

INTRODUCTION.

The interest in urban history has increased in recent past and number of works have appeared elucidating various features of this newly developed discipline. Since antiquity the western India has always been fascinating the merchants of diverse lands. The merchants came and settled down at various port-towns, obviously for the trade potentials the centres were infused with. The study of these urban centers deserves special attention. It is quite necessary to illuminate their nature, institutions, the socio-economic life of their residents. It is of historical importance why some of the flourishing trading centres decay at some stage or the other. I have chosen the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as they happen to be a high period for the global commercial movement. The role played by the portuguese in the urbanization and de-urbanization of some of the trade centers in the old world is crucial and I have tried to look at it in the case of one of the strategically located trading points in western India.

Recently some studies on the Indo-Portuguese history have made their appearance throwing light on various aspects of the Portuguese trade with the Orient during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The possessions of the Portuguese in the East have been explained as a chain of port-towns and fortresses that stretched from the Middle East to South East Asia and further extended upto the coast of the East Africa.¹ In fact it was the societal net-work

1. E.J.Hamilton, "The Role of Monopoly in the Overseas Expansion and Colonial Trade of Europe before 1800," *The American Economic Review*, Vole. XXXVIII, No. II, May, 1948, pp. 33-53.

that contributed much towards the organisation of the Portuguese trade in deriving revenues, providing markets to their merchandise and creating urban milieu conducive to their rule in the Orient. But little attempt has been made so far to understand the Portuguese towns in this context.

Dr.T.R.de Souza has discussed the socio-economic life of Goa during the seventeenth century but its position in the Portuguese colonial net-work was different from the other towns.² It was the capital city, surrounded by fertile rural enclaves which too were under the Portuguese hegemony. Similarly,Bassein also carried identical features and was elevated to a capital city of their northern provinces in India.³ The urbanites to both these towns were engaged in primary and secondary productions so the colonial policies towards the private trade did not affect economic life of these towns.

I have chosen the town of Chaul for some interesting reasons. Professor S.C.Misra has remarked that the Indian town in many cases is an extension of the village, carrying over the same social unities and attitudes.⁴ His analysis is perhaps more suitable to the towns of the interior parts of Mughul India. Contrary to this view, Chaul was not an

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2. T.R.de Souza, *Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History*, (New Delhi, Concept Publication Company, 1979).
 3. R.de Silva, *Bassein Under the Portuguese, 1534-1640*. Unpublished Ph.D.thesis submitted to the M.S.University of Baroda, 1985.
 4. "Urban History in India Possibilities and perspective, *Occasional Papers:No.1.Published by Urban History Association of India*, (Amritsar, 1982), p2.

extension of a village. It sprang up from nothing and over a period of two centuries remained under the aegis of the Portuguese rule. Its another interesting feature is the existence of two towns of the same name, having a common port. Being a colonial town, the socio-economic structure of the Portuguese town of Chaul was 'super-imposed' by the colonial power. The present study of it attempts to shed some light on its socio-economic life.

In 1879 Gerson da Cunha wrote a long article highlighting the major events of the 'glorious' era of the Portuguese rule at Chaul, and describing the historical remnants of the town.⁵ Gritli Von Mitterwallner published her thesis in 1964.⁶ Being a student of the architecture, she has concentrated on the field of her interest and illuminates the architectural aspects of churches in details. Both the works are of similar nature, as they preferred to focus on the ruins of this town. None of them takes the town in its physical context. Nor do they ^otouch upon its socio-economic life during the by-gone ages.

The period covered in present dissertation is from 1520 to 1699, i.e. from the foundation of the Portuguese fortress at Chaul to the year of relaxation of the monopoly control exercised by the Portuguese Trading Company on the private trade between India and Mossambique. The Portuguese followed certain special policies in order to make it

5. Gerson da Cunha, "History and Antiquities of Chaul", *The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XII, No. XXXIII 1879.

6. Gritli Von Mitterwalner, *Chaul: Eine Unerforschte Stadt an der Westkuste Indiens-Wehr, Sakral und profanarchitektur*, (Berline, 1964).

populous and develop it as an international market place. This period is important for the consequences of the placement, discontinuance and displacement of trade, and the impact of these processes on the urban life of Chaul.

While working in the archives I found substantial documentary evidence on Chaul although there are few gaps which may be attributed to two reasons. When this town was handed over to the Marathas by the Portuguese in 1739-1740, certain Captain of Chaul destroyed some of the valuable papers concerning the Portuguese rule in Chaul as he found them difficult to shift to Goa. Similarly some of the documents pertaining to the Portuguese activities in the East were destroyed by the earthquake that shook Lisbon in 1755. Moreover, the extant documents do not speak much of either the Portuguese trade at the factory level or the private trade at Chaul. For this lacunae I have studied the State policy on trade and its impact on the economic life of the town basing my analysis on the records of Municipal Council of Chaul.

In the first chapter I have discussed the socio-economic and political conditions of the ancient Chaul which was under the control of the Nizmsahs of Ahmadnagar before its port was ceded to the Portuguese. A survey of its pre-existing urban pattern has been covered upto the year 1520 A.D., when the Portuguese fortress at Chaul was founded. An attempt is made in this chapter to identify the exact location of both these towns. A map showing location of the port and ancient

town of Chaul is also presented here. An attempt made here to explain why the Portuguese did not intend to occupy the existing town of ancient Chaul but only contended to possess its port.

Professor R.J.Horvarth has argued that migration to the colonial town from the surrounding rural areas was limited because of the tendency on the part of the colonial power to keep it separate from the indigenous societies, at least in the initial stage.⁷ This hypothesis is put to test in the second chapter where the process of the societal growth of Chaul is discussed. It is observed that the migration of the local people to the colonial town was motivated by the Portuguese policies and the migration from urban to urban centres blossomed into a society of cosmopolitan nature composed of various professional segments. An appendix is added to this chapter that lists the names of the urbanites of Chaul and their respective occupations during the first half of the seventeenth century. The colonial town-building process has been identified and elaborated into three distinct phases. This town was destroyed partly during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, therefore its physical features found during the seventeenth century are discussed. At present this place is a thick concentration of palm and betel-nut plantation. I have prepared a map of the seventeenth century Chaul with the help of archival feedbacks and exhaustive survey of the site. The plans of the churches are also attached to the present study at the end.

7. "In Search of a Theory of Urbanization: Notes on the Colonial City", *East Lakes Geographer*, No. 5, 1969, pp. 68-82.

The creation of the *camara* or the Municipal Council was one of the characteristics of the Portuguese rule in India. The Municipal council was transplanted in the town of Chaul on the European model. The existence of this institution in the towns of Europe is dated back to the eleventh century A.D. It was an elected body which always tried to get concessions, Privileges and protections for its inhabitants from the lord of the town.⁸ In the case of Chaul the formation of this Council followed the pattern of oligarchy, more specifically of the white settlers. But their tacit involvement in commerce and the auxiliaries of trade resulted in the formation of the class interest and this Council clashed with the State and Church several times. In the third chapter an attempt is made to understand the role played by this body in the economic life of the urbanites. The privileges of the town, the structure, functions and the financial resources of the Municipal Council of Chaul are elaborated in it. The subsequent two chapters cover the role played by this institution in the economy and revenue administration of the colonial town of Chaul.

Max Weber in his Classical work has defined the city as settlement of the inhabitants who live primarily on trade and commerce,⁹ rather than on agriculture. In Weberian terms Chaul could be called as a town. Antonio Bocaro who visited

8. Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, translated from French by Frank D. Hasley, (New York, 1925), Chapter on Municipal Institution.
9. Max Weber, *The City*, translated from German and Edited by Don Martindale and Gertud Neuwirth, (New York, 1958), pp. 66-68

this town in the fourth decade of the seventeenth century¹⁰ described it as a non-cultivating settlement. But being a colonial town the commercial activities of the resident merchants were often regulated and restricted by the Portuguese policies. These policies varied according to the needs and the circumstances suitable to the colonial power. Chapter fourth is an attempt to study the economic condition of the urbanites by studying the Portuguese trading policies towards Chaul. The impact of placement and displacement of the trade at Chaul is highlighted here.

The fifth chapter deals with the revenue administration of the town of Chaul. An attempt is made here to discuss the nature of various taxes. The Portuguese system in the fiscal administration is elucidated whereby the mechanism of the colonial power that attempted extracting revenues without incurring any expenditure is focused upon. The data given in this chapter helps us in comprehending the vicissitudes of this town. The income and expenditure has been worked out in the attached appendix to this chapter.

The concluding chapter examines the placement of trade at the urban center which contributed towards its emergence, growth and development. It is observed that the formulation and application of the colonial policies without taking the local needs into consideration resulted in the loss of trade and the de-urbanization of Chaul.

10. A.B. de Bragança Pereira, *Arquivo Portugues oriental*, (Bastora, 1937), IV, II, I, pp. 196-206.