Mughal City: An Economic Profile of Broach

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Abstract: Mughal Empire was dotted with a number of cities inhabited by multiple ethnicities and engaged in complex professions. Gujarat was not only the most urbanized suba of Mughals, but also the commercial capital of Mughal Empire in the seventeenth century. The most important urban centers in seventeenth century Gujarat were Surat, Ahmadabad, Baroda, Broach, and Gogha. An extensive work has been done and still continues on Surat and Ahmadabad. The Broach and Baroda are the neglected areas. Broach, as an urban center was only next to Surat and Ahmadabad in all aspects; population, revenues, and taxes. The present study briefly categorizes the Mughal cities on the basis of their dominant attribution. The paper actually tries to construct economic history of the city of Broach in seventeenth century. The supposition that the city declined in the later decades of the seventeenth century has been critically examined and by analysis of the contemporary data this supposition has been invalidated in this study.

Keywords: Broach; City; Urbanization, Economic History, Trade

Cities are the index of the economic growth, social change (Schultz: 1979 15), religious outlook and political structure of a political power. The depiction of the cities always differs as time and space affect their sketch. The historical contexts and regional frameworks do not allow us to develop a general perception of a city (Schultz: 1979 15). The Mughal Empire was dotted with a number of cities, diverse in their functions, pyramidal in their prominence but connected all through a network of roads and routes facilitating inter and intra-regional trade relations. Though the singularity of the cities is too far to be chased, but these cities shared some of the predominant reasons for the elevation and degeneration. The geographical location, including climate and morphology are at times the activating forces for the rise of a city, so is the agricultural and commercial potential of a particular area. The pilgrimage centers have also facilitated the transformation of rural/sub urban areas into mature urban centers. The political circumstances conditioned the rulers to fix power concentration (implicit with it was defense) at a particular area, in turn these power concentrated areas evolved into typified cities. The prominent cities under the Mughals were Agra, Banaras, Delhi, Lahore, Surat and a number of others. Agra, Banaras and Surat were not only well distanced from each other but also varied in their elevation and attribution. Agra, Delhi and Lahore were actually the cities of political expediency, though we cannot undermine some other actuating urban forces. The rise of Agra as the capital city of Mughals was conditioned by the political developments of the time. It was political understanding of Akbar, which obliged him to shift the capital from Delhi to Agra. The political circumstances facing Mughal Empire in the later years of Humayun were other than the Delhi Sultanate. The Babur’s conquest of Hindustan neither faded his desire of Central Asian territories nor were Central Asian chieftains satiated in their own spheres. Rather they looked on the territories of each other always with teeth of tiger. The defeated Humayun seeking asylum at Shah’s court exposed the instability of Mughals. The threats from the trans-Indus regions of Afghanistan and Badakshan necessitated Akbar to supervise all these developments nearer than Delhi(Spear: 1981 60). The Sikandar’s decision to set Agra as the capital was also to arrest the centrifugal tendencies of Jaunpur, Kalpi, Chandawar, Rapri and Etawah.(Trividii: 1994 156). So it was this internal instability and external threatens to the Empire which made Akbar to shift his capital from Delhi to Agra. The King or ruler resided in the capital with a retinue comprising of harem, nobles, army and servicemen(Spear, 1980 53). This not only pulled a good portion of surplus from the surrounding areas to capital but also inflated the demand in the market of the provisions of food, cloth and shelter. So a good portion of the revenues from Mughal provinces came to Agra. These ‘political cities’ like Agra, Delhi and Lahore we have recognized distinctively rich of architecture, predominated by the secular monuments.

Agra is the archetypal of this phenomenon of architectural accomplishment and the construction started from the day Akbar set it as his capital. The first endeavor of Akbar was to build a fort. So the Red Fort and the buildings within it cost him Rs 35 lakh(Habib: 1987 54).Jahangir added many monuments to it, so did Shah Jahan. As Shah Jahan’s architectural tastes were more aesthetical and sophisticated, the renovation and reparation of old buildings and construction of some new ones within this Red Fort cost him almost double (60 Lakh) to what Akbar had
spent on it(Moosvi: 2009 202). The *magnum opus* of Shah Jahan the Taj Mahal, where we see synthesis and zenith of architectural achievements of Mughals cost 50.00,000(Moosvi: 2009 202) and some other buildings an amount of almost Rs 4 lakhs(Moosvi: 2009 209). The imperial buildings adjacent to Agra like Fatehpur-Sikri, Akbar’s tomb at Sikandra and others also added the expression of power and prosperity of Mughals. So we recognize the typical feature of these capital cities their architectural achievements and Agra as appropriate model. But we do not fix Mughal Agra all in all in these grand structures and undermine its commercial and industrial gravity. The shift of capital from Agra to Delhi true entailed relocation of Emperor Shah Jahan with his cavalry, harem, *darhans* (door keepers), *Khitmatgars* (personal attendants), and a number of professional communities, and must had been unfavorable for economic prosperity of the city. The trade routes, economic magnitude and agricultural potential of the area were hardly smashed by this move. So we see economic continuity of this city throughout the seventeenth century.

The geographical factor was more dominant in flourishing trade in Surat. The waters and other ecological factors gave a space for industrial activities and commercial drives. The rise of Surat in 1570s as an outcome of three great empires the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman, and its prosperity a gift of conquest of Gujarat by Akbar(Gupta: 1979 8) undermines some other forces. The conquest of Gujarat as the determining factor for rise of Surat has been recognized by Shireen Moosvi as well in a different way. At the time Akbar conquered Gujarat ‘the major route connecting the inner core with the Gulf of Cambay was the one running through Ahmedabad to Agra via Ajmer’. Though the distance was fairly short, the interference of chiefs imposed security concerns. The conquest of Khandesh in 1601 by Akbar offered an alternative safe route; it ran south from Agra through Gwalior and Malwa to Burhanpur and then turned west crossing the Khandesh plains into southern Gujarat. This led to the rapid growth of Surat at the cost of Cambay in 17th century. (Moosvi, 1992 125) A recent work on the rise of Surat has emphasized the importance of both pre and post Mughal times. The work distinguishes three phases in the rise of Surat to prominence (Subrahmanyam: 2000 21).The 1530s saw the first phase when Rander and to a lesser extend Surat benefited from slow decline of the Cambay. The second phase follows on cession of Diu to Portuguese in 1535, when Surat was fortified and emerged as the major alternative not only to Cambay but also to Diu. The last and most important commenced by Mughal conquest which enabled Southern Gujarat to be integrated to the heartland of Hindustan (Subrahmanyam: 2000 31-32).

In these commercial driven cities we see widespread circulation of commodities and coinage. There we see also the amalgamation of merchants from different locations. So Surat was inhabited by Turkish, Persian, Arab, and Armenian people(Gokhale: 1979 73).This flow of people would not have necessitated exchange of commodities and ideas but also of trade tools and techniques. We also presume development of many substandard languages in these cities and a good chunk of polyglot people especially among broker class. The economic importance of the city can be supposed from the figures of the English and Dutch trade from this city. In 1619 the value of goods shipped by the English company was about £39,923. By the same year ,the net gains of Surat trade were reckoned at £200,000(Gokhale, 1979 93).It comes from the English factors that Surat in 1634 struck Rs. 8,000 daily (5000 for English and 3,000 for Dutch, and in 1636 it coined Rs. 6,000 daily for English(Moosvi: 1987 56).The figures propose that Surat mint coined more than Rs. 8,000 daily during the years 1634-1636(Moosvi: 1987 56). So the cities like Surat we note were much advance in commercial engagements than the other cities.

In Benares, like other holy cities, we see more devotional monuments and it was far ahead in imparting education than commercial drive cities. Though these cities were rich in education but the superstitious aspect cannot be ignored here. The principal *pagoda* (temple) of the Hindus was in this city and four hundred of normal size(Manrique: 1927 146).Adjoined to the main temple was a college (Tavernier: 1977 183),where Brahmans gave lessons to their pupil. Though teachings were predominated by the religious preaching (Tavernier: 1977 183), but secular education was not absent. Tavernier himself saw these Brahmans making arithmetic figures on ground with chalks(Tavernier: 1977 183)and Bernier could observe these *pandits* acquainted with the doctrines of ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle(Bernier: 2012 259). But he was also disgusted by some superstitious beliefs particularly of the burning of women with the body of those husbands whom they frequently hated while alive. (Bernier: 2012 261)

These holy cities also provided space for urbanization. The religious centers were patronized by the state as well as by the commercial magnates. So Shah Jahan had granted a pension of Rs 2,000 to the chief Brahman at Benares (Bernier: 2012 257). The main pagoda had enough resources to build stone steps from the main door of pagoda to the river, chambers for the dwellings of Brahmans, and residence for the students (Tavernier: 1977 179). The maintenance of the kitchen where food was prepared for the Brahmans, pupils, and for pilgrims necessitated adequate money and human energy. This would have also facilitated demand of certain items, which were more associated to this kitchen and temple like rice, flowers, scented oil, saffron etc. But the prosperity and continuity of Benares purely on religious lines seems problematic. The commercial factor and economic potential can hardly be denied (Spear: 1980 52).

The commercial importance of the Brouach dates back to the antiquity, but the seventeenth century marked some outstanding changes both in quality and quantity of the merchandise. We have a number of descriptions by travelers who visited this city at different times in the seventeenth century. The European travellers from Thomas

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Roe to Abbe Carre have provided brief descriptions of this city. The city was situated on the right bank of the river Narbada (Tavernier: 1977 54) between 21°25'45” and 22°15'16” north latitude and 72°34’19” and 73°12’15” east longitude (Gazetteer: 1961 1). The city of the north was Kaira, to the East Baroda, west was Cambay and to the South was Surat (Gazetteer: 1961 1). The population of the city has been exaggerated as two lakh souls, though we are seldom sure about Mughal statistics. The total area of the town of Broach in 1871 was 2943.2 square miles. For Palsaert Broach was a small city, 20 koss north of Surat and entirely surrounded by the wall of whitewashed stone and looked more a fort than a city (Palsaert: 1925 42). While as Tavernier regards that Broach was a large city separated into two parts, the Upper and the Lower. The upper part which lies on the river side remains mostly inaccessible because of its steepness (Fawcett: 1990 140). The lower side seems anew and more urbanized. Here are the bazars, the custom house and the huge buildings for Mughal officers and of principal traders. This area only is surrounded by wall on the all sides (Fawcett, 1990 140). It seems that “the city looked more fort than a city” to Palsaert would have been actually only that area where there were houses of companies, the Mughal Custom house, and the flourished markets. This would have conditioned Mughals to surround it by high walls and also maintain a contingent here. Because Mirat-i Ahmadi notes that there was a Mughal Faujdar with a contingent of 250 cavalry.

Palsaert reagards that the climate of Broach was more certain than the other towns of India, however river Narbada would not have let the inhabitants certain about the calamities (Palsaet: 1925 42-43). The climate year of the town can be divided into 1) Winter Season from November to February, 2) Hot season from March to May, 3) South-west monsoon season from June to September, 4) Transition month of October (Gazetteer, 1961 8).

As Akbar conquered Gujarat in 1572, Surat and Broach were first to be put under Mughal fold. Mirza Atka, the first faujdar of Broach could not crush the dissented powers fully. So Muzaafar Shah exploiting the space provided by weak administration of Mirza Atka tried to reestablish himself in 1583. But the endeavor was brutally suppressed by Akbar (Gazetteer, 1961 67-68). For Mughals Broach was important not only for the trade and commerce, but its strategic position made it more significant for them. However, here we are concerned only to its economic spheres.

The English officials at Surat Aldworth and Withington saw good fortunes for company at Broach, and desired a factory in this place. So they pleaded to Jahangir, and were allowed to establish a trading house at Broach (Gazetteer: 1961 68). The subahdar of Gujarat, Mahabat Khan wrote to his officials at Broach soon after Jahangir’s farman in favour of Company that a house be provided to the English on rent and no one harm them there by land or sea (Foster, 1900 143). The English settled a factory there, which remained subordinate to factory at Surat (Foster: 1900 143). Jahangir’s presence at Ahmedabad in 1618 was capitalized by the Dutch (Van Ravesteyn) to seek Emperors farman in favor of Company to trade here (Prakash: 1984 14). The establishment of the Dutch factory made this city as a competitive region between these two companies for decades (Gazetteer: 1961 68). Abbe Carre when visited this place got enthralled, and wished a French company here but the deplorable conditions of this company at Surat made it inmaterial (Fawcett: 1990 140).

So conquest of Gujarat (Brouch) in 1573 and the establishment of East India factories were the two most important regenerative forces to evolve this area into an adult city. The Mughal conquest not only mounted the demand of textiles from this area for harem and nobles, but this town was inter-linked with other Mughal cities like Lahore, Burhanpur, Agra and Delhi. By the second decade of seventeenth century, the English and the Dutch connected it directly or indirectly with cities like Mokha, Aden, Mozambique as far as Achin and Java.

The evolution of Broach as a city was actually the importance it had accomplished as a center of manufactures. The production of variety of textiles made this city known across continents, though textiles were not only production. Mandelso affirms that the areas around Broach were very fertile yielding rice, wheat, and barley. Though these are the articles of daily consumption, but the trade in these commodities is expectable (Commissariat 1931: 15) Thevenot saw the trade in agates dominant in this territory and mostly sold at Cambay (Thevenot: 1949 7). John Fryer who extensively travelled in India in 1670s saw many tobacco fields at Broach (Gokhale 1974: 485). The English Factories record that hides and liquor were also sent from Broach to Surat (Foster 1906105). It seems that hides were transshipped to Surat for England but the liquor of Broach was not of such quality. The case seems that this liquor would have been used by English for local trade at Surat. Because we see that the Mughal emperors themselves liked the European imported liquors, and in fact this was the best present to corrupt Mughal emperors. Pietra Della Valle records that on his visit to this port, he was offered Tari, which he explains as liquor drawn from the nut-trees of India, whitish and a little troubled like Brish wine (Valle 1991: 61-62). Ali Reis, an early traveller mentions the manufacture of this local wine from the tree called as tari aguadji (millet tree). The branches of this tree are cut and liquid like arrack is squeezed and exposed to heat of the sun and this way it is prepared (Reis 1898: 29).

Broach was more famous across cities of Asia and Europe for the best baftas it produced. (Alexander 1995: 144). It was the chief city in India for baftas and cotton yarn (Foster 1899: 33). The baftas of Broach were in high demands at Achin, Java, Mozambique, and at Mocha (Palsaert 1925: 43). Tavernier mentions both long and narrow baftas made in great quantity here, and are very beautiful and closely woven (Tavernier 1925: 54). The baftas were of varied qualities ranging from 4 upto Rs. 100 (Tavernier 1925: 54), though fluctuations were not
uncommon. The English exported the cloths mostly from Broach. For *Globe* in 1617 English bought 1152 pieces of *baftas* in a single order from this city (Foster 1900: 110). In Jan 1620 the English facotry at Broach procured white and black *baftas*, kamkhanis, berams, asmanis, sircandia and similar other textiles for Achin, Java Sumatra, and England (Prakash 1984: 131).

The Dutch company competed with the English in securing commodities at Broach. As early as March 1617 bought the textiles as follows; white and black *baftas* (bafta was a generic term for a plain calico of Gujarat esp. of Broach and Navsari), varying in quality from coarse to fine- the latter costing twice the former. *Baftas* sent to Europe were generally white while as for Asian markets were dyed blue, black and red. After the Gujarat famine of 1630, these *baftas* were tried at many other places thus the trem lost the local significance.) and cannikens (cheap coarse calico, dyed black or blue, patolas ( a well-known type of silk cloth, the warp and the weft being tie-dyed before weaving according to the predetermined pattern. The chief industry was at Patan), with a length of 6 *asta* per piece for Java, Moluccas and Ambinoa: *some pintudos as per the samples provided*; sail cloth (Prakash 1984: 21). In 1619-20 the list of the commodities bought by Dutch at Broach was much varied. They bought for trade at Mocha and other places; broad *baftas* of length 2½ covids and width ½ covids at 5-4 mahmudis per piece, fine *baftas* of length 21 covids and width 1 covid at 7 to 15 mahmudis per piece, coarse *baftas* of length 21 covids, width 1 covid at ¾ to 4 mahmudis per piece, black *baftas* of length 5½ covids and width ¾ covids at 16 to 16½ mahmudis per 20 pieces, Red Chelas of length 7 covids and width 1 3/8 covids at 35 to 36 mahmudis per 20 pieces (Prakash 1984: 127).

The price inflation of cloths in 1620 was caused by Dutch investment in this product and also as some brokers started independently investing for Mohka. But despite the prices were so dear, English in the year of 1628 alone invested 40,000 *mahmudis* in this product (Foster 1909: 230).In the coming year they purchased 2500 pieces of *bafta* (2000 broad and 500 narrow), besides 700 maunds of cotton. (Foster 1909: 230).

The dyeing and bleaching were closely connected to cloth manufacturing. So Broach was also celebrated for dying and bleaching of cotton textiles, which were cut into pieces as per European specifications and transported to different Asian and European cities (Maloni 2008: 72). Secondly, the water of river *Narbada* was supposed more suitable for this purpose. So for bleaching, calicoes were brought from all corners of the Mughal Empire (Tavernier 1925: 54). The English and Dutch also bought clothes not only at Broach but in other parts of India and transhipped for bleaching to Broach. At times when there was not much time to first buy clothes and then to bleach them, company pursued to buy bleached goods. (Foster 1900: 282). So important was trade in bleached goods for Company that Aldworth the English official at Surat in 1613 sent his own servant particularly for the purpose to look over well bleaching of white calicoes for Company (Foster 1900: 100).

The indigo was an important commodity exported from this city, and was generally called as Jambusar indigo as it was collected from suburb (Jambusar) area of this city bearing the same name. The English ships frequently exported this commodity to the other colonies. The *Lion* in 1619 sent to red sea included 12 churls of Jambusar indigo woth 1132 *mahmudis*. The rate of this indigo was 20 *mahmudis* the maund (Foster 1900: 100). But the English always warned their officers not be deceived by the duplicity of this commodity. Not only bales were of irregular size, and mostly failing the claimed weight, but this commodity was of inferior quality (Foster: 1906 310). They regarded this not a worthy commodity to be shipped for home. The Dutch also regarded it substandard quality to be sent to home and was mainly used to dye clothes of poor quality like black *baftas*, cannikens, etc (Prakash 1984: 234-235). Even at times the Mughal officials were forcing this indigo upon English and Dutch merchants. Sometimes this sort of indigo was mixed with the *sarkhej* indigo as adultery.

We have a reference of ship building at Broach. Pietra Della Valle was carried to a place where carpenters were building a small ship which Valle calls as *patache*. From this we assume ship building at Broach (Valle 1991: 61-62). The ship building would have been facilitated by the availability of the timber near the port. We also assume that only the small size ships were built and the large ships in voyage were renovated here.

In the city of Broach there was well developed financial system. The bills of exchange were both credited and withdrawn here. The factors at Surat in 1618 sent a *hundee* of 4000 *mahmudis* to the officials at Broach (Foster 1906 111). Thomas Kerridge and Rastell on August 1619, again send a *hundee* of 6000 *mahmudis* to Broach officials (Foster 1906 114). At times the English credited money at Broach to withdraw it at Surat with a rate of interest ¼. The *hundees* at Broach were issued for Agra, Surat, Ahmadabad, Baroda and vice versa (Foster 1899, 283).

The banking system at Broach by second decade of the seventeenth century was efficiently working. The Dutch sources give us a good idea of the potential of the merchants of this city and the way they invested capital. Soon after Dutch settled in this city, they started raising loans. Narain Ramji, provided a loan of Rs 2000 to Geleynssen de Jongh on on 1st of Jan., 1627 for a period of 12 months and one more 1st Jan 1628 and paid off after 10 2/3 months. Another loan was taken by the same person from Govindji Laleji on 1st April 1627 for a period of 8 ¾ months. The Dutch at times bought merchandise on borrow and returned to these merchants/brokers after marketing at destined places. So Sankoti Surji supplied 200 mans of cotton yarn payment for which was made after the arrival of cash from Batavia or Holland (Alam: 1990 302). The persons who lent money to the Dutch at times were mostly the local merchants and the brokers. Narainji Sewadas was an exception who was a *sarraf*. The
brokers brought not only the suppliers and purchasers of the goods together but also the those who supplied money and those who wanted it (Alam: 1990:303).

In Broach there was also a custom house where the merchants paid their custom dues on the goods imported and to be exported (Tavernier 1925:54). There were at times disputes between the merchants / company and the Mughal officials over the custom dues. The customs for commodities as usual were paid at a single place in Mughal domains but we are informed that local officials were frequently forcing customs on merchants at multiple places. So the English factors bore a grudge for being forced to pay separately at Ahmadabad, Broach and Surat for same lot of commodities (Foster 1900:80). In 1619 the English Factors at Surat complained to Mughal official Himmat Khan against this ill practice (Foster 1906:133). Though they were assured by the subahdar as usual, but we hear these complaints from English again and again. Palsaert was also disturbed by this toll, made that if they were exempted from this, they will carry all their merchandise from and to Agra via this route which is more convenient and less time consuming than the Burhanpur route (Palsaert 1925:43).

Abbe Carre mentions that at times the people of Broach bore the worst prosecution, and Mughals were fixed to destroy their temples and religion. The only way out people took was to strip off their idols of best jewels and present these to Mughals (Fawcett 1990:140). He implicitly makes that it adversely affected the prosperity of this city. This seems misleading and actually pictures Aurangzeb as an iconoclast, which modern researches strongly refute. Hamilton also speaks in same language that the town lost its importance as hub of trade because of the wars of Aurangzeb with his brothers. He razed the walls of the town and no one dared to rebuild these. But the threat from Shivaji’s incursions made him to rebuild these walls himself (Alexander 1995:140). Hamilton could not see that these skirmishes were not particular to this city, but succession battles were actually fought in Agra. The progress of trade barely disappeared at Agra. So the harmful effects of these skirmishes were neither perpetual nor catastrophic for Broach. Moreover, it was not for the first time that Broach saw this political turmoil. We are informed by Ali Reis of a similar case in 1550’s (Reis 1898:26-27). When Sultan Bahadur died and was succeeded by minor Ahmed, Nasir ul Mulk a noble of high rank bore the desire of kingship. He with the aid of Portuguese concentrated his power and army in the fort of Broach. Soon Ahmad with his army reached Broach, fought many battles and razed to dust the glory of both these infidels (Portuguese) and of this ungrateful noble. Though for many days the two armies fought each other, and even destroyed many buildings, but commercial importance of the city was not buried once for all. In the same period Pearson quotes that in Surat forced conversion to Islam and tyranny towards bariahs led them migrate en masse to Broach (Pearson 1976:122). From this two assertions can be made. First there was no prosecution against these bariahs in Broach, who were mostly Hindus. Secondly they saw more economic room in migrated Broach than the other surrounded cities of Surat. Therefore we regard that Broach continued as important center of trade and transshipment throughout the period of our study. So our study finds that Broach in seventeenth century was a well-developed city, where there were rich merchandise and advanced financial system. There were brokers, sarrafs, hundees issued and withdrawn and recognized coinage system. The different ethnic groups celebrated harmony and maintained trade relations irrespective of religious affinities. Broach remained under the jurisdiction of mutassadi of Surat, and main outpost for Surat. But it had independent trade relations with other cities like Ahmadabad, Baroda as for as Malacca. So this city accelerated the urbanization in Gujarat and added to the progress of trade of companies and economic prosperity of the Mughal Empire. The examination of sources make it clear that though there were forces of disturbance in the second half of seventeenth century, but the city of Broach was counted among the few flourished cities of Mughal empire by the end of this century.

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