



Revisiting the sources of Rajasthan history: A Regional Perspective

¹Kera Ram,²Kavisha Yadav,

¹Research Scholar,²Research Student

¹Department of Social Work

¹Sardar Patel University, Anand, India

Abstract: In Medieval scholarship, Regional history is very much popular, since long ago. But one is hampered in most cases by a lack of detailed information specific to particular region. If there is one region where strictly local evidence is so massive as to enable us to construct a picture on that evidence alone, it's region of Rajasthan. It can be seen in development of recent decades, where it has been huge canvas of new historiography with different approaches.

Rajasthan history a fast moving and constantly evolving Field in south Asian scholarship, due to its massive availability of rich and diverse sources.

This paper will explore and revisit the immensely diverse and detail documentation for the landscape of Rajasthan, that have resulted in exceptional growth in research conducted on socio-economic and cultural history of medieval Rajasthan.

After introducing sources, paper will also trace how these sources are overlapped while forging social and economic aspects of the region.

Keywords: Regional History, Sources, Rajasthan, Medieval History

I. INTRODUCING THE REGION

Usually, general notion about Rajasthan is a deserted landscape, with lots of livelihood problems, and scarcity of resources. But that is not reality, even for present and past as well. Though, geographically it can be termed as difficult terrain but when one look at its historical development, we witnessed a very vast and complex different picture that is contrast to popular notion looking towards Rajasthan. On one hand, we can see extensive trade with vibrant economies, and parallelly imperial centre trying to Interact with local's chieftains. Similarly, there were huge interactions in different social group as well. Geographically, it can't be claim some certain borderline about Medieval Rajasthan, because the modern state of Rajasthan is creation (or result) of Tod's imagination of borderline. This arid and semi arid region start forming boundaries in 16th century which was perceived by Mughals and later by British and also adopted by Modern Indian government as well.

Although, many Rajput states, started emerging autonomous while struggling within in late 12th century onwards. This region surrounded by, in North Imperial capital-Delhi, South was coastal trading centre Gujarat Ports, while southeast area was Malwa-a huge centre to connecting dakshinapath and utrapath. So the region of study was a popularly, a major centres of trade and carvans coming from Sindh, from Delhi, and from East and sometimes from south so it can be termed as 'trans-regional zone' simultaneously 'cross cultural' point as well as, which is highlighted by Ziegler (Ziegler1976).

To study this Medieval Rajasthan, there are varieties of sources. I will unravels some of them here and how we can utilize the same for socio-economic history of the region.

ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

There are wise and vast ranges of archival documents available for the history of the region. One category is the Arsatthas. This word come from arhsath (sixty eight). As S.P.Gupta (1968) states that "it is being supposed that it was compiled from the daily entries from as many as sixty eight documents". It is most useful revenue records and provides comprehensive information about total income and expenditure of pargana, including details of villages. It gives estimated income, appears, return and expenditure incurred under different heads in the pargana. The area under the zabti and bataijinsi crops for entire pargana is given in arsatthas. The amount of land revenue and the names and magnitude of numerous other cesses are also entered in them. It contains valuable information on the nature of land grant under the bhom, prices of food grains and value of silver relative to gold (muhr) and copper (taka); pattern of ijara, nature of jagirs assigned to the sub-assignees, paragana administration and commercial activities. As Dr Choudhary (2018) notes that these also vital because "provides abundant information about the society, sometime even the seamy side of peasant life."

Similarly, R.P. Rana (2006) argues that these have useful information regarding every day forms of peasant resistance, as he notes about hasil-firohi column by which we can, "construct a narrative of every day forms of peasant resistance" further he added, "also get a graphic account of the nature and incidence of sundry other offences committed by the villagers". These arhsattas are different types i.e. arhsatta-bhomi, arhsatta-mujmil, arhsatta-imaratkharh etc.

Another archival source is Bahis. There are varieties of BAHISI. Like Hukumat Bahi, Focus on political events after Jaswant Singh. Other than political development it also through a flood of light on various socio-economic of Marwar. It reflects on detailed information on increment during period of 1583 to 1638. For example it states about dams in jodhpur pargana as "... त्यागी विगत –

असल – 5885000, इजाफे -8840000.” It also gives description of who died in wars, their religion, and simultaneously satis episodes as well. Further it’s valuable account of village wise distribution of land with caste of jagirdar and other details of pattas i.e. date, description if any change, who is holding later and proper location etc. It has list of “ sardars who held pattas.” This is valuable source to understand pattadari system. Other examples are Rukka-Parwana Bahis, Haaqiqat-bahi,Patta -bahis,Kharita Bahis,Oadha-Bahis etc.

Third category is Yaddasht (yadidasti). It stood for “memoranda or documents of remembrance”. It has information of land-cultivated or not, and simultaneously other aspects of land assets. Sometimes these yaddasht treated as a kind of patta to the jagirdars at the time of grant of jagirs by the rulers or at the time of restoration of it to the son of a deceased jagirdar. It has detail amount of grant and sometimes records of ploughs and bullocks per cultivator alongwiththeir castes. Example- Pargana ChalKalyana VS 1722 and Yadidasti Hal Bail Pargana Bahatri VS.1762.

Fourth is Parwanas. It is used for order or letter of instructions issued by Maharaja to his subordinates like diwan, wakil and other subordinates. It generally provide details of duties and right of subordinates people. The parwanas provide us important information about lands or villages granted in punyauk to the Brahmans taking care of the temples or to the charans and Bhats.

Another is Amal –dastur. It is usually provide information or rules for the exactions and levies particularly on local trade and commerce. It also provides comprehensive schedules of the local revenue rates and levis on agricultural or non agricultural products. S.P. Gupta by analyzing some amal-dastur rahdari documents argued that “very large numbers of peasants were not able to reach the open market at all. They, therefore, had no choice but to sell their goods to the village merchants.”

There is Komwar document, which stand for “the rules applicable to the people caste wise.” These records have huge amount of information about Kachhwahas i.e. Political, social, rituals and religious life as well, and also “are helpful to assess the reputation enjoyed by various chiefs in Jaipur court.” One Example is Dastur Komwar :Rajawat.

Another archival Wakil reports were written by vakils of rulers posted in imperial court. It helps us to understand development in contemporary politics and moves of Emperor-Raja. For example of Wakil reports of Maharangan, which reveals data about Mughal Court i.e. increament in mansab and jagir, attitude of Emperor, wazir and other official towards rajput states. It generally provide details of duties and right of subordinates people as well as information about land grantee. These reports throw considerable light on the petty interests of various groups of nobility at the Mughal Court and their mutual conflicts, as also their attitude towards rebel zamindars such as the Naruka Rajputs and the Jats.

Another archival category is Arzdashts. It is written by amils, faujdars and other official who posted in various pargana. Arzdashts have large amount of political, social and economic aspects. It also helps us to understand relationship between patron and client. They contain Raja’s direction to his officials, reflecting the attitude of jagirdar with regards to their jurisdiction territories.

Taqsim are mainly administrative and accountancy manuals of 17th and 18th Centuries, which contains summary account of revenue in pargana including it’s villages, total area of a paragana, simultaneously uncultivated land as well. Sometimes the area under charitable land is also mentioned. Example- taqsimdahsala pargana Dausa VS 1787-1798. Similarly, one more category is Takhmina, that give us details of estimates of revenue of villages in a pargana covering the details of crop production and revenue demand per bigha in kind. The fact that these documents give the crop yields make them especially valuable. Example- TakhminoparganoMalarna, VS 1794.

Nirakh-bazars records contain details of Market rates in a pargana or qasba for all commodities. It included the prices of agricultural and non agricultural products along with gold(kundan), good muhr, silver and different kinds of taka(copper). Nirakh -jamabandi is one more category of document that supplementaries to nirkh-bazar. They give current prices of different crops datewise under kharif and rabi.

Amber records, are dominated by Bankers and official as well. These help us to construct relationship between Court and mercantile classes. Like Siyah (Shah) is a appealing letter to King. It has routine activities of Court as well. Similarly Siyah Huzur is also day to day records of court, appealed to Raja for adjudicating disputes. Khatut-i-Ahalkaran highlights letter exchanged between various officials. Khatut-a-Maharajgan highlights disputes between various Rajput States.

Jamabandis give a detailed account of the amount of revenue assessed upon an individual village or paragana in a single harvest or both (kharif and rabi). The rate of assessment per bigha, rate payable in cash or in kind, the total produce, the share of the cultivators and the state, showing the kind of crops and their Prices, perquisites in cash or kind, the village charges and expenses, the total value of the produce in money are given in these valuable jamabandis.

Khasra documents specify the name of propertietor and the cultivator of each field, its length and breadth, it’s area in bighas and biswas, the quality of the soil and the crop growing upon it. Information about individual cultivator’s holding, helps us to determine the extent of stratification among peasants. The share of the state and raiyati out of the total production is also started. The rates on different crops under zabti are given. These papers were prepared and duly signed by the patwari and Patel, the headman and the accountant respectively. Example- KhasromauzaSundri VS.1719.

Muwazana documents contain information about the number of villages, the area of arable land, land under cultivation, waste, forest, nullah, hilly strips. These also help us to understand the jama figure as well. The detailed information as to whether a particular village, in a particular year was in khalisa or jagir or in’am or ijara, is contained in such documents. Similarly, Muwazanakalan and Muwazanakhurds (khitthis) are valuable papers for understanding the working of the institution of zamindari, containing as they do valuable information about the condition of peasants, forced labour, complaints of peasants lodged with the pargana officials about the oppression of zamindars, and jagirdars. The land rights of different classes and the obligation of landed class towards the state are recorded in miscellaneous papers contained in these bundles.

Sand contain miscellaneous information such as an individual’s emoluments, titles, privileges, offices or the state rights to revenue from land. The sands were issued by the diwan and a record of them was kept in his office.

Roznama are the daily account of receipts and expenditure, land revenue of each village in a pargana along with the different cesses other than land revenue such as peshkash, rahdaripuro, jurayan, chobi etc. These documents were maintained by the potadar of a pargana.

These archival documents shed light on revenue administration, mechanism of surplus extraction, various aspects of rural economy and society including linkage between agrarian economy and social relations. The statistical data of these records is crucial to ascertaining the magnitude of land revenue demand and trend in agriculture productions as well. Talking about archival records like

Arzdasht, Arsatthas, Chithiyat Dr Choudhary states that “(These documents) contain information regarding the prevailing social, political and economic conditions.”

Another category is Mughal Farmans. For example “Farmans of Mughal emperor, mainly Shahjahan and Aurangzeb addressed to Mirza Raja Jai Singh during the war of succession.” (Sharma) There are large scale farman, for example Mughal address Bikaner house in Farmans of 1595, 1596, 1597, 1602, 1604, 1605, 1607, 1667. There are huge Mughal chronicles which are useful to fill the gap of Rajasthan history. These chronicles help us to understand geo-politics and social status of Rajput kingdoms. Chronicles like Ain-i-Akbari and Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri give immense information about rank of Rajput, political developments and other areas.

LITERARY SOURCES

There are many Rajasthani literary sources as well, which contain information about king, their family members, and their battles. Recent studies show that “the literature of a particular period of time can also be read to understand its history”. G.D. Sharma categorizes this into three categories as follows-

1. Khyats, Bats, Vamshavalis, Vachanika
2. Vigats
3. Poetic works

One primarily and popular literary source is Khyat, which emerged from the tradition of composition of panegyric works of poetry and prose in the Rajasthan courts. It’s a account of glory, that “contained histories of battles, sacrifice, valor and chivalry, values that came to be associated with Rajput and were often exhortation to the Rajput.” (Tanuja, 2016) While, Ziegler trace it as “the term Khyat is related to the Sanskrit word khyati and Apabhramsa word akhyati but in Dimgala, it’s evolved in the sense of both, one is which is told or proclaimed and other is account or description”. (Ziegler) Let me interface one of Khyat i.e. Nainsi ri Khyat (Written and composed by Muhanot Nainsi, seventeenth century official from Marwar court), which deals with history of Rajput clan predominantly. This contains a collection of bats as well as kavitts, dohas, vamsvallis and pidhivallis. It has “valuable information about the social structure and politics of the 17th century Rajput States of Rajasthan.” (Sharma, 1977) This text page by page provides information about various branches of Rajputs, “state land revenue demand, nature of the bhom rights, practice of Bhai-bant and pattadari system prevalent in these (Rajput) states.”

Other examples are temdiarathikana ri Khyat, KhampMertia ri Khyat, AjitSinghji ri Khyat, Sindhi Priyagdas ri Khyat, Champawata ri Khyat, Kumptawata ri Khyat, Bankidas ri Khyat, Muraridan ri Khyat, Sisodiyani ri Khyat, Jodhpur-Rajya-ki-Khyat etc.

Shyamal Das’s Vir Vinod is another source, but he is working in shadow of Col. Tod. This account is written by Diwan Shyamal Das of Udaipur. Its four volumes give detailed information about “contemporary rulers of Rajasthan (Rajput kingdoms) and their meetings, interaction, encounters, marriage alliances, political ties, friendship and hostilities with Ranas of Udaipur.”

Bat tradition, is a tale form of Dimgala prose narration. This term derived from varta, a Sanskrit word that means account or tiding. Locally this bata is used as kahani. There is tradition practiced nowadays as well, that children brought with these bata.

Vamshavalis are genealogical account of the royal kinsmen, compiled by Bhats. In these Charan and Bhats glorified this land under the patronage of princely Kingdom. Few examples are Suryavamsavali, Badvadevidanvamsavali, Rathora-ri-Vamshavali.

Another literary genre is Vigat, “a kind of gazetteer” is literary account of past. For example Marwar-ra-pargana-ri-vigat, has valuable information about socio-economy of Marwar during Jaswant Singh, where Nainsi recorded “a systematic pargana-wise account of Marwar giving details about the evolution of each and every pargana as well as the history of their ruling families.” This vigat also contains various significant Political, economic and social aspects of all villages of each Pargana. Marwarra pargana ri vigat gives us pargana wise Details of land and people as well. He also “describes battles, marital alliances, cadet lines, court rituals, sasan grants, pattas apart from the descriptions of events during the reign of Jaswant Singh, his patron.” (Tanuja, 2016)

There are many sanskrit text as well, which are in poetic form, and deals with our area of study, like Ekalingamahatmyam of Ekalingaji, Rana kumbha’s sangitaraja, Sutradhara Mandana’s rajaballabhamandana, Ranachoda Bhatta’s amarakavyam and Rajaprasasti Mahakavyam, Jinaprabha Suri’s vividhatirthakalpa, Jayasimha Suri’s hammiramadamardana, Nyayacandra Suri’s hammira-mahakavyam, Jinapala’s kharataragacchabrhad-gurvvali, Jinavijaya’s kharataragacchapattavali, jainpustakaprasastisamgraha etc.

TRAVEL ACCOUNT

One of major source of studying medieval Rajasthan is James Tod’s The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan- which not only inspired nationalist but also shaped vernacular imagination of past. James Tod, an official of the East India company, who learnt Sanskrit and Marwari dialects from a local Jainacharya. He traveled extensively in Rajasthan in the early nineteenth century and met various Rajput chiefs and collected local bardic traditions.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES

This category includes archaeological excavation and their reports, Inscriptional records and Numismatic findings as well. These Archeological evidences help us in examining the truth in past literary tradition which are a composition of myth, exaggeration and reality. This can be done by Archaeological Excavation reports, Different Inscription records and Numismatic findings. Epigraphic and Numismatic sources form a valuable supplement in fixing the chronological events and determination of the physical extent of a kingdom. For Rajasthan, there are large number of Inscription which are useful to fill the gap of our written sources, varies from sultanate to Mughal period. These Inscriptions either eulogies the Imperial sovereign i.e. Nagor Inscription 1248, has name of king or their opponents, and thus offer some Direct evidence of nature of political control the area. It doesn’t mean that these only limited to political aspects only. Bari khatu Inscription (1203) give reference to construction of building, similarly Kaman Inscription (1204) records constitution of well, tank and mosque by Amir. Sambhar Inscription (1363) also records the construction of a step well during governorship of Malik Kamaluddin Ahmad Khurram through the best efforts of Bamdeo. This Inscription also refers to allotment of some quality of salt as well. One more thing this Inscription is bilingual as well as.

Further examples are Abu Inscription and Delwara Inscription both talk about tax imposition. The former reflects on some relaxation on state (by mewar) levies as valami and ras(kha)vali in Arbuduchala and (Mewar state levied a security tax in place of

pilgrimage outside mewar.) While later records imposition of 14 tankas on travellers for worship of Sri Dharmacivitamani. Nadol Inscription 1500 from temple aadinath and another Inscription from Zawar 1421 give details about social group of Jain . Similarly jain festivity can be traced from jalor Inscription 1211, as well, which records Dipavali as a religious festival of Jains. There are varieties of prashasties (i.e. The Raj prashasti of 1676 , which preserve account of famine and measures to avert it) , Surehs or tablets (i.e. Abu tablet of 1449 -refers to coin and officer who was charge of collecting cess), Memorial pillars (i.e. The Gor Singh memorial stone of 1689, which indicates his personal qualities as a hero) , Pillar inscription (i.e. Inscription of Kirtistambha ,13th century, Inscription of Vijayastambha of 15th century , The Stambha of Jai Singh near Amber 18th century etc.), Temple inscription (like Jalor Inscription 1211), Sati slabs (i.e. Sati slab of Kameti- through the light on the sacrifice of women folk for the cause of the country) and many other Inscriptions on the Pedestals, Inscriptions on tomb and mosques etc., these all provided immense information on social and economic aspects of our study.

Recently, new historical paradigms emerged which emphasison tradition and memory to reconstruct the past of community or sect. There are lots of potentiality in alternative sources like ballads, different songs of community, mythical memory and other traditions, to reconstruct or fill the gaps of historical past. These new insights open up new ways to enrich field of medieval Rajasthan, byraising newquestions and methodologies.

In sum-up we can say that there are varieties of sources including literary genres, Mughal chronicles, official documents and European documents to be explored and used for the historiographical narrative of the region. Although these documents are overlapped while tracing the information. But this drawback help us to fill the gap or cross checking of historical past, Like for example various village level details can be traced from khasra, taqsim and yaddashti documents as well, so we can fill the gap between the Interval, and also cross verification of information can be done. This mean these sources can not be termed as unidirectional only. Varieties of these can be used to construct economic and social history of medieval Rajasthan i.e. details of Cultivation, different crops, social division, incidence of land tax, structure of rights, the framework of revenue, adminstration, organization of trade, caste etc.

As Ziegler rightly pointed out, “social and cultural data capable of providing insights into a range of important questions regarding caste interactions and ranking, the nature of local legitimacy and authority, the changing structure of political loyalties over time , and many others” (Ziegler). Although, every source has it’s own limitation (s), so as a student of history while using these sources to garner information, we need to examined these critically within their time framed and context.

Bibliography

- Ahluwalia, M.S. Muslim Expansion in Rajasthan, New Delhi: Yugantar Prakashan, 1978, pp . 1-10.
- Chandra, Satish. Sing, Raghubir. Sharma, G D. (edi.) Jodhpur Hukumat-ri-bahi, New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1976.
- Choudhary, Manisha. Trade, Transport and Tanda: Shifting identities of the Banjaras, New Delhi: Manohar, 2018.
- Choudhary, Manisha. The Eternal Dastur Craft, Delhi : Primus Books, 2020, pp. xxxviii-xxxx & 231-234.
- Choudhary, Manisha. The History of Thar Desert: Environment, Culture and Society, Shimla: IAS, 2021, pp. 14-18.
- Gupta, Satya Prakash. The agrarian system of eastern Rajasthan 1650-1750, New Delhi: Manohar, 1986.
- Kothiyal, Tanuja, Nomadic Narratives A history of mobility and identity in the great Indian desert, New Delhi: Cambridge University press, 2016, pp. 18-21.
- Rana, R.P. Rebels to Rulers: the rise of Jat power in Medieval India 1665-1735, New Delhi: Manohar, 2006, pp. 18-21 & 207-209.
- Sharma, G.D., Rajput Polity, A study of Politics and Administration of the state of Marwar, 1638-1749, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977, pp. xiii-xvi. & 308- 318.
- Sinha, Nandita . State formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the Seventh-fifteenth Centuries, New Delhi: Manohar, 2002, pp. 22-23.
- Zeigler, Norman. The Seventeenth Century Chronicles of Marvara: A study in the evolution and use of oral Traditions in western India, History in Africa, vol.3, Cambridge University press, 1976,, pp. 127-153.
- Zeigler, Norman. The Marvari Historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social and History of Rajasthan , 1976.