing a great unhappiness among people<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> R.L. Singh's ed. *India: A Regional Geography*, National Geographic Society of India, Silver Jubilee Publication, 1971. pg 535.

<sup>38</sup> *Arzdasht*, Sawan Sudi 3, V.S. 1762/1705 Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner (RSAB).

<sup>39</sup> *Arzdasht*, Bhadva Vadi 7, V.S., 1774/1717, RSAB.

Not only were rains important to the agricultural economy of Eastern Rajasthan for the *kharif* crops, but also for the tasks of future cultivation. It was noted by Purohit Harnam in 1686 A.D. that on Asad Sudi<sup>40</sup> some rain had fallen in the parganas barely sufficient to start ploughing and it was only six days later that rains necessary to fill up the ponds fell. Similarly it was reported from qasba Amber in 1718 A.D. that only when it had rained continuously for 15 days in July, thus filling up all the ponds of the qasba, did the *raiyyat* who had deserted the village earlier, felt hopeful to come back and resume cultivation.

Significantly, even the winter crops of wheat, barley, tobacco and indigo were also dependent on rainfall in the months of November-December. All these *rabi* crops moreover required either irrigation at regular intervals or one of the best natural soils. As far as the soils are concerned Eastern Rajasthan has a vast variety of alluvial soils, varying both in texture from clayey loam (*chiknot*), sandy loam (*matiyat*), to sandy (*bhur*) and in tints, from pale brown, yellowish brown to dark brown<sup>41</sup>. Thus in Eastern Rajasthan with a fair supply of moisture, loamy soils produce crops far superior to those in the sandy soils (of Western Rajasthan) which can produce only the low value *bajra* and *moth*. Also owing to a greater evaporation from light soils, frequent falls of rain are required to renew its supply of moisture than in case of loamy soils, where in irrigation itself can bring in the most advantageous

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<sup>40</sup> Rajputana Gazetteer Volume 2, Calcutta, 1879 Pg. 61.

<sup>41</sup> R.L.Singh, *A Regional Geography*.

results. An estimate puts the yield of unirrigated land as only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of irrigated area<sup>42</sup>.

To a great extent, the advantage of irrigation in the region was due to a fairly high water table ranging from 30 to 40 feet in the core area. Due to this easy access devices like 'dhenkli' (wooden scoop) and 'charas' (large leather bag pulled by oxen) were used to draw well water. Some idea of the number of wells in 18<sup>th</sup> Century can be gauged from a report in the Arhsatta, pargana Sawai Jaipur A.D. 1725 that stated 1100 masonry wells had been constructed in the past 7 years in 874 villages of pargana Sawai Jaipur.

Here it's significant to note that construction and maintenance of wells in the villages was largely possible because of the financial support extended by *mahajans* (who represented an occupational finance class) usually concentrated in qasbas and in the rural trade centres (*mandis*) to the rural dignitaries (*zamindars and patels*) and even to the state<sup>43</sup>. In following instances of advancing (*tagai*) loans to the *ryot* the money was borrowed from '*mahajans*' by the *Amil*' (state official.)<sup>44</sup>

What is of significance for us is that the irrigation in our region not only made possible a greater yield from the same plot of land, it also led to an

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<sup>42</sup> Famine Enquiries Commission Rajputana, 1879, pg. 78.

<sup>43</sup> Chittis from Diwan Hargovind Kanhi Ram to *Amils* pargana Chatsu A.D. 1753.

<sup>44</sup> Pargana Lalsot in years of A.D 1754 and A.D 1758, pargana Chatsu in years of A.D 1755, 1757, 1759, pargana Sawai Jaipur in years 1760 A.D., pargana Malarna in years 1755 A.D. as mentioned in Chittis to *Amils* pargana Chatsu dated 1763 A.D, to *Amil* pargana Malarna, AD 1755.

extension of the cultivated area. Thus the cultivated area varied from 30-80% of total measured area in different paragons. In 1666, it was estimated as 60% in paragana Chatsu and 79% in pargana Malarana<sup>45</sup>

This facility thus resulted in the region having a multiple crop economy. As many as 37 crops of *kharif* were grown in most areas, including not only bajra, jowar, moth, urad, mung but also cotton, sugarcane, opium, tobacco, til and as many as 18 crops of *rabi* were sown, including barley, wheat, gram, oilseeds, opium etc.<sup>46</sup> By this approximation the total number of crops individual food and cash cultivated within a year ranged from 45 to 55. Increasing production of cash crops and superior food crops created conditions for the growth of small urban centres (*qasbas*) and rural trade centres (*mandis*) which facilitated urban-rural linkages in terms of exchange of commodities.

Here it is important to state that though we have argued for a developed economy based on fertile soils, irrigation facilities and multiple crops, one must note its rather sensitive relationship resulting often in greater stress for the vulnerable sections – the very factor of environmental conditions favouring the growth of developed agricultural economy in Eastern Rajasthan made it much more vulnerable to climatic fluctuations and extremes in context

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<sup>45</sup> Dilbagh Singh, "Local and Land Revenue Administration of the State of Jaipur" (c.1750-1800) Ph.D. Thesis, JNU, Delhi 1975.

<sup>46</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series, Rajputana*, Compiled by K.D. Erskine, Calcutta 1908.

of a semi-arid environment, where such uncertainties were a regular feature, agriculture despite its significance and premium became a gamble so that a single harvest failure could result in a famine. The impact of these famines of the Raiyyat would have been greater due to its more exploitative relationship with the dominant groups. Since pursuance of agriculture demanded possession of some 'capital inputs', the Raiyyats dependence on agencies like moneylenders and state authorities-both rural and town based would have been greater even in normal years.<sup>47</sup> Years of famines would thus have increased the dependence resulting in acute impoverishment which quite often forced the Raiyyats to migrate to qasbas / towns for survival - Thus at a broader level one can argue for a strong relationship between the nature of climate and the forms of rural-urban relations in Eastern Rajasthan. It is precisely the dynamics of rural-urban relations, which is going to be the focus of the following chapters.

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<sup>47</sup> Dilbagh Singh, 'Role of Mahajans in the rural Economy in Eastern Rajasthan during 18<sup>th</sup> Century', *Social Scientist*, Volume 2, No. 10 (1974),Pg. 20-31.

## **Chapter 2**



## Agricultural Production in Qasba

Our information about agrarian and non-agrarian production in Eastern Rajasthan is largely derived from the *arhsattas* of pargana Chatsu, pargana Malarna, pargana Amber (later Sawai Jaipur) and pargana Sanganer. The *Arhsattas* contain information on – total revenue demand, (both from *rabi* and *kharif* harvest), area under each crop assessed according to the zabti system, total revenue realized in per crop, total revenue realized in kind, according to the *batai jinsi* system and the sale prices of the crops in which it was obtained in kind.<sup>48</sup> The data given in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl has also provided useful information regarding cropping patterns and ratio of land revenue.

### Cropping Patterns

The potential cropping possibilities of a region can be said to be broadly determined by its agro-climatic conditions, the level and type of technology and exchange economy. The extent to which this potential is realized depends upon interaction between peasant family needs and resources and their response to a given situation. The limitations to agricultural production in Eastern Rajasthan in 18<sup>th</sup> Century were primarily those associated with dry land agriculture in a sparsely populated frontier region. The extent of the arable land and the range of crops grown were closed related to availability of water, draught cattle and labour. The physical constraints on

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<sup>48</sup> S.P. Gupta “*Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*” (c.1650-1750) Delhi, 1986, pg.46.

the expansion and intensification of production could, however be offset by increasing investment in irrigation. As Madhavi Bajekal<sup>49</sup> states, ‘ irrigation was crucial for stabilizing production through minimizing the effects of variable rainfall and making possible the cultivation of higher value crops and thereby enhancing the productivity of land in terms of increased yield as well as a greater intensity of land use: the development of irrigation not only signaled an improvement in the “level of practice” by raising agrarian productivity within the confines of traditional technology, is also represented an increase in labour and capital input’. The geographical fluidity of labour and capital that characterized the pre-colonial period meant that interaction of state initiatives and peasant responses to changing patterns of supply and demand greatly influenced the development of the rural economy. The ability of the state to channel the direction of agricultural production through measures that promoted capital investment, facilitated the cultivation of certain crops, attracted labour to colonize abandoned lands and protected and encouraged trade were all-important stimulants to the local economy. Equally in times of natural disasters or political disorder, state intervention remained critical to agricultural recovery. Changes in the cropping pattern over time therefore provided an important index of peasant response to casually interlocking changes in production conditions and ‘state action’ – (This would be the focus of our subsequent chapters). However here it is important to note that not only did the state help in crisis management in the rural hinterland and extension of cultivation, but also exercised a considerable influence in determining the cropping pattern of the rural hinterland.

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<sup>49</sup> Madhavi Bajekal “Agricultural Production...”

Thus ... “the locational advantages enjoyed by the agriculturalists cultivating in the qasba were considerable. These included access to a fixed market, both retail and wholesale, access to a network of trade within and outside region, as well as a ability to respond to local demand generated by qasba population comprising both the elite and artisans, service groups and other non-agriculturalist residents”<sup>50</sup>. Thus the qasba could be viewed as a dependable market of a range of agricultural products that provided an incentive to agricultural producers to diversify while protecting them at the same time from the risks of excessive specialization.<sup>51</sup>

That these factors influenced the cropping pattern of the qasba is unmistakable in the qasbas of Malarna, Sanganer, Amber (as we'll see below). Diversity in crop production was especially marked in an agricultural suburb of the qasba. In these qasbas, sixty crops were grown in all and on average as many as forty different field crops were cultivated in each qasba over the period<sup>52</sup>. We find that production of crops such as poppy; tobacco, herbs and a range of vegetables and melons were mainly concentrated in the environs of the qasba almost to the exclusion of villages in the parganas. These high value crops do not figure in selection of major *kharif* and *rabi* crops. Cultivated in

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<sup>50</sup> B.R. Grover “An integrated pattern of commercial life in the rural society of India during the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, *Indian Historical Records Commission*, Volume 37(1966), Pg 121-153.

<sup>51</sup> The generative aspects of pre-industrial towns and their impact on agricultural production in the hinterland have been emphasized by E. A. Wrigley: “Parasite or Stimulus: The town in a Pre-Industrial Economy” in E.A. Wrigley and Philip Abrams eds. *Towns in Societies* pg. 301.

<sup>52</sup> S.P. Gupta “Agrarian System..”

four parganas together accounted for approx ninety percent of revenue of each parganas.

The qasbas produced many more types of crop in each harvest and specialized crops like poppy, tobacco and various kinds of we were cultivated almost exclusively in the qasba – not only did qasbas specialize in production of certain crops but in relation to a village it also produced more cash crops like cotton and sugarcane. The production of more lucrative crops in qasba was at the expense of food grain production. This is also apparent if we compare figures for the qasba and average village under the heads total zabti and total *jinsi* showing aggregate percentage annual revenue derived in cash and in kind. The proportion of revenue levied in cash, and hence the cultivation of high value crops was invariably greater in the qasba than the villages. This would become clearer if we analyse the cropping trends of a few qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan.

### Qasba Chatsu

In the agricultural production in winter or *rabi* harvest was more important than the *kharif* harvest over the period 1710-70. This was primarily due to the extensive cultivation of irrigated wheat and barley. The form of revenue assessment in the qasba was predominantly by zabti method of a specified cash levy per unit of cultivated land in both harvests.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Arhsatta*, pargana Chatsu dt. VS1767/A.D. 1710.

The major crops grown in the *kharif* harvest were cotton, vegetables, maize, bajra and moth along with smaller quantities of coarse millets, pulses and indigo.<sup>54</sup>

The major crops grown in the winter harvest were wheat, barley, and vegetables, wheat and barley were addressed primarily by the *zabti* form of assessment and assessment in kind was largely confined to unirrigated winter cereals and contributed a seasonally variable and relatively insignificant proportion of the land revenue. Irrigated land sown with wheat or barley attracted an identical rate of cash assessment and the combined acreage of both crops was entered in a revenue records under a head of "*Chomli*".<sup>55</sup> The production of wheat and barley on irrigated land dominated agricultural production in the *rabi* harvest. The variation in an area under *Chomli* and consequently in the revenue derived from it determined and overall trends in an aggregate production indices for the *rabi* harvest in qasba Chatsu.<sup>56</sup>

### **Qasba Malarna**

A comparison of the annual revenues derived in the *kharif* and *rabi* harvests shows that there were alternating periods when either the *kharif* or *rabi* harvest was more important in terms of annual revenue contributed. Between 1711-17 and 1731 – 64 *rabi* productions was important while revenues obtained from a *kharif* harvest pre-dominated in an intervening

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<sup>54</sup> *Arhsatta*, pargana Chatsu dt. VS1783/A.D. 1726.

<sup>55</sup> S.P. Gupta and Dilbagh Singh have taken *Chomli* to mean a specific kind of crop.

<sup>56</sup> Dilbagh Singh, "The pattern of agricultural production in the qasbas of Chatsu and Malarna(c1709-1770)" *PIHC*, 1976 Pg. 184-187.

period from 1718-30 and after 1765. In both harvests the seasonal revenues were largely composed of taxation on the cultivation of food grains, as there were collected in kind, the annual fluctuations in a total revenue collection of qasba Malarna were accentuated.

The aggregate area sown with zabti crops in a *kharif* harvest was small ranging from 79 *bighas* to 471 *bighas*. The major *kharif* cash assessed crops were in decreasing order of importance in terms of relative cultivated area, sugarcane, cotton, maize, tobacco and indigo. The major food crops grown in a *kharif* harvest were *bajra*, *jowar*, *moth*, *sesame* or *til*.<sup>57</sup> The principal crops of *rabi* harvest were food crops barley, wheat and gram with a limited cultivation of higher value crops like poppy and vegetables. The latter were invariably assessed by the zabti method.

### *Qasba Sanganer*<sup>58</sup>

The cropping pattern of qasba Sanganer differed from that of the other qasbas in variety of specialist and non-food crops that were grown there. These included a range of dye plants besides indigo like safflower, henna and a root yielding red dye called *aal*, condiments and medicinal plants like cumin, *ajwain* and *isabgol* as well as small amounts of poppy, tobacco, betel leaves and rice for the local market. Not all these crops however were grown every year and their cultivation was limited in terms of the total annual output. The cultivation of these special crops contributed to the variety in the overall

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<sup>57</sup> *Arhsatta*, pargana Malarna V.S. 1786/A.D. 1729.

<sup>58</sup> *Arhsatta*, qasba Sanganer, V.S. 1797/A.D. 1740.

produce mix of the qasba without however altering the local pattern of cotton and maize cultivation in a *kharif* harvest and barley in the *rabi* season common to surrounding villages. Where the cropping pattern of a qasba differed significantly from that of the village was in the extensive cultivation of vegetables both in *kharif* and *rabi* harvest which together contributed to about 20-25% of the annual revenue from crop production in qasba.

Crops like cotton, sugarcane and vegetables that could only be assessed by the zabti method, were the major *kharif* crops while cereal production, generally assessed in kind was more significant in *rabi* harvest. Overall, the *jinsi* assessed revenue was slightly larger in percentage terms than the zabti revenue. The ratio between two being 52:48 respectively.

The major zabti crops in *kharif* harvest, in descending order of relative acreage cultivated were cotton, maize, vegetables, coarse millet called *madhwa*, sweet potato or *sakarkandi*, sugarcane and a fodder crop, *guwar*. In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the aggregate area occupied by cash assessed crops was large and fairly stable.

The major *jinsi* assessed crops in *kharif* harvest were *moth*, *bajra* and *urad*. Although the aggregate quantity of levy in kind was small with a mean of 123 *maunds*, it fluctuated widely from year to year ranging from less than a *maund* of *moth* in 1764 to 913 *maunds* in 1708.

The zabti assessed crops were mainly melons and vegetables, with relatively smaller cultivation of poppy for opium, tobacco, winter maize and condiments.

The major *rabi* crops were however cereals, barley, wheat and gram and their admixtures. Of these the barley contributed over 60% of the aggregate quantity of produce revenue. Hence the year-to-year fluctuations in barley are the major explanatory components of a annual fluctuations in the aggregate produce revenues. Relative to barley, wheat cultivation was small but more important than gram.

### Qasba Jaipur<sup>59</sup>

The trends in agriculture production in the suburbs of qasba Jaipur, the residence of Jaipur Maharaja, since its foundation in 1727, differ radically from that of any of a qasbas analyzed so far. Here production was not only more stable but expanded consistently during the course of the century. The cropping pattern in qasba Jaipur also differs from other qasbas in terms of importance of the cultivation of high value food crops to meet urban demand such as vegetables and maize in the *khariif* harvest and wheat in the *rabi* harvest.

The distribution of annual revenue between the autumn and winter harvests was almost even indicating that production in a winter harvest was as

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<sup>59</sup> *Arhsatta*, qasba Sawai Jaipur, V.S. 1721/A.D. 1769.



important as that in the rain-fed *kharif* season and that cultivation of 2 crops a year was a general practice. As in other qasbas, the mode of revenue appropriation in qasbas Jaipur was also predominantly in cash for the *kharif* season and in kind for *rabi* season.

The cropping pattern in qasba Jaipur differed significantly from either qasbas studied both in its crop mix as well as the long-term trends in production. The predominance of market gardening and wheat cultivation in a qasba indicates that urban market of the political and administrative capital of the region stimulated the production of these crops.<sup>60</sup>

Thus in retrospect, the incentive for agriculturists to expand and intensify production, such as witnessed in 18<sup>th</sup> Century in our region, involved a complex interaction between diverse factors such as the availability of credit and resources, changes in prices and tax demands of the state, and needs of the cultivating units. The available evidence so far suggests that the sections of rural society that were in a position to respond more dynamically to growth of commercial production were village elites and that these actions were also involved in a provision of credit to finance cultivation and the marketing of crops. Our imperfect understanding of integral links between production credit and marketing make it difficult at present to assess the role of such “agrarian managers”.

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<sup>60</sup> K.N. Hasan, S.Nurul Hasan and S.P. Gupta, “The Pattern of Agricultural Production in the Territories of Amber (c.1650-1750)”, *PIHC*, 28<sup>th</sup> session (1966) pg. 244-264.

## Cropping Choices

The overview of the short term variations in cropping trends in a qasbas clearly show that agricultural production was sensitive to changes in political, environmental and economic conditions and that these played a vital role in peasant production decisions. For the historian however the fundamental questions, which seek to understand the nature of peasant decision-making and their response to market, remain problematic. In context of a highly monetized economy and unequal distribution of economic resources it would be pertinent to investigate if there was a systematic difference in the cropping pattern of various actions of agriculturalists and whether such differences were directly associated with their differential resource positions.

Fortunately our sources allow us a glimpse of a variation in cropping pattern of individual agriculturalists.

It has been argued that *zamindars*, revenue grantees, revenue officials and village headmen were endowed with a greater command over resources and that enabled them to produce commercial crops for sale. The advantages that these agriculturalists possessed were capital for investment, access to a credit and produce markets, and ability to undertake risks associated with production of specialist crops. On the other hand, 'ordinary' peasants (*reza riaya*) were unable to cultivate commercial crops because these generally required a larger investment than an ordinary peasant could afford (Irfan

Habib). The evidence of a *khasra* record or record of crop production and the associated taxation for each cultivator, of a village in pargana Chatsu dated 1796 has been cited in support of this view (Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib eds. CEHII This *khasra* of the *kharif* harvest shows that one of the three *patels* in the village was the largest<sup>61</sup> single producer in terms of both the number of crops and volume of output. In contrast only 16 out of 36 cultivations in a village produced only one food crop. However, a closer examination of *khasra* cited shows that these inferences need to be qualified. While there was undoubtedly a wide difference between the gross production of the largest producer and the majority of small peasants, we find that at least 14 of 36 cultivators in a village produced cotton and all of them were substantial peasants with a larger and a more diversified production range than one of the three *patels* in a village<sup>62</sup>.

Baker<sup>63</sup> has suggested that production strategies in semi-arid regions can be analytically distinguished into 2 basic types: “minimal” and “intensive”. Modifying Baker’s schema, we would suggest that 3 distinct types of cultivating strategies could be envisaged:

- a) An extensive system of food grain production associated with large-scale *bhomia/zamindar* holdings cultivated primarily through bonded labourers (*malis*) and retainers. The investment rationale of the big *zamindars/bhomias* in our region would perhaps be dictated by their

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<sup>61</sup> S.P.Gupta – *Khasra Documents in Rajasthan in Medieval India – A Miscellany*, Vol IV(1977,pg 168-176).

<sup>62</sup> S.P.Gupta, *Agrarian ...*

<sup>63</sup> C.J.Baker *An Indian Rural Economy:1880-1955*, Delhi, 1984.

attempt to enhance their political authority and prestige through a greater control over men, larger retinues, religious and charitable donations and conspicuous consumption rather than maximizing productivity<sup>64</sup>.

b) An “intensive” strategy adopted by proprietor cultivators of larger than average holdings and the best agriculture lands. Such a strategy required the highest inputs of capital and labour – both animal and human. Capital was required for digging wells, buying seed and cattle and procuring labour. Production was geared towards cultivating marketable crops and returns were in a form of higher yields and more secure production. This strategy needed a considerable financial outlay and a significant command over the labour of poorer cultivators within the village.

c) “Minimal” strategy pursued by peas families with little or no capital in order to eke out a living barely rising above the subsistence. Such peasants were primarily dependent upon rain fed cultivation of millets in *kharif* harvest and a few leguminous crops that were saleable for limited cash requirements.

An analysis of the cropping pattern accords with the strategies as outlined above. 4 taxpayers out of 102 have been identified as *bhomyas*

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<sup>64</sup> Walter Neale “Land is to Rule” in R.E. Frykenberg ed. *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* Wisconsin, 1969.

(category I) and they accounted for above 16% of a total grain production in the village. However, they only produced barley and low value mixed grains. On the other hand the gharuhala cultivators i.e. Brahmans, Rajputs, Kayiasthas, and *Patels* and a Patwari (category II) produced about half of total barley and low value grains and more than ¾th of potentially marketable high value wheat crop. Their contribution to the revenue was virtually in the same proportion as their relative output. The 20 peasants of a agriculturist castes (*paltis*) produced 8.5% of a total barley and 12.25% of a wheat produced in that year. The fact that agricultural castes from such an insignificant proportion of a recorded taxpayer suggest that only a few had been in a position to cultivate their land in a *rabi* harvest.

It has be argued that perhaps this disproportion in the extent of cultivation between the privileged sections and the *raiya* could in part be attributed to the fact the crops of the *rabi* harvest depended upon artificial irrigation. Its possible therefore that a lack of resources to provide irrigation was the prime reason for low output of the unprivileged sections. This hypothesis would then lead to further proposition – if irrigation was the primary factor in explaining the disparity in production between a privileged and non-privileged sections of the village then the difference ought not to be so great for the *kharif* season, which was primarily dependent upon rainfall. Unfortunately we do not have a complete *khasra* of the *kharif* harvest to examine this question with comparable data (S.P.Gupta).

*Yaddashti hal bail*, pargana Chatsu Vs 1723 AD1666 - the unprivileged or *raiyyati* category cultivated a larger percentage of the total area under cash assessment and produced a larger quantity of food grains than the privileged sections in qasba Chatsu. The relative crop distribution within categories of privileged and *raiyyati* have been presented in tables below. The tables also show that the *raiyyati* grew a greater proportion of cash crops than the privileged sections. Cotton cultivation was however unevenly distributed between the two. In the cattle census recorded for qasba Chatsu in 1666, the relative ratio of bullock owners belonging to the privileged category and the *raiyyati* was 4:6 respectively. If this ratio is taken as a proxy for the relative number of these 2 sections in qasba Chatsu, then the *raiyyati* were actually growing more specialized cash crops in the qasba than the privileged sections. This is particularly apparent for the dye crops and vegetables while cotton acreage was proportionately greater under the category of privileged cultivators. On the other hand, the *raiyyati* were producing a much smaller quantity of grain than was justified by their numbers.

**A. ZABTI CROPS(Area in bighas)**

CROPS	Total Area	Privileged Area	<i>Raiyyati</i> Area
Cotton	476.90	234.35	242.55
Indigo	58.95	0.00	58.95
Vegetables	192.35	13.90	178.35
TOTAL	862.25	293.25	569.00
PERCENTAGES	100.00	34.00	63.00

**B. JINSI CROPS(in maunds)**

CROPS	Total Quantity	Privileged Quantity	Raiyati Quantity
<i>Bajra</i>	234.98	158.23	76.75
<i>Juwar</i>	54.88	18.50	36.38
<i>Moth</i>	908.38	377.23	531.10
TOTAL	1330.13	600.35	729.78
PERCENTAGES	100.00	45.13	54.87

Source : *Jamabandhi Bhomi*, pargana Chatsu Fasl Kharif VS.1747/1690 A.D., in Madhavi Bajekal, *Agricultural Production ....* Pg. 327.

Although nothing conclusive can be said about a cropping pattern of individual agriculturists on the basis of the data available, its clear aspect needs to be examined in detail.

**I. Area Under Cultivation**

The statistical records of the measured area available in the *Arhsattas* and the assessment made upon cultivable land of a paragana can be used to determine the proportion of cultivable land out of total measured area which also includes area under waste.

Approximately 7 to 20 % of the total measured land was classed as unfit for cultivation, in paragana Chatsu, Malarna Lalsot, Bahatri (taqsim of different parganas in different years). The proportion of uncultivated waste to the total measured area varies considerably from paragana to pargana. It would seem that the total measured area included gross cultivation plus cultivable waste (including fallow land) and a part of uncultivated waste. The actual percentage of area assessed for revenue was between 50% and 65% of the total surveyed land. (According to *Yaddashti hal bail* pargana Chatsu 1666). The proportion of cultivated area in the total measured area in the villages of pargana Chatsu was approx between 54% to 81%. In paragana Malarna the average cultivated area in 34 villages amounted to 79% of the total.

Interestingly, a significant proportion of land in a number of villages was under double cropping. In 6 out of 34 villages of paragana Malarna, the cultivated area exceeds the total area – this could be only due to double cropping. Further the classification of cultivable land into *polaj* (land under continuous cultivation) and *banjar* (cultivable waste) is also provided in these documents<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> *Yaddashti hal bail*, pargana Malarna., VS 1723, AD 1666.



## II. Rates of Land Revenue Assessment:

From a study of *Arhsattas* as also references in Ain-i-Akbari it appears that the revenue imposed was at almost 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total produce under *jinsi* system.<sup>66</sup>

In view of these limitations of evidence in our study of relative position of crops, its safer to rely just on the revenue realized from each crop – 17<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup> C thus in pargana Malarna, Chatsu, Jaipur.

	Pargana Malarna	Chatsu	Jaipur
Sugarcane approx.	10-20%	5-7%	4-5%
<i>Bajra</i> "	25-35%	20-40%	15-20%
Jowar	20-30%	5-10%	1-2%
<i>Moth</i>	6-16%	20-30%	25-30%

Source: S.P. Gupta, *Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, in Chapter 'Agricultural Production' Pg 45-50

Apparently the rate depended on the quality of produce, productivity of soil and current prices. Since during the period under review, there was apparently a general rise in prices, the *zabti* system would appear to be more

<sup>66</sup> The most valuable point in these *Arhsattas* is that these contain particulars of the total area under cultivation, total produce, and state's share in kind. However the majority of *Arhsattas* give us a more limited range of information. For crops under the *batai* system they usually give the total produce, state demand in quantity, the price and the cash value of the state share. In the *zabti* system, we have the total area under each crop, the rate of revenue demand per *bigha* and the total revenue demand in cash. Thus owing to absence of information about the total area in the case on *jinsi* crops and about the total quantity of production in case of *zabti* crops, our data for most parganas and most years tend to be incomplete-S. P.GUPTA *Agrarian System...*

advantageous to *raiyat* than to the state. It was perhaps for this reason that there is a tendency for an increase in the cultivation of *zabti* crops. Thus we see that the share of state in respect of different crops varied even within each *pargana* and even year-to-year. The state's share varied in accordance with in fertility of soil from  $\frac{1}{4}$  th to  $\frac{1}{3}$  rd,  $\frac{2}{5}$  th to  $\frac{1}{2}$ . It would appear from *Arhsattas* that the standard revenue demand in *jinsi* crops was  $\frac{2}{5}$ <sup>th</sup> of produce on *polaj* land and  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of produce on *banjar* land was universally accepted. Generally the share in cultivation for *banjar* land was given on a payment of  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of produce to the state, however cases of  $\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> share are also recorded.

The following table gives the average of the share of the total produce for each of the principal crops taken by the state in 3 *parganas* of Amber, Malarna and Chatsu.

**State Share of Total Produce:**

<u>Pargana</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Bajra</u>	<u>Jowar</u>	<u>Barley</u>	<u>Wheat</u>
Amber	1716	38.2	45.2	29.7	30.5
Malarna	1699	42	44.5	34	34.1
Chatsu	1709	35	36	32	33

Source: S.P. Gupta, *Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Pg 59.

A perusal of above table reveals that the incidence of demand for the principal *jinsi* crops of the *rabi* harvest was more or less the same as that of

zabti crops while for the *kharif* harvest the incidence of revenue demand of the *jinsi* crops tended to be 10-15, higher than that of zabti crops.

Interestingly some of the *jinsi* crops were occasionally assessed according to the zabti systems and therefore the zabti rates as well as demand in kind and price for the same crop in the same pargana are available. It consequently possible to convert each demand in *bigha* into demand in kind per *bigha* (on the basis of prevailing prices).

It's also possible by assuming that the zabti rates were calculated on the basis of one-third of average produce, to work on the average yield per *bigha*. By examining the average yield per *bigha* and the average demand in kind per *bigha* its possible to work out the area under each crop where the state demand in kind is given. (the figures are given on the next page).

By this method the proportion of area under different crops can be estimated. The table on the next page shows this.

**Table showing the percentage of area under different crops**

**Pargana Jaipur**

Year	Bajra	Jowar	Moth	Wheat	Barley	Gram
1677	25	1.5	64	3	55	40
1744	5	4.7	41	6.5	79	5

**Pargana Chatsu**

Year						
1708	55	0.5	0.5	8	35	2
1710	32	3.7	51	8	55	28

**Pargana Malarna**

Year						
1690	12.6	16.6	50	32	34	25
1749	19.8	18	25	27	42	25

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Source: S.P. Gupta, *Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Pg 61-62.

However before actually stating the principal crops grown in the qasbas of eastern Rajasthan, it is pertinent to first analyse the trends in cropping systems of eastern Rajasthan.

## Cropping Systems

### Kharif Season

The outbreak of the monsoon in late June marks the beginning of the agricultural or harvest year. Sowing of the “sialu”(Kharif), or autumn season commences with the first heavy showers on land ploughed and prepared in the preceding months from April-May. The *kharif* season in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century was and continues to be the most important harvest cycle within the agricultural year in this region. This is because the regions staple foods – a variety of millets- were grown in this season.<sup>67</sup> As it's rare in this region for the seasonal pattern of rainfall to coincide with the crop water requirements, millets and other crops capable of withstanding water-stress dominate the *kharif* harvest. These crops were called “Barani” or rain fed crops and need little or no supplementary irrigation. The *kharif* crops harvested from October-November.<sup>68</sup>

### Rabi Season

The winter crops called *rabi* or ‘*unhalu*’ was only possible with artificial irrigation / on retentive black soils. The negligible amount of winter rainfall in this region made this one of the major factors limiting extensive *rabi* production. The cultivation of *rabi* crops needed considerable initial

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<sup>67</sup> R.L. Singh *A Regional Geography*..

<sup>68</sup> S.P. Gupta *Agrarian* .....pg. 48.

investment in the construction of wells, working capital for their maintenance as well as the provision of additional draught animals to work them. They also required repeated ploughing preparatory to sowing, and frequent weeding and watering. Preparatory tillage for the *rabi* crops is done initially prior to the monsoon, and then repeated between mid September and October after the retreat of the monsoons. The crops are sown in the period extending from October till mid December and harvested in March-April. The major *rabi* crops in our period were barley, wheat, gram and combinations of these. In irrigated lands, “*Zaid-rabi*” crops like vegetables and various types of melons, cucumbers and gourds were grown in the period between the harvesting of the *rabi* crops and the *kharif* sowing of the next harvest cycle.

### **PRINCIPAL CROPS AND CHANGES IN THE CROPPING PATTERNS**

#### **(A) Principal Kharif Crops:**

In the *kharif* harvest, the most important food crops were millets. Of these *bajra* predominated in region grown on light soils with no manuring. Its traditionally grown inter cropped with pulses such as *moth*, mung and *urad*. If sown as a mixed crop, the same land can be used year after year without rotation. To the south and east of Jaipur with better soil and a greater annual rainfall, jowar cultivation expanded but never supplanted *bajra* as the principal millet. Jowar was mainly a *kharif* crop, only occasionally being recorded as a green fodder crop under “*chari*”. When grown as a fodder crop, Jowar however completely exhausts the soil of moisture and plant. In addition

to the major millets, small grain millets such as *Kodon*, *mandwa*, *Kuri* and *barti* were also cultivated. These small millets were all low value crops, eaten by the poorer sections of the population, low in nutritional content, but agriculturally best suited to the environment.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the millets, the *kharif* food crops included pulses, maize, sesame and a few condiments. Next in importance to *bajra* as a food crop was the pulse *Moth*. Of the pulses, *moth* is least demanding in its soil and water requirements given a well distributed rainfall, and pulses mature without watering – with *urad* requiring maximum moisture and heavier soil, followed by mung and *moth*. Pulses are generally intercropped with the millets, being sown at the same time but harvested separately due to their differing growing durations. When sown alone, the pulses are an important cash crop of rain fed agriculture in Rajasthan and can be followed by sugarcane/another irrigated *rabi* crop. They are also a source of valuable fodder. Maize was sown both as a *kharif* and a *rabi* crop. It requires fertile soil, frequent irrigation and careful culture in the form of repeated weeding, thinning and manuring. Maize cultivation therefore was probably limited to irrigated and manured land lying close to the habitational site. Small quantities of *til*, a coarse rice called *Sali* and condiments like *ajwain* and cumin were grown as *kharif* crops.

In addition to food crops, cash crops like cotton, sugarcane, indigo and sun hemp were also cultivated. Cotton cultivation was the most widespread both in terms of its acreage and its distribution within the region. Generally,

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<sup>69</sup> S.P. Gupta *Agrarian System*....  
Page 56 of 130

however cash crop cultivation was more significant at the level of the qasba when compared to the pargana as a whole particularly for specialized crops such as natural dye plants, vegetables and tobacco.

Sugarcane was grown less extensively than cotton in the region in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Sugarcane occupies the land for 12 months and is the most demanding crop in terms of its labour and water requirements. Ratooning / taking a crop in the second year from the stubble of the first was practiced. Although this gives a poorer yield, less labour and capital is required. The sucrose content of sugarcane planted on fields that had been left fallow for a whole year prior to planting was the highest. These technicalities of sugarcane production involving varying levels of capital and labour inputs and yields, were reflected in differential rates of revenue levied on cane, grown on prime land followed in the proceeding year, well or *dhenkali* irrigated land, water retentive soils and *pedi* sugarcane.<sup>70</sup>

The natural dye plants of which indigo was commercially the most significant were cultivated in all the qasbas studied though in varying degrees of importance. The market for indigo centered at Agra must have stimulated its cultivation in our region. Indigo was a triennial plant, which was cut every year after the rains in August or September. Besides Indigo, dye plants like Kasumbho (Safflower), henna were also grown in the qasbas.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Arhsattas* Sanganer, VS 1804 – 1805; 1812 – 1813; 1817 – 1818.

<sup>71</sup> Madhavi Bajekal “Agricultural Production....”



A wide variety of vegetables, gourds and melons were grown extensively in the immediate environs of the qasbas. The vegetables cultivated as field crops included egg-plants, carrots, spinach, onions, *arabi*, raddish, potherbs, tinda, karela, varieties of cucumber, pumpkin and melons such as kharbuza, sarda and tarbuz. The perishable nature of these crops and problems of transportation would have restricted their cultivation as field crops to areas where the market for them was easily accessible. It may perhaps be mentioned here that '*sakarkandi*' or sweet potato that was grown more widely as a *kharif* rather than a *rabi* crop was cultivated in the region prior to the 18th Century and could not have been introduced in India during or later than 18th Century as claimed in recent research.

**(B) Principal Rabi Crops :**

In contrast to the *kharif* season, the range of crops grown in the *rabi* season was limited in variety. While high value crops like poppy, tobacco, sugarcane and garden produce required fertile manured land with an assured supply of water, the staples – wheat, barley and gram could be grown on retentive soil with little or no additional irrigation. However the yields of these crops were substantially affected if they were unirrigated.

The food staples wheat and barley and gram and the mixed crops constituted the principal winter crops of our region in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In comparison to the hardier barley and gram, wheat cultivation was relatively restricted due to the higher labour and capital inputs required for its

cultivation in terms of repeated preparatory tillage and regular watering and inter culture. There were 2 varieties of wheat grown – the hard/*kantha* and the soft or *vajya* wheats. The latter variety is of finer quality and value while the hard wheats are normally coarse and grounded into *suji*. It was common in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, as it is today in the wheat growing tracts of northern India, to cultivate mixed crops of wheat, barley and gram. Mixed cropping of this type differs from inter cropping of *kharif* food grains and pulses. The combinations grown were called *gojara/gojai* (wheat and barley), *gochani* (wheat and gram), *baijhari* (wheat, barley and gram). Thus when conditions for the sole cropping of wheat were unsuitable, mixed cropping provided a beneficial alternative.<sup>72</sup>

The *rabi* oil seeds – ‘sarson’ (rapeseed) and ‘alsi’ (linseed) – were cultivated in smaller quantities. While sarson was grown in all the qasbas under study, alsi production was confined to qasbas Phagi, Chatsu and Malarna oilseed production is difficult and requires a most favourable season for a successful harvest. There are often intercropped with wheat and barley and sown earlier and harvested later than the associated crop. Linseed oil is often blended with other oils and used for cooking, while sarson oil is used for lighting. The oil cakes used as feed for milch cows.

In the *rabi* season, cash cropping was dominated by the production of a variety of vegetables, cucumbers, gourds and melons almost exclusively restricted to the environs of the qasbas. They were probably also grown on small homestead plots in the villages, but were liable to taxation only when

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<sup>72</sup> S.P. Gupta *Agrarian System* ....

cultivated as field crops in response to the demand in the qasbas. The winter vegetables commonly grown were onions, carrots, raddish, brinjals, spinach, sweet potatoes, potherbs, pumpkins and cucumbers. These crops require intensive manuring, weeding and watering and are gathered intermittently as they ripen. Their production was specialized and normally carried on by a separate caste group – *malis*. The different kinds of melons grown – the ‘*tarbuz*’ and ‘*kharbuza*’ as well as a variety called “*sarda*” which was native to Kabul and thought to be the finest quality of melon – are really the “*Zaid – rabi*” crops. These were grown on the banks of dried riverbeds; the seeds being dropped into heavily manured pits, and bore fruit from April to June. In addition to the vegetables and melons, poppy and tobacco were also cultivated in small but significant quantities in the qasbas.

### **(C) Changes in the Cropping Patterns**

As far as the changes in crop production goes, the most marked change in the pattern of agricultural production, as is discernable from *Arhsattas* (pargana Chatsu) and *Arhsatta* (pargana Malarna) was an increase in the *zabti* crops of the *kharif* harvest especially in the production of cash crops.

There was also some increase in the importance of *rabi* crops like barley, wheat and gram as judged from their share of revenue. The cultivation of *rabi* crop in Eastern Rajasthan, especially wheat and barley required far greater inputs than *kharif* crops like *bajra* and jowar. There was a proportionate increase in the share of the *rabi* crop out of the total land

Page 60 of 130

revenue at the expense of *kharif* cropping. As already noted, the latter prospers reasonable well without artificial irrigation the former requires better ploughing, watering, weeding etc. The same is true of crops like sugarcane where better irrigation and higher inputs are essential. On this hypothesis it would seem that during our period there was no decline in agriculture and that adequate resources were available in the village for more intensive cultivation as well as for extending cultivation. In any appraisal of agricultural improvement one must also consider the role of cattle in supplying milk dairy products and representing draught power, an important 'capital resource in agricultural production. In fact in a landscape marked by low population density and uncertain production it was not the ownership of land but the possession of cattle that was an essential prerequisite to cultivation. No wonder thus in the records of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the basic distinction between the cultivator and the agricultural labourer was that the latter did not possess cattle to cultivate land independently. Interestingly during this period, sufficient capital was available for developing agricultural production.(*Yaddashti halbail* pargana Chatsu, Malarna)

Here it is significant to mention that the state authority as well as the '*mahajans*' (class of money lenders) concentrate in urban centres or qasbas played a significant role in extending loans (*tagai*) to different classes of rural society (from *zamindars* and *patels* to the raiyyat themselves) for the extension and improvement of agriculture including purchasal and replacement of cattle and procurement of manure seeds. (*Chittis to Amils*

pargana Chatsu, A.D 1758, and pargana Malarna, AD 1755 – this fact which would receive a detailed discussion in a subsequent chapter).

Thus our overview of the short term variations in cropping trends in a gasbas clearly show that agricultural production was sensitive to changes in political, environmental and economic conditions and that these played a vital role in peasant production decisions. For the historian however the fundamental questions, which seek to understand the nature of peasant decision-making and their response to market, remain problematic. In context of a highly monetized economy and unequal distribution of economic resources it would be pertinent to investigate if there was a systematic difference in the cropping pattern of various actions of agriculturalists and whether such differences were directly associated with their differential resource positions.

It has been argued that *zamindars*, revenue grantees, revenue officials and village headmen were endowed with a greater command over resources and that enabled them to produce commercial crops for sale.<sup>73</sup> The advantages that these agriculturalists possessed were capital for investment, access to a credit and produce markets, and ability to undertake risks associated with production of specialist crops. On the other hand, 'ordinary' peasants (*reza riaya*) were unable to cultivate commercial crops because these generally required a larger investment than an ordinary peasant could afford (Irfan Habib). The evidence of a *khasra* record or record of crop production and the

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<sup>73</sup> Irfan Habib "Potentialities of Capitalist Production" *Enquiry* vol. III, No. 3, 1971 Pg. 20  
Page 62 of 130

associated taxation for each cultivator, of a village in pargana Chatsu dated 1796 has been cited in support of this view<sup>74</sup>. This *khasra* of the *kharif* harvest shows that one of the three *patels* in the village was the largest single producer in terms of both the number of crops and volume of output<sup>75</sup>. In contrast only 16 out of 36 cultivations in a village produced only one food crop. However, a closer examination of *khasra* cited shows that these inferences need to be qualified. While there was undoubtedly a wide difference between the gross production of the largest producer and the majority of small peasants, we find that at least 14 of 36 cultivators in a village produced cotton and all of them were substantial peasants with a larger and a more diversified production range than one of the three *patels* in a village<sup>76</sup>.

Taking cue from Baker<sup>77</sup>, who has distinguished the production strategies into 2 basic types: “minimal” and “intensive”, scholars have suggested 3 distinct types of cultivating strategies:

- a) An extensive system of food grain production associated with large-scale *bhomia/zamindar* holdings cultivated primarily through bonded labourers (*malis*) and retainers. The investment rationale of the big *zamindars/bhomias* in our region would perhaps be dictated by their attempt to enhance their political authority and prestige through a greater control over men, larger retinues, religious and charitable

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<sup>74</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib eds. *CEHII* Pg. 222

<sup>75</sup> S.P.Gupta – “*Khasra Documents in Rajasthan*” - *Medieval India* – A Miscellany, Volume 4, 1977, pg 168-176

<sup>76</sup> S.P.Gupta, *Agrarian.....*

<sup>77</sup> C.J.Baker “*An Indian rural Economy*”, Pg. 138-144.

donations and conspicuous consumption rather than maximizing productivity.<sup>78</sup>

- b) An “intensive” strategy adopted by proprietor cultivators of larger than average holdings and the best agriculture lands. Such a strategy required the highest inputs of capital and labour – both animal and human. Capital was required for digging wells, buying seed and cattle and procuring labour. Production was geared towards cultivating marketable crops and returns were in a form of higher yields and more secure production. This strategy needed a considerable financial outlay and a significant command over the labour of poorer cultivators within the village.
  
- c) “Minimal” strategy pursued by peas families with little or no capital in order to eke out a living barely rising above the subsistence. Such peasants were primarily dependent upon rain fed cultivation of millets in *kharif* harvest and a few leguminous crops that were saleable for limited cash requirements.

An analysis of the cropping pattern accords with the strategies as outlined above. 4 taxpayers out of 102 have been identified as *bhomias* (category I) and they accounted for above 16% of a total grain production in the village. However, they only produced barley and low value mixed grains. On the other hand the gharuhala cultivators i.e. Brahmans, Rajputs,

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<sup>78</sup> Walter Neale “Land is to Rule” in R.E. Frykenberg ed. *Land control ...* Pg 3-15.  
Page 64 of 130

Kayasthas, and *Patels* and a Patwari (category II) produced about half of total barley and low value grains and more than  $\frac{3}{4}$ th of potentially marketable high value wheat crop. Their contribution to the revenue was virtually in the same proportion as their relative output. The 20 peasants of a agriculturist castes (*paltis*) produced 8.5% of a total barley and 12.25% of a wheat produced in that year. The fact that agricultural castes from such an insignificant proportion of a recorded taxpayer suggest that only a few had been in a position to cultivate their land in a *rabi* harvest.<sup>79</sup>

It is possible that because of a lack of resources to provide irrigation, the unprivileged could manage only a low output. However according to *Yaddashti hal bail*, pargana Chatsu Vs. 1723 AD1666 – the unprivileged or *raiyyati* category cultivated a percentage of the total area under cash assessment and produced a larger quantity of food grains than the privileged sections in qasba Chatsu. In fact in the cattle census, recorded for qasba Chatsu in 1666, the relative ratio of bullock owners belonging to the privileged category and the *raiyyati*'s was 4:6 respectively. If this ratio is taken as a proxy for the relative number of the privileged and unprivileged sections in qasba Chatsu, then the *raiyyati* were actually growing more specialized cash crops in the qasba than the privileged sections.

In retrospect however, nothing conclusive can be said about the cropping pattern of individual agricultural belts on the basis of the data available and this aspect therefore needs to be further examined in detail.

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<sup>79</sup> Madhavi Bajekal "*Agricultural Production..*"  
Page 65 of 130



Before summing up, it is pertinent to mention that the most significant feature of the cropping pattern was a corresponding *decrease in the crop percentage of bajra and the pulses*. (emphasis mine) The *increase in cash crops* in *kharif* accompanied as it was with a *general rise in prices* and a comparatively stable cash demand per *bigha* had significant implications for the economic life of Eastern Rajasthan. This pattern was symbolic of decline in *local self-sufficiency of villages*, adequate use of *money*, *extension of commodity production and forging of commercial links* between countryside and towns and *qasbas* (emphasis mine). It is these linkages, which we would focus in our next section.

## **Chapter 3**

## *Agrarian Trade in Oasba*

Various scholars have emphasized the importance of agrarian trade as a linkage between rural and urban sectors. A study of trade in agricultural produce in late 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Rajasthan cannot be separated from the study of system of Land Tax.

As is evident from the Arhsatta records as also references in Abul Fazal's Ain-i-Akbari the state often appropriated approximately *one half* of the produce of the cultivator as land revenue on most of the crops. In addition, the peasant had to pay roughly one-tenth of the produce directly or indirectly by way of various taxes in cash and kind. The collection of land revenue in cash was a fairly well established practice in the whole of Mughal Empire especially Eastern Rajasthan. This naturally induced the rise of local markets, where the peasant had to sell his surplus produce in order to make cash revenue payments to the state.

Arhsatta documents speak about two methods of revenue collection prevailing in Eastern Rajasthan; one being *zabti*,<sup>80</sup> where the revenue was stated in *cash per bigha*, the other *jinsi or batai jinsi*, where the revenue was originally fixed in *kind*. (Ain-i-Akbari Allami translated Blochmann Vol. II).

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<sup>80</sup> *Zabti* signifies land revenue specimen in cash per *bigha*. Under the system a cash revenue rate was separately fixed on each crop per *bigha*. It implies the fixation of cash revenue rates and the actual measurement of land – Irfan Habib “*Agrarian System .....*” Pg 200-216 ; S.P. Gupta “*Agrarian System ...*” Pg 39; Shireen Moosvi , ‘Magnitude of Land Revenue Demand’ in *Medieval India- A Miscellany*, Vol IV, pg 91.

In this case, the peasants had to pay simply by surrendering the grain to the state. Part of it was stored in village granary and the remainder carted to the state granary (*kothar*).

Arhsatta documents further show that *jinsi* accounted for the bulk of revenue collected in this region. However it did not mean that the peasant did not pay in money. In fact the Jamabandi documents, of different parganas in Eastern Rajasthan for the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, show that even where the state collected revenue in kind, its immediate impulse was to *sell* it at the approximate prices. Thus the collecting authorities and state revenue officials, *jagirdars*, *udikis*, *ijaradars* had to make arrangements for the disposal of grain collected as revenue. Our revenue records provide evidence of such sales in profusion. The state either sold grain to officials' in charge of qasba / officials collected on behalf of the state and deposited the cash in the state treasury. Besides this the state used to sell grain in urban markets when the prices were high.<sup>81</sup>

The grain was put on sale (bichoti) in the village itself at harvest prices the remaining portion known as *Anya* (*Dastur-ul-Amal*, *Arhsattas*) sent to state granary under the jurisdiction of state officials. The grain was stored here presumably for the purpose of meeting emergencies or selling later at market prices.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> B.L. Bhadani *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs...*

<sup>82</sup> B.L. Bhadani and Masanori Sato *Economy and Polity in Rajasthan: Study of Kota and Marwar, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century*, Jaipur Publication scheme, 1997.

It is clear from the *Arhsattas* and also *Dastur-ul-Amals* that the portion of grain collected for storage was very small as compared to proportion sold at village level sale (*bichoti*). The selling prices at this *bichoti* were generally lower than the prices gained by sale from government granaries- the latter being close to urban market prices.

The *mahajan* and *bania* played an important role in the transportation of the revenue grain whether taking it to the nearest market or to the state granary.<sup>83</sup>

In order to sell this grain collected as revenue, the authorities used the agency of a *vyopari* (*trader*), *village bania* or *mahajan* based in *qasba*. It is evident from the *Chittis* of different *parganas* of different years sent to the *Diwan* by *pargana* officials (*Amil*) that the objective was to convert the collected grain into cash on the best available terms. *Chitti* of 1664 from *Amil* of *pargana Mauzabad* informed the then *Diwan Kalyan Das* that “after the collection of *jinsi* as state share, the *Amil* wished to sell it at the spot. But as no one was prepared to purchase it, the *Amil* called a *bania* from the adjacent *qasba Phagi* and asked him to purchase the grain”.

The village level grain was sold by the government to mainly 4 kinds of persons viz. *bania*, *mahajan*, *tehi* and *raiyat*. However, often the disposal of

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<sup>83</sup> Dilbagh Singh “ Role of Mahajans in the Rural Economy...”; Also see G.D. Sharma “The Marwaris: Economic Foundation of an Indian Capitalist Class” in *Business Communities of India : A Historical Perspective*, ed. Dwijendra Tripathi, Delhi, 1984 pg 185-207 and A.J. Qaiser ‘Role of brokers in Medieval Rajasthan’ of in *Facets of a Marwar Historian* ed. B.L. Bhadani and Dwijendra Tripathi, Jaipur Publication Scheme, 1996.

*jinsi* (state share) could often be through the peasant (*raiyyat*) himself (*Arhsattas*, pargana Chatsu A.D. 1711, *Amal Dastur*, Mapa Rahdari, pargana Lalsot A.D. 1724). Besides revenue realization in grain, the authorities could require the peasants to pay tax in cash. Our Jamabandi and revenue collection records show that the revenue demands were often assessed and collected in cash. This implies two forms of action – first in which the state commuted revenue in kind into cash at approved prices and second when the peasants themselves sold their produce to the traders from within or outside the village – when the peasants were asked to pay in cash, it must be supposed that they themselves sold their produce to the traders. Sometimes the peasants themselves carted their grain to the urban markets (*Arhsattas*, pargana Chatsu A.D. 1711, *Amal Dastur*, Mapa Rahdari, pargana Lalsot A.D. 1724) - In other words, the peasant too acted as *trader* carting his produce from even local market to the qasba (town). Even the chaudhuris are found transporting grain for sale to the market in the qasbas.

Thus the mode of payment of land revenue generated to a considerable extent trade in food grains between qasbas and countryside.

At this stage it becomes pertinent to shed some light on B.L.Bhadani's<sup>84</sup> latest argument on grain trade in Rajasthan. Taking the case of Western Rajasthan in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> Century, he points out that the state having acquired much grain in revenue could also make many of its payments in kind. Our revenue and expenditure accounts show that in the 17-18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> B.L.Bhadani, *Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs*  
Page 71 of 130

Century the state usually distributed millet (*bajra*), collected in revenue, not only amongst servants employed on daily wage, but also amongst the officials and more regular servants.

This remuneration in kind was known as '*petiya*' (ration in grains). The *amal dastur* of pargana Merta shows that the state made provision for an official called *Kanwariya* (protector of corn in kind). Besides petty officials, soldiers and labourers, the members of royal family too were given grains – for these reasons, the state did not always dispose off all the grain it collected in revenue. Either a portion or sometimes the entire collection was stored in the village granary<sup>85</sup>.

- Interestingly, this broadly corresponds with the conditions of Eastern Rajasthan. S.P. Gupta (Agrarian System) has compiled a table for 3 parganas in which he states the portion of revenue commuted into cash and transported to the state granary. – in the case of Amber, 66% of grain was retained in 1723, while 61% and 51% were kept in Chatsu and Bahatri respectively. It can safely be inferred that the grain was retained either for sale or for distribution amongst the state servants / other claimants on its bounty. This situation according to Bhadani brings us near to the conditions of “Indian Feudalism” in that the commodity circulation is restricted by direct grain payments.

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<sup>85</sup> B.L. Bhadani...*Peasants ...*

The state it seems usually preferred to hand over the charge of revenue collection to the members of Baniya community. It seems that they were given the right to collect revenue from these villages and to pay the state in money. Of this we have specific illustrative instances and it seems certain that the role of the merchants was crucial in the collection, cartage, storage and sale of grain on behalf of the state. This, according to Bhadani, 'could be a tendency counteracting feudalism' (We will review the specific role of merchants as a link between urban and rural sectors in subsequent sections).

The forgoing study establishes a close connection between the land revenue structure (and especially the form of payments) and the development of trade in agricultural products while such development was quite obvious in case of revenue demand in cash, its also not excluded in cases when the demand was initially made in kind – the moment the tax realized in kind was commuted into cash – market forces came into play. Karl Marx noted the possibility of this phenomena when he observed on the Indian system that here *“it's the surplus alone the becomes a commodity and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of state into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of those products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind”*. (emphasis mine)

#### **Factors promoting Rural-Urban Trade in Eastern Rajasthan:**

Besides the land revenue mechanism, the other factor, which contributed appreciably to the development of trade in agricultural produce,



included grains, was growing urbanization and increasing population. The increase in population may be testified from the fact that the number of villages in Eastern Rajasthan was rapidly multiplying. The number of qasbas also rose. In pargana Sawai Jaipur alone, there were 13 qasbas, including capital town of Jaipur (Arhsatta pargana Sawai Jaipur A.D. 1756).

Moreover, the intra regional trade in food grains was generated by some economic compulsions. Certain households in the villages were engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and were thus incapable of growing the food they needed. The village artisans and menials received a small fraction of the village produce in lieu of the service rendered to the village community which party met their requirements for foodstuffs. However there is sufficient evidence to show that the sphere of economic activities of the village artisans was not only merely confined to the village alone. They also carried their products to the neighbouring villages, qasbas, hats (weekly urban markets) and fairs and either they exchanged their products for cash, which they also needed to pay a variety of taxes levied upon them by other administrations. (*Dastur-ul-Amal Chabutra Kotwali qasba Malarna A.D. 1693*)

In many cases they were found buying food grains from the qasba, town market, hats and the local village mahajan. The growing use of money in economic transactions is a growing indicator of increasing interaction between village and town and village self-sufficiency and isolation of countryside.

While the food crops were grown in more or less in all the villages of Rajasthan some villages in more fertile Eastern Rajasthan predominantly produced cash crops and were deficient in foodstuffs, which had to be imported from outside villages. Thus each village and peasant was not necessarily self sufficient in food grains.

Moreover there were geographical factors, which accounted for inconsistency of harvests in Rajasthan where agricultural production was uncertain so as to maintain a delicate balance between output and consumption. There was a cycle of difficult years in which the majority of peasants had to look to the trader-cum-moneylender for obtaining foodstuffs. The qasba based *mahajans* also supplied grains to the needy peasants not only for direct consumption but also for use as seed. In a number of cases we find the peasants buying grain as seed for sowing even from the qasba, and hatwara (*Chitti to Amil pargana Sawai Jaipur A.D. 1727*)

Apart from this, famine and draught conditions also varied in different years. This necessitated the trade in food grains from surplus to deficient areas and particularly to qasbas which about wholly depended on the rural sector for the supply of food grains. In fact, though most of the historians have primarily emphasized on intra-regional uniformity.. as a matter of fact, there was a great deal of geographical diversity within Rajasthan. In fact, there was a considerable specialization of agricultural production – Eastern Rajasthan produced not only different commercial crops such as indigo, tobacco, spices, cotton, sugarcane and oilseeds, but also food crops such as

Page 75 of 130

wheat and diary products like ghee, etc. Such specialization in agricultural production too encouraged trade between the rural and the urban tract – also occasionally the richest sections of cultivators viz. *khud-kasht*, peasants, *zamindars* or *ijaradars*, who had disposeable surplus of food stuffs also carried it to the local market, *hatwara* or *qasba*, with a view to convert it into cash (*Chitti* to *Amil* pargana Jaipur, A.D. 1737).

All these factor contributed to the growth and development of rural urban trade.

As far as *Components of Trade between Countryside and qasba* are concerned, our information is largely derived from the *Chittis* (of pargana Chatsu, AD1738 and pargana Malarna along with *Dastur-ul-Amal* Mapa Rahdari pargana Sanganer) and *Arhsattas* of various parganas which throw valuable light on the intra-regional trade of food grains in Eastern Rajasthan.

The principle food grains that formed important items of trade in Rajasthan region were *bajra*, jowar, *moth*, *makka*, *urg*, *mung*, *til* and *chola* (in *kharif*) and barley, wheat and gram (in *rabi*). Paddy was also grown in some parganas while rice was not grown locally but was an important item of import. We have information of the *banjaras* traveling long distance carrying paddy and rice.

Trade was also carried on the high value agricultural produce such as indigo, cotton, opium, sugarcane, oilseeds, *ajwain*, *dhania* and tobacco, etc. which was produced for local consumption as well as export.

Local manufactures such as *sanganeri*, calico and *sambhar* salt were two most important non-agricultural items of local trade, trade in silk was also prevalent in this region on a limited scale as it met the demand of the upper sections of society.

Other items of trade, which were locally manufactured consisted of ghee, oil, raw leather, leather goods, *gur* (unrefined sugar), sugar candy, paper and cotton thread, etc. Besides these, *kirana*(groceries, spices, medicinal herbs, *mehndi* (henna), betel leaf, nuts, coconut, etc. were also traded.

There also existed trade in such metals as iron, lead, zinc, bronze and glass for making bangles and mirrors. Fruits and vegetables also formed important items of trade; though trade in these items must have operated over a short distance, as they were perishable. Trade was also carried out in oxen both local as well as *Nagori* variety and other cattle.

A major feature of the trade was the *two way flow of commodities from the villages to towns and from towns to the villages, the necessary link being provided through the network of market structure as it developed and by the mercantile community (emphasis mine)*. The *hatwaras*, *mandis* and the *qasbas* as also the *vichhayat* and *sthani* traders played an important role in

establishing strong economic ties between the village and the towns – the rural dignitaries, the peasants and the artisans actively participated in economic transaction and the bulk of trade in the rural society was conducted with the help of money. Thus, we find a subtle change in the pattern of economic organization of the rural society due to the growing penetration of commercial change to satisfy its growing needs. The *increasing interaction and interdependence of the country and the qasba is also evident.* (emphasis mine)

### **Role of intermediary classes as a linkage between rural and urban sectors**

This very increase in interdependence was largely possible because of a chain of intermediaries<sup>86</sup> operating at different levels, who through their participation in intra regional trade actively contributed to cementing rural-urban linkages. In the subsequent section, we'll study the contribution of the merchants, traders, and moneylenders in sustaining the rural-urban relations.

#### **(A) MERCHANTS:**

As mentioned earlier, the merchants collected, carted, stored and sold grains on behalf of the state, which made their role anything but neglectable. Collection of revenue in kind necessitated the conversion of grain and other crops into cash; likewise collection of revenue in cash required the peasants to

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<sup>86</sup> See D. Singh's "Role of Mahajans" A.J. Qaiser's "Role of Brokers" and G.D. Sharma's "Vyoparis and Mahajans in Western Rajasthan during 18<sup>th</sup> Century" *PIHC*, 1980.  
Page 78 of 130

sell the grains for cash, further the surplus grain with the rural elite and even ordinary peasants was to be disposed of – this is where the merchants came in.

In fact, the urban population residing in qasba was largely dependent on supply of food grains from the rural areas – this group of merchants effectively tackled the problem of feeding such a large urban population. These merchants imported and exported goods on a large scale. This relieved the villagers of their responsibilities of taking to and bringing from mandis the goods they needed. The merchants had all the apparatus or transportation for this purpose. 17<sup>th</sup> Century documents show that in certain regions, people viewed visiting ‘*beoparis*’ or merchants as village guests who served the essential needs of the village community. They were entertained at the expense of the village revenue and the cost of rations for their entertainment during their stay in their village was debited to seasonal state revenues.<sup>87</sup>

As far as the margin of profit is concerned, B.R.Grover<sup>88</sup> argues that the margin of profit could not have been large enough to exploit the rural population, otherwise the concept of treating the *beoparis* as village guests could not have existed. However according to B.L. Bhadani<sup>89</sup>, it was actually the margin of difference in prices between countryside and qasba or town, which lured the merchants into grain trade. Generally they endeavoured to

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<sup>87</sup> B.L Bhadani, “Role of Merchants and Markets in Agrarian Trade in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Western Rajasthan” in *Economy and Polity of Western Rajasthan* Ed. B.L. Bhadani and Sato (1998)

<sup>88</sup> An Integrated Pattern of Commercial Life in the rural society of north India during 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century, *Indian Historical Records Commission, 1966*

<sup>89</sup> Land, Tax and Trade in Agriculture Produce in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Western Rajasthan....

establish full control over the supply pipeline, right from the stage of storage of grain, to its transportation and finally its sale to the consumer to the market.

As far as the storage is concerned, most merchants had set up storage pits known as *khod / khad* which were quite near to the fields. Here they stored grains at the time of harvest and sold it in times of lean years at great profit – likewise city grain dealers appear to have erected grain storage space, which were known as *Bhakhars*.

Between village and towns, there were individual traders who organized grain sale. They were called *sahs, sahuikars, banias, fadia and bichhayat*.

The shifting of grains from villages to towns was another important aspect of agrarian society, which deserved attention. Grain from villages of Rajasthan was largely transported by camels to the qasbas and the urban centers through the aegis of a specified class of grain carriers known as *baldiyas, or banjaras and camel owners*. Sometimes the peasant themselves appear to have engaged in grain trade.

In Rajasthan, *Charans* played an important role in the grain carrying trade. They were the owners of camel caravans. *Raibarts* were camel breeders, but they appear to have been hiring out their camels to grain traders and sometimes they themselves were engaged in grain trade. Besides these, a variety of people including *sahs, chaudharis, malis* and people from higher

Page 80 of 130

castes were also engaged in grain trade between rural and urban area. Majority of grain purchasers were *sahs* who had direct links with the peasants. They purchased revenue grain and also the peasants portion to be sold in the qasba.

In urban areas too, we discover hierarchies of traders who were engaged in wholesale and retail grain trade. These intermediaries traders of rural areas who came into contact with each other in the markets (*bazaars*), hats, mandis and towns were *mahajans*, *seth*, *baniyas* and *saudagars*. In the markets, *mahajans* were largely engaged in brain transactions while a large numbers of *sahukars* dealt with wholesale transactions.<sup>90</sup> They ensured continuous supply of grain to urban areas. This class of urban merchants had adequate storage facilities in the form of *kothas*. Besides there are *Fadiyas* who were retailers. They displayed their grain for sale in the market place on mats. The bichhayats directly contacted the consumers in their own localities or near their residences. There were broadly two categories of traders, each category consisting of two groups;

- (1) Two different local big trading groups known as *beoparis* and *mahajans*. The former bought goods from outside and the latter from the '*des*' only i.e. rural areas of Eastern Rajasthan.
- (2) The second category also consisted of two different groups and both were known as *bichhayats*. One brought goods from within Rajasthan and others from outside.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> B.R. Grover "An Integrated pattern...."

<sup>91</sup> B.R. Grover "An integrated pattern..."



As in the case of merchants or traders, there also existed a *hierarchy of markets between the countryside and the town*. Thus, at the top of the structure of grain market, was *mandi*, exclusively for wholesale. Below it was bazaar with large number of shops where both wholesale and retail transactions took place. At the bottom, there was a bazaar where ordinary retail selling was the norm. Besides, a large number of individual itinerant traders (*bichhayats*) themselves reached the consumers regularly.

In retrospect, thus a process of bargaining by dealers, finances and rulers ran the markets. It can be argued that even the peasants, usually described as the down-trodden lot were part of the bargaining to a greater or smaller extent by virtue of their role in the production process. And as Prof. Harbans Mukhia has rightly put it “*No society functions at the diktat of the ruling class but rather through a balance between power exercised at many levels. Following from this it would be suggested should not only be described in terms of a revenue based state, taxing a largely agrarian society without studying the role of intermediary groups*”

A discussion on the role of intermediate groups is however incomplete without examining the role of the *mahajans* as a crucial link between rural and urban sectors. Here it should be noted that Dr. Dilbagh Singh<sup>92</sup> has provided a very valuable insight into the functioning of *mahajans* in Eastern Rajasthan during their course of 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

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<sup>92</sup> D.Singh, “Role of Mahajans in the Rural Economy in Eastern Rajasthan during 18<sup>th</sup> Century”

**(B) MAHAJANS:**

*Mahajans* referred to a group of moneylenders and traders who provided money capital to the rural community. Also known as *bohras* in Eastern Rajasthan, the *mahajans* occupied an important position amongst the rural elite because the peasants, the state as well as other rural dignitaries depended upon the monetary support to meet their financial requirements.<sup>93</sup> (*Chittis to Amils* pargana Chatsu VS1817/1758, pargana Sawai Jaipur VS1817/1760)

The *mahajans* as an occupational finance class usually concentrated themselves in particular villages, especially in the qasbas, in the villages in the neighbourhood of towns and in the rural trade centers (*mandis*).<sup>94</sup>

The peasants borrowed money from the *mahajans* on a number of accounts. It appears that a major factor was their need for subsistence at the time of natural calamities such as famine, drought etc. (*Chittis to Amils* pargana Chatsu VS1815/AD1758). Not only in abnormal years but also in normal years the peasants looked to the support of the *mahajans* for their agricultural requirements. Even the agricultural loans known as *tagai* advanced by the state to the *ryots* were borrowed from the *mahajans*. Out of thirteen instances of advancing *tagai* to the *ryot*, in 11 cases the state

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<sup>93</sup> Dilbagh Singh....Role of Mahajans

<sup>94</sup> *Chittis to Amils* pargana Chatsu VS1812/AD1755, pargana Malarna VS1812/AD1755.

borrowed money from the *bohra*. In following instances of advancing *tagai* to the *ryot*, the money was borrowed from the *bohra* by the *Amils* – The darbar granted *tagai* out of its own resources an amount of Rs. 10,000 to the *ryot* of pargana Chatsu in the year VS1810/1753.

Besides the peasants and also the state, the loans by *mahajans* were availed by different classes of rural society. These loans were availed by different classes of rural society for multifarious purposes. Thus while *zamindars* and *patels* required these loans for the settlement of new villages or to provide necessary facilities for rehabilitating old ruined and deserted villages, for the expansion and improvement of agriculture, for digging up wells and for construction of ponds, the peasants on the other hand utilized their *tagai* to extend their holdings to replace/purchase cattle and to buy manure, seeds and ploughs.<sup>95</sup> In many cases, the peasants indebtedness was collective and we find the entire *ryots* of the villages borrowing money from the *bohra* to purchase seeds, manure, ploughs and bullocks so that they could cultivate the fallow lands of the villages, construct ponds and dig wells.

Apart from giving loans to the state *zamindars* and cultivators, the *mahajans* also loaned their bullocks, ploughs, seeds and manure to the needy cultivators.

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<sup>95</sup> *Chittis* from Diwan Hargovind Kanhi Ram to the *Amils* pargana Chatsu VS1810/AD1753, *Chittis* to *Amils* of pargana Sawai Jaipur VS 1817/1760, D.D.H. Jaipur records, R.S.A.B.  
Page 84 of 130

Thus the *mahajans* not only provided capital for the expansion of agriculture, but in many cases they themselves were involved in agricultural operations. In majority of cases they held *gharu kashta* and invested capital for the cultivation of cash crops. In other words, apart from investing money in usury, these *mahajans* also used their capital to acquire landed property, both for the *gharu kashta* and for share cropping in the village. In fact they were involved in the purchase of and mortgaging agricultural lands on a large scale. The extent to which the *mahajans* acquired agricultural land by this manner can be seen by an instance in the year of VS1820/1763. It was reported that in qasba Chatsu out of 350 fields belonging to the *raiya*s, 175 had been purchased or mortgaged by the *mahajans* at the time of scarcity among the cultivators due to famine.

The *mahajans* were also bringing about significant developments in the rural society by acquiring the hereditary offices of the village officials through purchase. In many cases that directly secured the offices which were vacant due to their absence of incumbents by offering good amount as *nazrana* to the state. We find the *mahajans* acquiring the offices of *patel*, Chaudhary, *patwari* by the power of the purse.

Further at times, we even find that the *mahajans* were also directly or indirectly involved in the work of revenue collection through the system of *Ijaradars*. The widespread practice of *ijara* especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century provided the *mahajans* an opportunity to penetrate into the work of revenue collection thus enabling them to *control the rural economy*. (emphasis mine)

Thus the *mahajans* had become an *integral part of the administrative machinery and of the village society*. (emphasis mine) This itself was symptomatic of close linkages between the inhabitants of village and functionaries based in the urban centers or *qasbas*.

However it is important to mention that in 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the state had imposed several restrictions in the operations of these rural moneylenders. These measures were taken by the state in order to restrict the demands of the *bohras* as well as to ensure uninterrupted cultivation. In a few instances we find that the *raiya* desert the village due to the excessive demands laid on them by the *bohras*. It was precisely this sort of present resistance to excessive demands that the state attempted to prevent through a policy controlling the sphere of money lending.

The *diwan's* instructions to the *amils* repeatedly emphasize that the *bohra* must not harass the *raiya* to meet repayments on loans that were older than a year. In situations of acute distress or poverty of the *raiya*, a moratorium on all repayments on loans were imposed till such time as they were able to clear the debt in easy installments.

These two agencies for agricultural loans (viz. state and the *bohras*) should not be seen as competing alternatives but rather as being complementary to each other. This should further become clearer in our

analysis of the Role of State in Eastern Rajasthan in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century, which would be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

## *State and Rural Urban Trade in Eastern Rajasthan*

The general pattern of local rural trade that emerges from the studies on the same, is “an essentially vertical thrust of commodities moving out of the locality through a hierarchy of market linked by chains of intermediaries and the flow of commodities and credit”.<sup>96</sup>

It has been suggested in<sup>97</sup> Rajasthan records of late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century that crop sharing persisted as the dominant mode of revenue assessment for food grains in particular, the peasant was obliged to remit the revenue in cash after commutation of the state’s share of grain at current local prices. Thus, whether the revenue was assessed in cash or by the division of the grain heap, its ultimate payment as cash necessitated the marketing of agricultural produce by the peasant. The role of The Mughal State in commerce is thus seen to be limited to taxing traders through various sales and transit tolls or monopolizing the sale of certain commodities.<sup>98</sup> Instances of the direct intervention of the state in the regulation of grain trade have been noted in situations of scarcity and famine. Such intervention was by its nature sporadic - limited to times of crisis in food grain availability and keeping with popular expectations of a paternalistic ruler.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri “Inland Trade”, in *Cambridge Economic History of India*, Pg 339-349

<sup>97</sup> Article by Irfan Habib “Agrarian relations and Land Revenue: North India” *CEHII* Pg. 237

<sup>98</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri, “The State and the Economy: Mughal Empire” *CEHII* Pg 182-192

<sup>99</sup> Bayly: *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars...*



A careful analysis of Jaipur records however reveals a more direct and routine involvement in local trade by the local government administration. This involvement was articulated through the collection of revenue in kind, which constituted more than half of the total annual revenue proceeds. The collection by the state commission to cash by sale of grain organized by the state. The revenue collected in kind was marketed by the local revenue officials and not by the peasants.

Based on the *arhsattas* and Jaipur records, Madhavi Bajekal in her article,<sup>100</sup> has given a panoramic treatment to states role in rural urban trade. In order to elaborate on this aspect of the state's interest in the grain market, it would be pertinent to trace the processes involved in the disposal of the grain revenues appropriately by the state.

### **Storage :**

As far as storage is concerned, the states contribution lay in the construction of a host of storage pits<sup>101</sup> in the villages for storage of state's grain share. Storage of grain in pits is regarded as the most important and efficient method of long-term storage in dry lands and continues to be in use today. Tod's description of a grain pit in the adjoining state of Kota in Eastern Rajasthan indicates that there were simple unlined structures in which grain was generally stored loose or unbagged. The recommended practice in such

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<sup>100</sup> Madhevi Bajekal, 'State and the Rural Grain Market in 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Eastern Rajasthan' in Sanjay Subramanyam ed. *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India, 1990.*

<sup>101</sup> *khasas* – According to *Chitti* dt Kartik Sudi 7 VS 1788/AD 1731, pargana Amber ( No. 383).

cases was for the *amil* to arrange for its transportation to the state granaries in the *qasba*.<sup>102</sup>

In view of the fact that efficient storage of the grain pending its disposal was as important as the collection of revenue, the revenue officials of the state were required to inspect village pits regularly.

If the stored grain was deteriorating, the *amil* was instructed to make immediate arrangements for its disposal, either through the grain dealers at prices lower than those current in the bazaar, or the grain was distributed to the needy peasants as the *taccavi* loans to be recovered in kind at the time of next harvest.

Storage of grain was however just an interim process to its ultimate disposal. The state's need to convert its grain revenues into disposable income in cash as well as the fact that long term storage of grain was not feasible and inadvisable, due to risk of deterioration, meant that the bulk of the grain was sold to the local grain dealers during the current harvest. Some of the grain, was however, transported to forts for the provisioning of garrisons.

Taking of all the above factors into consideration, the upper and lower limits, to the proportion of the grain produce appropriated and marketed by the state in any *pargana* would have been about three to twelve percent of the gross grain production with the collections in the period 1730 – 1750. Control

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<sup>102</sup> James Tod, *Annals and Antiquity of Rajasthan*, Vol 2 Pg. 438.  
Page 91 of 130

over a sizeable grain stock meant that the involvement of the state in the grain trade in the market was significant. *The state participation in the grain market as a giant seller in conjunction with a political power that it wielded ensured its domination of the local grain market.*<sup>103</sup> (emphasis mine)

### **State's Role in Price Determination**

According to B.R.Grover, the state exercised formal control over the rural market through a policy of fixing prices on a regional scale. The state's need to fix prices has broadly been ascribed to its desire to ensure cheap food. The fundamental value implicit in this policy was the virtue claimed by and attributed to Mughal rulers during whose reigns low grain prices prevailed or who actively kept prices low in their central cities.

Bayly<sup>104</sup> on the other hand has argued that the fixing of bazaar prices by the state was more of a process of bargaining between the local merchants and the political authorities. In fact, the intervention of the state in negotiating retail prices with reference to the wholesale prices has been taken by Bayly as a mechanism to ensure smooth flow of grain into the city.

The evidence gathered from the “*nirakh bazaar*” documents, as also *chittis* suggests that state intervention in price setting was closely related to its role as the major seller of grain in the market with its annual revenues being

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<sup>103</sup> Madhavi Bajekal, 'State...'

<sup>104</sup> Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, North Indian Society in the age of British expansion, 1770-1870, Cambridge 1983.

dependent on the value of the produce appropriated in grain. The bazaar prices recorded in the '*nirakh bazaar*' documents for each qasba provided a benchmark for the state to determine the price at which it would sell its produce revenue to the grain dealers. The involvement of the state in the process of price setting can thus be seen as an index of official social policy as well as revenue considerations.<sup>105</sup>

Besides storing the grain and determining its price state also assumed the role of the potential trader in grains. The *Amil* was responsible for the role of the state share of grains in his pargana.<sup>106</sup> He took several steps to ensure the quick disposal of state share of grains. For selling the grains, not only the local traders were approached but traders from different towns were also invited.<sup>107</sup> In the majority of cases the state grain was sold to the traders before harvesting the crop by entering into a sort of contract known as *sati*. Thus traders, under state agreements, undertook to buy the state grain on the basis of price current on the day the contract was made. The state revenue official could contract the *sati* for a village or a group of villages either before the commencement of harvesting season, as was the usual practice or after collection of revenue.<sup>108</sup> If the contract was made before the collection of revenue the traders had to gather the state grain wither directly from the

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<sup>105</sup> According to *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl "The provincial/local administration fixed prices of foodstuff on a regional scale. The fixing of prices was governed by the principle of local supply and demand. In a region where a particular commodity was in excess, its import was forbidden and commodities in excess were diverted to other regions. For drought stricken areas/regions with certain deficit commodities, special facilities were provided to traders. In order to keep down the prices, they were afforded unrestricted movement and were exempted from mahsul duties."

<sup>106</sup> Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*

<sup>107</sup> *Chitti* to *Amil* pargana Amber dated AD 1727.

<sup>108</sup> *Chitti* to *Amil* pargana Chatsu dated A.D. 1728.

peasants or the local collecting authorities i.e. the *patel* or the *zamindar*. There are several instances of the traders being unable to collect the grain from the *patels* and the *raiyat*.

Efforts were also made by the state to put the grain on sale at an appropriate time when the prices were rising. The *amil* was especially instructed to keep an eye on the price movement in the local market as also to obtain timely information on prices from other towns and make attempts to contact *sati* on favourable terms. It was at this stage that the process of bargain between the state and the traders started in order to seek more profitable terms. The traders could have hoped to and did get profit out of difference in the price levels at different places or due to local price fluctuations in the light of price and demand. This can be highlighted by the instance at the year A.D. 1728 when the *sati* of a village in pargana Chatsu was contracted with a *mahajan*. However the prices rise from the very next day and the trader earned profit even in the local market.<sup>109</sup> The *amil* was blamed for not being vigilant in watching the price movement. Thereafter, the sale of the state share was made in the presence of *chaudhari*, with a view to reducing the possibility of misappropriation of the state revenue by the state officials on the one hand, and by the merchants through reducing the prices on the other.

In normal circumstances the traders who contracted *sati* with the state for the purchase of its grains were required to make payment as stipulated in

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<sup>109</sup> *Chitti to Amil pargana Chatsu A.D. 1728.*

the terms of agreement failing which they were liable to be charged interest. However in case of glut or scarcity the state not only offered its grain to the traders on lucrative terms including interest free credit facility but also advanced cash loans to induce them to buy the grain. This reflects the eagerness of the state to dispose off its grain as early as possible in order to avoid accumulation of stocks for want of proper storage facilities.

Apart from taking recourse to *sati*, the state officials also invited local as well as outside traders to buy state grain. In an instance in the year 1727 we find the state officials of Amber selling 700,000 mounds of grain to the *vichhayat* traders<sup>110</sup> sometimes the state did not dispose off its grain directly to the traders and handed it over to certain urban based big traders, who were instructed with the responsibility to sell state grain along with the personal stock on commission basis.<sup>111</sup>

On several occasions, the state in its eagerness to sell off its grain, even tended to monopolize the trade in food grains by resorting to restrictive methods and harassing the traders especially in emergency situations. At the time of depression in the market, the pargana officials forced the traders to buy state share of grain according to their status and purchasing capacities. In 1728 when there was a glut in the market the *amil* of pargana Amber resorted to coercion in order to compel the traders of Amber town to buy state grain.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Chitti* to *Amil* pargana Amber A.D 1727.

<sup>111</sup> *Chitti* or *Amil* pargana Sawai Jaipur A.D. 1728.

<sup>112</sup> *Chitti* to *Amil* pargana Malarna A.D. 1736.

Quite often the state officials imposed *parna* on the *panch mahajans* of the *qasbas* thereby compelling them either to buy the grain or pay a cess in the form of fine. According to the customary practices only grain merchants were liable to the imposition of *parna* but in many cases we find the *panch mahajans* and even the *patel* and the *raiyat* protesting against the imposition of *parna*. The monopolistic attitude of state with regard to grain trade can also be judged from the fact that the *pargana* officials were not to permit other traders to sell their stocks in the market unless the state grain was wholly disposed off. Thus the state emerged as a strong competitor to the professional grain merchants.

*However this is not to imply that the role of state in the grain trade was simply monopolistic.*(emphasis mine) On the contrary in fact we come across instances of the state giving instructions to the *amils* not to send food grains to Delhi, Agra, etc. but to divert it to Amber where it was hoarded in anticipation of further rise in prices.<sup>113</sup>

Further, the state had advanced *tagai* (*taqavi loans*) to the *raiyat* in the preceding year in the form of food grains on the condition of its repayment in cash according to the price of the day on which *tagai* was granted. However, in the following year the prices shot up and the state insisted the *raiyat* repaying *tagai* in kind so that it could take the benefit of the rise in prices.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Chitti* to Shah Sahih Ram *Amil* *pargana* Sawai Jaipur dated A.D. 1726.

<sup>114</sup> *Chitti* to *Amil* *pargana* Sawai Jaipur A.D. 1727.

In fact in a number of cases we find the state instructing its *amils* to hoard grains whenever they anticipated shortages due to some reason or the other. This was because of scarcity of rainfall and anticipated substantial rise of agricultural prices in the near future, which led the state to undertake this move.

Due to the lack of rainfall and scarcity of food grains the anticipated rise in prices of grains in 1707 A.D, was 50% within 5 to 6 days, the state also constructively utilized the situation by selling off the old grain so as to balance out the demand and supply of grain.

Even during the famine years, when there was a scarcity, the state made attempts to regulate the prices of foodstuff in the internal market through the instrument of *panch mahajans* who were instructed to regulate prices at appropriate level.<sup>115</sup> In its effort to provide relief to the urban poor who were too weak to earn a wage owing to the severe drought and grain scarcity of 1738, food canteens (*langars*) were opened towards which a sum of rupees four thousand was sanctioned.<sup>116</sup> In addition a ban was imposed on the export of grain from the region while imports were encouraged through the cancellation of all transit and sale taxes for all grains except wheat and sesame.

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<sup>115</sup> *Chitti to Amil pargana A.D. 1731.*

<sup>116</sup> *Chittis to Amils pargana Amber, Chatsu dated Koti Sudi 4, VS1788/1731.*



*Thus the state besides extending financial and material support to the rural sector in extension and improvement of agriculture and releasing surplus stock for the villages affected by scarcity also emerged as the most important agency for upholding law and order, which was crucial for smooth flow of trade between countryside and towns.* <sup>117</sup>(emphasis mine)

**Transport :**

Though the evidence is not clear yet, in certain years we have instances of states involvement in the transportation of grain. B.R.Grover<sup>118</sup> states that the transmit of official grain to the *mandi* for sale was arranged by the local revenue officials. On occasion we do find instances where the state did arrange for large quantity of grain from the region to be sold in distant markets.

In 1726, <sup>119</sup> the *amils* of parganas Phagi, Chatsu and Amber were instructed by the *diwan* to arrange for professional carters to transport the *rabi* grains, wheat, barley and gram for sale at Delhi.

There is a similar evidence of the state organizing the transport of salt worth two lakh rupees from Sambhar Lakes to the newly established salt *katla*

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<sup>117</sup> According to *Ain-i-Akbari* “ The Mughal State regulated trade and commerce... a *jagirdar* or a *khalisa* officer would adopt a conciliatory attitude towards fair minded merchants and artisans, but he would impose a penalty in the shape of double duties upon the merchandise of traders and artisans who violated regulations and indulged in black marketing.

<sup>118</sup> B.R.Grover, ‘An Integrated Pattern...’

<sup>119</sup> *Chitti* dated Kartik Sudi, 7 VS 1782/AD 1725, pargana Amber (No. 32),and *Chitti* dated Bhadon Sudi, 7 VS, 1783/ AD 1726, pargana Chatsu.

(wholesale market) in Sawai Jaipur to be given to the salt dealers there. Five thousand rupees were spent by the state for the transport of salt over thirty six-mile distances between the lake and *qasba* Sawai Jaipur, which was later recovered from the salt dealers.<sup>120</sup>

The state and administration also had a substantial stake in marketing of food grains. Although the state did not monopolize the sale of grain, the appropriation of revenue in kind for grain must have restricted the flow of goods and services through private marketing channels in an economy where grain production and revenue in kind predominated. The state by enforcing upon the local traders a collective responsibility to purchase the state grain at fixed prices in effect made the traders the agents of the state for the disposal of its grain stocks. The restrictions on private trading and the movement of grain till such time as the grain stocks were sold must have also restricted the stocks available for private trading in the period of state trading. In so far as the measures succeeded on raising post harvest prices, the purchase price paid by the traders included a large element of taxation. Traders on the other hand would adjust the supplies that they were prepared to release to the market once state trading was over, in order to profit from the expected seasonal fluctuation in prices the four month period allowed between the delivery of the grain or the signing of contracts and the deferred payment was in effect a form of interest free loan incentive. The disposal of the grain revenue by the state therefore involved three policy variables – controlling the price of sale,

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<sup>120</sup> S. Nurul Hasan “The Morphology of Medieval Indian City – A case study of Shahjahanabad in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, *PIHC, 1967(29<sup>th</sup> session)* pg 350-371...– in which he describes *katla* as a small square bazaar that was often a whole sale market where stocks were kept.

forcing the merchants to purchase grain stocks and lastly allowing for a margin of profits to the traders through the mechanism of deferred payment.<sup>121</sup>

It's not only with respect to the local grain trade that we find evidence for the direct control exercised by the state in the market. In fact rural commerce as a whole was also subject to indirect controls and regulations by the state, through taxing markets, establishing tolls, and controlling the location and periodicity of markets.<sup>122</sup>

Before summing up the discussion on state's role in the rural-urban trade, it is however important to outline certain trends in agricultural taxation for, a detailed analysis or the formulation of the 'zabti' rates and the proportions of the produce levied in '*batai*' reveals their close relationship with the state control and productivity.

There were two modes of revenue assessment prevalent in the region from at least the mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century. These were firstly the crop sharing method or '*batai*' based on a physical division of a crop in an agreed proportion—between the peasant and the state, and secondly – a cash assessment per unit area of land or the 'zabti' system. These two methods co-existed for each *qasba* and village and for each harvest. Before we discuss the working of these

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<sup>121</sup> Madhavi Bajekal, 'The State and The Rural Grain Market...'

<sup>122</sup> Due to paucity of time and space we have not undertaken a detailed discussion on different types of agricultural and non-agricultural taxes levied on the peasants, traders and merchants operating in both rural and urban areas. However, one can refer to the articles by S.P.Gupta "New Evidence on Agrarian & Rural Taxation in Eastern Rajasthan (17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Dilbagh Singh, "Nature and Incidence of Taxes Levied on Inland Trade in Eastern Rajasthan during 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries" *PIHC*, 1975, pg. 311-325 & pg. 229-241 for a comprehensive treatment of the same.

two distinct forms of revenue realization its necessary to examine the rationale for their adoption by the state.

It was the type of crop grown, rather than a quality of soil or the nature of land tenure which determined whether the crop was assessed by the 'zabti' or 'batai' method, or sometimes interchangeably by both. The crops invariably assessed by the 'zabti' system were the cash crops in both *kharif* and *rabi* harvests. These include cotton, the dye plants, sugarcane, tobacco, spices, vegetables, poppy, maize and sunn-hemp. These constituted the "pukki zabti" crops or the crops that were never assessed by the crop sharing method.<sup>123</sup>

The crops generally assessed by the 'batai' method included all the major food grains - millets, pulses oil seeds, barley, wheat, *rabi* and mixed grains. In accordance with the Mughal policy of taxation, each of latter food crops could be assessed by the crop sharing method or by 'zabti' method, the choice theoretically being left to the peasant.<sup>124</sup> Such crops were classified as "kutchi zabti" perhaps to indicate the flexibility in the form of assessment possible with respect to these crops.

In an area of dry farming that was prone to indifferent harvests, crop sharing was clearly of advantage to the cultivator as the preferred mode of discharging his revenue obligations. Crop sharing ensured that while the risk

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<sup>123</sup> *Chitthi* dtd Sawan Sudi 16 VS1784/AD1737, pargana Sawai Jaipur.

<sup>124</sup> Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System Mughal India*.

of harvest shortfalls was shared between the state and the peasant in proportion to their respective shares in the output, that of local price variations was borne by the state alone. However, the transaction or the supervision costs involved in the tasks, such as policing to prevent pilferage, prior to the harvest, the actual weighing and division of the crops and the arrangements to ensure the sale of the produce, were undoubtedly in the '*batai*' method. In these respects, cash assessment had the clear advantage of making the assessment and collection of revenue administratively easier from point of view of the state.

As stated in the "*Ain-i-Akbari*", the cash rates per *bigha* crops assessed by the '*zabti*' system were fixed in accordance with the prices and average productivity of the crops in each *dastur* circle / *mahal*.<sup>125</sup> However the *arhsattas* and *dastur amals* for our region indicate that there was no uniform cash rate for each crop in the areas within a simple *dastur* circle as identified in the "*Ain-i-Akbari*". In practice the differences in the quality of soil, location of field, duration of fallowing of the field sown and the degree of capital and labour investment were incorporated to formulate a complex schedule of graded tax rates for each crop.

The interplay of diverse factors that affected the cash rate can best be shown by the examples of the variation in the crop specific '*zabti*' rates on sugarcane and cotton cultivation in qasba Sanganer.

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<sup>125</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* vol.2; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*.  
Page 102 of 130

Cotton cultivation in qasba Sanganer was also taxed according to the sliding scale of revenue rates per *bigha* depending upon the quality of soil and irrigation method. There were six basic categories into which cotton acreage was divided. The highest rates were levied on good quality soils that were irrigated by wells having an abundant supply of water. These lands were manured and often lay adjacent to the inhabited sites. The next category comprised ordinary soils irrigated by wells located at reasonable distance from the inhabited area.

In general terms, the indexed values for all the parganas reveal a basic pattern of high rates on cash crops and lower rates on the food crops relative to cotton. Comparison with the indexed rate for the *dastur* circle of qasba Chatsu recorded in "*Ain -i- Akbari*" (1595) and the rates given for pargana Chatsu for 1712 show that the rates of all crops except indigo, sunn-hemp, cumins and onions were higher in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century taken relative to cotton. The '*batai*' system was less complex as a method of appropriation primarily because it did not take into account variations in the type of soil, location of field, local price levels or the type of crop. The highest proportion of the produce taken was a half share for both *kharif* and *rabi* crops. However a few of the crops in the *kharif* harvest that were invariably irrigated like coarse rice called "*sali*" were taxed at  $\frac{2}{5}$ <sup>th</sup> of the gross produce. In the *rabi* harvest on the other hand, all the '*batai*' crops were differentially assessed depending upon whether or not they were irrigated. The irrigated *rabi* crops were liable to a lower assessment in terms of the proportion of the produce. In the majority of parganas for which we have data, the standard assessment on

Page 103 of 130

irrigated crops was  $2/5^{\text{th}}$  of the produce. In Chatsu however it was as little as a third.

Its important to note that while it was a policy of the state to encourage the extension of irrigation, its improbable that the state would be willing to pursue a policy that would be detrimental to its revenue returns. This anomaly is further reinforced when we compare the cash rates levied on irrigated and unirrigated wheat and barley. A sample survey of the 'zabti' rates applicable in a few villages of pargana Toda Bhim for the *rabi* harvest of 1693 shows that the highest rates are for crop irrigated by permanent wells and lowest for unirrigated crops.

A vital element of the taxation policy that derived from social and political considerations rather than specificities of crops production were 'preferential rates' granted to certain privileged sections of village inhabitants.

In the formulation of the produced proportion, the *dastur amals* make an explicit distinction between the "*raiayati*" and the "*riyayati*" *dasturs*<sup>126</sup>. While the former constituted the highest proportion of the produce that could be levied on the resident cultivator in the village, the *riyayati* schedule was lower and was further differentiated. The *riyayati* or concessionary rates were applied on the revenue paid in kind by the hereditary village officials – the *patels*, the *patwaris*, *chaudharis* and *qanungos* as well as distinct caste groups

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<sup>126</sup> Dilbagh Singh, 'Local and Land Revenue Administration of the State of Jaipur (c.1750-1800)' PhD. thesis, JNU, Delhi.

like *rajputs*, *brahmans*, *kayasthas* and *mahajans*. The granting of advantageous terms of revenue payment to the local administrative functionaries was a method of remuneration that has a parallel in the allocation of revenue free or '*inam*' lands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Maharashtra. The inclusion of the *pahis* in the *riyayati* schedule was primarily part of the state policy of offering fiscal inducements to migratory cultivators who were generally given a wasteland or poorer quality land of the village to cultivate. The *pahis* thus irrespective of their caste was assessed at concessional rate and thus a rationale for their inclusion in the *riyayati* schedule was quite different from that of other groups.

The preferential rates accorded to the village officials and the higher castes varied between parganas. However in each pargana the *chaudhuris*, *qanungos* and *zamindar*, *bhumias* paid the lowest rate of the quarter and the *patels* the highest at 2/5<sup>th</sup>. These formed the upper and lower limits of the range of preferential rates.<sup>127</sup>

However unlike the *arhsattas* of other qasbas, those of qasba Malarna, record a single zabti rate allowing no variation of productivity or the status of cultivator although the revenue obtained in kind was levied at two different rates. Its possible that these two rates were applied to irrigated and unirrigated crops and did not represent preferential taxation.<sup>128</sup> The questions that arise next are whether all the members of the non-agricultural castes were accorded

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<sup>127</sup> Madhavi Bajekal "Agricultural Production ...."

<sup>128</sup> *Arhsatta*, pargana Malarna VS 1777/AD 1720.



concessionary rates, and if so whether there were any restrictions imposed on the extent of their privileged holding and the degree to which these were effective. It has been argued by Dr. Dilbagh Singh that all members of the privileged section or caste were granted concessionary rates of revenue on their entire holdings<sup>129</sup>. This inference is supported by the manner in which the *dastur amals* specify caste as the condition for the award of the preferential rate.

The formulation of the basic revenue demand was therefore extremely complex and varied, incorporating within its structure differentials in productivity of the land, labour and capital as well as recognizing the superior requirements of the socially and politically dominant section of rural society.<sup>130</sup>

The payment of the basic revenue demand was undoubtedly the chief financial burden on the peasantry. However the revenue records do not reveal the entire range of additional payments made by the peasants under numerous heads, which can broadly be categorized as protection and transaction charges. All of these charges, which accrued to the state, were generally recorded under the category of "*Sair Jihat*" taxes and where the Jaipur Raja also held *zamindari* or *bhomia* rights under the specific accounts of *bhomi* dues.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> D. Singh, 'Caste and Structure of Village Society in Eastern Rajasthan', *Indian Historical Review* - vol II, no. 2 1976, pg 299-311.

<sup>130</sup> N.A. Siddiqui, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals, 1700-1750*, London, 1970, pg. 42-48.

<sup>131</sup> According to *Ain-i-Akbari* during the Mughal Age the State imposed custom duties (mahsul) on imported goods and other cesses of various kinds on arts and crafts manufactured

In 1723, a pargana was issued by the Jaipur *darbar* to the *amils* of all parganas. It began with a statement that the expenses from common fund had become so high that cultivation was falling off to the detriment of the state revenue. The *amils* were therefore instructed make a concerted effort to encourage and *patels* the *raiyyatis* of the parganas to extend cultivation by offering them a reduction of the fourth of the stipulated on new land brought under the plough along with an offer of the state loans or *tagai* to enable them to do so. Further as a mark of royal favour the *patels* of the large villages were to be honoured with the presence of good quality cloth while others were to receive turbans. It was impressed upon *amils* that on no account should they allow any further impositions, fines or presents to be from the village. Further if the village had previously taken a loan from the moneylender, either collectively or individually in order to meet their obligations they were not to be coerced into repaying the outstanding amounts until permitted by the state.

### **State's Role in Relief and Agricultural Development**

Intrinsic to the taxation policy of 18<sup>th</sup> century Jaipur state were measures to promote agricultural expansion and investment. As we have seen, taxation schedules were structured to distinguish the natural fertility of the soil

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by artisans. Cesses imposed on sale and purchase in the rural qasba market covered commodities like articles of food, grains, commercial crops, oil, cloth, skin... under the revenue heading of state income – all these cesses formed a part of *Sair-Jihat* and *Sair-ul-Wajah*. Akbar abolished various miscellaneous cesses like *tamgha*, *zakat*, *baj*; Jahangir too abolished *zakat* on transit goods, river tolls and some other cesses which were being realized by *jagirdars* in their territory. Later Aurangzeb also abolished transit duties (*rahdari*) on gram and vegetables which were being levied per *maund*. In fact strict orders were issued by the government to the local officials to refrain from charging *rahdari* from traders moving in the deficit regions.

and the higher yields brought about by individual efforts and investment so that cultivators who improved their fields retained a larger share of the output. In order to expand production, taxes were scaled down to facilitate cultivation of '*banjar*' cultivable waste and tax rebates were granted for the restoration of the depopulated lands and the construction of the wells<sup>132</sup>. Peasants were persuaded to cultivate higher value crops through loan to finance the purchase of seed and through tax incentives. Official policy with regard to agricultural development was primarily composed of fiscal measures such as those, which aim to encourage productive investment, by the rural elite.

While a risk in the rural productivity was an important consideration of state policy, its overriding concern was with maintaining continuity in the production. The incorporation of the '*batai*' mode of taxation for food grain production shows how deeply this concern was built into the system of taxation - while in the '*batai*' mode of taxation the revenue demand adjusted automatically to the quality of the harvest, specific allowances had to be made to adjust output to the tax demand in the case of cash assessed crops. Allowances were made for a partial failure of the harvest or destruction caused by a marching army through a deduction in the revenue demand in proportion to the extent of damage. In the years of exceptionally poor harvest there was a general deduction in the cash revenue rates and much of the assessed revenues were written off if only because they were irrecoverable.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Chitti* pargana Malarna VS 1791, AD 1734, *Chitti* dt. Asoj Vadi 12 VS 1767/AD1710, pargana chatsu (no. 358).

<sup>133</sup> William Foster ed, *The English Factories in India: 1618-166*, Oxford, 1909-1927. - "The indigo business of Bayana was so lucrative that the Mughal State started giving monopoly of its sale to the contractors/indigo farmers. The Mughal State even financed the contractors for

Page 108 of 130

The provision of the state loan or *tagai* loans went some way in providing rural entrepreneur badly needed capital to rehabilitate villages to construct dams, dig wells and purchase seed and cattle. However as we have seen *tagai* loans were generally distributed in the response to a production crisis rather than as a part of a long-term policy that sought to stabilize or expand production through effective state intervention and control. Considering the importance of the *tagai* loans during periods of crisis, they should be seen primarily as a part of the states relief measures to enable the rural population to tide over situations of exceptional distress. The restricted supply of credit in conditions of draught or political conflict meant that the state had to provide a form of social subsidy in order to prevent large-scale migration from the region.

An evaluation of the impact of the system of revenue taxation on agricultural productivity in pre-colonial period by the modern historians has yielded conflicting viewpoints: The historians of the colonial period emphasize the flexibility and the responsiveness of the pre-colonial tax structures to the welfare of agriculturalists and contrast this to the rigidity of tax system imposed by the British.<sup>134</sup> A leading historian of the Mughal economy, Irfan Habib, on the other hand has emphasized inherently regressive

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purchasing indigo from the various local mandis and entered into an agreement with the latter, keeping its stipulated share in the profit of the sale proceeds. It also offered quite reasonable terms to the indigo farmers who in case of little profit would be obliged to return only the state loan. The indigo farmers had the monopoly on sales of indigo to local merchants and foreign trading companies. This resulted in the rise on indigo price and greater returns for the state". *Jahangirs India* : tr. of Francisco Pelsaret's Remonstrantee by W.H.Moreland and P.Geyle, Cambridge, 1935. pg. 47-50.

<sup>134</sup> Asiya Siddiqi, *Agrarian Change in a North Indian State : Uttar Pradesh, 1819-1833*, Oxford 1973.

nature of Mughal taxation of its tendency to 'subvert superior cultivation' though excessive exploitation.<sup>135</sup>

On the other hand, the fact that the taxes were levied at the standard rate and were not linked to individual resources certainly highlights the regressive nature of the structure of the taxation. In Eastern Rajasthan this feature was further accentuated by granting of tax rebates and concession to the privileged section of rural society. Further more to the extent that taxation drew out scarce capital from countryside, the system of taxation inhibited the diffusion of superior cultivating practices to all levels of rural society. The objective of the state to maximize its revenues on the other hand could not be achieved through a system of taxation that did not allow the producers sufficient resources to meet their needs for continued production. The states need to attract and retain labour imposed further limits to any policy aimed at short-term revenue maximization. In a dry farming area where the production conditions were unstable and variable the system of taxation had to incorporate measures to promote productive investment in order to stabilize and expand production in the long term as well as to provide relief to overcome seasonal shortfalls in production.

Thus the agrarian policy of the state, as Madhavi Bajekal<sup>136</sup> has pointed out was a coherent and complex amalgam of interrelated elements that

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<sup>135</sup> Irfan Habib, "Agrarian relations and Land Revenue: North India", *CEHII*, Pg 240. One can also see the views of Satish Chandra in his article "Some Institutional Factors in providing capital inputs for the improvement and expansion of cultivation in medieval India" *Indian Historical Review*, Vol 3, No. 1 (1976), Pg 83-98.

<sup>136</sup> Madhavi Bajekal, "State and the rural Grain Market in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Eastern Rajasthan.."

aimed to achieve an acceptable balance between interlocked and contradictory interest in rural society. The agrarian policy attempted to mediate between the revenue demands of state on one hand and the social reproduction of primary producers on the other, along with need to reconcile these two primary interests with the conflicting and often competing demands of traders, moneylenders and the landed aristocracy. A measure of the effectiveness of these policies was the sustained growth and agrarian prosperity during the reign of Sawai Jai Singh when the active implementation of state's agrarian policy coincided with favourable economic trends and a phase of relative political stability. Climatic imbalances during this period resulted in famines but the destructive impact of such crisis in production was *contained by state intervention which aimed to restore incentives to stimulate production and which enabled a relatively rapid recovery.* (emphasis mine)

## CONCLUSION

In the course of this dissertation, I have endeavoured to examine the rural-urban relations in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with special reference to qasbas in Eastern Rajasthan. With respect to rural-urban relations, I focused primarily on economic relations existing between the villages and qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan. In fact, in our discussion, spanning over four chapters, we have tried to examine, using the analogy of rural-urban grain trade, the 'symbiotic' relationship which existed between the countryside and qasbas of Eastern Rajasthan in late 17<sup>th</sup>-early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the First Chapter, we have highlighted how the semi-aridity of Eastern Rajasthan made it a problem zone with extremes of temperature and uncertain rainfall. Water, in fact, was a main limiting factor, making the rain dependant farming a fluctuating one. Also, the seasonal nature of the rivers and the loamy content of the soils necessitated greater dependence on artificial means of irrigation. Significantly, the peculiar topography of Eastern Rajasthan, and a fairly high water table, ranging approx. 30-40ft., especially made the construction and usage of wells, more advantageous for the region. However, the availability of means of artificial irrigation (especially wells), itself, would not have been possible had it not been for the financial support provided by the qasba based *mahajans* (money lenders), *bantias* (traders) and at times the state itself. However, the financial and logistic support, from the urban dignitaries, was not limited to extension of irrigational facilities. Even in

Page 112 of 130

times of drought, famine or scarcity conditions, the state came forward to help the rural inhabitants to tide over their crises. Thus, we argued for a closer relationship between the geographical setting and the rural-urban relations, in Eastern Rajasthan.

In the Second Chapter, we have emphasized, that notwithstanding, the climatic and geographical constraints in Eastern Rajasthan, the peasants in the countryside, were able to generate a substantial surplus, to sustain both rural and urban sectors. In fact, the *arhsattas* and *khasra* documents pertaining to the period (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) show, a marked increase in the production of *zabti* crops of *kharif* harvest. There was also some increase in the production of *rabi* crops as can be judged from the share of revenue pertaining to the period. As is well known, the *zabti* harvest prospers best under the conditions of better ploughing, weeding and watering. On this hypothesis, it would be safe to suggest, that during the period under study, there was no decline in agriculture, and that adequate resources were available, for intensive cultivation, as well as for extending cultivation. What we have further highlighted in this chapter, is that this extension and improvement of agriculture, including even purchasal and replacement of cattle and procurement of manure seeds – were largely made possible because of the financial contribution of the *mahajans* as also the state authority, to different classes of rural sector, from *zamindars* and *patels* to *raiyyat* themselves.

In the Third Chapter, we have discussed the dynamics of agrarian trade as a linkage between rural and urban sectors. A study in agricultural produce

Page 113 of 130



is intrinsically linked to a study of system of land tax, therefore, we also discussed the mode, mechanism and rates of land revenue, levied in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Rajasthan. References from Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* as also from S.P.Gupta's *Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, show that land tax in Eastern Rajasthan, was collected both in cash (*zabti*) and kind (*batai*). However, notwithstanding, the mode of payment of land revenue, the need of the peasants, traders and revenue officials alike, to convert the surplus grain stock into cash, led all of them to the market. This, then, was the starting point of grain trade between countryside and *qasbas*. Besides the land revenue mechanism, other factors like, the specialization of agricultural production and geographical diversity of the region; growing urbanisation and increasing population also facilitated rural-urban trade. In fact, there is sufficient evidence, in the *arhsattas* and *chittis* alike, which shows that the sphere of economic activities of the village inhabitants was not confined to village alone. They also carried their products to the neighbouring villages, *qasbas*, *hats* and fairs and they exchanged their products for cash, which they also needed, for paying a variety of taxes, levied upon them by the administration. Likewise, in many cases, they were found buying food grains from the *qasbas*, town market, *hats* and *mahajans* too. Finally, the growing use of money, in economic transactions was a significant indicator of increasing interaction between the town and consequent decline of village self-sufficiency and isolation of countryside.

Under the heading 'State and the Rural-Urban Trade' in Chapter Four, we have tried to dismiss the view that 'the pattern of rural-urban trade, was

Page 114 of 130

essentially a vertical one, with undue benefits to the urban sector, often at the cost of rural sector. A study of *arhsattas* and *chittis* show that the states role was not 'limited' and 'sporadic', confined to crisis-management situations, rather the state played a very active and a positive role, in the entire dynamics of rural-urban trade. Right from the collection and assessment of land revenue in the countryside to its marketing, trading and distribution amongst consumers in both rural and urban sectors, *the state actively participated in the entire process – to maintain the price levels, to regulate law and order, to reduce the misappropriation of funds by the intermediaries, to smoothen the flow of trade between the countryside and the qasbas, and last but not the least, to extend financial and material support to rural sector, in extension and improvement of agriculture and releasing surplus stock for villagers in times of crises.* (emphasis mine)

In retrospect it is significant that the grain trade between the countryside and the qasba was an established feature of late 17<sup>th</sup> century to early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Eastern Rajasthan. The volume of intra-regional trade was indicative of the range of agricultural productivity in the region, which in turn was itself symbolic of the ability of rural producers to adapt to and overcome the ecological constraints of semi-arid agriculture. Whether cultivation could take advantage of productive potential of the land depended upon a complex interplay or several factors such as population density, the availability and distribution of resources, the agrarian policy of the state and the development of exchange economy.

More significantly this intra-local trade was not *only one-way flow of commodity from countryside to qasba* but also the *trader also purchased grain from the town market and sold it in the villages.*(emphasis mine) Thus, we have instances of grain being carried from qasba to village *karauli*, qasba to village *bhandhara*, traders also bought grain from the qasba and stored it in the village to sell it in time of scarcity. Therefore, the trade in food grains not only indicates existence of surplus in deficit areas but also tends to modify the concept of complete village self-sufficiency in food grains and *therefore the notion of 'parasitic' town or urban centre needs to be further evaluated* (emphasis mine) and it to these aspects of economy of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century which form the essence of my research.

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