Decades before the death of Aurangzeb, the last of the Great Mughals, the raids of the Marathas, the ruthless rivalry of the foreign trading companies and internal wars, had in general dissipated the Mughal Empire. Without a strong guiding hand at the centre, its officers had become lax and corrupt, ready to join any party for immediate gains. The alliances of the Indian chiefs at this time is rather confused but one factor which lends continuity to the history of this period is the determination of the English to follow the advice of Clive and make territorial acquisition and Empire building, their goal in India. The metamorphosis from trade to Empire was gradual but the policy had taken root in England as far back as the Stuart period. It was speeded up with the break up of the Mughal Empire.

Broach being situated on the main route from the Gangetic Plain and the Deccan to Gujarat, was frequently subject to the pressures of armed forces. Alexander Hamilton who came to India during the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign and stayed to witness the disintegration of the Empire, says about Broach, "Formerly it was a place of great trade but in Aurangzeb's
wars with his two brothers, about the year 1660, this town held out a great while against his army". He continues that "the season proving a dry one, Aurangzeb's folks suffered for want of fresh water and provisions but at last he took it and put all to the sword that had borne arms against him and razed part of the walls and pronounced a curse on them that should repair them again". Broach suffered heavily at the hands of Aurangzeb's revenge on the rebels.

Added to the internecine wars of the Mughals were the raids of the Marathas. Surat as the major port of the Mughals, had already been raided by the Marathas. They advanced to Broach because of its wealth in trade and textiles. Surat had close trade links with Broach. The Nawab of Surat held also Broach and had a share in its trade. In 1675 when the Marathas attacked Broach they found it unprotected. They levied contributions (Chauth) which they usually claimed from areas raided by them. They laid waste the city once again in 1686. At this time the English trade at Broach was considerable. Their main interest in Broach was because of its cloth, cotton and cotton yarn. In a few years the notorious English smuggler Avery, annoyed the Mughal by capturing the Muslim Pilgrim ships. Aurangzeb ordered the English Factors to be imprisoned. Their Factory at Broach was closed down. But the Maratha claim of Chauth in Broach continued to be taken, often by force of arms.
The Marathas had become a factor in the history of Mughal India towards the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign. The conquest of the Deccan had brought upon him the antagonism of the Deccan kingdoms which looked to Maratha mercenary forces to harass the Mughals. The Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan was also inclined to look upon himself as an independent ruler in the South because Aurangzeb had conferred that status on his son, when he sent him to the Deccan. The Marathas were employed by one or the other rulers of the Deccan, but later became an independent power. They never settled down to administering the territories they raided.

The policies of Aurangzeb also speeded up the disintegration of the Empire. Trade staggered under heavy taxes. Money lenders refused to advance capital to conduct trade. The pressure of the foreign companies on Indian soil and their anxiety to get the commodities of trade under any circumstances, to advance their trade on the one hand and the desire of the Indian dynasties and rich merchants to continue what was left of their trade, on the other, made them draw up "commercial undertakings" with the foreign merchants which finally reduced them to a position of money lenders. The English company made the best out of the situation.

In 1702 a union of the New company of the English and the Old East India Company in India brought back the English
Company to Broach, after having been closed since Avery's attack on pilgrim ships in 1696. But in 1736 Nizam-il-Mulk (who had declared himself independent in the Deccan in 1722) ordered that a Musalman Officer be given Broach and its revenues. The Mughal Viceroy of Gujarat refused to recognise the Nizam-ul-Mulk's grants and added Broach to his own private estates. The Muslim Officer of Nizam-ul-Mulk assumed the title of Alam Khan and ignored the claims of the Mughal Viceroy and of the Marathas. Alam Khan established himself as the first independent Nawab of Broach but died in 1738.⑴

During all this time Broach seems to have been a centre of textile industry, cotton yarn and cotton. Hamilton's account says that Broach was "inhabited by weavers and much mechanicks as manufacture cotton cloth. And Broach baftas are famous throughout all India, the country producing the best cotton in the world". He says the town is subordinate to Surat but that the English and the Dutch had withdrawn their factories from Broach.⑵

Hamilton's travels to the East lasted from 1688 to 1723. The English Company was withdrawn in 1696 but there is record that Broach was one of the English Factories of the Bombay Presidency in 1702. By the middle of the 18th century both the Dutch and the English had withdrawn their factories from Broach but the English took Broach in 1772.⑶
Hamilton's notice of Broach must be sometime between 1696 and 1702. However, that it continued to be of sign of significance, when Alam Khan established his independence in Broach and in the following decades is borne out by the reports of the English trading company at Surat. The trade of the Surat English Factory and their agents at Broach was very close. The Surat reports say that the English traders were not able to get required commodities from Broach because of the unrest in the country. In 1687 when Bombay was made their centre of trade, they diverted the trade of Broach gradually from Surat to Bombay. In the 18th century the link of Broach with Bombay was established but its trade was declining.

The independent line of the Nawabs continued in Broach under Alam Khan II (Mirza Beg) after the death of Alam Khan I in 1738. He reigned till 1752 when he was succeeded by his brother, who died within three months. The succession was not settled for two years. In 1754 Syed Idrus, a powerful religious head of a Muslim sect in Surat, espoused the claim of Mirza Ahmed Beg, a grandson of the first Nawab, and made him the Nawab of Broach.

It was during the time of Mirza Ahmed in Broach that the English took Surat (1759). The English by virtue of possessing Surat claimed the rights of the Surat Nawab in Broach. They demanded their share from the Nawab of Broach together with another sum of Rs. 150,000 which they said was an
excessive duty levied on them on cloth. The English undertook to collect this amount from Broach on an understanding drawn up with the Nawab of Surat. For the trouble of collecting the amount the Company claimed 2/3rd of the money recovered. In 1768 Mirza Beg died and was succeeded by his son Mazad Khan. He was the last independent Nawab of Broach.

By this time the English in Surat were using the Surat Nawab’s forces to induce the Nawab of Broach to come to a settlement regarding payment. The Nawab of Surat sent his forces to Broach in 1771. Characteristically, the Bombay Company refused to acknowledge the move of the Surat Company. They induced Mazad Khan to negotiate with Bombay. But before he left, Bombay extracted from him a sum of Rs. 40,000 of which 20,000 was to be given in 6 months and the rest in 2 years. He also promised to make over to the English all the duties collected on English trade at Broach. But when the first instalment was due, the English Company’s resident at Broach, Morley, wanted clarification of the Nawab’s intentions. If he did not agree to Morley’s terms, he was instructed to break off negotiations. Thus by opposing the Surat Company’s attack on Broach, Bombay had gained a footing in Broach. The Nawab had to collect all the jewellery to pay the 1st instalment but the English refused negotiation except on their own terms. They decided to use force, in spite of the fact that they had condemned the same move from the Surat Company.
The refusal of the Nawab to pay, they said, amounted to breach of promise. Bombay and Surat joined in justifying the attack. In 1772, helped by a traitor, the English took Broach. The successors of Mazad Khan were given a small pension of ₹200, which was later stopped by Elphinstone. At this time (1773) the revenues of Broach were ₹150,000. The territory of Broach which contained 162 villages fetched a revenue of ₹5,01,717. The English re-established their factory at Broach.

With the possession of Bombay, Surat and Broach, the English gained a substantial control of the cotton trade of Western India. Its major trade was in cotton which was sent to Canton. The English purchased cotton at Broach and sold it at Canton. Michelborne's report says that the country round Broach was rich in cotton, cotton yarn and piece goods. But they were generally shipped through Surat in his time, and later from Bombay.

By 1761 the power of the Peshwas at Poona was in the decline. The first three Peshwas (1713-1761) had consolidated the Maratha houses and their conquests had reached up to the Ganges plain and Bengal. But in 1761 the Maratha Confederacy was defeated by the Afghans at the battle of Panipat. For a time it looked as though the fate of India lay in a delicate balance between the Afghans, the Mughals and the Marathas. The Afghans withdraw. The Mughal Emperor failed to re-establish
his authority. Peshwa Balaji Rao, the last of the great Peshwas died in 1761. Madhurao who succeeded him, maintained the Peshwa rule for another ten years. He named his brother Narayan Rao as his successor, with Raghunath Rao his uncle, as his guardian. The English Company at Bombay wanted Salsette and Bassin, which guarded the passes to Bombay, to stabilise their trade. They made overtures to Raghunath Rao, and agreed to recognise him as Peshwa, if he surrendered Salsette and Bassin to Bombay. Raghunathrao, whose cause the English supported, till the house of the Peshwas was ruined, cost the Marathas their Kingdom. Narayanrao was murdered in 1773 and Raghunathrao was accused of the murder. A council was set up by Nana Phadnavis at Poona to prevent Raghunath Rao from becoming the Peshwa. The council's position was strengthened when a posthumus son was born to Narayan Rao in 1774 and was recognised as Peshwa. The fate of the house of the Peshwas revolved round the infant Peshwa and Nana Phadnavis. But Nana was not a soldier. His antagonism to the British East India Company's traders made him the target of the English. Warren Hastings, who was sent to India as one of the Company's first Empire builders, had to work out a plan to reduce the power of the Marathas, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Hyder Ali of Mysore. The greatest danger to the English was an alliance between them. The Grand Alliance was achieved by Nana Phadnavis in 1782. Warren Hastings knew that Nana was dependent on the forces of Scindia to fight the English. He picked up Scindia and
isolated him from Nana Phadnavis. At the treaty of Salbai (1782) Mahadji Scindia was given Broach and 162 villages. At this time its revenue was 6,14,140. During the period Scindia held Broach, the English extracted several concessions from him to trade freely at Broach. The French and the Dutch were asked to withdraw their factories from Broach. However, the English Company was faced with the challenge of the private trade of their own merchants. Scindia in a bid to curtail the powers of the English asserted his authority. But Cornwallis, warned him that any curtailment of the privileges of the English, would be met by force.

For 19 years that Broach and the sub-division remained with Scindia, the English hold on it was tightened. The Peshwa's share on Broach revenue was handed over to the English. In 1802 as part of the operation against Scindia the English took Broach and the suburbs. Broach and the lands included in its subdivision (with the 162 villages) and Wagra yielding a revenue of 10,54,540 came under British management. They also claimed the authority to levy tribute on several other small chiefs.

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century had established the Cotton Industry of Lancashire on a firm footing. The American War of Independence (1774) had deprived Lancashire of the American Cotton. The policies of Warren Hastings,
Cornwallis and the many Residents of the English Company in India were inkeeping with the policies of industrial Britain. Pitt's India Act of 1784 had metamorphosed the company from a trading unit to an administrative organ. The export of cotton from Gujarat was now mainly to England. With the take over of Broach by the Company, its private trade was prohibited. The Company purchased the entire stock. The English set up Bombay agents to purchase Broach cotton at a minimum price.

In 1805 the English decided to collect cotton as revenue. The price of cotton was fixed and the peasants were forced to cultivate cotton to pay the revenue. Large quantities of cotton were shipped to England but the peasants in India did not greatly benefit by it as the prices were low. With the success of the Industrial Revolution in England, the English levied high tariffs on Indian cloth. The export of Indian cloth to England was banned. By 1815 the foreign trade of Broach had ceased. The whole trade was a coasting trade south to Bombay and all the intermediate ports, and to the north as far as Cutch-Mandvi. Its imports were sugar, unwrought metals, woollens, coconuts, spices and all kinds of European and Chinese goods, with a small portion of teak, timber, bamboo and rafters from Daman and other near by ports. The exports were cotton, grain and other products of the soil. Manufactured goods were very few in the exports of Broach. Like the rest of India Broach had become a port exporting predominantly raw goods, and importing some manufactured goods. (10) The Navigation Act of 1814 prohibited Indians trading in the Indian Ocean in Indian owned ships.
References:


(3) Gujarat State Gazetteer, The Broach District, op.cit., p.70.

(4) Gujarat State Gazetteer, The Broach District, op.cit., p.70.

(5) John Pinkerton, op.cit., p.315.


(9) Gujarat State Gazetteer, The Broach District, op.cit., p.401, footnote (1)