

CONCLUSION

The decline of the Mughal authority in the Subah of Gujarat had begun in the reign of Aurangzeb itself. The principles on which the stability of the Mughal Empire rested were compromised to a large extent during the latter half of the 17th century. The Mughal policy of not combining Jagirdari and Faujdari rights in the same person was compromised to a great extent. Many instances of Faujdars being given charge of their own Jagir have come to our notice. Many administrative lapses could not be checked effectively. In addition, Shivaji's attack and sack of Surat twice had a deep effect on the trade and commerce of Gujarat. Aurangzeb's death only accentuated the problem. The Marathas, who were hovering on the fringes of the region having already conquered the smaller forts of strategic importance, entered the region with full vigour. Factors like the infighting and the power struggle amongst the big nobles added to the process of decline. The ambitions for personal aggrandizement of wealth and power of the nobles appointed as the Nazims and Faujdars of Gujarat led to the creeping in of the malpractices in the administration. This coupled with their inability to check the Maratha invasions led to complete breakdown of the Mughal imperial authority in the region.

The infighting percolated to the level of local nobles as well leading to a situation of constant warfare in the region. Many factions had emerged amongst the regional nobles as well. Mainly two factions that of Shuja'at Khan, protégés of Haider Quli Khan and Hamid Khan, the protégé of Nizam-ul-Mulk, had become prominent by 1725. With the defeat of Shuja'at Khan's faction the semblance of Mughal authority in Gujarat was lost. The region came to be shared half-to-half with the Marathas who had helped Hamid Khan against Shuja'at Khan. By 1740 the Subah had disintegrated completely and many principalities of different statures had come into existence.

The most visible characteristic following the decline was the constant flux in the fortunes of almost all the principalities of Gujarat. There was constant warfare amongst these principalities for territorial expansion. In this case the *diwans* of the various principalities played an important part. The case of Ranchoji Amarji of Junagadh has been explored in this study. Amongst the main beneficiaries of this uncertain situation were the *desais* and *patels*. It has been found that the *desais* could accumulate greater amounts of wealth and power locally. We also see the rise of *ijaradari* simultaneously. It seems that the offices of faujdar, etc were also being given on *ijara*. With the coming of the Marathas *ijara* was institutionalized known as *Kamavisdari*. This institution also helped the *desais* in their aggrandizement. *Manotidari*, giving monetary sureties for revenue payment by the peasants, also contributed towards the same. The

desais themselves took *ijara* and in places where they were not *Kamavisdars* they became *Manotidars*.

Another notable feature is the increased role of the *bhats* and *charans* in the newly emergent political set-up as security holders or guarantors. Following the decline of effective authority, revenue collection became arbitrary and forceful. The peasants also resisted its payment. Thus, the intervention of the third party became necessary. It was here that the *bhats* acted as intermediaries between the parties for settling the payment issues. Although their role as securities in revenue collection process has come to our notice for earlier times as well, but during our period of investigation their role seems to have been enhanced. The security system pervaded other branches of administration as well. Referred to as *bandheri* in Persian sources and as *bhandari* in the British sources, securities were taken for both monetary transactions safeguarding the share of each party and also for non-monetary activities such as security against harassment by officers, both Mughal and Maratha. By the end of the Century, the British officers found *bandheri* being used in all the activities of Baroda administration. The case seems to have been the same with other principalities as well. The Arab *sibandis* also came to hold the same position as that of the *bhats*. This gave them considerable power over the administration and it was this position, which the British took from the Arab *sibandis* that placed them in a formidable position vis-à-vis the local administration.

The above developments took place in the back drop of acute fragmentation of political authority in the region. The existence of multiple authorities frequently led to conflicts and the nature of sovereignty is not easily discernible. The assertion of authority by various factions amongst the Mughals and Marathas created uncertain political conditions. Their authority extended only to the urban areas; rural areas were largely left to fend for themselves. The *Girassias* were beneficiaries under such a situation. They could extend their claim to revenues over many villages and recourse to force for its realization. These conditions also gave rise to new practices in the assertion of political authority. *Mulkgiri* was one such practice. Many principalities undertook *Mulkgiri* expeditions for collecting tribute from the subordinate principalities. This practice has been explained in detail in the fourth chapter. We also come across the practice of seeking protection by smaller principalities from the bigger ones. This practice helped many petty principalities save itself from extinction. Many individuals also frequently sought protection from other political powers against official harassment. Due to the rise and existence of multiple authorities the offices of *Peshkar* and *Vakil* and such other intermediaries became important.

The study of the folk literature available in the form of *garbas* reflects the different concerns of the common people. It mainly reflects the concern of the people with the Maratha invasions early in the century and the lack of imperial protection to them. Later, the harassment of the subjects by the Peshwa's *Sarsubahdars* forms the subject of this literature. This harassment led the *Nagarsheths* and

merchants to act as protectors of local population against harassment by officials. Consequently, the *nagarseths* rose in social esteem and became the voice in their localities that had to be heard by the administration.

One of the major changes of 18th century Gujarat, as in the rest of India, is the rise of mercenary system of army. In Gujarat we can see the mercenaries called *sibandis* being assigned important functions like safeguarding towns and fortifications and undertaking *Mulkgiri* expeditions. These *sibandis* were organized on ethnic basis. We see *sibandis* from diverse ethnic background being active in the region but the *Arabs* and the *Sindhis* after them were the most sought after. They also emerged as a power group in different principalities. It was these *Arab* and *Sindhi* *sibandis* that the British had to confront while they were establishing their hegemony in the region. The British disbanded the *Arabs* in large numbers once they came to power. Besides the non-indigenous *sibandis* the indigenous groups of *sibandis* known as *Qasbatis* were also employed. But it is clear that the non-indigenous *sibandis* were more in demand mainly due to their mobility and non-attachment to lands. The *Qasbatis* were local soldiers leading one to suggest that they were indeed peasants who were attached to their lands and therefore unwilling to move from their local areas.

This period also saw the rise of British East India Company as a sovereign authority. Using its position as a merchant body in the economy of Surat the Company could capture Surat's castle in 1759, its first conquest in Gujarat and monopolize Surat's trade to a great

extent. This was followed by the conquest of Bharuch. It was an outright territorial conquest and was planned in advance with a view of territorial aggrandizement. The Bombay Presidency's attempts at conquest of Gujarat was aborted in 1781 due to the failure of first Anglo-Maratha war but 20 years later due to their intervention in the internal crisis of Baroda they could establish subsidiary alliance with Baroda principality. Through Baroda's over lordship over the rest of the principalities in Gujarat the Company could penetrate into the interiors. The Company used revenue settlements or fixing of tribute to be paid to the Gaekwads and the Peshwa by these principalities, as an instrument towards establishing their presence in Saurashtra and the Mewasi regions of North Gujarat. In 1818 due to Peshwa's defeat in the third Anglo-Maratha war the British became paramount authority in Gujarat.

Though this study is not directly concerned with the economic aspects of the period there are indications in the sources that the economy of Gujarat was indeed prospering as suggested by many recent studies. Infact the invasions, constant warfare and uncertain political conditions do not seem to have affected the economy of the region adversely. There were many temporary halts and disturbances in trade and commercial activity all through the Century, but at the same time the merchants and rulers adopted different mechanisms to overcome the crisis and continue the trade. The urban revenues were mainly dependant on the trade and commerce of the place and the new rulers being in utmost need of the revenues always made compromises with the merchants in case of any disturbances. Therefore trade and

commerce continued to be undertaken even if it was not smooth at all times. The wealth with the *desais* and their taking of *ijara* indicates that agricultural production was high and was the main means of their wealth creation. They made *ijara* an instrument of further wealth creation. Another important fact worth noticing is that the non-indigenous *sibandis* used to come to the region in search of employment and were employed in large numbers. They could also secure a position whereby they played an important part in the power politics of different principalities. Their main aim was to save the salaries and return home after some years. The region was a major market for the military labour. These factors indicate that during this period the region was dynamic, to say the least. These issues can be taken up by the students of 18th century Gujarat's history for further research that would lead to greater understanding of the period and the region.