I
Introduction

This work seeks to make an exploratory study of the Mughal state in its local context, as a process in constant negotiation with the local power relations. Unlike most studies on the Mughals, it looks at the state not from the perspective of the imperial centre, but of the localities. This shift in perspective entails a preference for 'process' over 'form', for the petty officials and the local power-holders over the *jagirdars* and high nobles, the forms of local power over the imperial grid and, indeed, the local conflicts and struggles over imperial stability. In short, what the study is primarily concerned with is the local experience of imperial sovereignty. But, this experience emerges through intricate levels of interconnectedness between the imperial sovereignty and local power relations. And, as this study unravels the layers of these connections, it is, hopefully, able to bring out the extent to which the system of rule, in its 'everyday form', represented and involved, reinforced and integrated the local structures of power.

The subject

Our objective clearly is not to de-privilege the state, but to expand the analytical framework for its study by re-positioning it within the social order. Drawing heavily on the established work on state in medieval and early modern Europe,[1] historians

[1] The predominant trend in European historiography has been to view the institutions and functions of the state as determined by a concern for taxes and soldiers alone. Theda Skocpol, for instance, sees the state as 'a set of administrative, policing and military organizations headed by an executive authority' that 'extracts revenues from society and deploys them to create and support coercive and administrative organizations'. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge, 1979). His position is shared, among others, by Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System, Vol. I, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A. D. 990–1990* (Cambridge, 1990); and Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. I, A History of Power from the Beginning to A. D. 1760* (Cambridge, 1986).

It is only recently that scholars have begun to criticise such a view of state, however influential, as narrow and constricting. See, for example, Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as a Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 1985); Ruth McKay, *The Limits of Royal Authority: Resistance and Obedience in Seventeenth Century Castile* (Cambridge, 1999); Wayne te Brake, *Shaping History: Ordinary People in European Politics, 1500–1700* (Berkeley, 1998); Julia Adams, 'The Familial State', *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994), 505–39; Philip Gorski, 'The Protestant

of South Asia generally perceive the Mughal state in purely fiscal and/or military terms. In their writings, they portray the state largely as a homeostatic structure restricted in its powers and functions to the realization of taxes and the maintenance of security (internal and external). Certainly, there is considerable disagreement among these historians concerning the strength and competence of the Mughal state, with some describing it a huge leviathan, others a paper tiger. But, the arguments on both sides are still quite narrowly focused on its coercive and extractive capacities. States do not only extract revenues, but also redistribute them. They not only use force, but also manufacture consent to ensure obedience. From the vantage point of the localities, this study is able to reveal the internal pressures that impinged on the state forcing it to participate in local arenas of politics and culture, and assume functions that transcended a concern with mere taxes and soldiers. In fact, the Mughal state was both enabled and frustrated in the exercise of its powers, even in the fulfilment of its extractive and coercive functions, by the consent of a pretty diffuse and dynamic political society in the localities. It was the dependence of state power on the local constituent political units that inexorably drew Mughal sovereignty closer to the multiple, if contradictory, concerns of society. In the localities, the Mughal state was buttressing the local systems of power, but was, at the same time, opening up negotiated spaces for the absorption of forces resisting them in the political system. It was also engaged in processes through which ordinary people instituted and maintained social and political norms through communication. But, state participation in social communication created intricate linkages between imperial ideology and the local framework of norms and values. It was these ideological relations between state and society that determined the 'moral economy of the state', that is, the system of norms that determined what was legitimate (and desirable) and illegitimate (and undesirable) in the exercise of state power.[2] The moral economy of the state thus provided the basis of the ideological dominance of the state and a mechanism for the construction of social consent for imperial sovereignty. The Mughal state was, quite paradoxically, both coercive and consensual; it was also both extractive and re-distributive. State formation in early modern South Asia proceeded in a dynamic relationship with the society, of which it was an integral part. The authority of state was deeply entangled with, and derived its meaning from local relations of power. This, in a way, is our point of departure from the existing work on the subject: the Mughal

Ethic Revisited: Disciplinary Revolution in Holland and Prussia', *American Journal of Sociology*, 99 (1993), 265–316; and Michael Braddick, 'The Early Modern English State and the Question of Differentiation, from 1550–1700', *CSSH*, 38, 1 (January 1996), 92–111.

[2] The term 'moral economy' was first used by E. P. Thompson to refer to the framework of local rights, norms and values that provided ideological justification to the resistance of subordinate social groups against their oppressors. E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present,* 50 (February 1971), 76–136; reprinted in E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991). The concept has been appropriated by scholars studying African political systems to emphasise the significance of political norms and expectations in legitimating and constraining state power. See William A. Munro, 'Power, Peasants and Political Development: Reconsidering State Construction in Africa', *CSSH*, 38, 1 (January 1996), 112–48.

state cannot be separated from social forces for it was continually moulded and reshaped by local power relations, alliances with social and political elites, popular resistance, social protests, communicative arenas of political arguments and contestation, local norms and values, etc.

This work is intended to serve as a critique of the structural-functionalist model that provides the backdrop to Mughal historiography. It is of course true that there is considerable disagreement among historians concerning the model that best describes the Mughal state, but they still largely share a concern with political taxonomy, and a view of the state as a stable, uniform and homeostatic structure, devoid of conflict and change. In one predominant view, attributed generally to the so-called 'Aligarh school' historians, but really enjoying a much wider currency, the Mughal state was a 'centralized-bureaucratic polity' that resembled, 'with an extreme systematization of administration, a new theoretical basis of sovereignty and a balanced and a stable composition of the ruling class', the 'quasi-modern state'.[3] For several other historians, it was a 'patrimonial-bureaucratic state', positioned somewhere between the extremes of the Weberian paradigms of a 'patrimonial state' and the 'modern bureaucratic state'.[4] Though scholars have refrained from applying the 'segmentary state' model to Mughal India, and have restricted its application to early medieval South India, a few have even found it worthwhile to explore the formation of the Mughal state exclusively within a ritualistic and theatrical frame of reference![5]

Despite substantial differences, the historians subscribing to these discrete models have more in common than is actually apparent. They share a framework that is synchronic, static and formal. They do not take into account the processes of change and conflict in the political system and, consequently, present overly monolithic

[3] M. A. Ali, 'Towards an Interpretation of the Mughal Empire', *JRAS*, 1 (1978), 38–49; also see M. A. Ali, 'The Mughal Polity – A Critique of Revisionist Approaches', *MAS*, 27, 4 (October 1993), 699–710.

[4] It was Stephen P. Blake who first formulated the thesis that the Mughal Empire was a 'patrimonial-bureaucratic state' (Stephen P. Blake, 'The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals', *JRAS*, 39, 1 (November 1979), 77–99; reprinted in Hermann Kulke (ed.), *The State in India, 1000–1700* (New Delhi, 1995), 278–303). Also see Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639–1739* (Cambridge, 1991). His argument has been supported by an influential historian of the Mughal period, J. F. Richards in *The New Cambridge History of India. Vol. I.2, The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 59.

[5] Under the influence of the structural school, several anthropological studies of African political systems have relied on the model of a 'segmentary lineage system' to depict the non-centralised political systems there. See, for example, Aidan Southall, *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (Cambridge, 1956); M. G. Smith, 'On Segmentary Lineage Systems', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 86, 2 (July–December 1956), 39–80; John Middleton and David Tait, *Tribes Without Rulers* (London, 1958); and Marshall D. Sahlins, 'Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion', *American Anthropologist*, 63 (1961), 322–45.

The 'segmentary model' was applied to the Chola state in South India by Burton Stein in his influential work, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (New Delhi, 1980). Stein has been severely criticized by several historians, in particular, R. Champakalakshmi, 'Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India – A Review Article', *IESHR*, 18, 3–4 (July–December 1981), 411–26; B. D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes and the Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India', presidential address, (Ancient India) *PIHC*, 44 session (Burdwan, 1983), New Delhi, 1984, 25–63; and James Heitzman, 'State Formation in South India, 850–1280', *IESHR*, 24 (1987), 35–61.

conceptions of the state. The disagreements among them concerning the vigour and competence of the Mughal state are all debated round the military–fiscal axis.

Perhaps, the most serious shortcoming common to all these models is that they isolate the state from social forces and overlook the extent of inter-connectedness between state and society. In the 'centralized-bureaucratic' model of the 'Aligarh school', the state being a powerful leviathan, its relations with society were unidirectional, with authority flowing definitely and unilineally from state to society and not vice versa. In Stephen Blake's 'patrimonial-bureaucratic state', all authority is shown to be emanating from the person of the Emperor and, as in the earlier model, the state is portrayed as insulated from the influences of its subjects. And, for those historians who find state-centred history unacceptable, real authority was vested in autonomous local self-governing units, and the Mughal state had no more than a ceremonial role. Thus, whereas the proponents of Mughal centralism see the relationship between state and society as one-sided, their critics view the two as separated from each other. Both, indeed, rule out the possibility of a dynamic interaction between them as an aspect of the political system.

It has been suggested by certain scholars dissatisfied with the preponderance of the structural–functionalist model that for a better understanding of the Mughal state a processual approach needs to be adopted.[6] Adherents to the processual approach reject the 'structure' as a unit of study, on the grounds that it represents the imposition of a preconceived category on a political phenomenon. Marc Swartz, representing the 'process school', argues that the problem with structural analysis is that it assumes that the units of analysis are known even before the study is made. And, more recently, scholars have, along similar lines, argued for the rejection of 'state' as a unit of analysis altogether. Philip Abrams, for example, argues that the state does not exist, and that its very idea is based on a 'collective misrepresentation'.[7]

This is rather unfortunate. It is just as mistaken to study the political processes in isolation from the determinate structures, as it is to study the political structures as insulated from human agency. It is of course true that the study of power relations is not adequate if it is based on its forms alone; it should also include the strategies, the tactics and the struggles through which conditions of domination are realized and reproduced, contested and modified. However, human activity is not autonomous and free, but is continually constrained by the prevailing socio-political institutions. These institutions, in the Mughal period, constituted the spaces and the boundaries within which much of the political activity took place. At the same time, they were themselves situated within the political arena, and were as such constantly appropriated by social actors in their political conflicts and struggles.

[6] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Mughal State – Structure or Process! Reflections on Recent Western Historiography', *IESHR*, 29, 3 (July–September 1992), 291–322; Frank Perlin, 'State Formation and Economy Reconsidered', *MAS*, 19, 3 (July 1985), 415–80. Also see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The Mughal State, 1526–1750* (New Delhi, 1998), introduction.

[7] Marc J. Swartz, 'Processual and Structural Approaches in Political Anthropology: A Commentary', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 3 (1969), 53–9; Philip Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, 1 (March 1988), 58–9.

My point, therefore, is that the systems-theoretic and action-theoretic approaches to power should be conceptually integrated for a better, more productive, understanding of the political system. This work attempts a similar exercise by considering political structures as units in action that were constantly changed by the political processes. It shows how social actors appropriated the structures, placing them in the arena of constant change and conflict. The political institutions of the period were crucially important in setting constraints on human subjectivity, even as the extent to which they were themselves implicated in local conflicts was continually reshaping and modifying them.

The Mughal state cannot be studied in isolation from the local power relations. It is owing to this reason that this work is equally concerned with the forms of local power, and the conflicts that centred round them. It is a study of the political system within the context of the conflicts, the struggles and the strategies that characterized power in the localities. But, what do we mean by 'power'? It is important to take up this question here, because 'power', in much of sociological and anthropological literature, has assumed extremely contentious meanings.

One influential school, that of the positivist-behaviourists, views power in terms of an empirical regularity whereby the behaviour of one agent (individual or social) causes the behaviour of another. Power is, according to the behaviourists, a coercive force that alters the behaviour of its victims in such a manner that they are forced to do something they would not otherwise do.[8] In a clear, and indeed explicitly acknowledged, application of the mechanics theory, they see power as an empirical relation of cause and effect, in which the external force of one agent causes an alteration in the behaviour of the other. Power relations do not always have to imply manifest conflict and compliance, but might just as well serve to suppress conflicts, by imposing constraints on the social agents that result in the 'suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker'.[9]

The behaviourists' approach to power is rather simplistic. Power is not always coercive, nor does it inevitably have to function in a manner that forces the subordinates to act contrary to their natural inclinations. A crucial difficulty with the behaviourists is that they invest power with a concreteness, a fixity that is historically neither feasible nor possible. Further, by looking at power within the stimulus–response dyad, they ignore the agency of the dominated. To understand domination as one-sided allows for only a one-sided view of power, for in any instance of domination, the agency of the subalterns is as much a factor as the oppression of the power-holders. And, in seeing power as an empirical causal relation, the behaviourists fail to give due importance to the larger social structures within which power relations are constituted. It has rightly been pointed out by Thomas Wartenberg in his situated conception of power that no power relation is actually dyadic, for such a relationship is indeed constituted within a broader

[8] Robert A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behavioural Science*, 2, 3 (July 1957), 201–15.
[9] Peter Bahrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 43–4.

social context. Power, he says, is situated within a 'social field' and is created through 'social alignments' that go beyond the agents involved in a particular power relation.[10]

Stephen Lukes has sought to improve the behaviourist model by introducing the concept of 'interests' to the behavioural approach to power. Power, he says, is not confined to instances of behavioural compliance, but extends to situations where it is able to 'avert conflict and grievance by influencing, shaping and determining the perception of others'.[11] Power, according to Lukes, is said to have been exercised not when the dominated work against their preferences, but when they work against their 'objective interests'.[12] Confronted with the need to define 'objective interests', he vaguely describes them as referring to what an individual would do under ideal conditions of social equality.[13] Lukes creates more problems than he solves. Like the behaviourists before him, he continues to narrowly perceive power within an empirical relation of stimulus and response, ignoring both the role of social structures in the institution of the power dyad, and the agency of the dominated. His notion of 'objective interests' is both vague and conceptually intangible.

We may mention here the realist concept of power that emerged in refutation to the behaviourist school, but offered apparently a poor alternative. Whereas the behaviourists consider power in terms of empirical causal relations, the realists view it as derived from the 'intrinsic natures' of social agents; by 'intrinsic nature' is meant 'not their unique characteristics as individuals, but their social identities as participants in enduring, socially structured relationships'.[14] In other words, power emerges from the enduring social structures that endow social agents with 'intrinsic natures' that carry a defined power with them.[15] The essential problem with the realist concept of power is that it suffers from acute structural determinism and, like the positivist-behaviourists, attributes to power an enduring nature, a determinate value. While it is true that agents enjoy some power from their position in the social structure, neither the structure nor the position of its beneficiaries enjoys the concreteness they attribute to them. The social structure and the power with which it invests its beneficiaries are in a state of constant strife and change.

This study has critically drawn upon the insights that are provided by Michel Foucault's strategic approach to power. It is sometimes overlooked that his larger theorization concerning power is specific to the advent of capitalism in western Europe, and that his arguments consider power as historically differentiated. Lois McNay, for example, accuses him of passing over the considerable 'differentiation'

[10] Thomas Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation* (Philadelphia, 1990), chapter 6.
[11] Stephen Lukes, 'Power and Authority', in Tom Bottomore and Robert Nisbet (eds.), *A History of Sociological Analysis* (New York, 1978), p. 69.
[12] Stephen Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London, 1974), pp. 22–5.
[13] *Ibid*., pp. 34–5.
[14] Jeffrey C. Isaac, 'Beyond the Three Faces of Power: A Realist Critique', in Thomas E. Wartenberg (ed.), *Rethinking Power* (Albany, 1992), pp. 32–5.
[15] *Ibid.*

that exists in different forms of power.[16] This is an unjustified criticism. In fact, the general arguments he makes about power reflect his awareness of its historical specificity. It is because he treats power within a historical context that he is able to situate it within an action-theoretic framework, as a function of strategic action among social actors.

Foucault proposes an action-theoretic model of relations as the basis of power. Power, according to him, is relational, an outcome of relations of strategic conflict among social actors. He rejects the positivist approaches that depict power as a form of property, that is in its attributes immutable, unrelenting and resolute. Instead, he situates it within a more dynamic context, as the wavering and unstable product of conflict between the subjects. Power, he argues, is not a property, but a strategy, and 'its effects of domination are attributed not to "appropriations", but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functioning.' It is 'exercised rather than possessed', and that 'one should decipher in it a network of relations constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess'.[17]

In his model of strategic action, power does not emanate from a single source, but is spread across the entire social body. It is 'capillary' in nature, in the sense that it is not exercised from a single, identifiable source, but has its genesis in the routine and inconspicuous forms of strategic action among competing social actors. Foucault refers to this as 'the micro-physics of power',[18] or at some other places as 'multiplicity of force relations'.[19] He situates power within the context of a 'perpetual battle', a provisional and fickle outcome of conflicts among competing subjects. In his own words:

> Power comes from below: that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix, no such duality extending from the top down and reaching on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for a wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole.[20]

Foucault's strategic approach to power underlines the role of human agency in the constitution and reproduction of power relations. His work emphasizes the need to study power as situated within an arena of social conflicts and struggles. This study draws upon his work in postulating the local power relations as based on the inter-subjectivity of human agency. One important effort of this study is to disclose the involvement of the subjects of power in the political system, and to situate power itself within the context of a political and symbolic contestation between the power-holders and the subordinate social groups. Drawing upon Foucault, I

[16] L. McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 44.
[17] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1991), pp. 26–7.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 26.
[19] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, *vol. 1 An Introduction,* trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1990), p. 92
[20] *Ibid*., 1, p. 94.

study power within a relational framework, as an outcome of relations of conflict, and strategic action among social actors.

However, a grave limitation of Foucault's work is its resolute rejection of state, or any political structure, for that matter, as a unit of study. He was indeed sensitive to the fact that his strategic model could not stand as a theory of power, unless it took into account the process of the 'stabilization' of social conflicts, and of the strategically acquired positions of power. As had been pointed out by Axel Honneth, his action-theoretic model is incomplete without an explanation 'of the stabilization of practically secured positions of power in the form of the social institutions'.[21] Consequently, given the difficulties inherent in his strategic model of power, when he set out to examine the history of modern forms of power, he was compelled to fall back upon a model of total institutions. He argued that the capitalist phase of history was characterized by a systematic augmentation of social control. In his firm rejection of the political system as a unit of analysis, he was led to explain this augmentation of control in terms of a vague institutional linking of the initially independent systems of control or, as he preferred to describe them, 'centres of discipline'. Since he refused to consider the political system, his analysis left the crucial question unanswered: what were institutions or the social groups that were responsible for the integration of these centres of social control or discipline? His theory of power, therefore, wavers from one extreme of strategic action to the other of total institutions.[22] It seems to have lost the concrete, historically real, middle ground where the 'system' interacted with 'strategic action', and structures were appropriated by social actors, precisely because it refuses to consider the political system as an integrated aspect of power relations.

In calling for a conceptually and historically justifiable fusion of the Foucauldian concept of agency with the political system, I am certainly not reifying the state, nor ascribing to it an immutability that is often attributed to it by the structuralists. Instead, what I am arguing for is to look at the state as a crucially integrated aspect of the phenomenon of power, in a process of constant conflict and change prompted by strategic action among social groups. That, indeed, is the framework which informs this work.

The place

For this study, I have chosen two prosperous port towns in western India, Surat and Cambay. The choice was motivated by the concern to study the state in an urban setting. This was owing to the fact that the emphasis on the agrarian base of the state has not allowed scholars to pay adequate attention on the political system in towns and cities, especially those with a well-developed trading and manufacturing base. Indeed, some studies of the period do underline the significance of trade and

[21] Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. Kenneth Baynes (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), chapter 5.
[22] A detailed critique of Foucault along these lines has been made in Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, chapters 5 and 6.

commerce for the state, and point to intricate linkages between the expansion of merchant capital in the Mughal period and the political system.[23] Yet, the overall framework for the study of the state continues to rely exclusively on the countryside, ignoring the trading and manufacturing urban centres, as if they were unworthy of consideration at all.

The towns of Surat and Cambay were in the *suba* of Gujarat. In the Mughal period, Gujarat was one of the most flourishing regions of India, and was, indeed, the most urbanized. Ali Muhammad Khan, writing in 1761, describes it as 'the most prosperous place in not just Hindustan, but the entire world'.[24] In 1572, when the Mughals annexed it to their empire, about 19 per cent of its revenues came from urban taxation.[25] With a littoral stretching towards the Arabian seas, the ports of Gujarat were major entrepots of inter-regional trade, linking the ports of west Asia, particularly Aden and Hormuz, to Malacca and Achin in the southeast. As Tome Pires noted, in 1512–15:

> Cambay [i.e., Gujarat] chiefly stretches out two arms, with her right arm she reaches out towards Aden and with the other towards Malacca, as the most important places to sail to, and the other places are held to be of less importance.[26]

The ports of Gujarat were also major emporia for export goods of the Indo-Gangetic plains and Bengal, such as the Biana indigo, textiles and silk, which had a great demand in the markets of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. They were also major transit points for bullion and horses coming from Basra, Hormuz and Mocha and destined for the interior markets of northern India.

Cambay was by far the greatest port in the Sultanate of Gujarat (1401–1572). One reason for its pre-eminence was its close proximity to Ahmadabad, an important centre of commercial and manufacturing activities during the period. However, the presence of large sand banks there made navigation hazardous and risky for the larger ocean-going ships. The prosperity of Cambay depended on its outer ports, Gandhar, and later Ghogha, where these ships would anchor for the onward transmission of their cargoes to Cambay in light boats, known as *tauris*. This

[23] See, for example, Karen Leonard, 'The "Great Firm Theory" of the Decline of the Mughal Empire', *CSSH*, 21, 2 (April 1979), 151–67. Her thesis has been contested by J. F. Richards in 'Mughal State Finance and the Pre-Modern World Economy', *CSSH*, 23, 2 (April 1981), 285–308. For her reply, refer to Karen Leonard, 'Indigenous Banking Firms in Mughal India – A Reply', *CSSH*, 23, 2 (April 1981), 303–13. Her findings find support from the work of C. A. Bayly who has studied the role of indigenous capital in the political systems that developed in the eighteenth century (C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, 1983)).

[24] Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mir'at-i Ahmadi*, ed. Nawab Ali, 2 vols. (Baroda, 1927–8), I, p. 111.

[25] Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire, c. 1595: A Statistical Study* (New Delhi, 1987), pp. 315–16. M. N. Pearson calculates that in 1572 the revenues from customs provided 6 per cent of the total revenues of Gujarat (M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 23–4.) But, his estimate has been contested by Shireen Moosvi in her review of Pearson's book, *Medieval India – A Miscellany*, 4 (1977), pp. 217–20.

[26] Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*: *An Account of the East from the Red Sea to Japan*, trans. Armando Cortasao (London, 1944), I, p. 42.

made maritime trade so much more hazardous and expensive for the merchants, for they had to bear the cost of transporting their goods to and from Cambay.[27] This provides the context for the emergence of Surat in the early seventeenth century.

For some time, the port of Diu was in the race with Surat to displace Cambay from its position of pre-eminence. But, with the Portuguese seizure of Diu in 1536, it seems, Diu lost the race to Surat. Diu was, in fact, quite disadvantageously placed in comparison to Surat owing to its restricted hinterland, located, as it was, quite some distance away from the capital city, Ahmadabad. Surat emerged as the premier port of Gujarat in the early seventeenth century, assisted with the discovery of the Swally hole, offering excellent anchorage facilities for large ships. It has been shown by Ashin Das Gupta[28] and more recently by Shireen Moosvi[29] that the Mughal conquest of Gujarat played a crucial role in the rise of Surat in the seventeenth century, by causing an expansion of its hinterland towards the Indo-Gangetic plains.

During the medieval period, Gujarat was well known for its manufactures. Ahmadabad, Surat, Baroda and Bhroach were major manufacturing centres of cotton textiles. Silk-weaving, using Bengal silk, was done in Ahmadabad, Surat and Cambay. Indigo was produced in Sarkhej, near Ahmadabad, but was refined in Cambay. In addition, it also had a strong handicraft industry, making weapons, furniture and jewellery. Gujarat also supplied a great variety of drugs and medicinal products to the rest of India and abroad.[30]

The sources

The empirical groundwork of this study is largely based on the local sources. For Cambay, one of the most important sources is a collection of contemporary documents, found in the National Archives of India (New Delhi). These documents, that shall hereafter be referred to as Cambay Documents, are an invaluable source for the study of the local life in Cambay, and include papers concerning transactions of property, disputes of property, marriage deeds, etc.[31] For Surat, an extremely important source is a collection of documents that was compiled by an anonymous

[27] For a detailed discussion on this, see W. H. Moreland, 'The Ships of the Arabian Sea about A. D. 1500', *JRAS* (April 1939), 174–5. Also see Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, c. 1700–50* (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 2–3.

[28] Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants*, pp. 3–4.

[29] Shireen Moosvi, 'The Gujarat Ports and their Hinterlands: An Economic Relationship', in Indu Banga (ed.), *Ports and their Hinterlands in India (1700–1950)* (New Delhi, 1992), pp, 121–9.

[30] For more details, see Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat, 16th and 17th Centuries* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 186–217. Also see Tapan Raychaudhury and Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, vol. I: c. 1200–1750* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 261–307.

[31] These documents were first brought to notice by Jawaid Akhtar who introduced six of them in an article entitled, 'Merchants and Urban Property: A Study of Cambay Documents of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in K. D. Bajpai, Rajesh Jamindar and P. K. Trivedi (eds.), *Gleanings of Indian Archaeology, History and Culture* (Jaipur, 2000), 334–8. The collection in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, has more than fifty documents.