

Urban Growth of Pali and Churu regions of Medieval Rajasthan with special reference to services provided by Trade Routes

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Abstract: Urbanization is a natural consequence of socio-economic change and a process through which an urban settlement comes into existence. Urbanization forms one of the most important watersheds in the phases of historical growth and events. The present paper proposes to examine the role and contribution of trade routes in the urban growth of medieval Rajasthan (especially-Pali and Churu regions of Rajasthan). The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources. Throughout history, trade routes have played a significant role in the process of urbanization of several countries and still continue to play similar role. Trade routes have long been considered as engines of economic growth and key centres for urban process. The aforesaid study will analyze how trade routes were instrumental in the acceleration of Urbanization process of medieval Rajasthan. The present study has particularly focused on Pali and Churu regions of Rajasthan and will also examine their significance as commercial towns.

Keywords: *Towns, Trade, Trade routes, Urbanization.*

Introduction:

It is true that the towns and cities started to grow in the 11th century A.D., but took a good position and expanded to a great extent in the 17th-18th century and finally in the first half of the 19th century. The state of Rajasthan also experienced a great urban growth during the medieval period. Development of trade and commerce, growth of towns, cities and markets-speak of Urbanization. In the said state of India, there were several factors which contributed in the said process but the study under discussion shows how trade routes proved as the major determinants in the aforesaid process. Trade routes, no matter what commodities they transported, played a vital role in the process of urban growth. As already mentioned throughout history trade routes have played a significant role in the urbanization process of several countries and still continues to play the similar role. It is witnessed, in many cases, that more the good trade routes, higher the urban growth. We know for the measurement of development of any small area, state or even a country, trade is one of the basic indicesⁱ. For trade, good trade routes are required.

In this paper, Pali and Churu regions of Rajasthan have been given much emphasis. For their rise and growth, the proximity to trade routes was, in comparison to other things a leading factorⁱⁱ. The said towns were important because of their location as many important routes passed through them. The traders frequently used the trade routes, setup *mandis* and markets, hence gave fillip to development of towns which in turn boosted Urbanization process. Because of their proximity to trade routes, the said towns became rendezvous of merchants, thus accelerated the urban growth. Routes both minor and major helped in connecting the primary producing areas to the townsⁱⁱⁱ. The linkages developing within the state also proved fruitful for the towns as the linkages connected the primary producing areas to the towns^{iv}. Thus, with trade routes, there was development of markets, towns and trade centres which are important features of Urbanization. Through the different trade routes, Pali and Churu traded within Rajasthan and outside the state. Growth of trade and commerce and growth of service oriented economy boosts Urbanization process.

Pali: It's growth as a commercial town with special reference to role of trade routes

Pali was considered as an emporium of Marwar^v. It is located around 70 km south-east of Jodhpur and is situated on the river Bundi's right bank. From the sources we came to know that Pallika and Palli (Pallika and Palli-mean a town) were old and ancient names of Pali^{vi}. It was an important region because of its location as many important routes passed through it. It was even the centre for the eastern and western regions where the productions of India including Kashmir and China were interchanged with those from Europe, Africa, Persia and Arabia or in Marwar, it was basically the situation of Pali that made it a central place from where merchandise moved to China, Kashmir, Africa, Persia and Arabia^{vii}. As the time passed, the said place became famous and known for dying of woollen, silk and cotton clothes^{viii}. The important internal and external trade routes that passed through Pali^{ix} are:

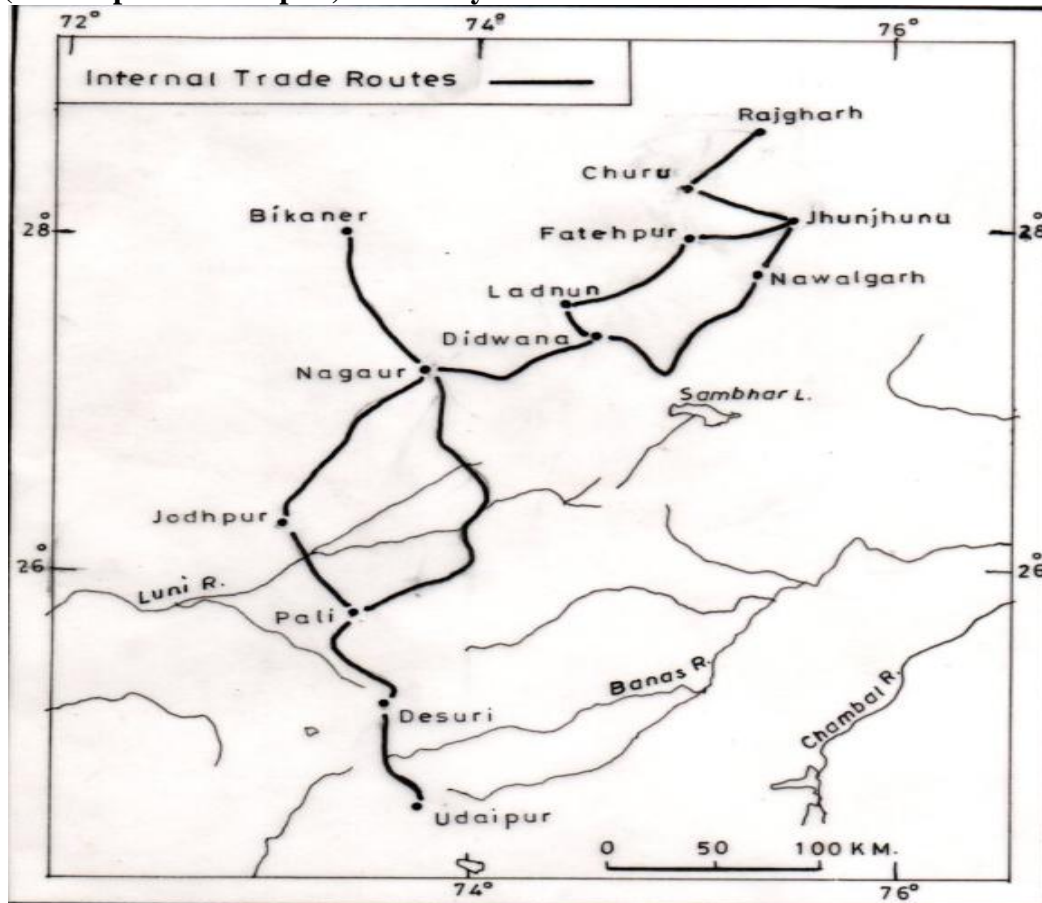
(A) Internal Trade Routes:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Bikaner to Pali | : | Bikaner-Nagaur-Jodhpur-Pali |
| 2. Bikaner to Udaipur via Pali | : | Bikaner-Nagaur-Pali-Desuri-Udaipur |
| 3. Rajgarh to Pali | : | Rajgarh-Churu-Nawalgarh-Didwana-Nagaur-Pali |
| 4. Jhunjhunu to Pali | : | Jhunjhunu-Fatehpur-Ladnun-Didwana-Nagaur-Pali |

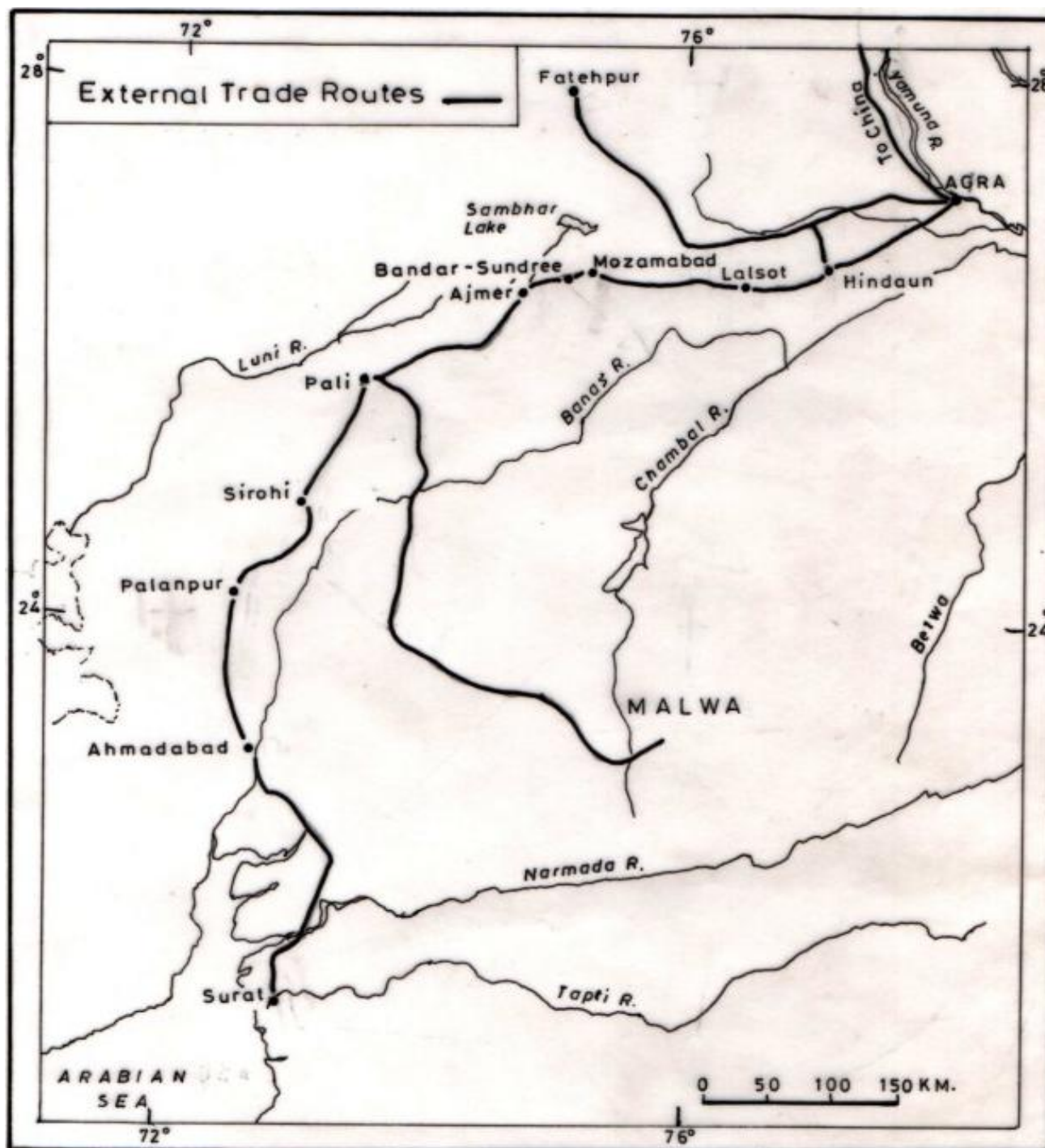
(B) External Trade Routes

1. Agra to Ahmadabad and Surat via Pali : Agra-Fatehpur-Hindaun-Lalsot-Mozamabad-Bander Sindree-Ajmer-Pali-Sirohi-Ahmadabad-Surat.
2. Malwa to China via Pali : Malwa-Pali-China

(See Map- 1 and Map- 2) Drawn by Author



Map 1. Internal Trade Routes.



Map 2. External Trade Routes

Pali was a great centre of trade and commerce and had trade connections with multan^x. The route between Multan and Pali- Multan-Pugal-Bikaner-Nagore-Jodhpur-Pali or Bikaner Phalodi-Pali^{xi}. Even Malwa to Bikaner route was through Pali-Chitor-Mandalgarh-Bednur-Pali-Jodhpur-Nagore-Bikaner^{xii}. With these trade routes there was development of markets and trade centres. The traders frequently used the trade routes, setup *mandis* and markets with the support of the state.

Churu: It's growth as a commercial town with special reference to role of trade routes

Similarly the town Churu emerged as a prominent trading centre and markets flourished there during the 18th century because of many factors, one of them was its location on the Delhi-Sind and Delhi-Kabul routes. Besides this, the situation of Churu on the routes from Multan to Sind to Jaipur and Delhi and its trade connections both internal and external, contributed to its growth and flourishing of markets there. Goods of different places were available over here that is why, it was considered to be an Emporium of medieval times^{xiii}. It was connected well with Rajgarh, Malpura (Jaipur) and Pali. Nagaur and Rajgarh were also placed on the way to Multan. So we are safely able to say that the geographical location of Rajasthan offered some important linkages with numerous trade routes passing through it and it was a connecting link between northern and western India. It is important to note that from Churu, significant trade routes bifurcated towards Shekhawati and Marwar which further linked southern provinces of Gujarat and Malwa^{xiv}.

It should be kept in mind that the routes (both minor and major) and linkages developing within the state helped in connecting the primary producing areas to the towns. Many *chowkis* and *mandis* were setup and established in the Churu region of Rajasthan^{xv}. Through the examination of sources we find that number of *chowkis* enhanced which is an indication of the creation of new internal linkages and routes^{xvi}. It is quite interesting to note that the link between Jaipur and Bikaner was via Churu^{xvii}. This link merged at Sikar^{xviii}. It is very important to mention that the link between Delhi and Ahmadabad was through Churo and other regions (like-Bhiwani, Rajgarh, Churu, Ladnun, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Jalor, Sirohi, Palanpur and Ahmadabad)^{xix}. Another significant link or route was -Churo to Pugal and then to various towns of Sindh:- Churu-Garabdeshar-Lunkaransar-Pugal^{xx}. It makes us clear that the trade routes proved very fruitful for the growth of Churu as the commercial town and boosted the trade of the said region. Different items were produced there like good quality of lime stone, etc^{xxi}. The aforesaid region/town functioned and worked as intermediary *Mandi* between the western parts and North India because it had connections with Rajghar, Malpura and Pali in Bikaner, Jaipur and Marwar respectively^{xxii}.

Conclusion

In the backdrop of the foregoing discussions and facts narrated, it can be presumed that, the trade routes acted as the major determinants of the Urbanization of medieval Rajasthan (especially-Pali and Churu). They proved as the engines of economic growth and rendered a meritorious service in the said process. The development and growth of towns (Pali and Churu) was chiefly the outcome of major trade routes and internal links of the town's within and outside the state of Rajasthan to far-off regions, from which people gathered over here and made them important centres. Because of their proximity to trade routes, the said towns became the rendezvous of merchants. Traders and merchants exchanged their items on trade routes which contributed to the growth of trade and commerce, towns and markets, thus gave fillip to urban growth. In the end, we are safely able to say that trade routes serve as life lines to the towns and boost and accelerate the process of urbanization.

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