

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Gujarat was one of the most prosperous provinces of the Mughal Empire. The decentralisation of the ruling authority in the eighteenth century witnessed on the one hand dominance of the Marathas (Gaekwad and Peshwa) in Gujarat and the increasing influence of the local potentates on the other. Though the political history of Gujarat has been much explored, its economic and social history with the exception of its trading and mercantile activities, still remains much of an enigma for the historians.

This study is an attempt in investigating and analysing the problems related to the economic and social life of one of the most varied and significant regions of Gujarat - the region between the Mahi and the Sabarmati, focus of the study being in the main, the Kheda district. The centre of this region comprises one of the most fertile areas of Gujarat - Charotar. The period which has been taken up for the study witnessed the decline of the Mughal authority the ascendancy of the Marathas for a brief interlude and finally the process of assimilation and consolidation under the British sway. During this period of political transition changes were affected in the economic and social set up as well. These have been studied and an attempt

has been made to understand this process of change in terms of historical context in the economic structure and social relations.

The district of Kheda was generally acknowledged as one of the most fertile in the whole of Gujarat. Thus the first chapter is devoted to agricultural production and changes in the cropping pattern during the period under study.

Land tenure forms an interesting and intriguing subject and this has been studied under two main categories - lands under one kind of tenure which paid regular sums of revenue to the government, land under another kind of tenure which were exempted partially or wholly from payment of revenue. i.e. they were alienated.

Like elsewhere in India, land revenue formed the main source of income for the state in the Kheda District. The rates and methods of assessment of land revenue thus hold significance and these have been studied from the point of defining changes under the Marathas and British. The systematic procurement of revenue largely depended on the administrative set-up. With the decline of the Mughal Empire and the ascendancy of the Marathas, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the position of the district and village heri-

ditary officers especially the Desais and Patels received a great boost, which was much impaired by administrative changes under the British.

The fiscal needs of the Maratha economy encouraged ijara practices, with the introduction of the office of the Kamavisdar. The British too adopted the farming system on a widespread scale and they gave the first preference to the village Patels to act as revenue farmers.

An attempt has also been made, perhaps for the first time, to understand the origin and nature of the Grassia tenure and how it differed from that of the Mewasi. L. 1000

The commodities produced or manufactured in the Kheda district did not find a significant place in the foreign export of the country. (with reference to Europe) However, because of its geographical location, this district was significant for internal trade and many transit lines passed through it. Its ^{Saini Haril} sayer revenues, thus, were much influenced by this branch of trade.

In the main the source material for the above study is available in (a) Central Record Office, Baroda, (b) Pune Archives, Pune, (c) Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay, the records are in Marathi and English.

The Marathi records are in Modi script and available at the Central Record Office, Baroda and Pune Archives, Pune. The district of Kheda at the time of the Maratha sway in Gujarat was shared between the Gaekwad, Peshwa and the Nawab of Cambay. The records of the parganas which were under the Gaekwad are available in Baroda Record Office while the same for those under the Peshwa are preserved in Pune Archives. On the basis of the nature of information contained in these Modi records, we may classify them into three categories.

(a) Taleband, Jhadtis, Ekberji, Arsatha, Nemnook, Ijmaiyl - all of which are revenue accounts of income and expenditure and throw good light on the system of taxation distinguishing the agricultural and non-agricultural taxes as well as on the administrative set-up including the number and salary of the different officers of the parganas. ✓

(b) Kalambandis - which underline directives for the collection of revenue and management of a district or parganas and highlight the principles of revenue farming and the position and powers of the Kamavisdar.

(c) Daffete Patras - which contains sanads, agya patras, yadis, chitnisi letters and which are briefly speaking orders for grants and resumptions of alienated lands. An analysis of these enables us to formulate an idea of the practices of alienations in Gujarat during the period under study. It is significant to note that these records have remained untapped till now and for the first time an attempt has been made to study and analyse them.

It may be mentioned here that the Modi records are available at intervals, for the period when the territories of Kheda were under the Marathas, Part of these came under the British in 1802 and the remaining with the exception of Cambay and Balasinore in 1817. The records for the period when these territories were under the British jurisdiction are in English and are found in the Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay and Pune Archives, Pune.

The English records are arranged departmentwise depending on the nature of their subject. Hence we have the records for the Revenue Department, Secret and Political Department, Judicial Department and so on. These give us in detail the condition of the different parganas when the British rule was established and thereafter the sources of revenue and revenue adminis-

tration, agricultural productivity, village society and the operation of trade and commerce. Here special mention made be of the survey reports of 1826-27 which give as a wealth of informations.

It may be mentioned here that only a comparative study of the indigenous and British records can help us in objectively solving the problems under study. Though the British records are classified and more detailed they are not always accurate. Thus it was remarked by one of its own officers that the elaborate records (especially of the Broach and Surat districts) of the beginning of the nineteenth century were 'worse than useless', as implicit reliance was placed on the faulty assertions of the hereditary officers.

The accounts of the foreign travellers especially those of Thomas Pennant, Walter Hamilton, British Heber and H.C. Briggs have also been consulted. The valuable works of James Forbes and Mounstuart Elphinstone have also been studied. A study of the relevant secondary sources has also been made.

A brief note may be added on the physical composition of the parganas included in the Kheda District. In its final shape the district came to include seven parganas as follows : 1) Borsad (or Petlad pargana),

(x)

ii) Napaad (including Chauth of Cambay), iii) Nadiad (including Bhalej Tappa), iv) Thasra (including Oomreth Tappa), v) Kapadvanj (including Antroli pargana) vi) Mahundha (including Alina pargana, vii) Matar (including Kheda fort, Dascroi and Dholka, east of Sabarmati, Mahemdabad pargana and Sandana Tappa).