Chapter-I

ECONOMY OF RAJASTHAN

A regional study of trade, commerce and banking must begin by placing the region within the context of its natural resource position and geography. No region could develop on the lines, contrary to what its natural conditions permit; and Rajasthan can be no exception to this. Thus, the natural endowments of a region, in association with the level and type of technology and pattern of economic exchange, set the broad parameters for the study of the economy of region. It is in this context that a discussion of the region concerned i.e. Rajasthan with its two geographically natural but unequal zones, is of prime importance.

One cannot, however, posit any automatic co-relation between geography and economic activities for, the same factor of climate change, could result in a varied impact in different regions and communities especially when we consider the issues like food supply, price factor, standard of living and economic behaviour and so on, of different groups of society.

Modern researches by Braudel, Ladurie and other 'Annales' school historians have made interesting observations, as they emphasize the importance of climate, economy and other environmental factors in the socia
evolution and at the same time they also underline their complexities. Braudel\(^1\) writes that "the rhythm, qualities and deficiencies of harvests ordered all material life in the pre-eighteenth century economies and these changes happened at the same time everywhere". But despite this determinism he also made it clear that the complexities of climate made its effects on plants, animals and social communities differently in different environmental conditions. Thus, stressing on the need to refer any social reality to the space or place in which it exists, i.e. its geographical context. To Ladurie, this study of the role and place of nature in human life was part of movement towards, to use his own words 'historical ecologique'.\(^2\)

Therefore, the study and analysis of Braudel, Ladurie and other historians of 'Annals School' lead us to address the questions regarding the adaptability of a society or lack of it, to climatic stress – that necessarily brings in the socio-economic setup as it interacts with the environment and also the individual's and group's response with the nature.

The following discussion on the ecology of the two distinct geographical zones of Rajasthan, takes up these issues by analyzing the ecological features and the limitations on the economy of the semi arid and arid zones, the natural resource base and the resultant economic activities of different social groups.


Rajasthan has an irregular rhombus shape, with its angles on the North, West, South and East, specially joined by the extreme outer boundary units of districts of Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Banswara and Dholpur. It is bounded on the West by Sindh and Multan, on the North, North-west and North-east by Punjab, on its eastern frontier lie Agra, and Gwalior and its southern boundary touches the limits of Malwa and Gujarat.

The trade through the territory of Rajasthan was facilitated by its favourable geographical position lying between various flourishing and manufacturing centres. Rajasthan is situated on the way from the Mughal capital to Gujarat. It was on the route of busy port of Cambay and manufacturing centres of Ahmedabad and Surat. Also the overland trade from Eastern India trading and manufacturing centres to the provinces of Sindh and Multan, passed through various parts of Rajasthan. Due to this location since early medieval periods, these trade routes which passed through Rajasthan facilitated the trade in this region. Early medieval epigraphic records mention trade-routes through the territories of Marwar and Mewar which connected various popular commercial towns like Pali, Jalore, Jaisalmer, Nadaul, Merta, Barmer, etc. Some of these trade routes are:

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4 G.S.L. Devra, 'A Study of Trade Relations', op. cit., pp.582-83.
• The route from Agra to Ahmedabad passed through Rajasthan – one passed via Ajmer and Nagor and the other via Chittor, Chatsu, Merta and Jalore.\(^5\)

• Several routes connected Agra and Delhi with lower Sindh via Ajmer and Hinduan.\(^6\)

• From Jodhpur to Peshawar.\(^7\)

• From Delhi to Multan via Bhiwani, Bhatner and Anupgarh.\(^8\)

• From Multan to Jaipur via Bhawalpur, Pugal, Bikaner, Churu, Sikar and Jodhpur.\(^9\)

• From Agra to Sindh via Bikaner and Jaisalmer.\(^10\)

• From Rajgarh to Sindh through Churu and Bikaner.\(^11\)

• From Agra to Ajmer via Hinduan, Lalsot and Mauzabad.\(^12\)

• From Delhi to Ahmedabad through Churu, Nagor, Jodhpur, Jalore and Sirohi.\(^13\)

Besides these trade routes, there were several other connecting routes.\(^14\)


\(^7\) Ibid., pp.113-16.

\(^8\) Girija Shankar Sharma, *Marwari Vyapari*, Bikaner, 1988, pp.20-.21


\(^11\) Ibid., pp.523-25.

\(^12\) D. Laet, op. cit., pp.64-66.

\(^13\) Gazetteer of Bikaner (Powlett), Appendix I.

These trade routes are indication of the locational advantage, Rajasthan had, which gave the traders much wanted opportunities. It is almost certain that the so-called 'Marwaris' greatly benefited from exploiting the strategic position of Marwar. This group of merchants certainly must have brought wealth from 'within India' and 'outside India'. This was reflected in their dominance over commercial capital and their spread all over India in the 16th-17th centuries. They earned fame and designation of 'Marwari'.

The Thar seems to spring to historical life in the 7th century. Yuan Chwang, journeying through it in C. 643, describes the independent kingdom of Gu(r)aja ('Ku-che-lo') with its capital at Bhinmal ('Pi-lo-mo-lo'). Also in the Thar was 'A-ta-li' (Ossali), where "the climate was hot and there was much wind and dust" and "the soil was sandy and fruits and flowers were rare". And yet, "the inhabitants were rich and flourishing, they were more traders than farmers". Here we have the first induction of famous Gurjaras, whose name survives in that of Gujarat, of a widespread pastoral community, the Gujars, and of ruling clan of whom the Gurjara-Pratiharas are so famous in history. It seems from Yuan Chwang that the Loni basin was the earliest known cradle of a differentiated people bearing this name, who had resources enough to found a kingdom. These resources, to judge from Yuan Chwang's description of A-t'a-li, came from trade, rather than agriculture.

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
Geographic Features:

The physical geography of Rajasthan is somewhat complex. The most conspicuous physiographic feature of Rajasthan is the Aravalli Range. The Aravallis forming its middle rib separate\(^\text{18}\) two absolutely distinct zones. On its west and north lie the arid plains and ever shifting sand hills of Marwar, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Shekhawati region of Jaipur, collectively bearing the term, 'Maroosthal' or 'Region of Death'.\(^\text{19}\) This region was characterized by the presence of low ridges and sand dunes ('dhora' or 'teeba').\(^\text{20}\) South-east from Aravallis, low lying plains alternate with narrow escarpments as the land rises towards the Harauti plateau, an extension into Rajasthan of Malwa uplands. This region is drained by the Bana and Chambal rivers, the well-watered alluvial lowlands of the latter forming one of the more productive environmental setting in all Rajasthan.\(^\text{21}\)

In both these regions, the ecological balance between man and environment is intrinsically precarious. The long as well as the short term variations in the climate and rainfall ruin crops and dry up pasturages, thus making the living conditions difficult. Water, here, is the most limiting factor for crop production, as the supply of water by natural precipitation is meager and sporadic, even while the climatically induced requirement for water is highly

\(^{18}\) *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Pro Series, p.2.

\(^{19}\) Tod, I, op. cit., p.536, II, p.234.


incessant. Moreover, it is not only the amount of water and its regularity but its effectiveness in terms of soil moisture available for the plant use, that makes the difference in altering the balance with the environment -- this is particularly true for the semi-arid area of Eastern Rajasthan, as compared to the fully arid zones which are distinguished by an unequal pattern of spotty population.\textsuperscript{22} Irrigation thus by necessity becomes the primary concern for crop production in both these areas.

Despite this similarity, there are important variations in the quantity and nature of rainfall, the extent to which irrigation can ameliorate the environmental stress in both areas. It is important to mention here, that semi arid areas in general allow for the continuous occupancy of areas.\textsuperscript{23} Their environmental balance, thus, to a certain extent, is more delicate than that of fully arid areas. Again in the arid zone, the scanty rainfall, non-perennial streams, low water table and poor natural vegetation make pastoralism an important component of the economy.\textsuperscript{24} As a result, there is difference in adaptation and survival strategies of an arid area from a region which is more reliant on rain-fed agriculture, which by virtue of keeping the cultivator tied to the land and crops increased the scale and extent of his misery.

Thus to highlight these ecological variations, we shall now discuss the geographical features of each zones, along with the influence and constraints of

\textsuperscript{24} Hendley, op. cit., pp.1-2.
these features on the economy. In this context, a brief survey of the involvement of the moneyed section of the society, as induced by the state, will also be the objective of this discussion. So an attempt has been made here to see how the economy of each zone could function, to some extent, according to the limitations of its 'eco-system'.

The South-east Rajasthan comprising present day districts of Jaipur, Alwar, Sawai Madhopur and Bharatpur forms a different ecological niche, different in temperature, soil pattern, rainfall, irrigation facilities from the dry western zone. 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. From the point of view of agriculture, the eastern half is better protected as unlike western Rajasthan rainfall is heavier and more regular here, different variations of soil are found, 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 is nearer the surface, numerous wells, rivers and streams exist and a two-crop economy is the rule rather than exception. Our contention, however, is that this very fertility of soil and capacity to grow diverse crops, which made the economy far more reliant on agriculture, resulted also in its more precarious balance with the environment.

25 Imperial Gazetteer of India, Rajputana, 1908, p.42.
This region is bounded by a chain of hills, which constitute a natural boundary between the sandy desert area of Shekhawati and Bikaner on one side and the more fertile tract of core Jaipur on the other.\(^{26}\) To the North-east, the region is demarcated by trans-Yamuna plains, by the upland of Alwar and the Karanti table land, separated by a range of low hills making the border. Aravalli mountains lie on the west of Jaipur and Bana river constitutes the southern boundary.\(^ {27}\) In the neighbourhood of Rajmahal, because of Bana river, the scenery is wild and beautiful. Abul Fazl refers to the green meadows and mountains, which had assumed the verdure of springs as well as jungle. He says that "to the south and south-east of Amber, there was a fertile plain, towards the Kishangarh border, either open or traceless plains or thick jungles, donated here or there in the hills."\(^ {28}\)

Further, Eastern Rajasthan is characterized by a diverse variety of alluvial soil, varying both in texture, from clay loam (chiknot) to sandy (bhur) and in tints, from pale brown, yellowish brown to dark brown.\(^ {29}\) To the North and West of Jaipur, the soil is generally sandy but occasionally stiff clayey soil mixed with gravel (kankar) is also found. Southwards from Jaipur, the soil is for the most part, rich and fertile; and the tract to the extreme south, enclosed by the bends of Bana river (i.e. Sawai Madhopur), consists of rich alluvium loam and is the most


fertile portion of the state. Eastward along Banganga river, the soil is generally a rich firm loam, becoming sandier.\textsuperscript{30}

Agriculture in Rajasthan has largely been dependent on the monsoon. Whenever the rains fell short of normal, the peasants were even compelled to migrate.\textsuperscript{31} On the other hand, excessive rains, too, led to migration.

The general drainage of the region follows the slope of the land towards the east and south-east of Aravallis. The Bana was one of the most important river, which watered the soils of a large area of Bana plains\textsuperscript{32} and formed the boundary between Udaipur and Ajmer and later between the state of Jaipur and Karauli.\textsuperscript{33} However, this river was unaffordable during floods. Its chief affluents were 'Berach', 'Lothare', 'Khari', 'Mansi', 'Dhol' and 'Morel',\textsuperscript{34} which in turn irrigated a large tract. Banganga, with its tributary 'Khari' often brought about disastrous flood and often came to be known as 'Ghora Pachar' (overthrow of horses) in the Bharatpur territories.\textsuperscript{35} Another river of importance was 'Sabi', which sprang up from the hills near Jetagarh and crossed Alwar state. It was by far the largest stream in Alwar and received the water of many tributaries like the Sota.\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} V.C. Mishra, \textit{Geography of Rajasthan}, Delhi, 1967, p.126.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Saiki Jaichand, ed., \textit{Muni Kanti Sagar}, Jaipur, pp.18 and 51.
\item \textsuperscript{32} V.C. Mishra, op. cit., p.135.
\item \textsuperscript{33} The Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol.I, p.34.
\item \textsuperscript{34} The Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol.II, pp.3-4, 128-30; Tod I, p.18.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Imperial Gazetteer of India, Pro Series, p.97.
\item \textsuperscript{36} The Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol.II, pp.130-31.
\end{itemize}
The basins of the major rivers and their tributaries form the micro-regions within the border geographical zone of the Bana plain. The Morel basin characterized by scattered hills and a high water table in the foothill zone incorporates the 'core' area of erstwhile Jaipur state. In contrast to the yellow soil of the more fertile Gambhir and Banganga basins, the Morel basin has inferior brown soil with a high proportion of cultivable waste.\(^{37}\) To the south of the Morel basin lies the Tonk pene-plain, characterized by dark brown or black soil with hard rocky substratum which makes digging of wells expensive and difficult.\(^{38}\)

This physiography of the region determined the pattern of the rural settlement. The rural settlements tended to conglomerate along the river-beds or near the hills. In the Morel basin, due to high water table, the tendency towards dispersed villages is more pronounced. However, the low natural fertility of soil, as compared to the Banganga and Gambhir basins, results in lower rural densities and a large proportion of cultivable waste.\(^{39}\) As compared to the Morel basin, the physiography of Tonk Peneplain discourages the construction of wells and thus the extent of cultivation is limited. The densities of rural population vary, being higher in the fertile eastern tracts and lower in the western Sarwar tract.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p.217.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., p.214.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., pp.216-17.
It is difficult to assess the density of rural population and settlements due to lack of information in the records of the seventeenth-eighteenth century. Our evidences however indicate the rural migration and enmass desertion of villages formed an important part of peasant's response to adversity due to famines, oppression and excessive taxation, etc. The recognition by the state of this process which profoundly affected the production and state's revenue, constituted a very important element of the official agrarian policy. State directives often instructed the rural authorities to rehabilitate the deserted villages and induce the migratory peasants to resettle in the area, by offering them tax reliefs, concessions and loans.

The irregular and uncertain nature of the rainfall also affected the process of agricultural production. The region receives rainfall between 50 and 100 cm. annually. Most of the rains take place in the months of July to September which are the monsoon months and about 10 to 20 per cent of it during winter. Due to the irregular monsoon, any failure of it affected the production of crops. The failure of crops takes place in proportion to the extent and duration of failure of rains. This precarious nature of rainfall was the most significant constraint on agricultural production. Our evidence often refers to such situation. For instance, in one arzdasht it was reported by Purohit Harsram that from Sawan

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41 Arzdasht dated Posh Sudi 9, VS. 1745/1688 AD; dated Asadh Sudi 2, VS. 1761/1704 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.
42 Ibid. dated Asoj vadi, VS. 1783/1726 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.
43 Hendley, op. cit., pp.10-17.
Vadi I to Sudi 1, there was little rainfall in the pargana and along with it because of strong winds, no ploughing was done and production of crop fell sharply.\textsuperscript{45} It indicates the concern of the state regarding the continuance of agricultural production to ensure a smooth flow of revenue from land.

It is important here to bear in mind that with a fair supply of moisture, loamy soils produce crops far superior to those sandy soils of western Rajasthan which can produce only the low value 'bajra' and 'moth'. Also, owing to greater evaporation of light soils, frequent watering of soil is required to renew its supply of moisture.

The importance of irrigation was clearly recognized by state. Although, till the end of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, the Kuchhwaha princes as Mughal jagirdars did not seem to pursue any long term developmental policies. However, towards the beginning of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, after a continuous policy of expanding his 'watan', one notices a marked change in terms of the facilities provided to the peasantry.

In the absence of any snow-fed river on one hand and the erratic nature of rainfall on the other, the only viable alternative option for irrigation was to tap the underground water through artificial methods of irrigation. The depth of water determined the devices to be used for lifting the water. Wells, channel and tanks etc.\textsuperscript{46} were popularly used for artificial irrigation.

\textsuperscript{45} Arzdasht, dated Sawan Sudi 3, Vs. 1762/1705 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{46} Imperial Gazetteer of India, Pro Series, p.49.
However, it is difficult to form any idea that how much of these resources were tapped in this period, as we are handicapped by the lack of adequate data on number of wells in different parganas. But the kind of crops grown and their share in revenue during this period gives an insight into it. There was a proportionate increase in the share of rabi crops out of the total revenue at the expense of kharif cropping. While the latter prospers reasonably well without artificial irrigation, the former requires better ploughing, watering etc. The same is true regarding crops like sugarcane, where better irrigation is essential. On this hypothesis, it would appear that during our period, adequate resources in terms of artificial irrigation were available for more intensive cultivation as well as for its expansion.

Thus, the ecological limitations made the needs for inputs considerably high. For the ordinary peasants, it was not possible to construct the wells of their own. These factors made it necessary for the state, bohras and moneylenders to play a vital role in the expansion and resumption of cultivation, because of their control over the management, distribution and redistribution of resources.

The Rajput state's objectives in financing agricultural developments appears to have been derived from the Mughal conception of development, which consisted of the expansion of area under cultivation and increase in the

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production of cash crops.\textsuperscript{49} The importance of artificial irrigation for expanding and stabilizing its revenue was clearly recognized by the state and loans were regularly provided for their construction.\textsuperscript{50} In one arzdasht it was reported to the ruler that whenever there was no rain, officials were trying their best to help the raiyat in sowing of crops, by making arrangements of irrigation through wells.\textsuperscript{51} The rural moneylenders also became an important source of this. Steps were taken to construct wells with the monetary assistance secured from bohras and moneylenders.\textsuperscript{52}

Periodical appearances of droughts and famines made the conditions more difficult for the peasants. For instance, it was reported to Maharaja in 1718, that it was difficult for peasants to continue agriculture because of lack of adequate resources and it was becoming difficult for them to sustain themselves.\textsuperscript{53} The peasants often requested for subsistence loans during such conditions, the bohras-moneylenders, who otherwise played important role in the expansion of agriculture, often refused to advance loans, due to the insecurity or agriculture failure, which made recovery of their loans uncertain.\textsuperscript{54} Bohras were also reported to be migrating during such situations.\textsuperscript{55} During scarcity, state

\textsuperscript{49} Dilbagh Singh, \textit{State, Landlords and Peasants: Rajasthan in the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century}, Delhi, 1990, p.52.

\textsuperscript{50} Chithi, Pargana Phagi, dated Posh Sudi 2, Vs. 1783/1726 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{51} Arzdasht dated Asoj Sudi 2, Vs. 1766/1709 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{52} Dilbagh Singh, \textit{State, Landlords and Peasants}, op. cit., pp.51-52.

\textsuperscript{53} Arzdasht dated Kati Vadi 8, Vs. 1755/1698 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. dated Asoj Sudi 2, VS. 1762/1705 AD; dated Asoj Vadi 6, VS. 1751/1694 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., dated Kati Sudi 13, VS. 1743/1686 AD; dated Bhadva Vadi 11, VS. 1743/1686 AD, HS, JR, RSAB.
besides providing 'tagai' loans from its own resources, took loans from the bohras and extended it to peasants.

A growing irrigation network and the ability of the state to make funds available to the peasantry either from its sources or from rural moneylenders in the 18th century, facilitated the settlement of new villages, extension of cultivation, both in qualitative and quantitative terms and growing recourse to double cropping. Thus one finds development of multi-crop economy – as many as 55 crops of rabi and kharif season including not only bajra, jowar, moth, maize, pulses, wheat, barley and grain, but also cash crops like indigo, sugarcane, singhara, vegetables, tobacco & cotton etc. were grown.56 These developments created conditions for the growth of small urban centres (qasba) and rural trading centres (Mandis). A logical outcome of this process was the growing monetization of agrarian economy and increase in the trading and commercial activities.

The development regarding irrigation and increased production of superior crops was, however, a feature of late 17th and early 18th centuries, in our region, when the conditions of were stable. In the later years, conditions of instability went alongside a marked deterioration in the upkeep of irrigation facilities. The developmental activities in production were badly affected by the repeated Maratha raids, frequent famines and the growing financial crisis of the state. There was a sharp decline in the share of area under cash crop to the total

56 Imperial Gazetteer of India, Pro Series, p.61; Also see S. Nurul Hasan, K.N. Hasan and S.P. Gupta, 'The Pattern of Agricultural Production in the Territories of Amber (C. 1650-1750)', PIHC, 1966, pp.244-64.
cropped area by 25 per cent, except in Sawai Jaipur. The revenue output from cash crops as percentage of total revenue declined from 26 per cent to 17.84 per cent.\textsuperscript{57} This resulted in the growing dependence of the state and the peasantry on the moneyed section, which must have constrained the ability of the state to exercise control over the moneylenders and bohras.

The North and North-west division covering nearly three-fifths of the Rajputana, was characterized by the presence of low ridges and sand dunes heights of which varied from fifty to hundred feet.\textsuperscript{58} The physical geography of Marwar is somewhat complex. The very name itself is popularly supposed to mean the 'region of death',\textsuperscript{59} but the statement is really applicable to only a portion of the larger region, namely, the part covered by sand dunes and barren rocks of the Desert. The region falls between the Indus and Sutlej basin on the west and the Aravalli range on the east. It lies approximately between latitudes 24°35'N and 27°38'N, and longitudes 71°35'N and 74°21'E. It is not watered by the two river systems of Northern India (the Indus and Ganges) and thus, depends on rain, which is scanty.\textsuperscript{60} Given this basic characteristic, Marwar has yet considerable physical diversity, with a basic contrast in the geographical features of the western and south-eastern portions. Whereas the former belongs to the Desert, the latter is the continuation of the Aravalli hills. We can also

\textsuperscript{57} Dilbagh Singh, \textit{State, Landlords and Peasants}, op. cit., p.62.
\textsuperscript{58} T.H. Hendley, op. cit., p.10.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p.616.
divide the region broadly into two portions, viz., the fertile eastern zone\(^{61}\) and the Thar.\(^{62}\) The south-eastern boundary of Marwar runs mainly through transition rocks rising from the plains of Jodhpur.\(^{63}\)

The climate of Rajasthan desert region is characterized by extremes of temperature and a marked degree of aridity. Rivers play only a very subordinate role in moulding the surface features of the area. The only river of any consequence here is river Luni; which originates in the hills near Ajmer and flows into the Rann of Kutch. The rainfall is thus scanty and so irregular that the village folk see one horn of the cow lying within and the other without the rainy zone.\(^{64}\) Droughts and famines are thus frequent. Col. Tod calls famine the grand natural disease of the western region.\(^{65}\) These droughts forced people to migrate in large numbers in the neighbouring provinces.\(^{66}\)

Marwar, as we have seen, is divided into two broad zones -- the fertile belt (the east, north-east and south-east) and the Desert or the Thar (west, north-west and south-west). The south-eastern boundary of Marwar runs mainly through transition rocks, rising from the plains. The river 'Luni' and its seasonal tributaries -- the Bandi, the Sukri, the Girari, the Jawai and the Jojri run through the plain, rain-fed from the Aravallis. All these are mentioned in the Nainsi's

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\(^{62}\) Ibid., pp.9-10.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., pp.8-9.


\(^{65}\) Tod, op. cit., Vol.III, p.1258.

\(^{66}\) Sanad Parwana Bahi, No.2, Jestha Sudi 2, VS.1822/1765 AD, No.14, Vaisakh Sudi 7, VS.1833/1766 AD, Jodhpur Records, RSAB.
Vigat and Jalore Vigat.\textsuperscript{67} The desert of the north and north-western Marwar is destitute of any river whatsoever. The more fertile region may also be designated the luni basin. Agriculture has naturally been the main occupation of the majority of the population here, though animal husbandry and allied professions have also been important. On the western and north-western side in the desert zone, agriculture tended to be confined to Oasis so that pastoral nomadism here was, of necessity, the norm.

The rivers of Marwar are generally rain-fed. Irrigation with river water was important for cultivation in the eastern and south-eastern regions, and some parts of southern Marwar. The junction of the two rivers, Gilari and Sukri, at Sojhat supported a small fertile tract. Wheat and cotton were produced in ample quantity.\textsuperscript{68} Sugarcane, too, was cultivated.\textsuperscript{69} Big orchards were maintained by landed magnates near riverbanks.\textsuperscript{70} They made endeavours to grow many kinds of fruits and flowers, in these gardens like pomegranates, mangoes, lemons and roses.

In Marwar, besides the main range of the Aravallis, there are low hills scattered over the region. Nainsi takes note of smaller hills in various parganas or villages. Under pargana Siwana and Sojat, he frequently mentions bhakhri

\textsuperscript{68} Nainsi, \textit{Vigat-I}, pp.396-97.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., pp.393-98 and 434.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp.393-94.
(mounds) and pahar (hills). The villages that lay amidst hills had some arable land. The fertile soil of a few villages produced wheat, bajra, moth, mung, juwar, til, ban (cotton), methi, ajmo (ajwain) and other spices. In other villages that possessed ample land for pasturage the number of sheep and cattle seems to be quite large. This gave a fillip to milk and ghi production.

Another advantage of the hills is that it yields wood or timber in large quantities. Cypress and nepa trees grew in abundance on the hills. Orchards were also maintained in villages near the hills. Dates and tamarid grew in the hilly region of pargana Jalore. Some hilly villages acquired elements of urbanization, which were comparatively well populated.

The 'forest line' always has had significance in Indian history. Forest was not necessarily wasteland. Marwar has a forest belt along its south-eastern boundary. On the basis of Nainsi's survey, it can be said that a large forest, besides isolated ones in various parganas, covered the western slopes of the Aravallis. Nainsi is quite popular in making a note wherever villages of pargana Sojhat and Jaitaran stood on the fringe of the forest or of the Aravalli range.

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72 Ibid., pp.427, 442; II, pp.234, 236 and 251.
73 Ibid., p.427.
74 B.L. Bhadani, Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneur, op. cit., p.84..
75 Ibid., pp.4-5.
76 Nainsi, Vigat I, pp.509-10; Rajasthan District Gazetteers, Pali, Jaipur, 1976, p.4.
77 Vigat II, pp.234 and 251.
These environmental constraints clearly conditioned the pattern of urban growth, the nature of rural settlements, the subsistence pattern of various social groups and the nature of the economy of the north-western Rajasthan in a significant manner. As growth of rabi crops required fertile soils and some irrigation facilities, in most of this region, it was the kharif, including low value bajra as cereal and moth or mung as pulses which formed the dominant harvest.\(^{80}\) Even where rabi crops were grown, the autumn harvest was far more relied on for annual food supply.\(^{81}\) A nineteenth century estimate puts ratio of the output of food grains from kharif to rabi as roughly 9:1 in Bikaner and 11:5 in Marwar.\(^{82}\)

It needs, however, to be emphasized that the region has certain inbuilt advantages and natural benefits, which offset and considerably moderate the harshness of the desert environment. Firstly, despite the irregularity and scantiness of rainfall when it falls it sinks into the sandy soil and does not flow off the surface due to which even a very small rainfall suffices for the crops. It has been estimated that in eastern Rajasthan with its comparatively heavier soils, hilly country and much of water drained off by Banas, Chambal and other smaller rivers, not less than 30 inches of annual rainfall is required for sufficient agricultural operations, while in north-west Rajasthan rainfall of 12 inches


\(^{82}\) Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol.IIIA, pp.101, 343.
suffices the needs of cultivation. Also with the help of camels or a pair of good bullocks in light sandy soils each cultivator is able to bring a large extent of ground under crop. Moreover, the population is so scattered that one bumper kharif crop of bajra and moth can feed them for three-four years.

Slight rainfall here also produces a number of trees and grasses, which not only provide excellent fodder for the cattle and camels but also serve as food, particularly in years of famine to the poor. The important ones are trees of 'ber', 'khejra', 'phog', 'kair', of grasses the most commonest and abundant in years of scarcity in bharut, used by the poor as food, even in the normal years. Bikaner especially has a lot of excellent fodder grasses — 'daman', useful for cattle breeding, 'ganthil', for production of wool and ghi; 'kiu', abundant in north, for cattle and 'sewan' for sheep.

The prevalence of so many grasses and trees make the region more reliant on a pastoral economy. Since even in normal years the desert area is chiefly a grazing land, comparatively very little grows out of cultivation in the years of famine. It is estimated that in Bikaner only three to thirty four per cent of the ground was under plough even in normal years. Practically, the whole of Bikaner was otherwise a vast pasture ground and the pastoral tribes of north-west and west relied heavily on camels, high milk yielding cows and the

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83 Famine Commission Enquiries, Rajputana, 1879.
84 Rajputana Gazetteer, Vol.IIIA, p.43.
86 Ibid., pp.6-7.
sheeps. Milk and milk products, wool and leather were important articles of trade. Our evidences show how sheep raising and wool manufacturing was particularly developed in parganas like Merta, Jalore, etc. of Jodhpur. Writing about Jaisalmer, Tod says, "their grand article of manufacture is from the wool of sheep, pastured in the desert, which is fabricated into 'looses' or blankets, scarfs, petticoats, turbans of every quality." The importance of cattle wealth to the entire socio-economic life of the region can be gauged from the innumerable taxes imposed on them, such as 'ghas charai', 'pancharai', and fodder taxes like, 'korad', 'bhuraj', 'sehat' and 'jakhiro'. The total income from them was equal to the 'house tax' or 'duwan bhacch' which itself was forty to fifty per cent of 'rokad-rokam'. Further, this income was increasing in the 18th century thus indicating the growing significance of pastoral activities.

Muhnot Nainsi highlights the importance of trade and pastoralism occupied in the socio-economic life of Marwar in the seventeenth century. Nainsi mentioned two types of grazing land, the first being the dry land situated on elevated grounds (desert region) and the second near rivers and nallahs. The first category of grazing ground was of great utility in the famine years since it mainly comprised of Parat or Ajoti (left for grazing) land. And it was here that

87 Tod, op. cit., pp.155-56.
88 Sanad Parwana Bahi, No.13, VS 1830/1773, Jodhpur Records, RSAB.
89 Tod, op. cit., II, p.225.
90 Devra, Rajasthan Ki Prashashnik Vyavastha, op. cit., pp.178-82.
91 Ibid., p.181.
92 Ibid., p.169.
pastoralism was most significant as an economic activity. Marwar was particularly known for its strong and best variety of camels coming mainly from Sheo, Shergarh, Mallani and Phalodi. Likewise in Jalore sheep raising, wool manufacturing and camel breeding were the main economic activities. Large herds of sheep and goats were found in the districts of Jodhpur, Nagaur and Pali. The milch cows of Mallani and Sanchor and the bullocks of Nagore were also famous and were sold with their milk and milk products at all the principal regional and local fairs. The pastoralist thus survived to a great extent on the income earned from his livestock and pastoralism remained an important sector of this zone until this century. The main objective of the pre-modern state has been to assess revenue on the cultivable land in the agricultural zone and on the cattle in the pastoral.

The association of agriculture with pastoralism varies geographically as well as historically. In the larger part of the Indian plains, the pastoral sector has for long been a mere adjunct of agriculture, the need to have drought animals for plough drive and water-lift has been primary, while that of dairy and other needs (milk, wool) is secondary. But in the large triangle between the Gangetic and Indus system formed by the present states of Rajasthan and Haryana, the pastoral economy assumed autonomy of its own. Here were grazing lands on which were bred cattle for superior breeds for export to agricultural zones, sheep for wool, and camels for transport. The land in Marwar that fringed the Thar

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desert and bordered the oasis within the desert, provided one of the best zones on which autonomous pastoral economy could flourish.

We now consider the relationship between land under ploughs and pasture. There was large cultivable waste, fallow and forestland which was generally used as pasturage. Sometimes entire villages deserted by the peasants were utilized as grazing grounds. After harvesting, the cultivated fields were left for cattle to graze on. Besides, there were well-marked areas for pasturages known as jor in Marwar. Some of them were in khalisa or under the direct jurisdiction of the state, while others appear to have been open to all.

The above-mentioned environmental conditions put severe constraints on the agricultural activities in Marwar and Bikaner. Moreover, because of lack of adequate population in the desert area, very little land could be brought under plough from the available cultivable land, which itself was very low in the sandy desert. As a result, the income of the state from land revenue was very limited, so state had to look for alternative source of its revenue income. The economic activities generated through pastoralism and transit trade helped the economy of the region to sustain itself. Nainsi describing an overall increase in the movement of goods passing through the territory of Marwar during the reign of Rao Chunda, state's conditions were becoming more favourable, ten times more

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97 Hasal-re Pargana ri Bahi, VS. 1746, No.5, Bikaner Bahis, f.45, RSAB.

According to Manu, 'trade internal or external, brings a good amount of money to the state exchequer in the shape of taxes levied on the merchants, production and sale of different kinds of goods — the king therefore should provide safety and security to the traders, increase production and consumption of goods, give reasonable privileges to the traders.\footnote{Manu, \textit{Dharmasastra}, Vol.III, tr. P.V. Kane, Poona, 1973, Chapter VII, pp.190-96; Kautilya, \textit{Arthasastra}, Vol.II, by R. Shamasastro, Mysore, 1967, Chap.XVI, p.105, canto 99; Chap.XII, p.90, canto 85.} This attitude is reflected in the trade policies of Rajput rulers from the medieval period. During those times, traders and bankers from different parts of India were encouraged by the Rajput rulers to come and settle in Rajasthan.\footnote{B.L. Gupta, \textit{Trade and Commerce in the 18th C. Rajasthan}, op. cit., pp.6-8.} Most of the flourishing cities such as Chandravati, Nanhad, Bhinmal, Nagor, Pali, etc. were known for their flourishing commerce.

The association of Rajput princes with the Mughals not only increased their prestige, but also provided them with extra income in terms of their service in the Mughal mansabdari system. The 'pax-Mughalica' also provided relative peace and security in this region, as it reduced the internecine war-fares amongst different Rajput clans of Rajasthan. Moreover, many trade routes and centres of Rajasthan came to be linked with the imperial route. These factors led to the fostering of trade and commerce in this area.
In the 18th century, with the breakdown of the Mughal administration in India, the local Rajas became practically independent in their respective regions. They were keen to promote the commercial activities in their region no doubt mainly in their own economic interests. They wanted to balance their state budgets with the growing income of the transitory customary duties.\textsuperscript{102} Now, since they ceased to be the Mughal Mansabdars, they were eager in searching of the new avenues of income in their own areas. In the desert areas state's share in the agricultural produce was not so meaningful as it was in the neighbouring areas of the Punjab and Delhi and even in the areas of eastern Rajasthan due to the dry nature and scanty rainfall. In Bikaner state the income from hasil was less than forty per cent in the total income of the state and it only increased by the addition of non-agricultural taxes in hasil.\textsuperscript{103} In these circumstances, the efforts for more revenue from the zakat or custom duty\textsuperscript{104} were a worthwhile step for the state.

Archival records mentioned that with the sincere efforts of the rulers new commercial towns were established and big incentives were offered to the traders. The state always provided encouragement and protection to the traders and merchants by giving them exemption in various transit and sales tax levied under the name of 'sair-dam', 'mapa' and 'rahdari' and also giving them free lands

\textsuperscript{102} G.S.L. Devra, 'A Study of the Trade Relations', op. cit., p.583.
\textsuperscript{104} Custom duty includes transit, excise and sales tax duties in Bikaner.
to build shops and houses. Sometimes the excise and custom duties were remitted to the extent of 50 per cent for the promotion of this cause. The Bikaner ruler himself issued letters to the traders of Sindh and Multan to pass through his territory with goods. Raja Surat Singh of Bikaner invited famous trader Mirjamal and his family from Ramgarh (Sekhawati) to settle in the state and arrange land for their settlement in Churu. They were granted various privileges in their business activities in the state. As a result of this villages like Anupgarh, Chhtargarh, Rohania and Kumbhana were established and served as mandis in such a land which was once called a 'no man's land' in the state.

Although agriculturally, most parts of Rajasthan were problem zone, but geography has offered many opportunities for the growth of trade and commerce. Rajasthan has many areas, which were rich in many non-agricultural and mineral resources. The availability of these resources provided conditions and opportunities for the growth of trading and commercial activities, both locally and inter-regionally. Most important of them was salt. Salt, a necessary article of consumption, occupied an important place in the rural trade of Marwar during the 17th-18th centuries. The eastern fringe of the Rajasthan desert, from Didwana through the Sambhar lake and the Pachpadra salt basin to the Great Rann of

106 G.S.L. Devra, 'A Study of Trade Relations', op. cit., p.584.
108 Ibid., pp.4-5.
Kutch, forms one of the great salt producing zones of India.\textsuperscript{110} Pachpadra and other centres, not as well known, were located within Marwar. Nainsi in his Vigat, gives us a detailed village-wise record of salt-pits. According to Nainsi, the circumference of Pachpadra basin was about 30 miles (12 Kos) with 300 to 325 salt pits.\textsuperscript{111} Salt was extracted by a special caste known as 'kharwals' and 'loonias'.\textsuperscript{112}

There being so many brine reservoirs in the region of Marwar, trade in salt must have flourished. The settlement of the banias and the Paliwals near Pachpadra and Godhani strongly suggests that trade in salt emanating from these places must have been considerable. The traders transported the salt of Phalodi to various places, namely, Bikaner, Sirsa, Bhatner and Raniya.\textsuperscript{113} These traders used to give Rs.3 to the state and Rs.2 to Kharwals.\textsuperscript{114} Trade was not carried on by the Kharwals but by the banias who would find suitable places to market it. The banjaras actually transported salt to different places at the directions of these banias.\textsuperscript{115}

Apart from salt, there were many other local mineral products, which were traded locally and inter-regionally. The rocky terrain in parts of Marwar provided quarries of building stone. The marble quarries of Makrana, derived its name

\textsuperscript{110} B.L. Bhadani, Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs, op. cit., pp.101-4.
\textsuperscript{111} Nainsi, Vigat II, p.36. Pachpadra was a village in pargana Siwana. Its history is traced in an official enquiry by the erstwhile state of Jodhpur.
\textsuperscript{112} Sanad Parwana bahi, No.25, VS. 1838, Jodhpur Records, RSAB.
\textsuperscript{113} B.L. Bhadani, Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs, op. cit., pp.101-4.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} The Salt Tariff Board Enquiry, Mehkma Khas, Jodhpur Records, RSAB.
from the place of production. From here it was sent to many areas since early
periods. Tod says, "to the marble quarries of Makrana, all the imperial cities owe
their grandeur. The materials used in the palaces of Delhi, Agra, their mosques
and tombs have been conveyed from Marwar." The Fidusar quarries situated
near Jodhpur are the largest in the region, which produce a very good quality of
sandstone. Copper was mined in Rajasthan at Bairath (Jaipur), Chainpur
(Marwar), Bidunsi and Bidasar (Bikaner) and the villages of Ladpura, Sidrada,
Punasar, Bhajesar, Khubhal and Churasam of Pargana Sojat of Jodhpur. Iron
was mainly mined in Malpur, Nagore and Bhinmal. Silver, lead and tin were
found in many parganas such as Sojat, Jaitaran and Jowar. Lead was mined
in Taragarh Hills near Ajmer and was sent to Agra. Gypsum, which was used
as cement for plastering, was found in the vicinity of Nagore and some other
parts of Marwar.

Under the Mughals, land revenue (mal) formed by far the larger part of the
fiscal burden borne by the peasants. It was essentially a tax on crops. Besides
land revenue, there were other direct or indirect levies. These could be either in

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116 Tod, II, op. cit., p.126; Irfan Habib, Atlas of the Mughal Empire, Delhi, 1982, Map 6B.
117 Tod, II, op.cit., p.126.
118 R.C. Sharma, Settlement Geography, op. cit., p.35.
119 Tod, II, op. cit., p.157; Sanad Parwana Bahi No.17, VS. 1833, Jodhpur Records, RSAB.
120 Tod, II, op. cit., p.126; Irfan Habib, Atlas, op. cit., Map 6B.
121 Tod, I, op. cit., p.222; II, p.126; Habib, Atlas, op. cit., Map 6B.
123 Vigat II, pp.423-24; Habib, Atlas, op. cit., Map 6B; Imperial Gazetteer of India, Pro Series,
p.184.
The same is true for Marwar and Eastern Rajasthan where the peasant had to bear land revenue, expenses incurred in collection of land revenue and miscellaneous taxes (both from agricultural and non-agricultural imports).

Although taxes on agricultural production were a major source of income for the Rajput states, there were also a variety of taxes that were imposed on non-agrarian classes as well as on the various professional groups, traders and artisans. Some of these taxes which contributed an appreciable share to the total revenue collection were from the rural as well as urban areas known as 'bija rakama' in Marwar and 'sair jihat' in eastern Rajasthan, presumably realized from taxes other than land revenue.

In the field of revenue administration, the Rajput system reflected a wholesale application of standard Mughal system. In fact the Rajput princes were allowed autonomy by the Mughals only in their 'watan jagir'. In rest of their domain, as jagirdars, they were expected to collect the land revenue in accordance with the imperial regulations and levy only such other taxes as were authorized.

'It is generally believed that the penetration of money economy into countryside was because the land revenue had to be paid in cash. Therefore, 'zabti'

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system was considered to be pre-requisite of monetisation. However in Rajasthan, because of geographical factors both 'zabti' and 'batai' system were prevalent,\textsuperscript{127} options lying with the peasants. The persistence of crop-sharing as a method of land revenue realization cannot be therefore seen as an indicator of poorly monetized economy.

Thus, the establishment of cash nexus in agrarian economy and mode of revenue payment (both in cash and kind) created conditions, favourable for the further growth of business activities. This situation generated factors, which necessitated the involvement of traders and bankers on the one hand, and the state on the other, in the process of the marketing of grain realized as revenue. Payment of revenue in cash and kind and the sale of surplus grain by rich peasants necessitated the growth of grain trade in Rajasthan. Grain trade occupies a significant place in the economy of Rajasthan. Various scholars have emphasized its importance highlighting linkages between rural and urban sectors.\textsuperscript{128} It is the rural areas which provide food to the large urban population. Export of grain from the surplus to deficit areas appears to have been a regular feature in the 17\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries Rajasthan. Grain from the villages of each

\textsuperscript{127} Chithi to Diwan Kalyan Das, phagun vadi, VS. 1721/1664 AD, HS, JR, RSAB; Also see D. Singh, State, Landlords and Peasants, op. cit., p.110; G.D. Sharma, 'State Land Revenue Demand in the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century', PIHC, 1974, p.71.

pargana was generally directed towards its town headquarters,\textsuperscript{129} to feed its population. It appears that some parganas and tappa headquarters had developed into townships -- essentially as grain markets -- and were thus dependent for grain supply on local rather than long distance trade. The information on grain trade between the rural areas of Jalore and the capital city of Jodhpur, Siwana and Sanchor can be gathered from our sources.\textsuperscript{130} Thus a large proportion of food grains became commodity which had local as well as outside market and involved the grain traders on large scale. The main articles of local commerce mentioned are til (seasame), gur, bajra, wheat, chola, kura, moth, mung, banfi, ghi, etc.\textsuperscript{131} Moreover, there is a possibility that grain transported to city headquarters from various parganas might have been redistributed to the north-western deficit areas.

Individual traders known as sah, sahukar, bania, fadiya and bichhayat organised the grain trade. The shifting of grain from villages to towns was an important aspect of agrarian society which deserves attention. Grain from villages of Phalodi was transported by camels to towns.\textsuperscript{132} This means there was a specified class of grain carriers. They were known as baldiyas and banjaras\textsuperscript{133}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{129} B.L. Bhadani, 'Land Tax', op. cit., pp.215-25.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid., \textit{Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs}, op. cit., p.298.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p.299.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Hasal Pargana ri Bahi, VS. 1746/1689 AD, MS Bikaner Bahis, RSAB.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Bajrang Lal Lohiya, \textit{Rajasthan Ki Jatiya}, Calcutta, 1954, pp.167-68.
\end{itemize}
and camel owners.\textsuperscript{134} Sometimes they themselves appear to be engaged in grain trade.

The grain trade provided the mercantile groups prosperity, especially to those who were at the top of the hierarchy. The peasants were forced to sell their products to merchants due to their indebtedness. This gave the traders an upper hand for dictating prices. Moreover, the storage capacity provided them opportunity to hoard grain which enabled them to manipulate prices to earn profit during normal as well as famine years.\textsuperscript{135} Thus, liquid capital of traders was profitably invested in grain trade.

The politico-economic setup of Rajasthan reflects the emergence of the traders and merchants as a powerful group so much so that in the mid-eighteenth century the Jaipur state was described as 'baniya rajya' in the popular lore.\textsuperscript{136} This rise of trader-banker class was due to large-scale use of money capital in the commercial transactions. The policy of the Rajput rulers towards trade, commerce and taxation had allowed a multiplication of the capital assets of the business class; the political edifices at the turn of the 18th century ensured them a greater participation in state affairs particularly in the formulation of the commercial policy. James Tod described that 'none of these states were without traffic; each has a mart of entrepot and while Mewar boasts of Bilwara, the Rathors claim Palli, which is not only the rival of the places just mentioned, but

\textsuperscript{134} Hasal Pargana ri Bahi, VS. 1746/1689 AD, MS Bikaner Bahis, RSAB.

\textsuperscript{135} Yati Jai Chand, Saiki, pp.40-46.

\textsuperscript{136} B.K. Bhargava, \textit{Indigenous Banking in Ancient and Mughal India}, Bombay, 1934, p.233.
many make pretention to the title of emporium of Rajputana. The pretentions, we may more readily admit, when we recollect that nine-tenths of the bankers and commercial men of India are native of Maroodesh, and these chiefly of the Jain faith.\textsuperscript{137} Marwari traders were engaged in multifarious commercial activities such as trade, business, banking and insurance etc.

Thus, the fiscal policy of the Rajput rulers and its implementation, particularly in the case of land revenue, increase in the cultivation of cash crops, growing commercialisation and monetization of economy provided conditions for the growth of merchant capital in the 17\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The emphasis of state on the realization of the revenue in the cash and its need for advance payment against the revenue, large scale prevalence of the ijara system as also the practice of transmitting funds through hundis can be considered as some of the important factors which necessitated the presence of men with liquid capital.\textsuperscript{138} Development of trade in the rural areas was also connected with the growth of commodity production. The traders also acted as a link between the rural areas and the town markets.\textsuperscript{139}

The Rajput rulers of Rajasthan followed the practice of appointing moneylenders -- mahajans or shahs -- in the offices dealing with the revenue, both at the pargana and the state levels. Although, it was not a new practice, it

\textsuperscript{137} Tod, II, op. cit., p.127.
\textsuperscript{138} G.D. Sharma, 'Indigenous Banking and the State in the Eastern Rajasthan during the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century', PIHC, 1979, pp.432-42; and 'Vyaparis and Mahajans in western Rajasthan', op. cit., pp.377-85.
\textsuperscript{139} A.I. Cheicherov, India's Economic Developments in the 16\textsuperscript{th} to 18\textsuperscript{th} Century: Outline History of Crafts and Trade, Moscow, 1971.
became more popular during the 18th century. Also it was a usual practice that incumbents should furnish the security of sahukars, who would take the responsibility of payment of revenue regularly to the state treasury, in case of default by the officers. However, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed frequent famines, which had a long term impact on the production. Also the frequent Maratha raids, their repeated demands for tributes and the increasing cost of warfare, were telling upon the state’s treasury. Along with it, there were increased internal funds. All these factors led to the growing need and pressure for capital. Thus we notice increasing dependence of the state on the bankers and traders for loans, revenue appropriation through ijara (which was also a way to repay the loans to the bankers and traders) and even for the supply of credit, which was essential for the restoration of agriculture. This kind of involvement of bankers and traders in the affairs of the state reflects their unprecedented importance. The dependence of state on traders and bankers led to the reformulation of relationship between the two, and they worked out structures, which were beneficial to both.

In the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, the practice of banking and other methods of credit were exercised on large scale by shroffs, shahs, bohras and mahajans. Shroffs were mainly engaged in writing and discounting hundis, moneylending, insurance of goods, etc. Shahs and bohras were also engaged in the transmission of funds, issuing hundis as well as pursuing the profession of

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money lending and trading although they were not functioning parallel to the shroffs. Their activities were centred mainly in the towns, whereas the mahajans were functioning at the rural level and usually concentrated themselves in particular villages, especially in qasbas, and in the neighbourhood of towns.\(^{141}\) Because of the nature of their monetary and financial transactions, it seems that each one of them was involved in trade directly or indirectly.\(^{142}\) The process of acquiring land revenue in cash in this period, necessitated the involvement of merchants on a large scale and also the availability of markets which could fulfil their requirements by purchasing the state share of grain. Our evidences indicate that local land revenue official often took initiative in inviting the traders to purchase the grain. The role of these business groups was not limited to the purchase of state share, but they were part of broader framework, which canalized the money transaction.\(^{143}\) The revenue collected in cash was subject to transfer from pargana headquarters to the state treasury, which needed the service of the mercantile groups.\(^{144}\)

Traders and bankers were also allotted important portfolios in the civil and revenue administrative apparatus by the Rajput princes.\(^ {145}\) This must have enhanced the position of these groups not only as a privileged group but also as


\(^{143}\) Girija Shankar Sharma, ‘Sources of Hundi Business in Rajasthan’ (17th to 19th C.) in \textit{Facets of Marwar Historian}, ed. by B. Bhadani and D. Tripathi, 1994, pp.181-84.

\(^{144}\) Chithi, Phalgun Vadi 14, VS.1721/1664 AD, Giritdhar to Kalyani Das, Jeth Vadi 2, VS.1788/1731 AD, Pargana Sawai Jaipur, HS, JR, RSAB.

\(^{145}\) G.N. Sharma, \textit{Social Life in Medieval India}, op. cit., p.91.
powerful dominant group in the society.

During the Mughal period, the business community of Rajasthan became dependable financiers and army purveyors to their Rajput princes. They usually moved along with the armies of their lords. When the question of forming a stable government came into considerations before the princes and their leading clansmen, they preferred to allot the civilian posts to the sahukars. The sahukars also proved very successful in the administration by virtue of their managerial skills and financial expertise. They were also preferred because their resources proved very useful for the Rajput princes at the time of their financial needs.

A study of the documents belonging to Diwan Hazuri of Amber state and Jama-bandhi of Jodhpur state makes it clear that mahajans or shahs were occupying the offices of potedar, Amil and Amin almost in all the paragons of Amber and Jodhpur. It seems that the families of mahajans had practically monopolized the offices in the land revenue administration in different paragana; appointments were generally made on the basis of kinship with the existing officials. The 'amil', who was the head of land revenue administration at pargana level predominantly, belonged to the class of moneylenders (mahajans) and bankers. The post of 'amin', another very important revenue officer at the

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146 When Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur had to go to Kabul under Aurangzeb's orders, cash for one entire year was arranged by the seths of Riya; Shiv Singh Choyal, 'Marwar Ke Dhai Ghar', Maru Bharti, 1961.
148 These documents are available at RSAB.
149 S.P. Gupta, Agrarian System, p.141.
pargana level, quite often went to these mahajans and sahukars. S.P. Gupta has given a table of the appointees to the posts of 'amil' and 'amin', which clearly suggests that in the parganas of Hinduan, Malpura, and Niwai, preference was always given to the mahajans and sahukars in these appointments.\textsuperscript{150} For example in 1746 AD, in Pargana Hindaun, the posts of 'amil' and 'amin' were given to Mahajan Ram Kishan and Mahajan Khushal Chand and Kirat Ram respectively. As 'amil' their main duty was the collection of state's revenue at the time of harvest and their safe remission to the pargana treasury.

Some of the members of the merchant community were also made local officials in the villages. They were appointed as Quanungo, Chaudhari, Patel, Patwari, etc. For instance, an arzdasht was sent to Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh by Brahman Gokul Ram, a merchant of pargana Chatsu, requesting the Maharaja to grant him (Brahman) the post of Chaudhary, which had been granted to baniya Jag Ram.\textsuperscript{151} The mahajans were also appointed to the office of Potdar (treasurer), whose main function was to receive the revenue, safe custody of cash and its proper disbursement.\textsuperscript{152}

In the second half of the eighteenth century, widespread use of 'ijara' especially in the 'khalisa' lands, opened good prospects for the mahajans and sahukars, who possessed investible money and had good knowledge of the areas to be given on ijara. Taking ijara of land revenue was prevalent even

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., Table II, pp.206-10; Sharma, 'The Marwaris', op. cit., p.432.
\textsuperscript{151} Arzdasht, Pargana Chatsu undated No.583, HS, JR, RSAB.
\textsuperscript{152} S.P. Gupta, Agrarian System, p.176.
during the 17th century, although its wide scale use in all the spheres of revenue, including the khalisa territory, was a new phenomenon in the revenue system of the Rajput states during the 18th century. This practice originated as a result of political instability in the Rajput states and was repeatedly followed as the Maratha's demand for cash went on increasing. It was not the land revenue alone which was given on ijara but also the right of mining, rahdari, kotwali and mapadan. Recent studies make it clear that the mahajans and sahukars as a class enjoyed an outright monopoly on the ijara practices. Taking ijara was considered a profitable investment. There was always a keen competition among the ijaradars to secure ijara of land and other revenue sources. Since the state had instituted this practice to get ready money without risk, it always favoured the person who used to bid the highest.

The Rajput state structure in Rajasthan was based on 'clan'. In Rajput ideology, the Thakur's estates and their dominion over them were theirs and their descendents by the right of original conquest. For their 'thikanas' the Rajput clan members were beholden not to their prince but to their ancestors. As was the chief's raj, so even more were his noblemen's 'thikanas': the ancestral estates of their holders, their shares of the clan's conquest, their patrimonial estates ('watan'). Together, they shared the 'raj', that was their clan inheritance, but in

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154 D. Singh, 'Ijara System...', op. cit., p.8; G.D. Sharma, 'Vyaparis and Mahajans in Western Rajasthan', op. cit., p.3.
reality they shared it uneasily. So armed hostilities within the clan factions were pursued indefatigably and interminably. The Mughal suzerainty placed some restraint on the capacity of the Rajputs to realize their ambitions by conquest.

During the 'hey-days' of the Mughal empire, the Mughal Emperors, consistently asserted the principle of 'paramountcy' in their relations with the Rajput chiefs.\textsuperscript{155} Therefore, a chieftain depended, for his position, on the goodwill of the Emperors as well as his own inherent rights. They were recognized as 'zamindars' and 'jagirdars' and their states were considered as 'jagirs'. The Rajput states were also recorded as 'parganas' or 'sarkars' under the province of Ajmer,\textsuperscript{156} Delhi and Agra. Some of the Rajput rulers were also enrolled as 'mansabdars' in the Mughal court and were assigned 'jagirs' to maintain their 'mansabs'. They were to serve the Emperor with fixed contingent when required and had to pay an amount of 'peshkash' from their states at the time of ruler's accession or at the time of grant of jagirs. The 'peshkash' appears to have been determined with some regard to difference between the actual collection expected and the 'jama' fixed on 'jagir'.\textsuperscript{157} The Mughal Emperors succeeded to a great extent in compelling the autonomous chiefs to implement the Mughal imperial regulations, especially in regard to the maintenance of law and order and the freedom to transit. Thus the Mughal court tended, on the one hand to treat the Rajput rulers as great nobles of the Empire, and on the other


\textsuperscript{157} S.P. Gupta, Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan, op. cit., p.11; D. Singh, State Landlords and Peasants, op. cit., p.7.
hand, insisted on their rendering allegiance personally in acceptance of imperial paramountcy. However, the prestige acquired by the Rajput chiefs, as a result of their association with the Mughal court, made them standout prominently among their peers. They therefore remained attached to the Mughals, but this did not prevent them from using privileges secured from the Mughals to expand their territories and develop into an independent power upon the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the course of the eighteenth century.

The Mughal policy, in essence, consisted of treating the Rajasthan rulers as nobles at par with others obliged to render military services while receiving jagirs in lieu of salary. It was fixed according to the schedules sanctioned for zat and sawar ranks. The salary fixed against the zat rank was assigned for the maintenance of the rulers and their family and that against the sawar rank for the maintenance of soldiers.  

Territories recognized as that of the chiefs by hereditary right were regarded as their 'watan' jagir. This means that, theoretically, the chiefs were entitled to get the full revenues of their domains with no obligation to pay tribute. The watan jagir was assigned at a notional revenue figure (jama), which was appropriated towards meeting the salary of the chief and pay-claims of the contingents kept by him for imperial use. If his status was raised and the required contingent enlarged, by increasing his zat and sawar mansabs, the additional pay-claims were met by assignments to him of other territories in

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ordinary transferable jagirs, the so called tankhwah jagirs. The revenue derived from the latter jagir was sometimes much more than that of the chieftain's hereditary domains; they thus became entitled to large jagir outside their watan.\textsuperscript{159}

In Marwar also, the rulers can be said to have obtained their income as mansabdars of the Mughal Empire. The jagirs given to a particular jagirdar depended on the jama of the territory concerned, which should have exactly equalled the salary claim (talab) based on mansab.\textsuperscript{160} The Rathor rulers got jagir from the Mughal emperors on the basis of this principle. They hold two kinds of jagirs, i.e., watan jagir and tankhwah jagir. The ancestral territory held by them was treated as an especial kind of jagir (watan jagir) of the ruler. Its estimated revenue (jama) was adjusted against the salary due on the ruler's mansab.\textsuperscript{161} Generally, these territories were not transferred to anyone else. The jagirs outside Marwar were granted to the Rathor rulers in lieu of the balance of their salary: these were ordinary tankhwah jagirs. The net income derived from jagirs outside Marwar was an important addition to the resources of the Marwar ruler. It explains partly the bond, which tied the Rathor court at Jodhpur to the Mughal empire. The jagirs were managed by hakims or officials appointed by the ruler of Marwar; parts were sub-assigned to his pattayats.\textsuperscript{162} Whether directly flowing to the Maharaja's treasury or to the purses of the pattayats, the steady flow of

\textsuperscript{159} S.P. Gupta, \textit{Agrarian System}, op. cit., pp.1-3.
\textsuperscript{160} Irfan Habib, \textit{Agrarian System}, op. cit., p.184.
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Vigat I}, p.147.
\textsuperscript{162} B.L. Bhadani, \textit{Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs}, op. cit., pp.374-75.
income from outside jagirs into Marwar must be regarded as a significant factor in sustaining the economy of that desert principality in the 17th century. In Kota, Nainsi differentiated between the parganas enjoyed in jagir by the Bundi chief and his sardars and the parganas, which were the original 'watan' of the Hadas.\footnote{Nainsi, Khyat, I, pp.101-5.}

In the structure of land revenue administration, a wholesale application of the standard Mughal system is reflected.\footnote{S.P. Gupta, Agrarian System, op. cit., pp.163-86; D. Singh, State, Landlords and Peasants, op. cit., pp.167, 180.} In fact, the Rajasthan rulers administered their respective territories as autonomous chiefs, as imperial jagirdars and as ijaradars. They were allowed autonomy only in their watan, the extent of which was very limited. In the rest of area, their rights were confined to the collection of land revenue in accordance with the Mughal revenue practices. So they not only had inherited that system, but also aimed at continuing the same rules and regulations. The Rathor rulers also organized control over revenues very much on the pattern of the Mughal system. The Mughal Emperors reserved the revenues of some territories directly for their own exchequer termed khalisa. The remaining territories were assigned to nobles and officers in lieu of cash salaries which were called the jagirs.\footnote{Irfan Habib, Agrarian System, op. cit., pp.257-59.} The Rathor rulers, too, reserved certain areas for their own establishments. These, in imitation of the Mughal practice, were called khalisa directly administered by the agents of the rulers. The size of khalisa area did not remain constant. When a pattayat had to be
assigned a village and this could not be done through transfers or adjustments between the pattayats, it was given out of the khalisa territories. Similarly, when the ruler needed additional income, he converted jagir areas into khalisa.\textsuperscript{166}

Besides salary claims, the rulers had other substantial sources of income such as various taxes. Further, the state added to its wealth by engaging in grain trade. The revenue realized in grain was sold by the state.\textsuperscript{167} When the sale was on credit, then, after the expiry of a certain period of agreement, the state took interest at one per cent per month.

Thus, the integration of the Rajput state in the Mughal empire provided relative peace and security in this region which helped in the further growth of the economy. The fiscal policies of Rajput rulers as inherited from the Mughals though adapted to the local conditions led to the growing popularization of superior food crops and cash crops. More acreage was devoted to the cultivation of cash crops and superior food crops. This expanding economy was manifested in the growing population and increase in the number of villages and qasbas, though in varying degree. The need to provide market for rural surplus raw material to the urban manufacturers and also the need to feed the growing urban population led to an increase in trade and commerce thereby further expanding the avenues for traders and merchants.

Hence, the state was engaged in the collection of land revenues and multifarious commercial taxes, which necessitated the maintenance and

\textsuperscript{166} B.L. Bhadani, Peasants, Articles and Entrepreneurs, op. cit., p.377.

operation of accounts and financial correspondence on a fairly wide scale. The rulers had to maintain bahis (or account books) and varied type of account sheets. Moreover, there used to take place a regular correspondence to facilitate the working of the revenue and commercial activities. This becomes more significant in the context of the taxation system, highly monetized economy and developed trade, commerce and banking institutions in Rajasthan.