

# Emergence and Spread of Exchange Centres in Early Medieval Western India

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/ihr](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/ihr)**Geetika Gupta<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

The present article basically seeks to look into the emergence and spread of exchange centres, popularly known as *maṇḍapikās* and *haṭṭas*, in western India during the early medieval period (c. 600–1300 CE). Large-scale land grants, introduction of better means of irrigational facilities such as *araghaṭṭa* and *vāpī* acted as catalyst for the growth of agrarian economy, leading to the availability of marketable surplus. All this altogether led to dynamic upsurge in trading activities, ultimately providing a favourable ground for the rise of exchange centres in different parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Political initiative by the rulers, rise of temple economy, organisation of fairs and festivals and the spatial context of an exchange centre were enabling factors. Merchants and merchant groups also in their capacity played a crucial role in the growth of exchange centres during this period.

## Keywords

*Haṭṭas*, *maṇḍapikās*, agrarian expansion, trade, rulers, merchants

Western India during the early medieval centuries (600–1300 CE) witnessed burgeoning rural economy and large-scale agrarian expansion. Introduction of *araghaṭṭa* and *vāpī* in Rajasthan and Gujarat from ninth to tenth century onwards ensured high agricultural yield and led to proliferation and diversification of crops and cereals.<sup>1</sup> Agrarian expansion through the agency of land grants made the creation of agrarian corporations, brāhmaṇa settlements and temples almost simultaneous developments. Agrarian expansion being conducive to surplus production and its distribution benefitted the new states and kingdoms and sacred centres. As these politico-administrative

<sup>1</sup> Chattopadhyaya, 'Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan', 38–56. Chattopadhyaya, 'Villages, Wells and Rulers in South-Eastern Marwar: Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in the Kingdom of the Nadol Cahamanas', 70–92. Jain-Neubauer, *The Stepwells of Gujarat: In Art-Historical Perspective*. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India (AD 1000–1300)*, 24–34.

<sup>1</sup> Department of History, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.

## Corresponding author:

Geetika Gupta, Department of History, University of Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi | 110007, India.

E-mail: [geetika9391@gmail.com](mailto:geetika9391@gmail.com)

centres and sacred centres required a variety of items for their day-to-day consumptions, it encouraged trading activity, to which we will return soon.<sup>2</sup>

In a way, it could be argued that the whole issue of land grants, the pre-eminence of Brāhmaṇas and the construction of monumental royal temples were interrelated phenomena, which constituted the economic base and provided congenial climate for the emergence of local (*haṭṭas*) and supra-local (*maṇḍapikās*)<sup>3</sup> centres of exchange, some of which over the course of time acquired urban features as well. Agrarian growth and availability of marketable surplus acted as a catalyst for the rise of exchange centres. In western India, especially in Gujarat and Rajasthan, emerged a new category of exchange centre in the early medieval period, which proliferated particularly from 1000 CE onwards.<sup>4</sup> These are known as *maṇḍapikās* providing vital linkages between the rural market centres (*haṭṭas*) on the one hand and larger markets at urban centres (*purā*) and ports (*paṭṭana/velākula*) on the other.<sup>5</sup> These middle category type of trade centres were popular as *maṇḍapikā* in North India, as *penṭhas* in the Deccan and as *nagarams* in the south. Their local and regional characters were very much pronounced as they were rooted in their respective regions and their rise to prominence can be seen in the light of the local and regional formations in early medieval India.<sup>6</sup> To cite an example, Rajor inscription (960 CE) of Pratihara Mathanadeva while referring to the presence of a *haṭṭa* at Rajyapura mentions the items brought for exchange at the centre, which included clarified butter, oil, sacks of agricultural produce and *collikā* leaves.<sup>7</sup> It can then be argued that it was the surplus caused by remarkable agrarian growth which necessitated the rise of the exchange centre.

The term *maṇḍapikā* literally stands for a covered hall or pavilion but the sources portray them as centres of exchange.<sup>8</sup> We often find regular references to merchants and diverse commodities in the descriptions of *maṇḍapikās*. Some of them are even referred to as *śulka-maṇḍapikā*, that is, *maṇḍapikā* or centres of collection of tolls and customs. Therefore, they were not only commercial but administrative centres too. *Haṭṭas* were rural market places or fairs corresponding closely to *aḍḍas* in the eastern Deccan and *sānthes* in the western and central parts of Deccan.<sup>9</sup> They enjoyed direct links with the rural hinterland, which supplied exchangeable agricultural and craft products. In early medieval records, *haṭṭas* also appeared as market places within the urban areas, such as in the case of Rajyapura.

<sup>2</sup> Chakravarti, 'The Pull Towards the Coast: Politics and Polity in India (c. 600–1300 CE)', 1–48.

<sup>3</sup> Chakravarti, 'Trade at Maṇḍapikās in Early Medieval North India', 187–97. Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, 99–127. Karashima, *Ancient to Medieval: South Indian Society in Transition*, 165–95. Chakravarti, 'Between Villages and Cities: Linkages of Trade in India (c. 600–1300 AD)', 99–119.

<sup>4</sup> Chakravarti, 'Merchants, Merchandise and Merchantmen in the Western Seaboard of India: A Maritime Profile (c. 500 BCE-1500 CE)', 83–85.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Chakravarti, *Trade in Early India*, 80.

<sup>7</sup> F. Kielhorn, 'Rajor Inscription of Mathanadeva VS 1016, *EI*, III', 263–7.

<sup>8</sup> Ram Sharma, 'Hathundi Inscription of the time of Maharajakula Samantasimhadeva V. 1345', in *EI*, XLII, 154–7.

<sup>9</sup> Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, 329.

*Maṇḍapikās* were also known by the name of *dāna-maṇḍapikās*<sup>10</sup> because they were also an institution through which religious donations were made. Most of the imposts on commodities were collected only through the *dāna-maṇḍapikā* or *śulka-maṇḍapikā*. We find myriad references to donations being given through the *maṇḍapikās* for arranging celebrations such as the *Rath-Yātrā* or the *Pañch-Kalyān*.<sup>11</sup> The Chittaurgarh inscription of 1274 CE of Samarasimha records a royal grant of a few *drammas* and such items as ghee, oil, etc., which were made from the *maṇḍapikās* of Talhatti, Ahada, Khohar and Sajjanpura to a Jaina temple of Parsvanath.<sup>12</sup> In case of Gujarat, we do find reference to a *śulka-maṇḍapikā* at Sri Mangalapura or Mangrol and Vamanasthali (Vanthali) and transit duties being levied at *śulka-maṇḍapikā* on the road to Lathivadra (modern Lathoda).<sup>13</sup> There is also evidence of certain donors depositing sums with the *maṇḍapikā* on which it earned interest; in turn, it was utilised for arranging daily worship in specified temples or for arranging religious celebrations, for instance, a record of 1249 CE from Bhinmal mentions an amount of several *drammas* deposited at the *bhandagāra* (treasury) of the Jagatsvami temple at Bhinmal, its interest being intended to procure certain resources for the performance of a ritual at the temple such as wheat, ghee, flowers, betel nuts.<sup>14</sup> According to another record dated 1162 CE of the time of Alhanadeva records grant of 5 *drammas* to the temple of Mahavira from Nadol *talapada śulka-maṇḍapikā* by Dhanigga of Prāgvāta family.<sup>15</sup> This interest was generated mainly through trade or commercial activities.

There were markets or *haṭṭas* of different commodities, for grain, clothes, jewellery (*maṇikār-haṭṭa*) and gold (*suvarṇa-haṭṭa*). The animal market or Kambali-*haṭṭa* provides a good instance.<sup>16</sup> A record from Delwara dated 1434 CE informs about a grant of 5 *ṭankās* from the cloth market, and 2 from the salt market.<sup>17</sup> We get reference to around eighty-four marts or *māṇḍavi* at Anahilapattana, each one being separately assigned to a different commodity.<sup>18</sup> James Tod<sup>19</sup> also mentions that in Anahilapattana, founded by Vanaraja in 745 CE, each kind of goods had its separate *māṇḍavi* where duties of export, import and sale were collected. He cites reference to ghee market at Anahilawar. Such kind of fairs and seasonal assemblies were held in the markets for buying and selling of goods. They served not only the purpose of trade and commerce

<sup>10</sup> Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 54–55. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties: A study of Chauhan Political history, Chauhan Political Institutions and Life in the Chauhan Dominions from 800 to 1316 A.D.*, 235–7.

<sup>11</sup> Kapur, *State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries*, 166.

<sup>12</sup> B. Ch. Chhabra, List of inscriptions on stone or other material, in *ARIE*, 1956–7, 85, no. 469.

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, *Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 248–51.

<sup>14</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Bhinmal Stone Inscription of Udayasimhadeva VS 1306, *EI*, XI, 55–7. J.M. Campbell, 'Bhinmal Inscriptions', in *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, I, 474–8.

<sup>15</sup> H. H. Dhruva, The Nadole Inscription of king Alhanadeva VS 1218, *JBBRAS*, XIX (1895–7), 26–34.

<sup>16</sup> Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 55. *EI*, XXIV, 329–36. Jinavijaya Muni, *Purātanaprabandha Saṃgraha*, 23.

<sup>17</sup> Somani, *Mahārānā Kumbha and His Times*, 111.

<sup>18</sup> Altekar, 'A History of Important Towns and Cities in Gujarat and Kathiawad (from earliest times to about 1300 AD)', 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> Tod, *Travels in Western India*, 156–7, 223, 227.

but also promoted social contact among the people in a big way. *Haṭṭas* owed their prosperity to merchants who traded in various articles and it is the marketable surplus of villages exchanged at *haṭṭas* that provided a meeting ground for peasants, crafts men and merchants. An inscription of the time of Chauhan Asvaka dated 1143 CE refers to organisation of a horse fair held at Bali.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in 883 CE assembled thirty-four horse dealers hailing from different countries on the occasion of a horse fair at Pehoa.<sup>21</sup>

The role of geographical factors needs to be acknowledged, which stimulated the rise of exchange centres. Some of them were nodal points located at trunk routes. Moreover, the proximity to the sea or their strategic location demands consideration, take, for instance, the case of Ahada.<sup>22</sup> Just because of the strategic location of western Mewar, a part of the commercial traffic of western India regularly passed through Ahada. The Nagda-Ahada kingdom was regularly visited by merchants from the distant lands. Saranesvara temple inscription of Guhila Allata of 953 CE records the grant of a number of commercial cesses levied on the merchants and travellers.<sup>23</sup> On entering Ahada at the *maṇḍapikā*, they were asked to pay 1 *dramma* on the sale of elephant, 2 *rūpakas* on a horse, one-fortieth of a *dramma* on a horned animal, which shed light on Ahada being involved in the international trade. Thus, Ahada emerged as an urban centre, an important political and commercial centre as well in the thirteenth century. Similarly, Somantha,<sup>24</sup> a famous Saiva centre, was called a *paṭṭana* or a port-town; it owed its importance due to its being a seaside place or a place of pilgrimage. It was also noted for its commercial importance and acted as feeder port for Cambay. The wealth of the town was not due to donations the temple received but due to its maritime links. Al-Beruni even mentions that it was a convenient station for the ships plying between Sofala in Zanzibar and China, which was the reason of the popularity of Somanath.<sup>25</sup>

Often the convergence and integration of commercial, politico-administrative and religious activities at one exchange centre is attested to by the sources of the time. Often the centres of administrative importance for the Guhila state would also be the centres of exchange, mining and religious activities, for example, Aranyakupagiri. The Samoli inscription of the Guhila king Siladitya dated 646 CE records the opening up of a mine at Aranyakupagiri and the building of a temple of goddess Aranyavasini by a migrating community of *mahājanas* headed by *Mahattara* Jentaka from Vatanagar (Sirohi).<sup>26</sup> Aranyakupagiri as a centre of mining and the presence of the temple of Aranyavasini led to the emergence of a workshop-cum-manufacturing centre either in the copper belt around Ahada or at zinc-lead-silver concentrates at Zavar, south of

<sup>20</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Bali Stone Inscription of Asvaka VS 1200, *EI*, XI, 32–3.

<sup>21</sup> G. Buhler, The Peheva Inscription from the temple of Garibnath, *EI*, I, 184–190.

<sup>22</sup> Chattopadhyaya, 'Irrigation in Early Medieval Rajasthan', 95, 102, 104. Kapur, *State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries*, 66–67.

<sup>23</sup> B. Ch. Chhabra, 'List of inscriptions on stone or other material, *ARIE*', 1956–7, 85, no. 469. R.R. Halder, 'An inscription of the time of Allata of Mewar VS 1010, in *IA*, LVIII', 161–2.

<sup>24</sup> Chakravarti, 'Between Villages and Cities: Linkages of Trade in India (c. 600–1300 AD)', 102. Altekar, 'A History of Important Towns and Cities in Gujarat and Kathiawad (from earliest times to about 1300 AD)', 29–32.

<sup>25</sup> Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as told by its Own Historians*, Vol. II, 104.

<sup>26</sup> R. R. Halder, Samoli Inscription of the time of Siladitya VS 703, *EI*, XX, 97–9.

Udaipur. The settlement was successful to mobilise both the raw materials and manufactured items for the nearest nodes, Nagda or Ahada or both. The temple too seems to have been visited by bards from far and near, indicating occasional festivities necessitating weekly or occasional fairs. Thus, Aranyakupagiri itself emerged as an exchange centre during the period. Likewise, Broach, referred to as *velākula* (port), was a holy place and port of export and import for the whole of northern India. It was a well-fortified place and port for vessels from China and Sind.<sup>27</sup> We see that common patterns were emerging across different regions during the early medieval period.

Intimately connected to the above issues is the necessity of analysing the spatial context of an individual centre of exchange, which could be located either in a *grāma* or urban centre or near the temple. It is this spatial context that dictates the importance of an exchange centre and distinguishes one from the other. Moreover, the degree of their importance and differences between them help us to situate them in the hierarchy of exchange centres. Rajor (Alwar) inscription of 961 CE belonging to Pratihara Mathanadeva contains reference to the presence of a *haṭṭa* at Rajyapura.<sup>28</sup> The suffix *purā* points to the possibility of it being located in a town or urban centre. In the same period, Pratihara Mathanadeva made several provisions for a temple, and the categories of people he addressed were headed by the *vaniks* and *pravāṇi* (probably represents some class of merchants),<sup>29</sup> suggesting their substantial presence at the exchange centre at Rajyapura. The imposts on all crops are mentioned, including the terms *skandhaka* (impost on carrying goods on shoulders) and *mārganaka* (possibly a tax levied on villagers in the form of voluntary gifts)<sup>30</sup> figures in the record. For spatial context, it is important because it suggests the range of activities extending to the movement of agricultural produce and *skandhaka* and *mārganaka* being imposts on such movement. Secondly, we do find reference to imposts in cash on loads of agricultural produce brought for sale. The exchange centre was thus located in the context of rural society.

Bayana inscription from Bharatpur dated 955 CE refers to the presence of two *maṇḍapikās* at Sripatha and Vusavata, both noted for trade in horses.<sup>31</sup> The local queen Chittralekha donated in favour of a Vishnu temple the sum of 3 *drammas* each from the *maṇḍapikās* at Sripatha and Vusavata, and 1 *dramma* per horse, which was levied as an octroi duty, respectively, at Sripatha and Vusavata for the same deity. This inscription also provides crucial information regarding the range of activity at the *maṇḍapikās*, which makes it quite evident that Bayana was being drawn towards inter-regional and foreign trade. At the *maṇḍapikā* of Shergadh (a fort-town) in Rajasthan (11th century CE) were present a number of *śreṣṭhis* who were representatives of a local body, which approved of the donation of a cess made by three merchants in favour of the deity.<sup>32</sup> Thus, this inscription shows that merchants were actively involved, and closely

<sup>27</sup> Altekar, 'A History of Important Towns and Cities in Gujarat and Kathiawad (from earliest times to about 1300 AD)', 33–35. Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as told by its Own Historians*, Vol. I, 87. Caturavijaya Muni, *Moharājaparājaya of Yasahpala*, 61.

<sup>28</sup> F. Kielhorn, Rajor Inscription of Mathanadeva VS 1016, *EI*, III, 263–7.

<sup>29</sup> Gopal, *The Economic Life of Northern India c. A.D. 700–1200*, 46–48.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>31</sup> R. D. Banerji, The Bayana Inscription of Chittralekha VS 1012, *EI*, XXII, 120–7.

<sup>32</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Shergarh Stone Inscriptions, *IA*, XL, 175–6.

associated with the *maṇḍapikā*. The proliferation of *maṇḍapikās* in the coastal region of Kathiawad during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is borne out by the existence of two of them at Mangalapura or Mangrol, which is a famous *paṭṭana* or port-town of Gujarat.<sup>33</sup>

Some *maṇḍapikās* or *haṭṭas* appear to have been situated at major urban centres like Anhilwada where they are described as *paṭṭanamāṇḍapikās*, distinct from *maṇḍapikās* or *haṭṭas*, which are smaller trade centres closely related to their adjacent rural hinterland. Some *maṇḍapikās* in Gujarat and Rajasthan must have participated in the brisk external trade, which is quite visible from the items exchanged at these centres. To cite a few examples, Anvada stone inscription of Sarangadeva dated 1291 CE records grant of 72 *drammas* from the *śulka-maṇḍapikās* in perpetuity to God Krishna for worship.<sup>34</sup> Among the list of donations figure madder, which might have been imported from Bengal. Similarly, in case of Mangrol, we get reference to the grant of betel leaves and betel nuts, which are commonly found in the different regions of South India.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, their proximity to the sea, or coastal towns, the rise of several important ports and the settlement of Arab merchants in Gujarat demands our attention.<sup>36</sup> Presence of the terms *jala-maṇḍapikās* and *sthala-maṇḍapikās* in the sources of our period probably hints at their being located near sea and on important trade routes.<sup>37</sup>

Gradual agrarian expansion led to proliferation of ruling lineages with their various centres of power. The linkage between the proliferation of such centres and of centres of exchange demands scrutiny. In fact, rulers themselves encouraged trade by establishing markets. Ghatiyala inscription dated 861 CE of Pratihara ruler Kakkuka furnishes a good example of expansion of agrarian economy by the efforts and initiatives of the ruler and replacement of a primitive tribal economy by an advanced economy.<sup>38</sup> Agrarian growth ultimately paved the way for the installation of a *haṭṭa* or market in *Rohinsakupaka* (a *grāma*), adorned with streets, shops and houses by Kakkuka. This inscription provides a good example of initiative by political authority in the growth and establishment of an exchange centre.

In western India, the early medieval towns had a political character. Emergence of regional kingdoms enhanced the importance of castles and forts, which became the main requirement of the period for defence against powerful rulers for which forts were constructed at strategic points and for the control of newly won lands administrative centres were created.<sup>39</sup> These forts were inhabited mainly by a non-producing class, which comprised of chiefs, their retainues and armies. It is possible that rulers collected necessary provisions in the form of tribute from the neighbouring rural areas.<sup>40</sup> Luxury

<sup>33</sup> Chakravarti, 'Between Villages and Cities: Linkages of Trade in India (c. 600–1300 AD)', 106.

<sup>34</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Anvada Stone inscription of Sarangadeva VS 1348, *IA*, XLI, 20–21.

<sup>35</sup> Chakravarti, 'Between Villages and Cities: Linkages of Trade in India (c. 600–1300 AD)', 102.

<sup>36</sup> Chakravarti, 'Merchants, Merchandise and Merchantmen in the Western Seaboard of India: A Maritime Profile (c. 500 BCE–1500 CE)', 80–95.

<sup>37</sup> Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 56.

<sup>38</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Ghatiyala Inscription of Kakkuka S. 918, *EI*, IX, 277–81. Munshi Debiprasad, Ghatiyala Inscription of the Pratihara Kakkuka of VS 918, in *JRAS*, 1895, 513–21.

<sup>39</sup> Malik, *Merchants and Merchandise in Northern India A.D. 600–1000*, 53–55.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

requirements of the elites were fulfilled by traders and merchants living inside or outside the fortress. Certain needs of that population residing in the towns were probably met with through the mechanism of trade. The case in point is of Shergadh in Rajasthan, which testifies our assumption.<sup>41</sup> The inscriptions recovered from this place of eleventh century refer to it as a fort town, a thriving urban centre of trade, agriculture and industry. The Somanath temple located inside the fort (*kotta*) of Kosavardhana formed the core of the city and several donations were made to it by private individuals, mostly merchants and landlords. They must have been the residents of the city. Apart from them, we get references to the guild of oilmen, and to oil-mills, *samkhikā* or counch-shell worker, which hints at it being some kind of manufacturing centre as well.

Rise of state capitals or capital towns encouraged trade, besides being the seat of government they were inhabited by king, his household, royal officials, soldiers, merchants and artisans.<sup>42</sup> They required a strong agrarian base to sustain and thus were supported by surplus produced in the villages. The luxury requirements of the king and his royal household and officials were probably met by the merchants. In Rajasthan, the shift of capital from Nagda to Ahada and the presence of ruling elite accelerated further demand for high-value items, which further increased the commercial traffic at this centre.<sup>43</sup> Resources were in fact mobilised from other areas of control such as Pratapgarh in southern part of upper Banas plain. All these factors added together acted as a catalyst in the emergence and proliferation of the exchange centres.

We notice the recognition of the significance of *maṇḍapikās* by the administrative authorities. This is indicated not only by the presence of important officials during the prominent socio-cultural events, but also by the reference to the creation of an administrative department concerning *maṇḍapikās*, that is, *maṇḍapikā-karana* in the *Lekhapaddhati*.<sup>44</sup> D. No.68 dated 1030–1031 CE refers to *maṇḍapikā* of Sri Anhillapattana being visited by merchants from distant lands and *banjārās* (itinerant traders) for trade.<sup>45</sup> It instructs the officers in charge of *māṇḍavi* or *maṇḍapikā* of Sri Anhillapattana not to harass them as it formed the potent source of revenue of the state. The income from the *haṭṭas*, *maṇḍapikās* or *śulka-maṇḍapikās*, or more specifically trading activities formed a major part of revenue of the rulers. Their potential as source of revenue was recognised by the ruling elites as is visible from the reference to the establishment of *maṇḍapikās* by the rulers.<sup>46</sup>

It is often believed that majority of the donations from the *maṇḍapikā* were made in favour of the temples, but we do find references to donations made for public use too. The stone inscription at Bharana near Khambhata (a seaport town in Gulf of Kutch under Jamanagar in Kathiwad) of the time of Bhima II dated 1219 CE records grant of transit duties of the village of Bharana (*Bharana maṇḍapikā*) for maintenance of a *vāo*

<sup>41</sup> A. S. Altekar, Two Inscriptions from Shergarh, in *EI*, XXIII, 132–41.

<sup>42</sup> Malik, *Merchants and Merchandise in Northern India A.D. 600–1000*, 53–55.

<sup>43</sup> Kapur, *State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries*, 66–67.

<sup>44</sup> Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, 330. Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 54–55.

<sup>46</sup> Gadre, *Archaeology in Baroda (1934–47)*, 17. *Progress Report of Archaeological Survey (PRAS)*, Western Circle (WC), 1919–20, 58, no. 14.

(step-well) built by governor Samantasimha.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Kutiyana (in Junagarh state) inscription dated 1474 CE refers to the fact that the *mahājanas* of Kuntipur trading in *māṇḍavi* were asked to contribute for some public purpose certain amount of *jawār*, cotton, etc.<sup>48</sup>

The *haṭṭas* generally provided the platform for the exchange of surplus marketable produce and congenial meeting ground for peasants, artisans, craftsmen and merchants.<sup>49</sup> The range of goods and services available at these centres was mostly locally generated and meant for consumption in the immediate surroundings of the locality. Both food grains and commercial items were brought for sale in the market. But there were certain items such as those produced by goldsmiths, coppermiths, braziers and even betel leaf producers, which suggest wider range of spatial interactions. The text *Samarāiccakahā* (written by Haribhadra Suri around eighth century CE) refers to the fact that at *haṭṭas* food, clothes and other necessities were easily available and they were sold and purchased in these *haṭṭas*.<sup>50</sup> V. M Jha<sup>51</sup> opines that the nature of commodities in itself reveals the existence of local, regional and trans-regional networks of exchange. Like for instance, trade in vegetables, fish, butter, clarified butter, which are perishable items and generally locally available suggests trade of local nature, while much of the trade in cereals, oil, textiles and the like would have been confined to regional limits. Saffron, sandalwood, musk, spices, madder, horses, elephants might have formed part of local, regional and trans-regional exchange networks.

Some exchange centres may have been manufacturing centres of some kind apart from being involved in commercial activity. In such cases, we need to look at the range of commodities transacted at these centres and examine the source of that particular commodity of exchange. In case of Rajasthan, such example is provided by Arthuna (Banswara) record of Paramara Camundaraja (1080 CE), which enlists the grant of imposts on the following items sold at the *haṭṭa* in which shops were located.<sup>52</sup> The list included agricultural items such as barley, loads of grain, sugarcane, candy-sugar, jaggery, cotton, thread, clothing fabric, sesame oil, oil, areca-nut, coconut, and citron; manufactured items included *manjiṣṭhā*, products of braziers and distillers of liquor apart from salt, *parṇā* leaves and cattle fodder. The inscription alludes to the possibility of some items being brought from distant lands indicating their commercial demand over extensive areas.

These exchange centres were mainly points of intersections for exchange of local goods with exotic and locally unavailable goods as a result of which they were also drawn into the network of inter-regional trade. The rise of local-level exchange centres over widespread territories facilitated transactions in grains.<sup>53</sup> They were often political centres of regional ruling elites. Regular patronage to construction and maintenance

<sup>47</sup> Peterson, *Prakrit and Sanskrit Inscriptions*, 304–5.

<sup>48</sup> D. B. Diksalkar, Kutiyana VS 1531, *NIA*, III, 122.

<sup>49</sup> Sahu, 'Markets, Merchants and Towns in early Medieval Odisha', 11.

<sup>50</sup> Jacobi, ed., *Samarāiccakahā of Haribhadra Suri*, 140, 585.

<sup>51</sup> Jha, 'Economy of North India', 294.

<sup>52</sup> Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the Paramaras, Chandellas, Kachchhapaghatas and two minor dynasties*, 286–96.

<sup>53</sup> Chakravarti, 'Trade at Maṇḍapikās in Early Medieval North India', 194.

of temples out of the revenues collected at *maṇḍapikās* is indicative of the commercial prosperity of the period.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, it elucidates the nature of the spatial interactions between one exchange centre and the other.

In case of South India, Radha Champakalakshmi argues that clusters of settlements emerged as a foci of urban growth. Extension of agriculture in *brahmādeyas* and temple centres is visible and agrarian growth and availability of surplus is a necessary precondition to urban growth. One example of such clusters is provided by Kudamukku-Palaiyarai in the Kaveri delta.<sup>55</sup> However, in case of western India, among the clusters of exchange centres, two centres, which received the attention of Chattopadhyaya, are Ahar or Aghatapur, a part of Udaipur<sup>56</sup> and Arthuna near Banswara. In both the cases, minor exchange centres were located around them and both were points at which varieties of resources converged. At Ahar apart from the resident *vaṇīks*, merchants of Karnata (Karnataka), Madhyadesa, Lata (South Gujarat and North Konkan) and Takka (Punjab) were also present. The range of merchandise included both agricultural produce and high value items including horses, elephants and horned animals. Records suggest the existence of *haṭṭa* as an exchange centre within the settlement complex. Arthuna too, as mentioned above, combined trade with manufacturing and presence of different groups of merchants is visible at the site.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the question of hierarchy of exchange centres, all we can say is that certainly there existed some kind of hierarchy among the exchange centres. The geographical factors, their strategic location, spatial context, range of exchange networks and many other factors combined together actually dictated the relative importance of an exchange centre and distinguished one from the other, say for example a *haṭṭa* located in a *grāma* or village must have enjoyed lesser importance than the one located in an urban centre, town or near the temple. *Haṭṭas* were village or local-level trade centres with a productive rural hinterland compared to the *maṇḍapikās*, which were supra-local centres of exchange and enjoyed more extensive networks than the *haṭṭas*.<sup>58</sup> D. No. 15 dated 744–745 CE of *Lekhapaddhati* refers to *pañcakula* comprising of *balādhipati* as in charge of *mahāmaṇḍapikā*.<sup>59</sup> *Mahāmaṇḍapikā* definitely must have been on a high footing and larger than the ordinary *maṇḍapikā*.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, *śulka-maṇḍapikā* or *paṭṭana-maṇḍapikā* seems to have been greater in importance than the normal *maṇḍapikā*. Therefore, we cannot be indifferent towards the typological differences among the exchange centres.

The simultaneous emergence of *tīrthas*, shrines and temples along with the regional states and kingdoms and the association of chiefs and kings with many of these sacred centres by way of participation in the rituals and ceremonies stimulated directly or

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization, South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, 331–66.

<sup>56</sup> R. R. Halder, An inscription of the time of Allata of Mewar VS 1010, *IA*, LVIII, 161–2.

<sup>57</sup> Trivedi, *Inscriptions of the Paramaras, Chandellas, Kachchhapaghatas and two minor dynasties*, 286–96.

<sup>58</sup> Chakravarti, 'Trade at Maṇḍapikās in Early Medieval North India', 187–200.

<sup>59</sup> Dalal and Shrigondekar, *Lekhapaddhati*, 13–14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

indirectly the emergence of exchange centres.<sup>61</sup> *Tīrthas* emerged mostly in regions outside Gangetic North India in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>62</sup> Ruling lineages patronised the construction and maintenance of temples to seek political validation and it led to the growth of pilgrimage networks. The organisation of pilgrimages to holy places either Brahmanical holy places such as Pushkara, Bajaulia or Jaina centres of pilgrimage such as Osia, Chandravati, Jiraval attracted big crowds from distant places to visit them because there were temples and monasteries.<sup>63</sup> Occasional fairs and festivals at these centres encouraged periodic markets, which contributed to the resource base of the Guhila state. These temples, monasteries and *tīrthas* helped in the creation of religious towns.<sup>64</sup> Because journeys to such places were encouraged, people visited them from all parts of India and they had to be provided food and facilities. Therefore, such *tīrthas* emerged as important nodes of consumption.<sup>65</sup> All the luxury requirements of the visiting princes, chiefs and royal officials and pilgrims encouraged artisans and merchants to flock to these places. Daily requirements of temple such as incense, betel nuts, encouraged trade traffic. We often find brāhmaṇas, *purohīts*, *sādhūs*, potters, smiths, grocers, etc., inhabiting the temple complex. Gradually, towns flourished around some famous temples such as Somanath in Saurashtra region. Somanath became prosperous because the idol was held in great esteem. Travel for religious purpose kept alive the contacts between different parts of the country and it might be possible that some exchange was conducted during the journeys.<sup>66</sup> As is duly stated that the wealth of the town was not just because of the donations the temple received but also due to the maritime commerce of the place.

In addition to the patronage and revenue from endowments, the income of the more grand temples included duties on items of trade, a percentage of which was donated to the temples. The endowment to the temple consisted of regular dues in kind such as oil and ghee for lamps, betel leaves and nuts, flowers, garlands for which the temple would have required a commercial outlet or a warehouse.<sup>67</sup> It is for this reason that according to Jalore inscription of 1296 CE belonging to the Chahamana realm we find reference to grant of a bazaar building or warehouse in the market (*nisra-nikṣepa-haṭṭa*) for storing goods.<sup>68</sup> All this tied the temple closer to trade and the administrative committee of temples would have been anxious to encourage trade and to purchase the goods (including local and trans-regional) required for daily necessities of the temple, funds from temples formed a sizeable investment. Merchants from far and near brought them, which in a way facilitated trade and rise of 'temple economy'.<sup>69</sup> Temples make evident

<sup>61</sup> Sahu, *The Changing Gaze: Regions and the Constructions of Early India*, 197.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan: A Study of Culture and Civilization*, 493–4.

<sup>64</sup> Malik, *Merchants and Merchandise in Northern India A.D. 600–1000*, 55–56.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57. Altekar, 'A History of Important Towns and Cities in Gujarat and Kathiawad (from earliest times to about 1300 AD)', LIII, 198; LIV, 29–32. Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, 33–34.

<sup>67</sup> Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, 34.

<sup>68</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Jalore Inscription of Samantasimhadeva VS 1353, *EI*, XI, 60–1.

<sup>69</sup> Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History*, 34.

the close linkages and cooperation between religious establishments and the mercantile community. Merchants used their close ties with the religious complex, which emerged as a meeting ground between them and the ruler who patronised the building of temples and made donations to them. It demonstrates the linkages and interdependence among rulers, merchants and religious establishments. It must be through the network of merchants that temples would have been able to participate in trade.

Radha Champakalakshmi<sup>70</sup> has focussed on 'temple urbanisation' (eleventh to thirteenth century) in case of South India, especially in the Tamil regions with either multi-temple centres or single large temple centres. Temples and *mathas* attracted itinerant trade on account of their organisational network. In case of western India, Somanath temple located inside the fort of Kosavardhana, that is, modern Shergarh formed the core of the city with several donations made to it by private individuals, merchants and landlords.<sup>71</sup> Apart from them, we get references to the guild of oilmen and couch-shell workers who formed part of the resident population of the city.

In his study of property rights from the sale deeds in Chola inscription, Y. Subbarayalu<sup>72</sup> put forward the view that because of the large-scale land grants or donations canonised temples became landowners by accumulating more and more lands by way of donations or purchase. This same trend is also visible in western India, for instance, the Somanath temple inscription and Dabok inscription of 644 CE refer to the grant of several dwelling houses, shops and fields to a religious establishment, which were either leased out for residential or business purposes or their rent was utilised for the temple expenses.<sup>73</sup>

Agrarian expansion, horizontal spread of rural settlements and state society were tied to the gradual emergence of markets, merchants and towns.<sup>74</sup> A new trend is visible of the movement of merchants or merchant groups and establishment of new exchange centres in the region of western India. Their emergence coincided with the growing visibility of the *vaniks*, and *śreṣṭhins*.<sup>75</sup> Like Aranyakupagiri,<sup>76</sup> where the migration of a community of *mahājanas* headed by Jentaka from Vatanagar (Sirohi) in the seventh century led to opening of a mine and building of the temple of goddess Aranyavasini, leading to the emergence of a workshop-cum-manufacturing centre either in the copper belt around Ahada or at zinc-lead-silver concentrates at Zavar, south of Udaipur. The settlement, thus, was successful in mobilising both the raw materials and manufactured items for the nearest nodes, Nagda or Ahada or both. The temple visited by people from far and wide provided congenial atmosphere for occasional festivities, necessitating

<sup>70</sup> Champakalakshmi, 'State and Economy: South India, circa A.D. 400–1300', 281–5. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization, South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, 206–22, 383. Chakravarti, *Exploring Early India up to c. AD 1300*, 338. Sahu, 'Markets, Merchants and Towns in early Medieval Odisha', 12–13.

<sup>71</sup> A. S. Altekar, The Somanatha temple inscription, *EI*, XXIII, 137–41.

<sup>72</sup> Subbarayalu, 'Property Rights in Medieval Tamil Nadu as seen from the Saledeeds in Chola Inscriptions', 151–62.

<sup>73</sup> R. R. Halder, Dabok Inscription of the time of Dhavalappadeva, *EI*, XX, 122–5. A. S. Altekar, The Somanatha temple inscription, *EI*, XXIII, 137–41.

<sup>74</sup> Gurukkal, 'The Socio-Economic Milieu of the Kerala Temple: A Functional Analysis c. AD 800–1200', 290–1.

<sup>75</sup> B. Ch. Chhabra, List of inscriptions on stone or other material, *ARIE*, 1956–7, 85, no. 469.

<sup>76</sup> R. R. Halder, Samoli Inscription of the time of Siladitya VS 703, *EI*, XX, 97–9.

weekly or occasional fairs, ultimately leading to the emergence of an exchange centre at Aranyakupagiri. Citrakuta<sup>77</sup> (Chittorgarh) in Rajasthan was an important pilgrimage-cum-monastic centre for the Jaina community. Jain merchants extended considerable patronage at Chittaurgarh. Considerable royal grants were made from Citrakuta-*maṇḍapikā*. Devakulapataka<sup>78</sup> or Delwara, 29 km from Udaipur seems to have been an important Jaina *tīrtha* and many Jain *śreṣṭhis* made lavish grants of commercial levies from the local *maṇḍapikās* to the temple. According to another record dated 1161 CE of the time of Alhanadeva records grant of 5 *drammas* to the temple of Mahavira from Nadol *talapada śulka-maṇḍapikās* by Dhanigga of Prāgvāta family.<sup>79</sup> These donations indicate the control of merchants over *maṇḍapikās*. Kiradu, near Barmer, which was ruled by the Paramaras as the feudatories of the Chaulukyas of Gujarat was an important trade centre of the period and a Kiradu stone inscription of 1152 CE of the time of Kumarapala reveals the presence of large number of merchants (*mahājanas*) in the twelfth century.<sup>80</sup> A record of 1178 CE from the same region contains reference to *śulka-maṇḍapikā*.<sup>81</sup> It could then be said that the presence of merchants brought commercial prosperity to a place, which also led to setting up of centres of exchange.

Markets attracted traders and merchants from different regions, cities and port-towns and even concessions were provided to them to convert the villages into towns.<sup>82</sup> In the case of western India, according to Butri (in Pindawada, Sirohi) stone inscription dated 1214 CE we get reference to a grant of one *halavaha* of land in the village of Savada Vriddha (Badi Anval) to a merchant (*śreṣṭhi*) Ampa by king Dharavarsha.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, we do find reference to the term *vañijāka grāma*<sup>84</sup> (village inhabited by merchants) and to the fields owned by merchants (*vañiks*) in the villages<sup>85</sup> forming part of the boundaries of the donated land, which shows that their presence brought prosperity in the villages and encouraged trade which might have also converted a village into some kind of an exchange centre with the establishment of markets. Thus, merchants acted as a medium through which the rural goods moved to the towns and urban goods flowed to the villages. Their presence in the village made it rich and prosperous and that is the reason that even kings did not hinder their journeys.

The above analysis throws light on the areas of concentration of exchange centres in different parts of western India. As far as the region of Rajasthan is concerned, around Jodhpur Ghatiyala and Bijapur was formed one cluster of exchange. Another cluster is located between Jodhpur and Udaipur, where Nadol, Sevadi, Kiradu and Jalore forms another group. In the southern parts of Rajasthan exchange centres were located at

<sup>77</sup> Kapur, *State Formation in Rajasthan: Mewar during the Seventh-Fifteenth Centuries*, 297–8.

<sup>78</sup> Somani, *Mahārānā Kumbha and His Times*, 111.

<sup>79</sup> H. H. Dhruva, The Nadole Inscription of king Alhanadeva VS 1218, *JBBRAS*, XIX (1895–7), 26–34.

<sup>80</sup> D. R. Bhandarkar, Kiradu Stone Inscription of Alhanadeva VS 1209, *EI*, XI, 43–6.

<sup>81</sup> B. N. Reu, Kiradu Inscription of Chalukya Bhimadeva I and his Feudatory Chauhana Madanabrahmadeva dated VS 1235, *IA*, LXII, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Sahu, Markets, Merchants and Towns in early medieval Orissa, 10. Karashima, *Ancient to Medieval: South Indian Society in Transition*, 132, 190–3.

<sup>83</sup> R. R. Halder, Dharavarsha Paramara of Abu and his inscriptions, *IA*, LVI, 47–51.

<sup>84</sup> Johnson, *Triṣaṣṭhisālākāpuruṣacarita of Hemacandra*, 89.

<sup>85</sup> D. B. Diskalkar, Bali Inscription of Kumarapala VS 1216, *Poona Orientalist*, I, 44–6. A. L. Basham, Paliad Plates of Bhimadeva I VS 1112, *EI*, XXXIII, 235–7.

Delwara, Ahada, Chittor and Arthuna, while towards the east, exchange centres were distributed in Rajor, Kaman, and Bayana. In Gujarat, Saurashtra region saw more concentration of exchange centres at Bharana, Vanthali, Kutiyana, and Mangrol in comparison to North (Anavada) and South Gujarat (Kadiya). Often we find references to *haṭṭas* and *maṇḍapikās* being located at one place, for example, at Ahada, which may be because of the fact that unlike *haṭṭas*, exchange at *maṇḍapikās* was routine everyday activity and was not marked by periodicity. One also needs to look at the nature of linkages between different centres of exchange. For instance, both elephants and horses were not locally available in Rajasthan, they seem to have reached from elsewhere. It could be a possibility that the supply of horses could have come to the *maṇḍapikās* at Sripatha and Vasuvata in Bayana from the Prithudaka or Pehoa, which is the known centre of horse trade. Similarly, elephants might have been supplied through exchange centres located in Bengal, Eastern India, Assam, Orissa as well as south Bihar. Saffron was coming from Kashmir while betel leaves came from Malabar, Konkan or Bengal where they were widely produced. Textile industry of Gujarat was famous for good quality cotton, which must have been exported to Rajasthan as well. Thus, all these examples indicate cross-regional linkages within and beyond western India.

The pattern that emerges from the above analysis is that in the ninth to tenth centuries, we find more references to *haṭṭas*, while from the tenth to thirteenth century and after *maṇḍapikās* and *śulka-maṇḍapikās* figure more frequently and the reason could be that from the tenth century there was massive surge in trading activities. During the tenth to thirteenth centuries, merchants in western India handled a variety of essential and luxury items, which were brought for exchange at *maṇḍapikās*. Collection of numerous tolls and taxes at *śulka-maṇḍapikās* also indicated spurt in trading activities during the later early medieval period, which is not so visible in the ninth to tenth centuries.

In short, it can be said that the rising agricultural productivity due to large-scale land grants and improved means of irrigation system facilitated rural–urban exchange, and spurt in commercial transactions. Political initiative by the rulers such as founding of a *haṭṭa* at *Rohinsakupagrāma*; rise of temple economy whereby daily requirements of temple such as incense, betel nuts encouraged trade traffic, and organisation of fairs and festivals at religious centres were enabling factors. The spatial context of an exchange centre was also important, for instance, Kapadvanj, being located on the trade route between Bharuch and central India emerged as an important commercial centre. Thus, all the above listed factors together provided the basis for the emergence and spread of exchange centres in western India. Exchange centres in western India were also involved in networks of inter-regional and overseas trade. Bayana and Anahilpattana provided good examples of it.

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