CHAPTER-VIII

SOURCES OF INCOME GENERATION

The economy of the new rulers was largely affected by the proper and effectively use of economic resources. These resources not only determined the economic structure of the new rulers but also influenced their economy. The better utilization of these resources provided the basis of stability and growth because the process of regional development and the growing stages of regional economy were influenced by the spatial arrangements of the important economic structures. The economic set up depended mainly upon the resource potential of the region. In this connection, however, the sources from resources of income generation during the late eighteenth century were mainly based on cesses and taxes collected from the agriculturists and the tribute collected from the vassal and subordinate chiefs.

A grazing tax tirni was collected from pastoral tribes who grazed their livestock on pasture lands. This formed a significant source of income. The tirni tax was collected in the area of Dera Ismail Khan and in the lower parts of the Sind Sagar, Chaj, Rachna and Bari Doabs¹ where irrigation facilities were scarce and a large proportion of land being lying waste. It was an inheritance from the Mughals and the object of it was to make professional cattle-breeders who did not contribute otherwise to the expenses of the state share in the rest of the population. Agricultural cattle were exempted from taxation and so were cows and buffaloes. But the cultivators who kept large number of camels and herds of cattle paid tirni.²

We have references of the collection of tirni tax by the various chiefs during the late eighteenth century. From the Sayyadwala area, Nakkai chief of Gogera collected nearly 60,000 rupees a year while Jassa Singh Dullu imposed tirni tax in Chiniot area and collected rupees 5000 in the first instance.³ It appears that the

¹ Foreign/Secret Consultations, 30 October 1847, Nos. 129-130; 28 April 1848, Nos. 64-65.
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income from pasture lands formed a much smaller proportion than the income from land under cultivation. Nevertheless the amount of grazing tax collected from different areas, to some extent, was fairly considerable.

The land under regular cultivation was not the only sources of revenue in the territories of the new rulers. The most important sources of revenue in this respect were mango orchards in the Jalandhar Doab, dates trees in the province of Multan and some of the ta’alluqas in Hoshiarpur. Such orchards initially had come down from the Mughal times but the Sikh rulers also encouraged the laying out of orchards and there seems to have been a general tendency among the new rulers to plant gardens in or near their native villages, cities and towns. As a result from the planting of orchards and gardens a considerable amount of revenue was collected by the Sikh rulers.

We have references to the prevalence of some cesses such as hak-buha, tara and ghiana which were collected in some areas of the Punjab during the late eighteenth century. Hak-buha or ghardwara was a house tax which was used to be collected from the kamins and non-proprietary residents of the villages. Similarly, tara was collected by the local chiefs in certain areas of Mankera, Lodhran and Multan at the rate of 2 to 4 rupees for 32 maunds of grain. In the hills, the owners of cows and buffaloes paid a cess called ghiana which was generally taken in the form of clarified butter (ghee). The reason behind this cess was formed ground on the assumption that the owners of cows and buffaloes did not pay tirni tax.

The cultivators used to pay nahrana or water tax on account of the use of canal water for irrigation from Shah Nahar known as Hasli. There is a parwana of

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Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Muzaffargarh District (1873-80), p. 83

4 Foreign/Political Consultation, 31 December 1847, No. 2378.
5 Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, pp. 104-105.
Zakariya Khan (issued on 22 Rajab, 1145/28 December, 1732) in which the 
daroghas of Shah Nahar were ordered not to levy nahrama on the village Talibpur in
pargana Batala which had been purchased from its maliks by Rai Bhawani Das and
given as an offering to Gosain Ramdas of Pindori. The Shah Nahar and the
collection of nahrama from its water for irrigation purposes remained in use during
the late eighteenth century is evidently clear from the orders of Jai Singh Kanhiya
and Sada Kaur in which they exempt the beneficiary from paying tax on water from
Shah Nahar for the irrigation of their revenue free lands. In another order Jai Singh
Kanhiya give a formal order to the authorities of Shah Nahar in 1775 to give water
free of charge to Mahant Prem Nath for his khudkasht land in pargana Gurdaspur.

During the late eighteenth century, another main regular or irregular source
of income was tribute. The realisation of tribute can be made possible through the
practice of suzerainty which implied a superior political claim over an autonomous
chief but no direct interference into his administration. Acknowledgement of
suzerainty essentially implied the payment of tribute (mu'ama or malguzari) in cash or kind. The vassal chiefs were left with a large measure of autonomy within their
own respective territories. The administrative arrangement and the fiscal pattern
were determined by the chiefs themselves not by the suzerain. The political
relations between the ruler and the suzerain were subjected largely to the political
geography of the region in which a principality was situated and its distance from
the centre of gravity. The significant characteristic of the suzerain-vassal
relationship was that the two concerned rulers entered in this relationship in their
capacity as individuals.

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7 B.N. Goswamy & J.S. Grewal (tr. & eds.), The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the
8 Foreign/Political Proceedings, 16 December 1853, No. 189; 07 January 1853, No. 219;
Edward O'Brien, Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Muzaffargarh District
9 Sometimes the subordinate chiefs did not pay tribute regularly before they were strictly
obliged to pay stipulated amount to suzerains.
10 Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, p. 39.
11 Ibid., p. 56.
12 Ibid., p. 62.
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The institution of suzerain-vassal relationship was not new to the Sikhs. It had been an essential feature of Indian polity since ancient times. This feature of Indian polity was effectively made use earlier by the Mughals and later by the Afghan rulers alike in order to give a certain degree of political unity to their empires. The Sikhs and the non-Sikh rulers of the Punjab adopted and cherished this legacy of the Mughal times with equal ease and consistency for increasing their influence and their resources. Particularly in the hills, this old age tradition was sufficiently preserved.\(^{13}\) Ranjit Dev of Jammu and Sansar Chand of Kangra are said to have successfully asserted such claims over a large number of hill principalities in their respective regions when the Sikhs took over the former Mughal province of Lahore from Ahmad Shah Abdali in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. They assumed the former position of the Afghan rulers as the suzerain of vassal principalities in the hills as well as in the plains of the Punjab.

Ahmad Shah Abdali tried to assert suzerain claims for collecting tribute not only over the old vassal principalities in the hills but also over the new rulers in the Punjab plains. Ahmad Shah Abdali’s economy was mainly based on tributes paid by his vassals. In this context, Qazi Nur Muhammad mentions that Suja-ud-Daula had been paying him a large amount of money.\(^{14}\) Similarly, Ala Singh of Patiala handed over money in the form of tribute at Sirhind.\(^{15}\) In order to increase his sources of income Ahmad Shah Abdali wanted to subdue the Sikhs but all his efforts to make them tributaries had failed completely.\(^{16}\) As a result, the economy of the Shah had suffered a loss and deficit owing to the rising power of the Sikhs who had been taking control of various regions of the Punjab.

The version of Qazi Nur Muhammad reflects that the internal relations among the suzerains and vassals were good, well and satisfactory. Ahmad Shah Abdali and Mir Nasir Khan conferred expensive presents and gifts, robe of honour,
horses of good quality, tents, drums and flags\textsuperscript{17} not only to vassal chiefs and clan chiefs but also to army commanders to please them in order to take help and services of their local armies. Mir Nasir Khan had conferred gifts, horses, tents and a robe of honour to two sons of Shah Sultan Ali of Shikarpur and Ismail Khan Hoot.\textsuperscript{18} In addition to, he bestowed vestitures, tents and horses of good quality to the sons of Anayat-Ullah. Mir Nasir Khan gave formally a horse of good quality and a robe of honour to Mir Haji Khan who earlier received and entertain the armies of the Khan into his territories. Similarly he granted horses to Ghazi Khan and Yar Khan.

According to Qazi Nur Muhammad the vassals were responsible for the effective supply of food and forage for the armies traversing into their territories. Ahmad Shah Abdali ordered Rehman Khan,\textsuperscript{19} the sief holder of Dera Jani and Ghulam Hussain Ahura,\textsuperscript{20} the collector of Shikarpur, to facilitate the troops by providing the requirements and necessary commodities of everyday use. When the army of Ahmad Shah Abdali was proceeding to Afghanistan and passing through the territories of Ismail Khan Hoot, he gave a party to the army chiefs and provided articles of everyday use at a place Mihan Kheri.\textsuperscript{21} Besides, he prepared a passage for the smooth movements of the troops by constructing a bridge on the river.\textsuperscript{22} At this point, the Qazi does not mention the content of the bridge whether it was built with the help of boats or arranging some other material which required no boats.

Ahmad Shah Abdali whenever pleased by his vassals, who tried to remain loyal and trustworthy, granted the prerogative to extend their area of influence. In this connection, he offered Mir Nasir Khan to acquire the area of Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan and Jhang upto the river Jehlum.\textsuperscript{23} The mutual relations between the Shah and Mir Nasir Khan were warm and cordial. The Shah

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 13 (Lines 25-36), Chapter 35 (Lines 53-54), Chapter 49 (Lines 1-12), Chapter 52 (Lines 60-66), Chapter 04 (Lines 44-54).
\item[18] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 31 (Lines 25-29), Chapter 52 (Line 60-63).
\item[19] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 11 (Lines 150-153).
\item[20] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 12 (Lines 52-56).
\item[21] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 52 (Lines 34-57).
\item[22] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 52 (Lines 12-16), Chapter 52 (Line 7).
\item[23] \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 46 (Lines 131-136).
\end{footnotes}
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considered Mir Nasir Khan as his son and he acknowledged this fact before the Baluch troops.24

In the version of the Jang Namah Qazi Nur Muhammad reveals that sometimes suzerains utilized their own power and influence with the purpose of assisting their vassals. For instance, Ismail Khan persistently urged25 assistance from Mir Nasir Khan to suppress the recalcitrant elements from his territories. As a result, Mir Nasir Khan authoritatively send forth warning to the rebellious elements to become law abiding.26

The suzerains made an effort to discuss matters and issues of serious concern with their vassal and clan chiefs. During the time of emergency in the battle field war councils were convened and the vassal and clan chiefs were permitted to express their views and opinions independently regarding the successful implementation of the strategy. Final decision had taken on the basis of unanimously expressed views supported by the majority of the vassals and clan chiefs. According to Qazi Nur Muhammad, Ahmad Shah Abdali convened war council at Lahore to devise a solid strategy to overcome and suppress the rising power of the Sikhs.27

The efforts and endeavours of Ahmad Shah Abdali’s successors did not achieve success though they asserted their claims even during the latter decades of the eighteenth century. Timur Shah and Zaman Shah asserted their claims of suzerainty over Raja Sampuran Dev of Jammu, Raja Raj Singh and Jit Singh of Chamba.28 Similarly, their insistence and peremptory order for the right of tribute compelled Nizamuddin Khan of Qasur, Muzaffar Khan of Multan, Muhammad Khan of Mankera and Bahawal Khan of Bahawalpur to comply in accordance with the demand.29 Timur Shah received tribute of seven lacks rupees from the revenue

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24 Ibid., Chapter 47 (Line 14).
25 Ibid., Chapter 52 (Lines 19-22).
26 Ibid., Chapter 52 (Lines 68-72).
27 Ibid., Chapter 22 (Lines 1-54).
29 Calendar of Persian Correspondence, Vol. VIII: 1788-89, National Archives of India, New Delhi, 1953, No. 365; Foreign/Secret Consultation, 25 January 1797, No. 09; Foreign/Political Proceeding, 30 December 1800, No. 90.
collection of Kashmir which was between twenty and thirty lacks of rupees. Under Timur Shah an Afghan chief of the vicinity of Attock yielded obedience and furnished a tribute of fifty thousand rupees to the treasury of Timur Shah. From the description of George Forster it is appear that under Timur Shah ‘different chieftains exercised a moderate sway over their vassals and yield a careless obedience to the orders of the government’. Similarly, the zamindars of Hasan Abdul, Attock, Khairabad and Jalarabad were the tributaries of Zaman Shah. Sometimes the zamindars adopted the politics of responding according to the seriousness of the situation as their interest were deeply connected with the collection of money and evading revenue furnished to the treasury of the overlord. In this context, the role of the zamindar Nur Khan Bakhial was significant who on Zaman Shah’s arrival paid him obeisance and at the same time kept up a friendly negotiations with the Sikhs.

In 1790s, Zaman Shah was persuaded the Sikh chiefs to accept his offer of acknowledging his superior political control in terms of an agreement to keep possession of their territories. In this context, he expressed readiness to offer the governorship of Lahore to Lehna Singh. Through elaborately cunning manner, he succeeded in collecting money from some of the Sikh chiefs during his invasions in 1797 and 1799. On the whole, it is suggested that Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors did not fully succeed in their motives to collect money in the form of tribute from subordinate chiefs as a great majority of the rulers of the Punjab during the late eighteenth century were strong and consolidated their position on sound foundation to resist the demand made by either Ahmad Shah Abdali or by his successors.

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31 Ibid., p. 52.
32 Ibid., p. 89.
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In the hills some of the more powerful chiefs tried to acknowledge successfully their superior political claims over others. Ranjit Dev of Jammu and Raja Ghamand Chand and Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra were strong enough to hold their sway over equal number of hill chiefs in their respective regions and they were acted in the capacity of sovereign rulers.\(^{35}\) Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu successfully asserted such claims and was able to receive tribute from all the chiefs ruling between the rivers Jhelum and Ravi and probably some of the chiefs ruling between the rivers Ravi and Sutlej. The chiefs of Akhnur, Bandralta, Basohli, Bhadarwah, Bhadu, Bhimbar, Chamba, Chenini, Kistwar, Khari Khariali and Kirmachi were notable among them who paid tribute to Ranjit Dev or sent contingents for service.\(^{36}\) Raja Ghamand Chand’s rule ushered an era of glory on the throne of the Katochs. In 1758, during the reign of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Raja Ghamand Chand of Kangra became the governor of Jalandhar Doab in which region was situated the hill country between rivers Sutlej and Ravi. Thus, Raja Ghamand Chand became Emperor of the small states which were located between rivers Sutlej and Ravi and took tributes from them.\(^{37}\) Thereafter, Sansar Chand ascended the throne of Kangra. He launched an attack on Kangra Fort which was in the occupation of Sardar Jai Singh Kanhiya. With the acquisition of the Kangra Fort Sansar Chand regained the glory of his ancient state. His power and fame grew with the occupation of this Fort. The fertile pieces of land which Todar Mal had annexed with the Kangra Fort, were all taken back by Sansar Chand. He became famous as the Sardar of eleven states which were in the Jalandhar Circle. He revived the old tradition of receiving tributes from the chiefs of the surrounding area.\(^{38}\) In 1792, he invaded Mandi and the minor chief of Mandi was obliged to pay one lakh of rupees

\(^{35}\) Khushwaqt Rai, *Ahval-i-Firqa-i-Sikhan*, IO 3897, ff. 130-137.


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as annual tribute. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, Sansar Chand was exercising suzerain rights over Bir Singh of Nurpur, Dhian Singh of Kotla, Gobind Chand of Datarpur, Mahan Chand of Kahlur, Prakash Chand of Guler, Pritam Singh of Kulu, Ranjit Sen of Suket, Sher Singh of Siba, Surma Sen of Mandi and Umed Singh of Jaswan.\(^{39}\) As a result, Sansar Chand was literally ascertaining the position of a King and people used to call him Pahar Badshah.\(^{40}\) The income of his entire country was nine or ten lakh rupees.\(^{41}\)

Raj Singh of Chamba exercised suzerain rights over the chiefs of Bhadarwah and Kishtwar. His son and successor, Jit Singh imposed tribute on the chiefs of Basohli, Bhadu and Bandralta.\(^{42}\) The chiefs of Kahlur received payment in the form of tribute from the petty chiefships known as Bhara Thakurian till 1793.\(^{43}\)

The Sikh Sardars did not separate themselves from the acknowledgement of suzerain rights and the collection of tribute. Having belonged to the agriculturists denomination, nevertheless they were fully realized the potentialities of participating in it and making their prospect bright. In this connection, one can infer that they were becoming the major competitors and co-sharer for political aggrandizement.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia received tribute from Rai Ibrahim Bhatti of Kapurthala, Churh Mal of Phagwara, Rai Ahmad Khan Manj of Talwan, Dayal Das and Saran Das of Jandiala and Dharam Das Topi of Jodhanagri.\(^{44}\) Charhat Singh

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\(^{44}\) Ram Sukh Rao, *Jassa Singh Binod*, MS. No. M/771, ff. 76a, 93a, 95b, 96a,b, 119a, 125b, 135b, 140b, 152b, 159a, 177b, 187b, 195b, 206a, 225a,b and 230b; Lepel Henry
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Sukerchakia used to get tribute from the Amanat Khan Jodhrah of Pindi Gheb, Rai Jalal Gheba of Kot, Awans of Shamsabad and Chatthas of Rasunagar.45 Similarly, Mahan Singh Sukerchakia obliged the Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, the Chatthas of Rasunagar, Alam Khan of Akhnur, Shabt Khan Janjua chief of Kusak in the Sind Sagar Doab to pay nazrana.46 Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia, son and successor of Mahan Singh Sukerchakia, was obliged the chief of Shaikhupura, Sahib Singh, to pay nazrana in 1795.47

Hari Singh Bhangi appears to be the first who made conquests and collected tributes from the rulers of Multan, Leih, Bahawalpur, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan.48 Besides, he received tribute from the Sial chief of Jhang and the Khokhar chief of Pind Dadan Khan.49 His successor Jhanda Singh Bhangi levied tribute from the chief of Jammu in the initial stage.50 In 1771, Jhanda Singh obliged the chief of Qasur, Hamid Khan (1763-1780), a nephew and successor of Muhi-ud-Din Khan to pay 4,00,000 of rupees in the form of tribute.51 In 1772, Jhanda Singh Bhangi realised tribute of 20,000 rupees from Ruhilla Khan, the Nawab of Ahmadabad; Jhanda Singh subdued the chief of Mankera and obliged him to pay

Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab: Being the History of the Principal States in the Punjab and their Political Relations with the British Government*, pp. 503-504 and 511-512.

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50 The annual tribute paid by the Jammu chiefs to its Sikh suzerains was 30,000 rupees: Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, p. 42.

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tribute. The Bhangi Sardars, Gujjar Singh and Sahib Singh received tribute from the chiefs of Akhnur, Khari Khariali and Bhimber.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia obliged the chiefs of the hill principalities of Kangra, Basohli, Chamba, Guler, Jaswan, Siba, Datarpur, Mandi, Nurpur, Suket and Bhadarwah to accept his superior political ascendency. He realised tribute from them for five years from 1775 to 1780 when he was ousted by the combined forces of Jai Singh Kaniya, Mahan Singh Suckerchakia and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Subsequently, these hill chiefs came under the control of Jai Singh Kaniya and remained his tributaries up to 1786. Territorial control of Jai Singh Kaniya was extended to Kulu is appear from the fact that its chief Raja Raj Singh made request of taking possession of one-third of Kulu on the condition that he would pay the revenue to him. Accordingly, Jai Singh Kaniya fixed the amount payable by Chamba at rupees 4001.

It is interesting to note that the minor sovereign chiefs of the Punjab also familiar with the idea and practice of vassalage. In this respect, they did not lag behind to increase their resources whenever they found an opportunity. For instance, Milkha Singh Thepuria received tribute from the Gakkhar chief of Khanpur and the Afghan chief of Sarai Niamat Khan. Baghel Singh Karora Singhia used to get tribute from Muhammad Khan Manj of Talwan; Ran Singh Nakkai (1766-1781) from Jalaluddin Khan of Dipalpur. Muhammad Khan of Mankera collected tribute from the chiefs of Kalabagh, Isa Khel, Kulachi, Mangal and Marwat.

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32 Ibid., p. 60.
33 Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, pp. 41-42.
34 Khushwaqt Rai, Ahwal-i-Firqa-i-Sikhs, IO 3897, ff. 94-96; Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, p. 41.
36 Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District 1895, pp. 52-53; Gazetteer of the Jalandhar District 1904, pp. 34-35 and 77.
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The booty, plunder and ravages formed an important source of income. Ahmad Shah Abdali gave orders to his troops to loot and plunders the Punjab villages and cities. Consequently, the troops had started looting Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The people used to run away as the Shah and his army chiefs, for extracting money and material, let loose their troops to loot, plunder and ravage the countryside. The account of Qazi Nur Muhammad reveals that during the time of loot and plunder all were allowed to take benefit leaving behind the discriminations of vassal and suzerain, army chief and clan chiefs of one or another side. When he started his retreating march towards home his army was attacked on critical points by the Sikhs who snatched the valuables they brought from committing ravages and plunder in India. The articles of plunder were divided among the chiefs according to their number of followers. It is pointed out here, however, that the incoming of the Afghan invader effected the fortunes of inhabitants of the Punjab.

Sometimes, the interests of the merchants suffered on account of plundering. Qazi Nur Muhammad speaks of the Sikhs not only looting the convoy of merchants, the ferries and the inns but also buildings of the bazaar shopkeepers and nobility were razed to the ground by plundering and ravaging it completely. George Forster refers to a caravan of the iron merchants which was plundered by the Sikhs when they were passing through Kangra on their way to Delhi. When they made a request for the recovery of their lost property, further demands were made upon them by the Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhiya. They returned to the caravan in disappointment and despair. This kind of activity became clear when we come to the fact that those merchants who settled in the areas of Sikh Sardars were accorded full protection but

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58 Qazi Nur Muhammad, Jang Namah, Chapter 35 (Lines 8-9), Chapter 27 (Lines 8-27), Chapter 29 (Lines 34-44).

59 Ibid., Chapter 27 (Line 15).

60 Ibid., Chapter 27 (Lines 14-27).


62 Qazi Nur Muhammad, Jang Namah, Chapter 35 (Lines 40-41).

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the traders or travellers who attempt to pass their areas without proper permission of the Sardar were ‘often plundered and usually ill-treated’.

In addition to the aforesaid sources of income was the rakhi, a tax levied on the area which sought guarantee of their protection from external enemy and internal troubles. When the Sikhs had occupied the whole of the province of Lahore, the greatest part of Multan and some parts of Delhi, the Sikh Sardars used to collect a certain yearly tribute from some areas of the Delhi and Agra provinces which were not in their direct possession. This yearly tribute, according to A.L.H. Polier, was called racky. Polier carried the impression that ‘in general a trifle will satisfy them, from two to five per cent on the revenues, particularly if at a distance; and provided this is regularly paid, it is said no further hindrance or molestation will be perceived from them. On the contrary the chief, to whom the tribute or racky is paid, takes the district under his protection and is ready to fight against any of brethren who might think of disturbing it’.

According to the idiom of the Sikhs, refers Taimur Shah, ‘the infantryman is called Shahjadah’. The troops of the Sikhs ‘go to those portions of villages and parganahs that are under the occupation of others, gives assurances of safety and take money’. James Browne strengthens the concept of rakhi by adding significant length, breadth and depth. ‘in the districts not reduced to their absolute subjection, but into which they make occasional incursions, they levy a tribute which they call Raukey, and which is about one fifth (as the Marhatta Chout is one fourth) of the annual rent; whenever a Zamindar has agreed to pay this tribute to any Sick chief, that chief not only himself refrains from plundering him, but will protect him from all others; and this protection is by general consent held so far sacred, that even if

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64 Ibid., pp. 337-338.
the grand army passes through a Zamindary where the safe guards of the lowest Sikh chief are stationed, it will not violate them. 67

William Francklin observed that ‘when determined to invade a neighbouring province, they (the Sikhs) assemble at first in small numbers on the frontier, when having first demanded the raki or tribute, if it be complied with, they retire peaceably; but when this is denied, hostilities commence, and the Sikhs, in their progress, are accustomed to lay waste the country on all sides, carrying along with them as many of the inhabitants as they can take prisoners, and all the cattle. The prisoners are detained as slaves, unless redeemed by a pecuniary compensation’. 68

Henry T. Prinsep refers to the collection of rakhi on the edifice of gurmatas. 69 On the other hand J.D. Cunningham clearly expresses that rakhi was collected from areas which were conquered but not completely annexed by the Sikhs. According to J.D. Cunningham, ‘the literal meaning of rakhi is protection and therefore, the amount levied was tribute’. 70

Taking into account the interpretation of the system of rakhi N.K. Sinha reproduced the same ideas as expressed by the early European writers. 71 H.R. Gupta makes use of the term rakhi in terms of sincere and thoughtful manner: ‘The Sikhs offered a plan to the villages individually. The villages were to place themselves under the protection of the Dal Khalsa on a promise to pay one-fifth of their income twice a year in May and October, at the end of each harvest, Asarhi and Saoni, known also as Rabi and Kharif. The Sikhs in return were to afford them full protection against plunder, theft or molestation of any other kind either by themselves or by their neighbours and Government troops’. The system of rakhi was

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70 Joseph Davey Cunningham, A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej, p. 55 n 1.

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a definite phase in the political career of the Sikhs, a step that 'supplied them with the idea of raising themselves into territorial chieftains'.

Similarly, Khushwant Singh remarks that by adopting system of rakhi the Sikhs 'took the first step towards becoming rulers of the country. Instead of simply robbing the people, as they had done in the past, they offered them protection (rakhi) on payment of one-fifth of their taking at the end of each harvest. Since the Sikhs were the only power which could fulfil its obligations, most of the Punjab readily accepted the offer of protection and for all practical purposes the country came to be administered by the Sikhs'.

It has been perceived keenly and observed seriously by Indu Banga that the system of rakhi did serve as a prelude to annexation but rakhi as a system was not a definite phase in the political history of the Sikhs in the process of occupation of territories. 'Territorial occupation and rakhi could be established by one and the same chief at one and the same time in two different areas. Rakhi was thus a transitional arrangement existing side by side with territorial occupation. The areas once brought under rakhi were often, but not always, actually occupied and directly sooner or later'.

The system of rakhi produced income for the Sikh Sardars. It is possible, however, that some densely populated areas produced larger income in comparative with other areas which were sparsely inhabited. The income of rakhi signifies the extent of the influence over the maximum area and on the other it strengthens the status of the Sardar with their counterparts which were exercising their control over different areas of the Punjab during the late eighteenth century. Rakhi benefitted not only to the cultivator who had to pay a smaller proportion of their produce in the form of revenue or rakhi but also they felt secure and safe against others who might demand revenues from them.


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The financial resources of the chiefs in the hills as well as in the plains varied from each other. This variation was due to the size and extent of their territories. In the hills, the chiefs of Jammu and Kangra possessed territories of more than 5,00,000 rupees a year. The chiefs of Guler, Bandralta, Jaswan, Nurpur, Jasrota, Mandi, Bhimber, Kulu, Chamba and Khari Khariali commanded resources between 1,00,000 rupees a year to 5,00,000. About half a dozen chiefs exercised the control of revenue of more than 50,000 but less than 1,00,000 rupees a year. The chiefs whose resources were less than 50,000 rupees a year were Kutlehar, Chenini, Siba, Kirmchi, Kotla, Darband, Bangahal, Sarai Niamat Khan, Khanpur etc.\textsuperscript{75}

In the upper Doabs of the Punjab the chiefs whose resources exceeding to over 10,00,000 rupees a year were Hari Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Gujjari Singh of Gujrat, Charhat Singh Sukerchakia and Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia. The number of chiefs possessing resources ranging from 5,00,000 rupees a year to 10,00,000 was rather small. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Mubarak Khan of Rawalpindi, Sahib Khan of Pind Dadan Khan, Budh Singh Faizullpuria and Baghel Singh Karora Singhia were included in this list. About sixteen chiefs exercised control of the resources between 1,00,000 to 5,00,000 rupees a year. The number of the chiefs who commanded revenue worth more than 50,000 rupees but less than 1,00,000 were about half a dozen. The rest of the chiefs probably possessed resources less than 50,000 rupees a year. In this connection, the existence of exception cannot be minimized.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} In the first category Jammu (5,00,000) and Kangra (7,00,000). The second category Guler (1, 40,000), Bandralta (1,25,000), Jaswan (1,25,000) Nurpur (4,00,000), Jasrota (1,25,000), Mandi (4,00,000), Bhimber (1,50,000), Kulu (1,30,000), Chamba (3,50,000) and Khari Khariali (1,00,000). In the third category the chiefs of Basohli (75,000), Datapur (50,000), Bheo (50,000), Bhadarwah (50,000), Akhur (50,000), Mankot (50,000) and Sikut (70,000) were included. In the fourth category, Kutlehar (25,000), Chenini (30,000), Siba (20,000), Kirmchi (20,000), Kotla (20,000), Darband, Bangahal Sarai Niamat Khan, Khanpur etc. were coming.

\textsuperscript{76} The financial resources of the first category are: Hari Singh Bhangi (10,00,000), Jassa Singh Ahluwalia (12,00,000), Gujjari Singh of Gujrat (13,00,000) and Charhat Singh Sukerchakia (13,00,000) and Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia (30,00,000). The second category Jassa Singh Ramgarhia (7,00,000), Mubarak Khan of Rawalpindi (9,00,000), Sahib Khan of Pind Dadan Khan (6,50,000), Budh Singh Faizullpuria (5,50,000) and Baghel Singh Karora Singhia (5,00,000). In the third category the chiefs of Kapurthala (3,00,000), Nakodar (1,00,000), Talwan (2,00,000), Rahon (4,00,000), Kathgarh (1,00,000), Adinanagar (1,00,000) Pasrur (2,00,000) Saurian (1,50,000), Qasur
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However, the resources of the chiefs of the lower Doabs of the Punjab were also extended in a wide range. The chiefs of Mankera, Multan and Jhang commanded resources worth more than 8,00,000 rupees a year. The chiefs who collected more than 1,00,000 rupees as the annual revenue were Kamalia, Chiniot, Sahiwal and Khushab. Two of the chiefs of both Haveli and Malka Hans yielding territories more than 50,000 but less than 1,00,000 rupees a year. The relevant information about the economic resources of the chiefs of Bhera, Leia, Gogera and Lodhran are not available but it is probable, however, that they were possessing territories yielding revenue of less than 50,000 rupees a year. In this context, however, the possibility of exception cannot be reduced to minimum level.  

(3,00,000), Chunian (3,00,000), Zafarwal (1,50,000), Daska (1,60,000) Akalgarh (2,00,000), Shaikhupura (1,60,000) and the Pindi Bhattian (1,50,000) were coming. The fourth category placed the names of Phagwara (50,000), Jandiala (50,000), Ferozke (70,000), Hujra Shah Muqim (75,000) and Doda (80,000). The fifth category constituted the chiefs like Sahaj Singh near Phagwara (20,000), Charhat Singh Sangatpuria (40,000), Mirza Singh Shergill (15,000), Jodhanagar (35,000), Dipalpur (35,000), Lehna Singh of Lahore, Sahib Singh of Kathu Nangal, Arbel Singh, the chiefs of Banga, Phillaur, Sujanpur, Fategarh Churian, Batala, Manawala, Shahpur, Wazirbad, Povind, Muraliwala, Kanganpur, Naoshehra, Wadala, Shamsabad, Rasulnagar, Taragarh, Kusak, Pindi Ghab, Kot, Ahmadabad, Malot, Makhad etc.

77 The financial resources of the first category are: Mankera (10,00,000), Multan (9,00,000) and Jhang (8,50,000). In the second category Kamalia (3,00,000), Chiniot (1,50,000), Sahiwal (1,50,000) and Khushab (1,00,000). In the third category Haveli and Malka Hans possessed resources worth (80,000) and (50,000) rupees respectively.