

Eclipse of Indigo Trade of Bahawalpur State during Third and Fourth Decades of Nineteenth Century

Abstract

Colonial penetration on Bahawalpur State forced its rulers to adopt new political and economic policies suitable to British interest. Resultantly, Bahawalpur experienced a wide range of changes to its socioeconomic conditions. Indigo sector is a useful indicator of such impact of British advent as indigo was major non-grain agricultural commercial product of State and it integrated distribution and consumption patterns across the Bahawalpur region and beyond. This paper seeks to draw a link between the British political hegemony in Bahawalpur to open up new vista for European traders and its catastrophic repercussions, the slump of lucrative indigo sector of Bahawalpur.

Historical Background of Bahawalpur State

The area, which later became part of State, had been mostly desert by the advent of eighteenth century. This pastoral-nomadic way of life was altered dramatically by a Sindhi group—Daudputras who styled themselves as Abbasi, by claiming the uncle of Prophet (PBUH) Abbas as their progenitor. These Abbasis first established themselves in Sindh where they bifurcated as Kalhoras and Daudputras. Daudputras ensconced themselves by laying the foundation of a prosperous settlement of Shikarpur but the rivalry of their kinsmen, the Kalhoras, became threatening for Daudputras so they accepted an invitation from Gillanis and Bukhari Makhdums of Uch Sharif, and populated near them just east of the confluence of the Chenab and Sutlej River by 1727. This clan of warrior entrepreneurs created vibrant polity out of an arid wasteland, they implemented their traditional water management techniques they brought with them from Sindh that resulted in running canals through the lands occupied by them. The gardens were prolific with fruits and fields generated abundant yield. With the passage of time, State was making good money by exporting its best non-grain agricultural commercial product—natural indigo¹ to Sindh, the Punjab and even up to Central Asia.

Throughout the nineteenth century, British India was the pre-eminent producer and supplier of indigo to the West for its thriving textile industry. Indigo was an important export for British until 1890s when it was hit by competition from German synthetic dyes.² But the crisis of indigo trade of Bahawalpur State had different story. During first half of nineteenth century when indigo business was on peak in India at the same time, Bahawalpuri indigo production and distribution declined. Actually, by third and fourth decades of nineteenth century excessive

* Samia Khalid, Assistant Professor in History, Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

availability of cheap indigo provided to the market from Bengal and Bihar by British planters and merchants gave rise to slump in the Bahawalpuri indigo trade.

British Advent in this Region

British opened up riverine trade routes for East India Company merchants through this realm in 1832. British planned to connect Calcutta with Bombay and Persian Gulf with Delhi via Hansi, Bahawalpur city then Sutlej and Indus Rivers. For Sutlej-Indus riverine trade route British signed a commercial treaty with Bahawalpur State, in 1833. However, circumstances were unsettled in the west of the Indus until British signed treaties with Mirs of Sindh in 1838. Thereafter, improvements in transport facilities and trade routes particularly the riverine gave a new boost to activities of British merchants. British plugged all loopholes and increased their trade through these routes. Resultantly, surprising increase in the number of British merchandise boats on Sutlej from 4 to 1125 between 1833-1843, within a period spanning over a decade, was observed by Mackeson, British Agent to Bahawalpur State.³ This rapid and significant increase in the number of British merchandise boats by 1839 was an aftermath of the treaty- a boon from heavens-concluded by British with Mirs of Sindh. Moreover, between 1833 and 1847, a series of treaties were signed between Bahawalpur State and British which bounded Bahawalpur to further the political and economic objectives of British in the region.

In 1838, Bahawalpur State became British Protectorate State. As a result of this treaty, Nawab was bound to fulfill all demands of British. Therefore Bahawalpur rendered military assistance to British in Afghan War (1838-41), constructed the first ever road of his State some 280 miles in length for British forces with his expenses and it also served as trade route.⁴ By 1842, Nawab organized another route from Sirsa to Bahawalpur City traversing 97 miles through Bahawalpur State.⁵ Actually, British connected Calcutta to Bombay via the route of Bahawalpur to Sirsa. It was safer and less time consuming for British merchants as compared to old route from Bombay via Pali, and Amritsar, which was not free from the apprehension of plunderers.⁶ Development of this itinerary bestowed central position upon Bahawalpur. Bahawalpur State provided all facilities to traders on these routes and, simultaneously, the War of Sindh, and eventually whole army of State was engaged in the Multan War in 1848 for more than almost 10 months. Such political changes due to British intervention in this realm exhausted the resources of State by utilization in trading routes projects, reduced the income of State by free trade, and dumping lessened the demand of Bahawalpuri indigo in national and international market which also curtailed the income of State.

Initially Bahawalpur State gave subsidies to British merchants on customs duties but by 1847 Nawab remitted all tariffs on British trade through his State without any compensation from British. Eventually, State reached the edge of economic crises. This phenomenon led to the changes in socioeconomic sphere of Bahawalpur. At this juncture, Nawab elevated the taxes which brought indigo grower, workers, sellers...etc. under economic crises. At the same time, the persons attached with indigo industry were unable to compete with abundantly available cheap indigo from British India in markets. This article has been

fractioned divided into three sections: production of indigo, how it decreased; distribution, how it was restricted to surrounding areas; and finally the consumption of Bahawalpuri indigo.

Production of Indigo

Indigo Production Areas

In 1833, major agricultural productions of Bahawalpur State were grains and indigo.⁷ Afterwards, in 1837, Bahawal Khan's State was renowned for its indigo plantation that was also an object of cultural identity as well as trade.⁸ In 1837, about 50,000 maunds of indigo were produced in Bahawalpur State.⁹ One maund was equal to forty seers.¹⁰

The hub of indigo production and distribution in Bahawalpur State were western areas of State. In 1840s, the cities of Ahmadpur East and Ahmadpur West were surrounded by fields filled with the crops in which indigo was planted prolifically.¹¹ The Khanpur city was environed by agricultural fertile land where indigo was grown in abundance.¹² Between Allahabad and Khanpur, indigo was largely prepared and for this purpose numerous cemented vats and tanks were used in its manufacturing.¹³ The annual indigo production in the vicinity of Bahawalpur city was only 800 maunds and it was entirely exported to Kabul at the price of 45 rupees per maund.¹⁴ Indigo was produced on large scale so all villages were engaged in indigo making; for instance, near Khanpur towards Sindh Boileau visited a village of *neel-gurs* (indigo-makers).¹⁵ By 1837 Leech recorded:

The indigo is sown in the month of Chaitr (April);...The ground that is intended for indigo cultivation is kept inundated by the swell in Srawan (August) for three months. In the months of Phagan (March,) and Chaitr (April,) the ground is ploughed, and the seed planted, when it appears above ground they water it at least 3 separate times at intervals of 20 and 25 days and strip the leaves off in Asoo (October,) and in Chaitr (April,) and Phagan (March,) they water the old plants, which crop is better or worse than the first crop according to the nature of the ground, new land or nawarr producing most.¹⁶

It was lengthy process to make the blue dyestuff extracted from the leaves of the indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*). First of all, the plants were cut and tied in bundles then taken to the vats (*hauz*), which were generally in the sets of three—two large ones and a small one (*hauzri*) in the middle. Afterwards, bundles were placed upright in the large vats with the stalks downwards. In the evening sufficient water let in to cover the stalks, which were kept down by heavy beams. It was important that this steeping should be carried out as soon as possible after the plants were cut; otherwise, they dry up. Early in the morning, the bundles were taken out, leaving the liquid in the vats. This was then churned up and this operation lasted for about four to five hours, in the course of which liquid changed

its colour first to *kajla* (deep blue), and then to *saua* (greenish) and finally to *punnra* (mauve). It was then left to settle for nearly an hour and a half. The *neel* (indigo) was then deposited at the bottom of the vats, while the liquid was let off by means of a hole in the side of each vat about four finger-breadths above the bottom. The deposit was then transferred to the smaller vat in which it was left to settle for the night. Early in the morning the water again drawn off, the sediment collected, tied up in cloth one side of which is plastered with *gachani* or *multani mitti*, and drained on a deep heap of sand. Finally, it dried in the sun, kneaded into a paste with the hand and made into small pieces/ balls/ cakes.¹⁷

Decline in Indigo Production

Indigo was commercial agriculture product of Bahawalpur State because peasants produced it primarily for sale in distant markets rather than to meet their own need or to sell in local markets. In 1830s and 1840s, British traders provided indigo from Calcutta to areas of Persian Gulf, which were previously principal buyers of indigo of Bahawalpur.¹⁸ Additionally in 1840s, British maintained political hegemony over Sindh and the Punjab and promoted British trade in these provinces. Therefore, major reason of reduction in production of natural-indigo could be attributed to decline in the demand of Bahawalpuri indigo in local and international markets.

Concurrently, to meet increasing demands of commercial and military assistance extended to paramount power British, Nawab Bahawal Khan III (r. 1826-1852) increased taxes on agricultural production from 17 % to 25 % of total product up to 33 % or even 40 % of the gross production in the case of the most productive lands in the State.¹⁹ This increase in agricultural production raised the production cost of indigo. Simultaneously, the demand of this indigo reduced in market so the profit on this product declined, therefore, indigo growers and sellers both were forced to operate in an economic straitjacket. Resultantly, between 1837 and 1848, the indigo production of Bahawalpur State decreased 93 %, as in 1837 total indigo production was fifty-thousand maunds²⁰ whereas in 1848 it reduced to almost thirty four hundred maunds.²¹ Succeeding sections will shed light on this catastrophic phenomena.

Distribution

Leech records about the sale and purchase of indigo in the bazaar of Ahmadpur East. He says that merchants examined the indigo by breaking the cake, and looking at the depth of the color in sunlight that ought to be a deep bluish violet, and free from Silica. About the bargaining, Leech observed that when the buyer was able to beat the seller down by exposing some defects of the indigo specimen, he did not usually pay less but got a seer or two more of indigo to offset the damages.²² This depicts that seller was easy on this concession because indigo was abundantly and easily available in the Bahawalpur State.

Different Classes of Indigo and their Prices

To understand monetary transaction of Bahawalpur State, it is significantly important to mention here that Bahawalpur State had its own coinage. The money currently in vogue in the Bahawalpur State was of three kinds: Ahmadpuri, Chaubissara, and Bahawalpuri or Bahawli.²³

The indigo was of different classes that realized the following prices:-

1. The price of indigo produced in the surroundings of Ahmadpur East district was 50 Bahawali Kacha rupee.²⁴
2. The price of Indigo exported from Ahmadpur East was invariably 50 Ahmadpuri rupees per maund but in Bahawalpur City bazaar the price of same indigo was 65 rupees Bahawali *kacha* rupee per maund. Most probably, owing to transportation cost its price increased in Bahawalpur City bazaar. From Bahawalpur City, some quantity of this indigo was exported to Khorasan.²⁵
3. Whereas, annual indigo production in the surroundings of Bahawalpur City was 800 maunds and all of this was exported to Kabul and its price was 45 Bahawali rupees per maunds.²⁶
4. Otherwise, Khanpuri indigo available in Bahawalpur city market sold at 50 Bahawali *kacha* rupees per maund²⁷ which also depicts that Khanpuri indigo was inferior in quality because in terms of distance Khanpur was far away from Bahawalpur than Ahmadpur East.
5. Indigo ready to use for dying was one rupee and two anna Bahawali a seer.²⁸
6. In Ahmadpur bazaar seeds of indigo were 30 Ahmadpuri rupees per maund or 19 Government rupees.²⁹
7. Leaves were four Ahmadpuri rupees a maund or 2.5 Government rupees.³⁰

Variation in prices of indigo depict market trends i.e. in 1835 price of indigo was 20 Government rupees per maund which increased to a price within the range of 31 to 49 Government rupees per maund in 1837. However, by 1848 price of indigo decreased and dropped to the monetary value within the bracket of 8 to 15 per maund.³¹

Export of Indigo

Although Bahawalpur City area was not the largest producer of Indigo but its market was prime Indigo export center. Annually three or four lakhs worth of rupees Indigo exported from Bahawalpur City to Multan for local use, whereas, six or seven lakhs worth of rupees indigo sent to Multan for Sindh markets.³² Additionally, from Bahawalpur City, Ahmadpuri indigo exported to Multan for the Khorasan market where it was in great demand in that all the natives would wear nothing but blue trousers.³³ From Bahawalpur City, indigo worth 10000 rupees was exported to Hyderabad and Allahyar (Sindh) and worth 3,00,000 Bahawali rupees to Marwar. Bahawalpur City exported its total production of eight-hundreded maunds to Kabul in 1837.³⁴

Second largest market of Indigo was Khanpur. Large quantities of indigo exported from here to Multan along with other parts of the Punjab, and as far as Afghanistan. By 1826, Indigo was prepared in the surrounding areas of Khanpur

and being a cheap and plentiful article it was exported chiefly to the markets of the areas across the Indus up-to Bokhara.³⁵ It was biggest market of commercial indigo in the State³⁶, therefore, it also had storehouses for indigo.³⁷ In 1837, ninety camel loads of indigo was sent by land from Khanpur to Pali via Shikarpur and Jaisalmer.³⁸ One camel load was seven maunds, which implies that total 630 maunds of indigo exported to Pali from Khanpur. Additionally, per annum, 800 maunds of indigo were exported from the districts around Khanpur, partly to Muscat, via Allahyar and partly to Kabul.³⁹ For export, indigo packed in large cloth bales; there was no vogue of wooden boxes.⁴⁰ Most probably, because it was transported on camels and it was easy to transport cloth bales on the back of camel.

Forty maund, worth of 2000 Ahmadpuri rupee Exported to Shikarpur from Ahmadpur and British Government purchased from Ahmadpur East, one-thousand maund indigo in 1837 for examination to compete it in market.⁴¹

Moreover by 1837, Bahawalpur State exported annually two-hundred loads of Indigo to Bombay via Jaisalmer, Allahyar-ka-Tranda, and Karachi, but occasionally it was sent through the road of Pali.⁴² Indigo was also annually exported from Bahawalpur State to Bokhara through Kabul.⁴³ Shikarpuri merchants were actively engaged in the trade of Indigo, indigo leaves, and seeds. The *aratti* (commission-agent) of Ahmadpur also dealt in indigo; they took half Ahmadpuri rupees as their commission from seller as well as buyer.⁴⁴ Detailed statistics in connection with the export of indigo are arranged in tabular form below: Overall trade in indigo was a lucrative business for instance leech recorded in 1837:

A letter arrived from Cabool a few days ago, stating that all the indigo there had been sent to Bokhara, and on account of the scarcity the price had risen to 150 rupees the maund. The Cabool and Ahmadpoor rupees are equal. The letter was from Mutturadas, the agent of Shah Parmanand of Shikarpoor; the price here is 58 rupees the maund, but it is not taken because Sawan Mall, the Governor of Multan, who used to take 12 ½ rupees the camel load now takes 2 annas on the rupee of value...⁴⁵

These quarrels between chieftains of Bahawalpur and Multan regarding indigo⁴⁶ and Sawan Mall's policy to increase duties on Bahawalpuri indigo transit inflicted economic setback on Bahawalpur State and affected indigo business on large scale because Bahawalpur State was exporting indigo to Sindh, Punjab and Kabul via Multan. Later on, by end of 1848 British captured Multan and eventually British traders captured all indigo markets. According to Cunningham, by late 1840s, major market of Bahawalpuri indigo was Khorasan but lately this trade also declined owing to the introduction of large quantity of British Indian indigo into these reas by way of the Persian Gulf. Still the fondness of the Sikhs and lower class Muslims for the Indus, for blue clothing, maintained a fair trade in Indigo of Bahawalpur State.⁴⁷

Money Making Trade

From total fifty-thousand maunds of indigo production, neighboring to thirty-thousand were exported to international and national markets that rendered foreign exchange to Bahawalpur State. Until late 1830s, trade of indigo was moneymaking business. Not only processed indigo but also its seeds and leaves were exported. For instance, in 1836, from Ahmadpur East five camel loads of seeds were sent to Bombay on speculation of a Shikarpuri who earned considerable profit. Indigo leaves of Bahawalpur were exported to Kabul from Shikarpur, 20 camel loads annually, at 4 rupees the maund. In Kabul, these leaves were sold for 44 rupees the maund.⁴⁸ About profit on indigo export to Bokhara, Leech says:

It is purchased from rupees 50 to 60 rupees per man, and each load contains 7 mans. The expenses, including the duties from this to Kabul are about 18 rupees per load, while it sells at Bokhara at a profit of from rupees 50 to 150 rupees per load. The duty raised at Laya is 2 rupees and 4 annas per man. Two hundred loads of it are also exported to Bombay, via Jaisalmer, Alaryar ka tranda and Karachi, but it is very seldom sent by the road of Pali; each load contains from 9 to 10 mars⁴⁹; the duty and expenses of the road amount to 175 rupees per load.⁵⁰

The foregoing statement manifests that export of indigo towards Kabul and Bokhara was more profitable than to India but when British Agency rule was established in Bahawalpur State by 1866 indigo was exported only to Indian market and British Agent abandoned international trade of Bahawalpuri indigo.⁵¹

It is also mentioned in above quote that indigo sent to Bombay via Jaisalmer, Alaryar ka tranda and Karachi, but occasionally sent by the road of Pali.⁵² Because the route through Pali was seldom free from the apprehension of plunderers.⁵³ Therefore, in 1830s, British opened river route via Sutlej and Indus. Moreover by early 1840s, British opened the Bahawalpur-Sirsa route to avoid route to Bombay via Plai completely.⁵⁴ Following map identifies two major points of this route: Sirsa and Bahawalpur City. Then traders entered Sutlej River. This route connected Delhi to Bombay. It further increased the pace of British trading activities and this route was preferred by merchants because of short distance, rapidity of riverine route and safety.⁵⁵

As indigo production decreased between 1837 to 1848 up to 93%, similarly the export of Indigo of Bahawalpur State declined up to 92 % between 1837 and 1866. In 1837, the annual export was almost 26361 maunds whereas in 1866-67 the export of indigo was 2042 maunds.

Consumption

Dyers of Bahawalpur State extensively used indigo as in 1835, principal non-agricultural manufacture of State was coarse blue cloth initially woven as white coarse cloth then dyed in indigo on the spot as per the demand.⁵⁶ This was the time when specialization of dyeing existed

Since *rangrez* and *lilaris* and dyers of red-color were different and distinct proletariats performing their work. All were dyers and artisans not menials being chiefly found in urban areas. *Lilaris* were indigo dyers only; *rangrez* dyed in all colors except blue (indigo) and red color. Chhimba (caste), who were mostly Hindus, dyed in red color but as a rule in no other color. The Hindu indeed did not dye in blue, which was to him an abomination; and red was his special color, so most of them used to dye in red color only. Chhimba were also calico-printers and stamped colored pattern on the cotton fabrics of the country. Resultantly, they were also called *chhapegar*. They also worked as *dhobi* (washer-man).⁵⁷

A glance at some considerable statistics enveloping important figures relevant to these professions in Bahawalpur State by 1835 are tabled as under:

| Name of Caste and profession | | Number of major bazaars of State | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | | Ahmadpur East | Bahawalpur City | Khanpur | Uch |
| <i>Rungraz</i> | Dyers | 50 (M) | 150(M) | --- | --- |
| <i>Leelgur</i> | Indigo-workers | 100 (M) | 200(M) | --- | 20 (M) |
| <i>Cheepee</i> | Washer and Calico printers | 500 (H) | 750 (H) | 350 (H) | 100 (H) |

Source: Boileau, *Personal narrative*, 223-4, 230-1. 241-2, 248

It portrays the numerical strength of family members associated with these professions where M denotes the Muslims and H stands for Hindus. In Bahawalpur State, red color was mostly dyed with the help of safflower. In 1837, at Bahawalpur City bazaar number of *Rungraz* increased to 200, from these 64 were specifically safflower (red color) dyers; and 20 were Indigo dyers that is a clear reflection of the fact that dying specialists were available. Simultaneously, there were 18 indigo dyers in Ahmadpur East and from amongst them 8 were dyers of safflower (red color).⁵⁸

Other than dying cloth in blue, indigo had another usage for creating other colors as Leech gave account of following techniques employed at that time for using indigo to give different shades of colors to cloths:

Savz Pista— piece of cloth, 6 haths⁵⁹ is put into a bath of light indigo of 4 pais weight, dried and then put into a bath of quarter seer sun dana.

Musakidar—take 2 tolas of musakh at ¼ rupee the seer, pound and boil it, and steep the cloth in this water for an hour, dry it and then take 2 pais weight of indigo, at 1 rupee the seer, dilute it and immerse the cloth for a short time, then dry it.

Saya—the cloth is put into an indigo bath of which there are always several ready in the dyer's yard ; it is dried and having been dipped and dried the second

time, it is put into a bath of limes, and then dried finally.

Peeroza—give it the usual indigo cold bath once, and having dried it, put it into a bath of 1 tola of phathadee[alum] and dry it.⁶⁰

Finally, yet importantly was the inauguration of municipality system in urban areas of State by British administration in 1874. These municipality boards instituted several measures to relocate some professions for better civic conditions of urban areas. Dyeing was one of relocated professions.⁶¹ Eventually in 1881, there were 825 *rangrez* (dyers) in all and 102 were *lillari* (indigo dyers) in Bahawalpur State.⁶²

State Earning

State did not confer any patronage and privilege upon indigo sector but instead policy parameters framed by the State were oppressive because it levied and collected multiple taxes from indigo segment. Following sections account for the taxes imposed on this sector of production:

***Batai*(tax in kind on crops)**

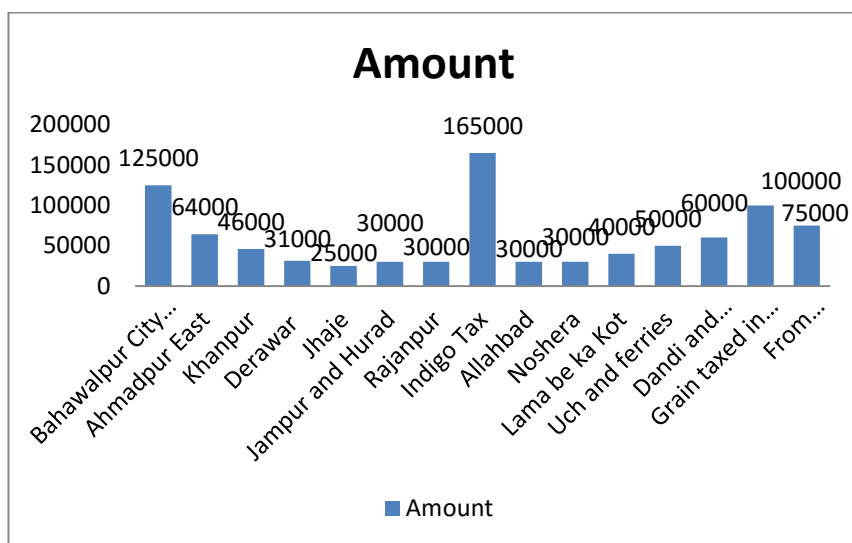
The *batai*⁶³ was the division of the actual produce and rates of *batai* varied from time to time as well as area-wise. This tax was collected in kind. As already noted that series of treaties were concluded and signed between Bahawalpur State and British Raj during 1830s and 1840s that obligated Nawab Bahawal Khan III to provide assistance to British by all means and measures. Hence, in order to meet increasing demands of East India Company, Nawab Bahawal Khan III (r. 1826-1852) soared taxes on agricultural production. Previously, the State share on agricultural production was prescribed at various rates ranging from 17 % to 25 % of total product. During the reign of Bahawal Khan III, gradually various additions were made to the amount to be realized in cash or kind, and the state demand was raised to 33 % or even 40 % of the gross production in the case of the most productive lands in the State. The lowest demand was 25 %, anything below that rate being regarded as a concession. Such concessions, where given, might reduce the revenue to anything from a fifth to a tenth of the produce.⁶⁴ State further collected tax on seeds of Indigo in kind.⁶⁵

***Mughla* (tax in cash on processed indigo)**

Tax levied exclusively on indigo was referred to as *mughla*, which was a State monopoly and no one else shared the revenue collected in the form of tax,⁶⁶ and it was collected in cash. Before 1830, in the areas of Bahawalpur State on right side of Sutlej river (which later became part of Muzaffargarh District), *Mughla* was collected in some parts at a fixed rate of Rs. 5 per *maund*. In others, it varied according to the market price e.g. when indigo sold for less than Rs. 40 per *maund*, the rate of *mughla* was Rs. 3 per *maund*; when it was sold above Rs. 40, *mughla* was Rs. 6.⁶⁷ This tax collection was in the Sikka of 1224 H.; one rupee Sikka of 1224 H. was equal to 13 British annas.⁶⁸

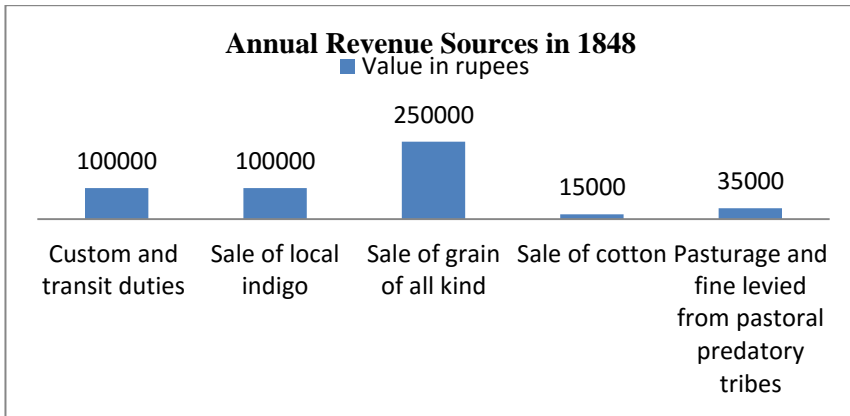
Sale and Purchase Tax on Indigo

State also levied sale and purchase tax on indigo in kind (in the form of indigo). The mechanism of this sales and purchase tax was that State took one maund for every five maunds of indigo from seller and when merchants bought indigo they were obliged to buy one maund from State for every four maunds and State sold its maund ten rupees dearer than the market rate.⁶⁹ A large portion of the revenues of the State was allocated to the Daudputras as *kasur grants*⁷⁰ for feudal services. They received certain share of the State produce; additionally they were entitled to the money value of a portion of the indigo sown in the State.⁷¹ State disposed of Indigo collected in kind by selling it in market for its desired price. If State could not sell its stock of indigo for the desired price then Nawab handed out one seer a month to its soldiers and in lieu thereof deducted two rupees from their salaries, which was five rupees at the maximum.⁷² In 1837, indigo taxes contributed the largest portion that stood at 165000 Ahmadpuri rupees to the State revenue as can be observed from the following graph:



Sources: R. Leech, “Report on the Sindhian, Khelat, and Daoodputr Armies, with a Collection of Routes”, in Burnes, Alexander, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood. *Reports and Papers, Political, Geographical, and Commercial, Submitted to Government, Mission in the Years 1835-36-37*. Section I “Political”, report no. XI. (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839), 80.

Above-mentioned graph shows that largest portion of State revenue was collected in the form of indigo tax but surprisingly over a span of decade by 1848, earning of State from indigo tax declined as following graphical presentation bears testimony to this piece of information:



Sources: Shahamet Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur, With Notices of the Adjacent Countries of Sindh, Afghanistan, Multan, and the West of India*. (London: James Madden, 1848), xi, 208-9.

It can be clearly estimated from the comparison of above graphical presentations that State income from indigo decreased by around 40% from 1837 to 1848. In a nutshell, plummet in indigo trade dampened the overall socioeconomic sphere of Bahawalpur State that ultimately affected everyone economically in the whole Bahawalpur society.

Conclusion

Before the arrival of East India Company in 1830s, Bahawalpur State and its adjacent areas, business of indigo was mercenary enterprise for everyone—farmer, vender, and Bahawalpur State. The British involvement in this region brought political changes during third and fourth decades of nineteenth century as an upshot of the treaties signed by the British with all cis-Sutlej and cis-Indus territories in 1830s that opened Sutlej and Indus for navigation of British merchandise boats. In 1843, British captured Sindh and, later on, in 1847 merged it with Bombay and annexed the Punjab next year in 1848. These spectacular political changes had wide spread striking socioeconomic implications on Bahawalpur State and one of the catastrophic repercussions was slump of lucrative indigo trade of Bahawalpur State. During these two decades, indigo sector the largest non-grain agricultural commercial production sector of Bahawalpur State lost its markets, which cause rapid reduction in price of indigo, minimize the profit, caused unemployment...etc. This economic crises did not interrupted by any fiscal policy therefore slowly and steadily these time-honored remunerative business drawn off.

References

- ¹ The natural indigo – the blue dyestuff extracted from the leaves of the indigo plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*).
- ² For details of scientific experiments on synthetic indigo in India and England, see Prakash Kumar, “Facing Competition: The History of Indigo Experiments in Colonial India, 1897-1920” A PhD Dissertation in History of Technology, (Georgia: Georgia Institute of Technology, August, 2004).
- ³ F. Mackeson, “Report on the Route from Seersa to Bahawalpore” in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Vol. XIII, New Series, Part I, Calcutta: Bishop’s College Press, (January to June, 1844): 313.
- ⁴ Foot notes in John William Kaye, *History: the Walk in Afghanistan*. A New Edition Revised and Corrected. Vol. I. (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), 405.
- ⁵ Total length of this route was 227 miles; first 43 miles passed through British governed area; the next 87, though Bikaner State; and last crossed Bahawalpur State.
- ⁶ F. Mackeson, “Survey of the Country between Bhawalpore and Sirsa” in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*. Vol IV. 3rd Series, (London: W.M. H. Allen & Co., (November-April, 1845): 526-533.
- ⁷ F. Mackeson, “Journal of Captain C. M. Wade’s Voyage from Lodiana to Mithankot by the River Satlaj, on his Mission to Lahor and Bahawalpur in 1832-33” *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. VI. Part I. Calcutta: The Baptist Mission Press, (January to June 1837): 202.
- ⁸ Percant H. Lord, ‘Medical Memoir on the Plain of the Indus’ in Burnes, Alexander, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood. *Reports and Papers, Political, Geographical, and Commercial, Submitted to Government, Mission in the Years 1835-36-37, In Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries*, Section II “Geography” report no IX, Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839): 60. Lord was the medical officer of the Mission to Kabul, he completed this report while his stay at Dera Ghazi Khan 2nd June 1837.
- ⁹ Munshi Mohan Lal, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur” in Burnes, Alexander, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood. *Reports and Papers, Political, Geographical, and Commercial, Submitted to Government, Mission in the Years 1835-36-37, In Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries*. Section three—Commerce, Part VII, (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839): 73.
- ¹⁰ R. Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country: Bhawalpoor” in Sir Alexander Burnes, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood, *Report and Papers, Political, Geographical, & Commercial Submitted to Government: Missions In the Years 1835-36-37, In Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries*, Section II, “Commercial”, report no. VI, (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bangal Military Orphan Press, 1839): 55.
- ¹¹ Orlich mentioned this place as Ahmadpur-Barra but actually, it was Ahmadpur Chuta. Leopold von Orlich, *Travels in India: including Sinde and the Punjab*. vol. I , Translated from the German by H. Evans Lloyd. (London: Longman, 1845),132, 138-9.
- ¹² Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab*. vol. I, (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), 23.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 389.
- ¹⁴ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country: Bhawalpoor”, 60.

¹⁵ A. H. E. Boileau, *Personal Narrative of a Tour Through the Western States of Rajwara, in 1835: Comprising Beekaner, Jesulmer, and Jodhpur, with the Passage of the Great Desert, and A Brief Visit to the Indus and to Buhawalpoor, Accompanied by Various Tables and Memoranda Statistical, Philological, and Geographical.* (Calcutta: N. Grant Tank Square, 1837), 51.

¹⁶ By 1837, Leech recorded that in Bahawalpur State six months of the *Unhale* (or hot season) were *Vesak* (May,) *Jeth* (June,) *Akhad* (July,) *Sawan* (August,) *Bhado* (September,) and *Asoo* (October,) and six months of the *Siyaree* or cold season *Khattee* (November,) *Mangar* (December,) *Po* (January,) *Maug* (February,) *Phaggun* (March,) and *Chaitr* (April). Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 56.

¹⁷ The Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State with Map 1904.* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazetteer, 1808), Reprinted (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2001), 222.

¹⁸ Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej.* (London: John Murray, 1849), 3.

¹⁹ *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State with Map 1904*, 303.

²⁰ Mohan, "On the Trade of Bahawalpur" 73.

²¹ Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej.* (London: John Murray, 1849), 3.

²² Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 56.

²³ Bahawalpuri coin was equal in value to the *kuldar* rupee (coin of Bombay), Chaubissara was worth 15 annas, and Ahmadpuri coin worth 12 kuldar annas. Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 180. Also see Mohan, "On the Trade of Bahawalpur" 71-72.

The Kabul and Ahmdapuri rupees were equal in 1837. Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country" 58 One hundred and seventeen rupees of Kabul are equal to one hundred Company rupees. 12 shyas make 1 Kabuli rupee. Alexander Burnes, "List of the English Manufactures brought to Cabool", in Sir Alexander Burnes, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood, *Report and Papers, Political, Geographical, & Commercial Submitted to Government: Missions In the Years 1835-36-37, In Scinde, Affghanistan, and Adjacent Countries*, Appendix "Lists of Specimens of Articles of Commerce and Trade, Submitted by the Officers, employed on Mission in Scinde, Affghanistan, and Adjacent Countries, in 1835-36-37. List no. 1. (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839): 194.

²⁴ Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60

²⁷ R. Leech, List of the Native Manufactures &c. of Bhawalpoor" *Appendix: Lists of Specimens of articles of Commerce and trade, submitted by the officers, employed on missions, in Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries, in 1835-36-37.* in Sir Alexander Burnes, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood, *Report and Papers, Political, Geographical, & Commercial Submitted to Government: Missions In the Years 1835-36-37, In Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries*, Section III, "Commercial", report no. VI, (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bangal Military Orphan Press, 1839),181.

²⁸ Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 66

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

- ³⁰ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56, 58, 66.
- ³¹ Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 255 Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56, Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, 3.
- ³² W. Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus in the Expedition into Affghanistan in the Years 1838-1839 under the Command of H. E. Lieut. General Sir Jhon (Now Lord) Keane: Illustrated by a Map with Views of Candhar, Ghuznee and Cabool, and by Various Tables, also the History of the Dooranee Empire from its Foundation (1747) to the Present Time.* (Calcutta: W. Thacker and Co. 1840),12.
- ³³ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56.
- ³⁴ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56, 58, 62-3, Mohan, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 73.
- ³⁵ Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, 19-20.
- ³⁶ Mohan Lal, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 76. Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, 23.
- ³⁷ Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys*, 389.
- ³⁸ Alexander Burnes, “On the Commerce of Shikarpoor and Upper Sindh” in Burnes, Alexander, Lieutenant Leech, Doctor Lord, and Lieutenant Wood. *Reports and Papers, Political, Geographical, and Commercial, Submitted to Government, Mission in the Years 1835-36-37. In Scinde, Affghanisthan, and Adjacent Countries*, Section III, Commerce, Report no. IV, (Calcutta: G. H. Huttman, Bengal Military Orphan Press, 1839): 28.
- ³⁹ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56.
- ⁴⁰ Atkinson, *The Expedition into Affghanistan*, 78.
- ⁴¹ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56, 58, 62-3, Mohan, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 73.
- ⁴² It was purchased from fifty to sixty rupees per maund, and each load contained seven maunds. Mohan, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 73.
- ⁴³ Mohan, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 73.
- ⁴⁴ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 57, 61.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.
- ⁴⁶ Burnes, “Report on the Establishment of an Entrepot or Fair for the Indus Trade.”, 112.
- ⁴⁷ Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, 3.
- ⁴⁸ Leech, “Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan’s Country”, 56, 58.
- ⁴⁹ Mari is composed of 12 ½ Mars, which is of 40 *pakka* seers, each seer in this country is 84 rupees in weight. Mohan, “On the Trade of Bahawalpur”, 75.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.
- ⁵¹

| Annual Export of Indigo from Bahawalpur State during year 1872-73 | | |
|---|----------|--------------|
| Areas where Bahawalpuri indigo was exported | Export | |
| | Quantity | Value |
| | Maunds | Govt. Rupees |
| Multan, Montgomery, Muzaffaghar and Dera Ghazi Khan | 4158 | 191783 |
| Bikanera and Jaisalmer | 817 | 45803 |
| Bunglah, Sirsa and Ferozpur | 44 | 2403 |
| Sukkar and <i>ubaorah</i> (upper part of Sindh) | 979 | 8622 |
| Total | 5998 | 248611 |

Source: Government of the Punjab. *Report on the Administration of Bahawalpur State for the year: 1872-73*. Appendix V, (Lahore: W. E. Ball, 1873), cxl.

- ⁵² Mohan, "On the Trade of Bahawalpur", 73.
- ⁵³ Mackeson, "Survey of the Country between Bhawalpore and Sirsa", 526-533.
- ⁵⁴ Mackeson, "Report on the Rout from Seersa to Bahawalpore", 312.
- ⁵⁵ Mackeson, "Survey of the Country between Bhawalpore and Sirsa", 526-533.
- ⁵⁶ Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 176.
- ⁵⁷ Denzil Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes: Being a Reprint of the Chapter on "The Race, Castes and Tribes of the People" in the Report on the Census of the Panjab Published in 1883 by the Sir Denzil Ibbetson, K. C. S. I.* (Lahore: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Printing, Punjab, 1916), 321.
- ⁵⁸ Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 55, 60.
- ⁵⁹ Common *hath* were equal to 22 inches and *shajahani hath* was equal to 18 English inches and two *hath* were equal to one *guz*. Leech, "List of the Native Manufactures &c. of Bhawalpoor", 180.
- ⁶⁰ Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 64
- ⁶¹ The Bahawalpur State, *By-Laws of Bahawalpur Municipality, 1874*. (Bahawalpur: Sadiqul-Anwar Press, 1874), 11-12.
- ⁶² Ibbetson, *Panjab Castes*, 298-299, 322.
- ⁶³ *Baith* or *battai* was value of Government share of produce. Henry M. Elliot, *Races of the North Western Provinces of India; Bring an Amplified Edition of the Original Supp; Segmental Glossary of Indian Terms*. John Beames edited, revised and rearranged. Vol II (London: Trubner & Co., 1869), 33.
- ⁶⁴ *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State with Map 1904*, 303.
- ⁶⁵ In 1867-68 state earned 6 Government Rupees. Government of the Punjab. "Report on the Re-Organization of the Bhawalpoor State, for the Year Ending 30th June 1867" in *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, vol. VI, no. 2, (Lahore: The Punjab Printing Company's Press, 1868), 14.
- ⁶⁶ In 1867-68 income under this head was 20, 138 Government Rupees. *Ibid.*, 15.
- ⁶⁷ The Punjab Government, *Gazetteer of the Muzaffargarh District 1908*, (Lahore: The Superintendent Government Printing, 1930), reprinted by (Lahore: Niaz Ahmad, Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2012), 168.
- ⁶⁸ *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State with Map 1904*, 68.
- ⁶⁹ Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country" 56.
- ⁷⁰ *Kasur* grant was a specific share in kind of the state share in certain lands: if the land was waste he got nothing, but if cultivated he obtained his share. *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State with Map 1904*, 306.
- ⁷¹ C. Minchin, "Report on the Re-Organization of the Bhawalpoor State, for the Year Ending 30th June 1867" in *Selections from the Records of the Government of the Punjab and its Dependencies*, vol. VI, no. 2, Lahore: The Punjab Printing Company's Press, 1868), 55.
- ⁷² Leech, "Commercial Information Regarding Bahawal Khan's Country", 65.