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Tamilnad Estates in the Twentieth Century*

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In 1802, the Madras government began to settle its province in zamindari estates, along the lines of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal nine years earlier. Where there were chieftains and revenue-farmers surviving from the pre-British regime, they were generally confirmed in their charges; where there were no such overlords, the government auctioned off the territory in *mittas* (parcels) and accorded these mittadars the same legal status as their more established neighbours. The scheme was never extended to the whole province and, after many estates had quickly collapsed through inexperienced management or unrealistic revenue demands, it was abandoned in 1818. In the next 30 years, several more estates got into difficulties, were dissolved, and the land settled under ryotwari. In the Tamil area (with which this paper is concerned) most of those that collapsed were recently-created mitta estates; with a few important exceptions, those established estates that survived the warfare of the eighteenth century also survived the peace of the nineteenth.[1]

The knowledge that the Madras Presidency was a distinctively ryotwari tract has deflected interest away from those lands in the south that were settled by the British under some other tenurial system. Yet in the Tamil area the estates remained unusually important. In the early twentieth century, estates still covered nearly six million acres, some 19 per cent of the total area. Estate-owners also managed much of the land (seven per cent of the Tamil area) held under *inam* (preferential tenure) and, either because of ancient ties or modern wealth, controlled markets, temples, and other facilities which catered for the whole population. Wealth, lineage, and the atten-

*The research for this paper was financed by the UK Social Science Research Council, with additional help from the History Faculty, Queen's College, and the Smuts Memorial Fund in Cambridge, and Titanus Distribuzione Roma. I am grateful to [illegible] and David Washbrook for their comments on earlier drafts. References to files in the Tamilnadu Archives, Madras, are abbreviated as follows: CoW = Court of Wards; (C) = Confidential; G.O. . . . . . Rev = Government Order number . . . in the Revenue Department; LRS = Proceedings of the Board of Revenue in the Department of Land Revenue and Settlement.

[1] B. S. Baliga, 'Acquisition of Estates and their Conversion into Ryotwari Tenure,' *Studies in Madras Administration*, Madras, 1960, Vol. I, pp. 46-108.

tions of the government also gave to the estates and their owners an important role in the politics of the locality and province.

This paper has two purposes. Firstly, it sets out to examine the nature of the Tamilnad estates—where and how big they were, who managed them, and how they were held together. Were they like the talukdari estates of Oudh, assorted collections of revenue rights in scattered villages, held together by the cosseting hand of the government and the 'complex series of political relationships' that gave landlords, estate officials, and tenants an interest in their survival?[2] Were they rather like the zamindaris of Bengal, revenue-farming titles which circulated among mainly urban notables, which allowed the zamindar to employ the British courts against his tenants with great effect, and where subinfeudation and disputes over occupancy rights were endemic?[3] Or were they like the clan estates of north India where the organization of the land was but one aspect of the organization of family and lineage?[4] This paper suggests that elements in the historical origin of the estates, the nature of the British settlement, and the economy of the region gave the Tamilnad estates a special character unlike any of the north Indian variants.

Secondly, it examines the problems faced by the estates in the depression of the 1930s. In that decade, several of the estates, including the largest in the region, faced bankruptcy, and the demand for the abolition of the estates became a major political cause. The paper suggests that to understand the particular impact of the depression in the estates it is necessary to examine the changing relationship of the estate both to the inhabitants within its boundaries, and to the province within which it lay.

I

In the 1920s, the Madras government listed 634 estates in the Tamil districts. They ranged from the 2,104 square miles held by the raja of Ramnad and inhabited by almost half a million people, to a few dusty acres owned jointly by 40 persons and inhabited by none. Their distribution reflected the disposition of past empires and the accidents of the British conquests and early settlement. There were three main clusters. The first, in the south of the Tamil area, consisted mostly of large poligar estates established between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries by the Nayak rulers at Madura. Some of these poligar families traced their lineage back to Telugu warriors who had

[2] P. J. Musgrave, 'Landlords and Lords of the Land: Estate Management and Social Control in Uttar Pradesh 1860-1920,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 6, 3, July 1972, pp. 257-75.

[3] Rajat and Ratna Ray, 'Zamindars and Jotedars: A Study of Rural Politics in Bengal,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 1, February 1975, pp. 81-102.

[4] R. G. Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja and Rule: State-hinterland Relations in Preindustrial India*, Berkeley, 1971.

come south in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and been rewarded with large fiefs. Others belonged to families which had been settled in the area before the Nayak invasion and had been gradually drawn into the Nayak administration, usually to help police the frontiers.[5] Some of these poligar estates had been dismembered after their holders had resisted the British conquest and a few more had not survived the economic strains of the mid-nineteenth century; however some 30 large estates and several lesser ones remained, and for the most part these estates were still held by the original families.

The other two clusters of estates were in the extreme north-east, and in a straggling line running down the centre of the Tamil area. In both these areas, there were a handful of large estates, held either by ancient local families or by the descendants of warriors who had been rewarded for service to the Nawab of Arcot, Sultan of Bijapur, Hyder Ali, or some other state-builder of recent centuries. Most, however, were mittas created by the British between 1802 and 1818.[6] Since the titles to these mittas had generally been sold by the government at auctions in the first instance, and since many had changed hands several times over the intervening century, the mittadars were a varied group, including entrepreneurs and ex-officials as well as men of agrarian caste. Most of the mittas were small, but some families had managed to cobble several mittas together to form a significant holding. The zamindar of Kumaramangalam, for instance, had amassed 15 mittas and become one of the largest estate-holders of the region.

The estates fall into three categories by size. Firstly, there were 512 small estates, mostly originating from the mitta settlement, consisting of one or two villages with less than 5,000 acres and less than 8,000 population, and most numerous in Salem and Chingleput districts. In size and operation there was little to distinguish them from the larger ryotwari estates, and their affairs will figure little in this paper. Secondly, there were 117 middling estates with acreages up to 80,000 and populations up to 70,000. These were scattered throughout the region but most concentrated in the southern district. Roughly two-thirds, including nearly all the larger ones, had been established before the arrival of the British. Finally, there were the five major estates, all of them ancient: Ramnad, Sivaganga, Arni, Ettaiyapuram, and Udaiyarpalaiyam. Table 3 gives details of the size and origin of the 50 biggest estates.

Most of the major estates in British Tamilnad, then, grew out of the poligar system. The poligar settlement, which developed between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries and which reached its height under the loose rule of

[5] R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nayaks of Madura*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 58-62, 68-69.

[6] F. J. Richards, *Madras District Gazetteers: Salem*, Madras, 1918; H. A. Stuart, *North Arcot District Manual*, Madras, 1895.

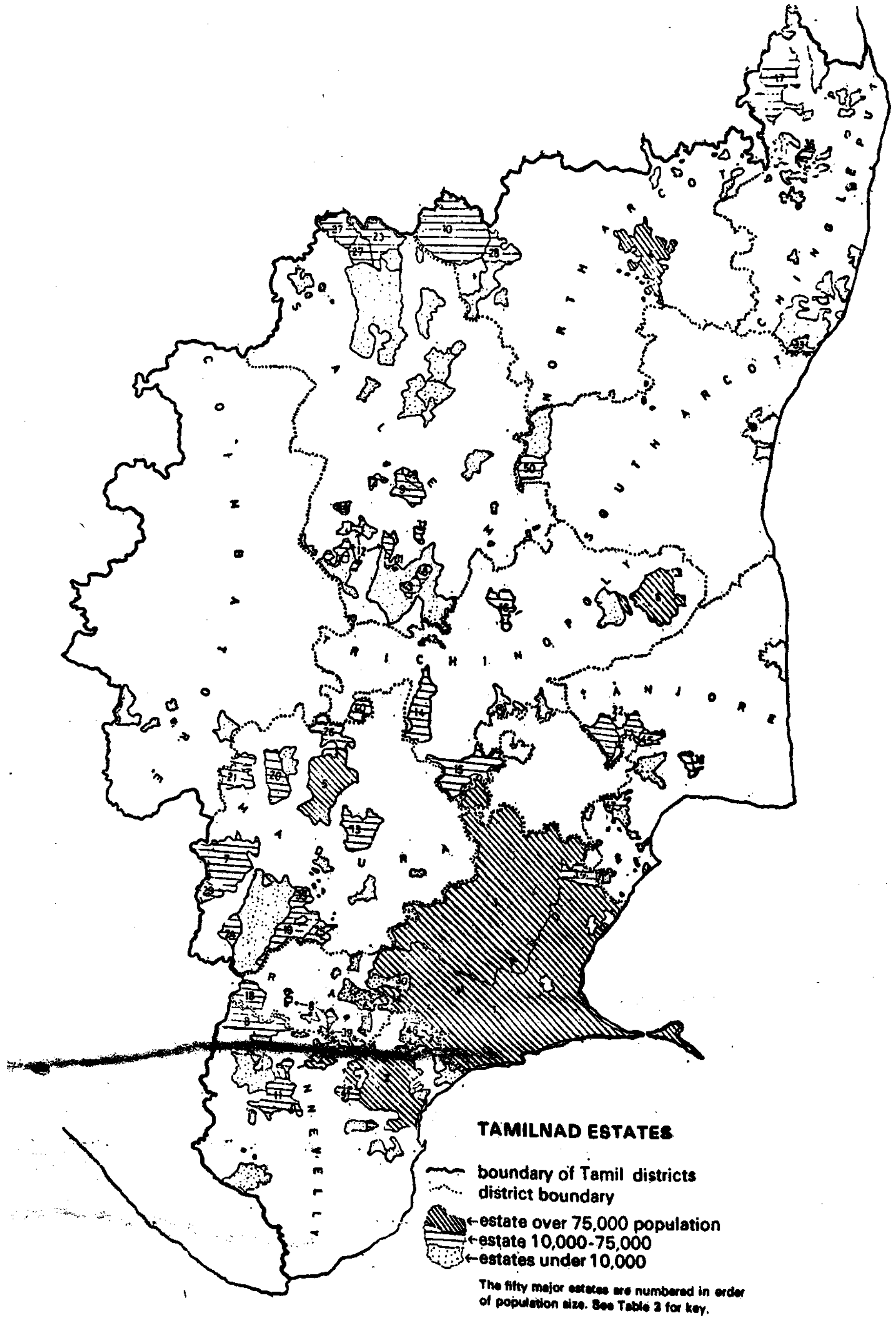

TABLE 1

District	*Number of zamindari villages*	*Zamindari acreage*	*Zamindari as percentage of total acreage*
Chingleput	529	386,565	19.7
South Arcot	110	156,394	5.8
North Arcot	370	261,644	8.8
Salem	477	967,862	21.4
Coimbatore	42	75,089	1.7
Trichinopoly	269	376,960	13.7
Tanjore	218	199,483	8.3
Madura	247	710,598	22.6
Ramnad	2836	1,936,143	61.7
Tinnevelly	287	801,175	28.7
TOTAL, Tamil districts	5385	5,871,913	19.0

SOURCE: *A Statistical Atlas of the Madras Presidency*, 1936 edition, Appendix I of each district chapter.

Vijayanagar viceroys in the sixteenth and seventeenth, was in essence an accommodation between local potentates and a succession of different overlords. The local potentates were generally either tribal chieftains, or those of the overlord's military captains who had seized land. In the settlement, the local potentate agreed to accept the suzerainty of the overlord, to deliver tribute and to supply troops, in return for the right to tax and govern his charge free of significant outside interference. The strength and independence of the poligars varied in inverse ratio to the powers of the regional suzerain, and as the Vijayanagar system crumbled in the eighteenth century and numerous invaders and usurpers fought for territorial dominance, many of the poligars gradually emerged as free agents. Some, like Pudukottai and Travancore, became independent states and remained as such under British rule. By the end of the century, however, most had to bow to the new territorial power or be dispossessed.[7]

The origin and development of the estates as military organizations had several important consequences. Firstly, it ensured that they were usually compact territorial units. The breaking up of some estates in the nineteenth century, the aggrandisement of some by purchase, and the internal fragmentation of others by subinfeudation had to some extent qualified the picture, but none of the processes had gone very far. Even those estates that had been put together in the nineteenth century by the purchase of several mittas were fairly compact; indeed the 15 mittas of the Kumaramangalam estate in Salem district were almost contiguous as were the 14 of the Chunampet estate in Chingleput.

[7] K. Rajayyan, *Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu*, Madras, 1974.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF ESTATES, CLASSIFIED BY DISTRICT, ACREAGE AND POPULATION

Acreage	*Chingleput*	*North Arcot*	*South Arcot*	*Salem*	*Coimbatore*	*Trichinopoly*	*Tanjore*	*Madura*	*Ramnad*	*Tinnevelly*	*Total*
0—500	92	6		25		4	11			4	142
501—1000	56	15	2	40		7	7		3	1	131
1001—5000	51	18	4	99	4	10	12	8	7	26	239
5001—10,000	5	6	2	16	5	1	6	6	5	10	62
10,001—25,000	2	1		8	2	1	4	4	3	8	33
25,001—50,000	1			3		1		4			9
50,001—100,000						2		2	1	2	7
100,000 +		2		1		1		4	2	1	11
TOTAL	207	48	8	192	11	27	40	28	20	52	634
Population											
Uninhabited	12			6			2			1	21
1—100	20	2		3			4			4	33
101—250	30	5		10		4	6			1	56
251—500	53	3		23		2	5		1	2	89
501—1000	53	10	1	32	2	7	7	1	3	4	120
1001—2500	26	15	4	56	1	5	7	5	5	15	139
2501—5000	8	8	1	38	3	3	3	6	2	12	84
5001—10,000	3	2	1	13	5		2	5	4	8	43
10,001—25,000	1	1	1	9		2	4	8	3	2	31
25,001—50,000	1			1		3		1	1		7
50,001—100,000		1		1		1		2		2	7
100,000 +		1							2	1	4
TOTAL	207	48	8	192	11	27	40	28	20	52	634

Compiled from details on area and population in LRS 389 2-2-1928, and details on ownership in *Almanack and Directory of Madras and Southern India*, published by the Asylum Press, Madras, 1933.

Secondly, ties of kin and clan played very little part in the internal structure of [redacted] poligars were Telugu Tottiyans whose ancestors came into the country in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the military captains of their kinsmen, the Nayak viceroys at Madura. In many of these Tottiyan territories, there were a handful of the poligar's clansmen who were often settled as ryots on favourable tenures, and who often played some role in the estate administration. Yet such ties could not extend very far. The bulk of the cultivators and officials of the estates were drawn from the local Tamil community who enjoyed no cultural or familial ties with the poligar. Other estates were held by local Tamil families who had obliged the

TABLE 3

REGISTER OF 50 MAJOR ESTATES (IN ORDER OF POPULATION) IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

		Dt.	*Acres*	*Pop.*	*Income*	*Origin*
1	Ramnad	Rd	1,346,500	444,780	800,000	Ancient Maravar family
2	Ettaiyapuram	Ty	384,429	228,515	500,000	Nayak
3	Sivaganga	Rd	1,147,520	136,593	750,000	C17 offshoot of Ramnad family
4	Arni	NA	115,129	121,622	230,000	C17 jagir, Madhva Brahman
5	Kannivadi	Md	121,090	93,074	180,000	Poligari, sold in 1900.
6	Udaiyarpalaiyam	Tr	84,866	75,058	180,000	Udaipur, poligar C16.
7	Bodinayakanur	Md	135,718	67,843	70,000	Nayak
8	Sivagiri	Ty	64,607	66,900	160,000	Maravar, poligar early C16.
9	Salem	Sm	11,312	61,987	25,000	Mitta, European owner.
10	Kangundi	NA	212,289	60,000	na	Telugu poligar.
11	Uthumalai	Ty	84,102	57,866	125,000	Maravar, poligar C16.
12	Kumaramangalam	Sm	31,678	44,555	80,000	15 mittas purchased by Gounder
13	Ammayanayakanur	Md	109,660	41,830	60,000	Nayak
14	Kadavur	Tr	98,262	40,346	54,000	Nayak
15	Marungapuri	Tr	113,216	39,073	100,000	Nayak
16	Turaiyur	Tr	30,203	36,853	47,000	Reddi family usurped palayam C17
17	Kachinad	Cg	48,228	30,579	na	Part of Andhra Kalahasti estate
18	Seithur	Rd	55,688	29,015	100,000	Poligar C16, married into Ramnad
19	Saptur	Md	46,226	24,558	50,000	Nayak
20	Ayyakudi	Md	50,558	24,422	37,000	Nayak
21	Rettayambatti	Md	57,597	23,681	na	poligari, sold to Chetties.
22	Gandarvakottai	Tj	21,107	23,175	na	Kallar, frontier poligar.
23	Berikai	Sm	115,200	21,101	na	poligar
24	Erasakkanayakanur	Md	28,159	19,784	23,000	Nayak
25	Peraiyur	Md	13,753	17,552	na	Nayak
26	Idaiyakottai	Md	37,832	17,090	30,000	Nayak
27	Shulagiri	Sm	14,931	15,786	na	Poligari, Maratha Brahman
28	Elagiri	NA	9,625	15,673	na	Mitta, Reddi.
29	Tevaram	Md	13,440	15,560	17,000	Nayak
30	Palaiyampatti	Rd	35,000	15,315	85,000	Ramnad subdivision, Maravar.
31	Periamanalai	Sm	17,703	15,105	na	Collection of mittas, Gounder.
32	Rasipur	Sm	5,063	14,998	na	Mitta, Gounder joint-owners.
33	Chunampet	Cg	19,821	14,337	na	Collection of mittas, Vellala.

TABLE 3 (*Contd.*)

34 Devakottai	Rd	9,839	14,257	15,000	Ramnad subdivision, Chetties.
35 Elumalai	Md	36,508	13,818	12,000	Nayak, sold C19 to Seithur kin.
36 Egattur	Cg	14,934	13,376	na	Collection of mittas, Vellala.
37 Bagalur	Sm	11,793	12,991	24,000	Poligari.
38 Sendangudi	Tj	18,048	12,798	na	Frontier palayam, Brahman.
39 Sevalpatti	Rd	16,421	11,574	na	Nayak
40 Andipatti	Tr	23,994	11,263	na	Poligari, sold to Chetties.
41 Kadambur	Tr	12,268	10,824	14,000	Poligari, Maravar.
42 Kattuputtur	Tr	6,072	10,701	36,000	Mitta, Reddi.
43 Namakkal	Sm	8,945	10,530	na	Mitta.
44 Konganapuram	Sm	10,894	10,340	na	Mitta, Goundur joint-owners.
45 Papanad	Tj	24,813	10,209	24,000	Frontier palayam, Kallar.
46 Pudur	Ty	22,061	10,191	na	na
47 Maddukur	Tj	9,694	10,160	na	Frontier palayam, Kallar.
48 Muthagapatti	Sm	10,428	10,033	na	Collection of mittas.
49 Kannankurichi	Sm	6,703	10,024	na	Mitta, Vellala.
50 Jadayagoundan Nad	SA	na	10,009	na	Hill poligar.

Details on acreage and population mostly come from LRS 389 2-2-1928. Income figures are approximations, and come from a wide variety of sources. Details on ownership and origin come from the District Gazetteers and the list of zamindars in the *Almanack and Directory of Madras and Southern India*. All *mittas* are nineteenth century; all Nayaks are Tottiyan chieftains settled by the Madura Nayaks in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. District abbreviations: SA—South Arcot; NA—North Arcot; Sm—Salem; Md—Madura; Rd—Ramnad; Tr—Trichinopoly; Tj—Tanjore; Ty—Tinnevelly; Cg—Chingleput.

Nayaks to accommodate them within their administrative framework; the most prominent of these were the Udaiyar estate of Udaiyarpalaiyam, the Kallar estates of Papanad, Madukkur, and Gandarvakottai, and the Maravar estates of Ramnad, Sivaganga, Seithur, Uthumalai, and Kadambur. In these cases, the bulk of the estate peasantry shared the estate-holder's caste, and looked to him as clan-head. Yet in important ways, these settlements were different from the Rajput estates of northern India, and the role of the estate-holder as clan-head more qualified. In all cases, the poligar family had won its position by military adventure. Its role as leader of the clan derived from military dominance, not from any role in the original colonization of the land nor from any process of lineage growth and segmentation. In the case of Udaiyarpalaiyam the founder had in fact usurped an estate already in existence, and his links of clan and kinship inside the estate stretched little

farther than those of the Tottiyans. In the great Maravar and lesser Kallar estates, the complications of south Indian kinship stood in the way. Kinship and territory might coincide at the level of the village, but not in any larger unit, and there was no pyramidal pattern of nesting units such as Richard Fox has described among the Rajputs. The separate lineages of Maravar (or Kallar) were greatly interspersed with one another, and in several of the Maravar estates the poligar belonged to one lineage and the bulk of the inhabitants to another. In the largest estate, Ramnad, this position was even more complicated: while the raja came from one lineage, a different lineage was generally acknowledged as locally dominant because its members were 'ferocious and capable' and the majority of the Maravar inhabitants came from still different lineages. Indeed, it is significant that the device through which the Kallar and Maravar poligars controlled their territories was based not on the clan, nor on the organization of the land, but on the organization of the local police. This was, of course, fully in keeping with their military origin and character.[8]

Thirdly, whether the estates were ancient territories or British confections, their role in the nineteenth century was entirely novel. Few of the estates were merely administrative units or tax-farming institutions which had been created by one government and could now be operated by another. The 1802 Regulation was moulded by eighteenth-century ideas of landholding in Britain, observations of pre-British institutions in Bengal, and the imperatives of revenue collection. For the British administrator, the role of the zamindar floated somewhere between that of a tax-farmer and that of a country gentleman. Yet in pre-British south India, these roles had played only a peripheral part in the function of the poligars; under the Nayak, Bijapur, Golconda, and other states, their chief duties had been to police their territories and to supply troops for the sovereign (or, after 1700, for their own defence or aggression). The payment of tribute was a subsidiary duty which was commonly ignored and almost completely dropped during the wars of the eighteenth century. The ownership or management of the land had nothing to do with them. It was the function of villagers, village leaders, and village communities, and while in the Kallar and Maravar estates these might be men who looked on the poligar as their head, they saw his role as wholly political and not economic. The poligars levied dues, but these were essentially taxes to cover military and administrative costs and tributes, not rents. 1802 in Madras was quite unlike 1793 in Bengal, which was merely an attempt to adjust an existing system of rural taxation and control to British ends; rather it was a treaty and settlement at the end of a war which disarmed the poligars but also cost more

8S. Kadhirvel, 'The History of Maravas 1700-1802,' Ph.D. thesis, University of Madras, 1970, pp. 16-18, 28-31.

the zamindar levying illegal dues, but ten years later he was still doing it;[17] the raja of Ramnad spent Rs 400,000 getting 19,121 decrees against his ryots for rent arrears, but they only helped him collect Rs 50,007.[18]

Disputes between zamindar and ryot filled the courts of the province. Most were initiated by the zamindar yet it would be difficult to argue that he made the courts an instrument of his own designs. Most of the suits were testament to the zamindar's difficulties, and the results suggest the courts could do little to alleviate these difficulties. The process is worth examining in detail. In cases of default on rent dues, the zamindar's first legal expedient was to distrain the ryot's crop or other moveables. The law required the zamindar to complete this within a year of the default, but few estate administrations were geared to such speedy action. Even if they were, the crop might already be sold, or the estate subordinates might decide to collude with the defaulting ryot. Next the zamindar might attach the defaulter's land and bring it to sale. The deficiencies of land registry made it difficult for the zamindar to identify the defaulter's land, and the non-cooperation of ryots generally brought a revenue sale to one or two conclusions: on the one hand, the land might covertly be sold back to the holder at a price roughly equal to the arrears (this was a useful expedient because land sold for arrears was deemed free of encumbrances and such sales were often used by ryots to defraud mortgagees); on the other, there would be no bidders and the zamindar would be forced to buy in the land and make it part of his home farm, after which he would probably find it difficult to eject the ryot and would thus have to lease the land back to him.[19] In the early twentieth century, such land sales realized on average about 78 per cent of arrears, and the proceeds represented only 37 per cent of the value of the lands sold.[20]

The zamindar's last resort was to the courts, to get a decree. The normal difficulties with the courts were here compounded with special ones. Most ryots who defaulted ensured beforehand that the patta for the land on which arrears were due stood in the name of someone else, preferably an insolvent or someone long since dead. If not, delays before or after the decree was passed could have the case debarred. In Marungapuri it was noted:

> Though most of the [rent] cases are decreed in favour of the estate and also execution petitions taken for the recovery of the amount, no amount worth the name has been collected by such executions because of the gross indifference of the civil court amins who invariably report that the judgement debtors are not found in the village. Their immoveable properties have to be proceeded against and in most cases it is found that they are heavily encumbered... even the judgement-debtors do not pay the amounts on the grounds that they are not able to raise any loan on landed properties in this estate.[21]

[17]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. IV, p. 293.
[18]CoW 19 Press 22-10-1937.
[19]LRS 1368 1-5-1934; *LRS* 2506 28-7-1934; LRS 2611 5-9-1930; *MELAC* Oral Evidence Vol. II, p. 233.
[20]See table on p. 30.

The zamindar had to invest in legal costs for such suits, with no clear chance of victory.

In sum, then, the larger Tamil estates were mostly compact territories whose holders included some remnants of old administrative grants and some beneficiaries of new ones, and many old military chieftains. The settlement of 1802 stripped them of their governmental functions and their military might, and replaced them with duties as estate managers and revenue collectors, and with a rather uncertain legal armoury. Without the power of the sword, of the legal code or of the clan headship, how then did they control their estates? Some of them clearly did not, as the incidence of collapse in the early nineteenth century testifies, but the majority did, and the answer must clearly lie in the relationship of the estate-holders to their ryots and to the processes of the agrarian economy.

II

The British were hopeful that the zamindars would become attentive estate managers; the permanency of the 1802 settlement was intended to provide security and an incentive for the zamindar to increase the yield from his territory. Most of the successful new mittadars did in fact take a close interest in the economy of their territories. The zamindars of Chunampet and Kumaramangalam, for instance, lent money and seed to their ryots, had an interest in agricultural marketing, and were keen advocates of agricultural improvement.[22] Indeed, it was certainly the control that these men exercised over the economy of their estates, largely through the provision of credit, that enabled them to survive and prosper where so many mittadars failed. The poligar cheiftains were more reluctant to grasp the opportunities for profit. In the early nineteenth century, many of the older zamindars found that the existence, on the one hand, of large supply of grain from kind rents, and, on the other, of a large demand for grain for the garrisons of the British army tempted them into the grain market in a big way. Soon, however, the garrisons were withdrawn and the zamindars gave up this activity. For some time also, the existence of several different currencies created by the

[21]CoW 34 Press 11-11-1940.
[22]*Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, Vol. III, London, 1927, pp. 553-58.

different rulers of the eighteenth century, and now by the British as well, enabled the Ramnad estate to operate as the major exchange bank in the south of the province, but this activity also decayed as the British rupee became universally accepted.[23] For the most part, the military chieftains of the eighteenth century were not prepared to become the agricultural or commercial managers of the nineteenth. However, by both direct, and more importantly, indirect means, they were able to exercise a measure of control over the local economy, and this was crucial to their ability to survive in and even to dominate the countryside.

Virtually all of the estates lay in the 'dry' tract of Tamilnad, that is, the area which depended on the meagre rainfall and small irrigation works, rather than major river systems, for the water necessary to cultivation.[24] This was no coincidence; the governments that settled the poligars had always retained a direct control over the prosperous 'wet' tract. For most of the nineteenth century, the economy of this area was meagre and stagnant. Land was moderately plentiful (for anyone ready to clear the scrub and prickly pear) but it supported little more than the coarse grains required for local consumption. Land in itself was of little value, and its produce found only a very local market. There were few big urban marketing centres in the tract, but many, small and very localized marts. In order to gain influence in the economy, it was not important to control the land itself or long-distance trade, which was almost non-existent.[25] Not surprisingly, then, few zamindars took any interest in the distribution of land, or in the levying of tolls and transit dues. They did, however, exercise some influence over the local marketing structure, and over those inputs of agriculture that were scarce.

The small marts at which the few specialized goods and services of this dry tract changed hands were usually located in the zamindar's palace town, often beneath the palace walls, and were managed by the zamindar. Other marts he managed indirectly; they were attached to important temples, which were in turn under the control of the zamindar. More important than this however was the zamindar's control over agricultural inputs. Production in the dry tract required capital, water, manure, and bullock power. To begin with, the zamindar looked after the supply of water. In most of the tract the meagre rainfall had to be conserved through tanks if it was to support any agriculture at all. Only the zamindar was able to raise the capital or labour to build new tanks or maintain existing ones and this remained one

[23]I am grateful to David Ludden of the University of Pennsylvania for this information.

[24]A few mittas in the 'wet' areas of Trichinopoly and Chingleput are the exception.

[25]For discussion of the economy of this tract see D. A. Washbrook, 'Country Politics: Madras 1880-1930,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 3 July 1973, pp. 155-211.

of his duties.[26] Next the zamindar controlled the 'forest' areas. 'Forest' in Madras described everything from plantation to scrub with most of it rather nearer the latter category. These areas supplied some of the most important ancillary inputs of agriculture—leaf manure, wood for ploughs, yokes and other implements, and space for grazing both draught animals and flocks of sheep or goats also employed to manure the land.[27] The zamindar exercised important control over access to these resources.[28]

The zamindar exercised further control over the markets and over the input of capital in a more indirect fashion. Close control over the economy of the villages in this tract was in the hands of very small numbers of rich ryots who commanded the slim agricultural surplus. Such men managed a large proportion of the land directly, supplied credit to their lesser neighbours, distributed grain to those whose holdings were inadequate even for subsistence, and handled the meagre flow of goods into and out of the village.[29] Such men were pivotal to the economy and society of the area, and the zamindar could control the area only by making a bargain with them, and giving them an interest in the survival of the estate. This was achieved through preferential rents, and devolution of power.

In general the zamindars sat lightly upon their estates. In the early part of the nineteenth century when the government's demands on the zamindar were set at an unrealistically high level, many were obliged to fleece their ryots in order to survive. As prices rose and the real value of the government's demand dropped after mid-century, most zamindars adopted a more leisurely style of administration. By the end of the century, the overall level of rents in the estates was undoubtedly the same or below that in the government tracts. In the twentieth century, both government and politicians repeatedly insisted that zamindari rents were high, and the government occasionally made calculations to prove this.[30] Yet both the government and the politicians were interested parties: the politicians were generally those who resented the prominence of zamindars, and the government was anxious to cast favourable light on its own assessments. The government's calculations of the comparative incidence of demand in ryotwari and zamindari areas were scandalously wrong. In computing the incidence per head in the government areas, it divided the ryotwari demand by the figure of *total* population (in-

[26]*MELAC*, Irrigation Reports from Zamindars.

[27]*Report of the Forest Committee* (*Madras*), Madras, 1913, Vol. I.

[28]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, pp. 168-69, Vol. IV, p. 269.

[29]D. A. Washbrook, 'Country Politics. . .'

[30]G.O. 2526 (C) Rev 18-10-1940; N. G. Ranga, *Economic Conditions of the Zamindari Ryots*, Bezwada, 1933; B. Sarveswara Rao, *Economic and Social Effects of Zamindari Abolition in Andhra*, Waltair, 1963, p. 10; for a counterblast from the zamindari angle see M. Sankar Linge Gowda, *Zamindari Taxation Enquiry Report*, Trichinopoly, 1936.

cluding those living in estates), thus depressing the figure. In computing the incidence in the estates, it used figures for revenue *demand:* this made no sense in the zamindari areas where collection sometimes fell below half. The effect here was to inflate the incidence per head in the estates. While it is impossible to make completely accurate calculations of comparative incidence, Table 4 represents an attempt to calculate *collected* revenue per head and per acre in certain estates and in the ryotwari areas of the districts in which they lay.

TABLE 4
COMPARISON OF REVENUE DEMAND IN GOVERNMENT AND ZAMINDARI AREAS

DISTRICT (*ryotwari*) *Estate*	*Revenue per head*	*Revenue per acre*
NORTH ARCOT	2.07	1.34
Arni	1.86	1.97
SALEM	2.11	0.90
Bagalur	1.81	2.00
TRICHINOPOLY	2.14	1.61
Marungapuri	2.87	0.99
TANJORE	3.56	4.76
Papanad	3.05	1.26
MADURA	2.48	1.75
Kannivadi	1.93	1.49
RAMNAD	1.84	3.88
Mannarkottai	2.17	2.11
TINNEVELLY	2.21	1.85
Kadambur	1.46	1.29

NOTES: Government revenue figures are taken from the 1928 Settlement Report, zamindari revenue figures are taken from average collections in the 1920s when the estates were under the Court of Wards, or from individual files. Acreage and population of the estates calculated from LRS 389 2-2-1928, and ryotwari population calculated by subtracting the sum of estate populations in each district from the district total. These calculations ignore the inam areas and populations (for ease of computation) which has resulted in a slight depression of the figures of revenue and acreage per head in the ryotwari areas.

The moderately low yield of the estates and the legal uncertainties surrounding the zamindari system discouraged the growth of subinfeudation,[31] which became such an agent of oppression in Bengal estates. Again unlike Bengal there was no dispute over fixity of tenure. Although until 1908 (and then only precariously) there was no guarantee of occupancy rights for estate ryots, most ryots enjoyed their holdings without interference and considered them 'ancestral property, hereditary.'[32]

[31]'Some patta holders do sublet their lands, but the actual numbers of such people vary from year to year according to conditions such as the availability of hired labour etc.,' *MELAC* Landholders' Statements Pt. III, p. 312.

[32]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. IV, p. 300; see also *ibid.*, p. 314 and CoW 1239 10-12-1938.

The estate bureaucracies were minimal and their activities virtually limited to book-keeping. In a middling estate like Papanad (25,000 acres, 10,000 population) there was a staff of eight—manager, accountant, three clerks, two peons, and a lighting superintendent. Its work extended little beyond accounting and litigation. All engineering work was let out on contract, and all police and revenue work was completely decentralized.[33] The largest estate, Ramnad, was obliged to sport a more elaborate structure. Beneath the raja there was an estate collector, Huzur Sheristadar and manager, and below them the office was divided into General, Jamabandi, Law, Records and Finance Sections, the Estate Engineer's Department, and the Stationery and Stores Depot. This office employed over a hundred clerks and menials, yet despite the size and elaborateness the bulk of the office's work was again accounting and litigation. However, the sheer size of the Ramnad estate demanded a more elaborate organization between the office and the rent-payer. The estate was divided into three ranges, each with five clerks, an attender and five peons, and below the ranges there were eleven taluks each with a tahsildar, assistant tahsildar, sheristadar, shroff, attender, duffadar, five clerks, five to seven division peishkars, five to seven division gumasthas, 12 to 19 peons, and three treasury guards.[34] Yes this stultifying complement of 454 men (including a forest department and a few other officers) still did not include any men to assess and collect rents, or to police the villages.

A search in most zamindari offices would not have revealed any land records or any details of the assessment of rents. The zamindar of Sivasamudram found one government officer, 'knows very little of his estate' and no one else knew much more because 'manager and staff are almost changing every quarter.'[35] The Chettinad zamindar 'has not cared to visit his estate and it is wondered by many whether he knows where exactly his estate lies.'[36] When the Court of Wards took over Mannarkottai, two villages in the estate were 'unlocalizable'[37] and in Ramnad also several villages mentioned in the records had disappeared off the face of the earth.[38] Most of the records were kept by the karnams, the village accountants,[39] and the zamindar's perception of his rights in and dues from the villages often depended on what information they were prepared to pass on.[40] The Ettaiyapuram estate complained: 'In several villages, Jamabandy [the annual completion and sub

[33]CoW 1041 13-10-1938.

[34]CoW 739 1-8-1938; CoW 187 17-2-1938.

[35]G.O. 946 (C) Rev 7-5-1937.

[36]N. G. Ranga, *Economic Conditions...*, p. 22.

[37]CoW 27 Press 22-10-1930.

[38]CoW 123 29-2-1936.

[39]CoW 215 23-2-1937.

[40]'What the karnam writes is taken as gospel,' CoW 330 5-12-1935.

mission of accounts] has not been completed for periods ranging from three to fifteen years. . . . It is impossible to say how much of the rent remains to be collected in these villages.'[41] The end-product of this situation was brought home to Court of Wards officials in the Ramnad estate. After a year sorting out the estate office and trying to make sense of the estate accounts, it dawned upon them that the estate accountants simply did not understand the centrepiece of Madras revenue practice, the 'demand, collection and balance statement.' Indeed, Ramnad and many other estates looked on the collection of dues in much the same manner that their forebears had in the eighteenth century, when they set out on horseback to seize what tribute they could find; they counted what came into the treasury and what was forcibly withheld but had no notion of computing the balance between what was collected and what should have been collected according to the revenue records.[42]

The business of assessing and collecting revenue, keeping records, and policing the villages fell to the village officers. The village headman, who made collections, kept order and often arbitrated in petty disputes, was often the rich ryot in the village. Far more than in the government areas, the karnam was often a major landholder as well. Even where they were lesser men, they resided in the village and were tied closely to its economically and socially powerful members. In their hands lay much of the important administration as the government noted:

> Far more than in Government tracts, the village officers [and particularly the karnams] represented the indispensable basis of administration in the estate; because while Government tracts are surveyed the estate is unsurveyed and while Government revenue is settled to a large extent independently of seasons and prices the estate demand fluctuated with both seasons and prices. For this reason and since the tenure is far more complex, the accounts necessary to be maintained are more numerous and more complicated. What is still more important, the sharing of the paddy is a gigantic operation which it is not possible to get through without the village officers.[43]

The village officers enjoyed considerable autonomy, and were able to exercise their own private jurisdictions which neither zamindar nor courts could

[41] LRS 2320 24-6-1935.

[42] 'In fact the whole old Samasthanam establishment was quite ignorant of the fact that the demand is a category distinct from the collection. They were under the impression that what is collected in a month in excess of the actual kist should be added with the actual kist demand and the demand increased so as to tally with the collection.' CoW 858 12-12-1936.

[43] G.O. 989 (8-S) Rev 1-5-36.

contest. Many karnams kept several sets of records and, as noted above, only showed the estate a portion of them. Often the government found that the records of cultivation sent to Madras for statistical collation bore no relationship to those used for revenue assessment.[44] Similarly, the government had to call off an investigation of rent rates in one village after one man had given his rather bizarre explanation of the state of affairs because 'as he is the village headman it is not possible to secure evidence to refute his version.'[45]

The result was to shatter the estate administration into little pieces, and this fact was most obvious in the case of different rent rates. Generally there was no agreement between the scheme of assessment and rates of rent in one village and those in the next. In Arni, for instance, there were four hundred different rates.[46] In Seithur, a government officer found 'the cash rents show the most incongruous variation', and, what is more, 'I asked the present manager if he could explain the system . . . [but] he confessed his inability to do so.'[47] The variations in rate resulted from both the operations of the village officers, and also from concessions which the zamindar made to his more powerful ryots. 'In some cases,' noted an officer, 'favourable treatment was due to friendship, in some cases it was rewarded for services rendered and in the majority of cases it was in consideration of premiums paid to the landlord.'[48] Many zamindars allowed considerable discount on rents in return for a premium paid at the start of the tenancy. This scheme enabled the zamindar to raise funds in the short-term to meet a crisis, while it gave the ryots rich enough to lay out a lump-sum a very privileged tenancy. The result of all these matters was a considerable tilting of assessments within the estates. As an officer in Seithur concluded, 'I am led to assume that previous landlords took just as much as the tenants would give them,' which meant, as a politician noted, 'rents are not paid regularly [by] powerful ryots . . . only the small and weak ryots pay regularly.'[49] It was this more than any overall high rate of assessment, that made the demands of the estate seem more oppressive than those of the government and that made ryots in the estate seem comparatively poorer. While the overall incidence of demand was little different, in the estates it was placed firmly on the shoulders of those unable to resist. Thus those people who dominated the society and economy of the villages had an interest in the survival of the estate. Village officers and other ryots could escape the demand for cash rent, and they could also evade the division of produce under a kind system. In Ramnad, for instance, once the

[44] CoW 72 22-3-1935; CoW 900 25-5-1944; LRS 746 7-3-1933.

[45] CoW 699 2-12-1941.

[46] *MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. III, p. 187.

[47] LRS 746 7-3-1933.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.* and V. V. Sayana, *The Agrarian Problems of Madras Province*, Madras, 1949, p. 110.

waram division was made, the estate had to hand its portion back to the village officers to look after; regularly, a quarter of it never found its way to the estate granaries.[50] The village officers and their local allies were the crucial hinge in both the economy and social control of the estates. As long as the economy remained highly localized, there was a rough correspondence between the economic and administrative units in which they operated, and they shared the authority and interests of the zamindar.

In sum, the zamindars had little chance of becoming attentive managers of the welfare of their estates, even should they have so desired. It was simpler for them to exercise a loose and largely indirect control over the limited and highly localized economy of the harsh tract in which they lay. They built up some identity of interest between the estate and its most important inhabitants, partly by seeing that some of them were tied by kinship and sentiment, but mostly by giving them the chance to enjoy much of the profits of agriculture and the privileges of local power. They remained very similar to their forebears in their attitude to the financial affairs of their territories, and also in their attention to political status. In part this meant an expensive display of pomp and circumstance, and careful attempts to underline the special relationship between the zamindar and the government. As one British officer approached the Udaiyarpalaiyam palace on a 'state visit' he came across 'a double row of first camels and then caparisoned horses and finally a couple of elephants with full regalia on . . . at the main gate . . . a roll of drums was beaten as we passed through. The car drew up at the steps of Durbar hall and I was conducted into a long cool, gloomy building where in a "jarokha"-like structure there was a central gold gilt chair and two similar gilt chairs on either side. The zamindar sat in the centre and put me on his right hand side and his son on his left and his retinue crowded in the hall and stood before us on the ground-floor level in various attitudes of humility and submission.'[51] More importantly it involved the zamindar in the patronage of temples and the organization of festivals on an enormous scale.

Thus zamindari management fell into a clear pattern. The zamindar managed the temples, markets, and irrigation works on the estate, and took care to preserve his own status and his relations with the leading ryots. As long as he attended to these affairs, he could rely on deference and an adequate flow of income from the ryots. It was a system founded upon a fine balance of duties, obligations and interests, and it was only precariously underwritten by law, government or force. From time to time, the balance in certain estates would break down. The zamindar would begin to neglect the temples and irrigation works, the estate officials and village officers then

[50]CoW 858 12-12-1936; CoW 602 12-6-1937.
[51]S. K. Chettur, *The Steel Frame and I: Life in the I.C.S.*, London, 1962, p. 91.

ceased to carry out their obligations, the ryots stopped paying and embroiled the zamindar in litigation. A change of regime or a spell in the Court of Wards was generally enough to restore the balance, and very few estates went all the way down the road to ruin. However, towards the beginning of the twentieth century, developments over which the zamindars had no control began to prejudice their continued stability. In particular, changes in the economy of the dry tract began to threaten the zamindar's crucial relationship to production and marketing.

III

In the early twentieth century, there was a rapid change in the economy of the 'dry' tract in which most of the estates lay. For much of the nineteenth century, cotton had been grown in the southern area, occupying about 10 per cent of cultivated acreage in Madura, Ramnad, and Tinnevelly; in the early twentieth century, it expanded from 280 thousand acres in these districts in 1902-3, to 881 thousand acres in 1919 and levelled out at an average of 702 thousand acres in the 1920s.[52] At the same time groundnut became a commercial, export crop and its cultivation spread rapidly in those parts of the dry tract which were unsuitable for cotton; the acreage under groundnut in the five predominantly zamindari taluks of Krishnagiri, Namakkal, Tiruchengodu, Udaiyarpalaiyam, and Pattukottai rose from 11,110 acres in 1891 to 115,291 acres in 1921.[53] With this expansion of cash-cropping came new marketing networks to draw the produce to the ports and manufacturing centres. The major strands of this network were the railways, and largely because of the legal difficulties expected in building tracks across zamindari land, the railways tended to by-pass the estates and the palace towns. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, this caused a dramatic shift in the pattern of urban growth in the tract, away from the palace towns and towards the new rail-heads.

The cultivation and initial marketing of the new crops were managed by the wealthy ryots of the dry tract who were drawn into new and closer contact with the growing towns. Inside the estates, this created entirely new networks that cut sharply across the old hierarchies of management and distribution. Parts of Ramnad and Sivaganga, for instance, became important areas of cotton cultivation, which focused not on the estate towns and their markets but on the mushroom towns scattered along the railway line in the non-zamindari west of the district. In Madura and Tinnevelly, too, cotton-

[52]*Season and Crop Report of the Madras Presidency* for the appropriate years.
[53]*A Statistical Atlas of the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1895 and 1924 editions.

growing spread in the estates, but cotton marketing focused in the non-estate towns of Tirumangalam and Tuticorin.[54] Much the same was true in the groundnut regions. Arni estate lay deep in the groundnut tract, but the local market was at Ranipet some way to the north of the estate.

The zamindars were not unaware of the danger that these new forces posed to the fine balance of political and economic control inside the estates. Indeed some zamindars took steps to discourage the spread of cash-crop cultivation, and the growth of markets in opposition to their own. The raja of Ramnad, for instance, made his ryots give 'written undertakings that they would not in future raise chillies or cotton on their lands.'[55] Ramnad and several others tried to discourage cash-cropping by levying high rates of rent on areas not sown with grain. In the government tracts, the revenue assessment rested chiefly on the type of soil and if the ryot chose to grow valuable, non-food crop, the profit was his. In most estates, however, the assessment took into account both the soil and the specific crop that was grown. These *vanpayir* rates levied on cash-crops were exceptionally high, and were clearly intended to act as a disincentive.[56] Further, many zamindars started to neglect the maintenance of tanks and other small irrigation works in their estates; while of course this move hurt all the cultivators, it fell particularly hard on those who grew crops whose yield (and thus profit) varied enormously according to the supply of water. Both cotton and groundnut were sensitive in that respect. Later a government officer was to suggest that the Ramnad estate had 'systematically neglected'[57] irrigation works, and the Estates Land Act Committee in 1937-38 was inundated with complaints from ryots of the zamindars' wilful neglect of irrigation.[58] Finally, many zamindars got involved in bitter disputes, over the control of local markets. Ramnad was again prominent; he waged a long battle against the managers of the market in the booming cotton town of Rajapalaiyam just beyond the border of his estate, and later tried to gain control over it by working through the new institutions of local self-government.[59] Other zamindars like Doddapanayakanur and Bodinayakanur also quickly became engaged in the struggle to control flourishing new markets through the machinery of local boards.

Many zamindars, just as much as the major ryots, were distracted away from the insular relationships upon which estate administration had depend-

[54] J. S. Ponniah, 'Production and Marketing of Raw Cotton in the Madras Presidency,' D. Litt. thesis, University of Madras, 1944.

[55] *MELAC*, Pt. II, p. 113.

[56] *MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, pp. 112, 172; Landholders' Statements Pt. III, pp. 2-3.

[57] G.O. 2906 (C) Rev 6-12-1935.

[58] *MELAC*, Irrigation Reports from Zamindars.

[59] G.O. 1984 Local Self-Government 7-9-1923. See also a dispute over another market in G.O. 811 Local Self-Government 9-5-1922.

ed, and tempted into new opportunities in commerce, industry, and politics. The zamindar of Papanad was a notorious prey to the latter siren and spent most of his time and money in a political career while his estate went steadily downhill.[60] The zamindar of Bagalur gave up his rather harsh realities of upcountry Salem for the 'creature comfort of Bangalore, electric light, cinema etc.,'[61] and many others took up permanent or semi-permanent residence in Madras City. Zamindars figured prominently in new business enterprises, particularly when joint-stock investment began to increase in the 1930s. In 1938, one observer looked back nostalgically to the 1870s:

> In those days, the zamindars and their tenants were acting something like one family, each sharing the festivities, the joys and the sorrows of the other. Whenever there was a feast or marriage in the tenant's house, the zamindar generally gave timber, gave a feeding and other such things . . . . Subsequently however when the administration changed hands, the tenants began to feel the difficulty of the high rent which was collected without the human touch. The zamindars began to lead a new modern life, their style of living went up, their scale of expenditure increased and therefore they wanted more money. They became friends of the officers they had to entertain now and again.[62]

Shorn of its romanticism, this statement echoed the observations of many other ryots and commentators.

The mood of accommodation between the zamindar and the major ryots was clearly turning towards one of antagonism. In many estates, disputes over the state of irrigation works, over local markets and over the vanpayir rates became endemic. In one estate, ryots refused to pay rent until tanks were repaired, and in two others ryots responded to the zamindar's refusal to maintain irrigation sources by rioting and shooting dead some estate employees.[63] Similarly the rise in population and the spread of cash-crops had diminished the 'forest' areas, and put greater pressure on those that remained. Following the government's example, many zamindars had assumed rigid control over their 'forest' areas and allowed their ryots entry only after the issue of permits and the payment of fees. The attempts to police the 'forests' and operate such a system opened up an area of constant and embittered contact between ryots and estate officials who in some estates murdered one another with monotonous regularity.[64] Where the zamindar

[60] CoW 1239 10-12-1938.

[61] CoW 30 28-10-1925.

[62] *MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, p. 125.

[63] *MELAC*, Pt. II, pp. 171-2; Oral Evidence Vol. IV, pp. 233, 269.

[64] *MELAC*, Pt. II, pp. 168-69; Oral Evidence Vol. IV, p. 269.

began to neglect his religious duties, ryots became especially incensed. In one estate they complained bitterly to the government that 'the village deities have to go on hunger strike for some days in the month' because the zamindar was neglecting his patronage,[65] and in another estate the ryots formed their own fund to maintain the temples that the zamindar was ignoring.[66] In Sivaganga, the ryots responded to the zamindar's negligence by continuing to pay rent only in those villages where the proceeds went to the temple.[67]

While economic changes were thus pulling the zamindars and their chief ryots out of their close, localized and hierarchial relationships, changes in the government of the province also began to bear down on the estates from above. In part these changes stemmed from the government's growing readiness to intervene in the internal affairs of the estates, and in part they resulted from adjustments to the political system of the province.

Through most of the nineteenth century, the Madras government had revelled in its ability to ignore the affairs of the estate tracts, for this left it more scope to deal with the rest of its large and sprawling domain. Gradually, however, the growing power of the government enabled, and the mounting evidence of zamindari problems demanded, a closer interest. Too many zamindars conformed to the picture of decadent overlords, tempted by the possibilities of wealth, impaired by in-breeding, and distracted by family tensions. The zamindar of Uthumalai was shot dead by his brother-in-law.[68] The zamindar of Marungapuri died leaving three wives, nine illegitimate children and two dubious and conflicting wills.[69] In Kadavur, the zamindar misspent his youth with considerable dedication and then took a fancy to the daughter of a sweeper in the palace, set her up in a house, employed her relatives in influential posts in the estate and frittered most of the income on her whims.[70] The Sivagiri zamindar kept a similarly expensive and low-caste concubine, and also supported many 'drunkards and hangers-on' to keep him company in his dissipation. He took the estate from solvency to bankruptcy in four years, while neglecting to pay government dues and diverting Rs 90,000 from temple and charitable funds to his own.[71] Much more common than such hedonism and excitment were cases of simple neglect. One officer who had considerable experience in the Court of Wards wrote: 'Often the affairs were in hopeless confusion—boxes of unlisted jewels, rooms full of unsorted records, villages unlawfully alienated to concubines, irriga-

[65]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, p. 167
[66]CoW 182 18-4-1941.
[67]G.O. 409 Rev 26-2-1929.
[68]CoW 617 31-10-1942.
[69]G.O. 1336 (C) Rev 11-7-1927.
[70]CoW 118 12-3-1941; G.O. 563 (C) Rev 10-3-1941.
[71]G.O. 3105 (C) Rev 5-12-1938; G.O. 2699 (C) 16-10-1939.

tion works in ruins, trust funds misappropriated and so on.'[72] Besides this, most zamindars were prone to debts and litigation. The first meant that the Secretariat often got involved in rescuing bankrupt estates; the second meant that judicial posts in zamindari areas were always irritatingly 'heavy.'[73] Then again, the absence of a survey or good statistical collection in the estates left annoying gaps in the government's picture of the province; legal quirks often made it difficult for the government to intervene in zamindari areas to improve public works; and poor irrigation works coupled with disincentives to agricultural improvement made the zamindaris conspicuously poorer than the ryotwari tracts.

One result was the Estates Land Act of 1908, a concerted attempt to define the rights and obligations of zamindars and ryots, and to provide legal machinery to protect them. The Act was a manifest failure, largely because its implementation depended upon a legal structure which, as noted above, was manifestly inadequate. The Act took almost 30 years to plan, and about the same number of months to neutralize. There was an immediate rush to the courts, which meant that henceforth legal decisions were not only of dubious value, but also difficult to achieve with any speed.[74] The government attempted to free the log-jam by setting up special revenue courts presided over by government officers rather than magistrates, but their inexpert decisions merely added to the confusion of precedents that were the joy of the estate lawyer and the frustration of everyone else.[75]

Far more important than the 1908 Act was the Proprietary Estates Village Services Act of 1894, by which the government took on the responsibility to pay and discipline the headmen and karnams of villages inside the estates. As the activities of the government had grown in the last part of the century, it had been obliged to heap several duties on the estate village officers—including collection of education and local board cesses, registration of births and deaths, recording of agricultural statistics—and the government was now anxious to control its own servants.[76] To avoid the problems of dual control, the government forbade the zamindars to pay or punish the officers. Thus at a time when the relations between the zamindar and the important inhabitants of the estate were approaching a crisis, the government severed one of the most important links between them. The zamindars protested immediately, but to no avail. Many zamindars now found it enormously difficult to control the village officers; some resorted to paying them illicit subsidies,

[72]S. Wadsworth, 'Lo, the poor Indian', typescript memoir in South Asian Archive, Cambridge, p. 151.
[73]See Sir Christopher Masterman papers, South Asian Archive, Cambridge.
[74]*Report on Working of Estates Land Act* for 1909, 1910, 1911.
[75]G. F. F. Foulkes, *Local Autonomy*, Vol. II, pp. 102-33.
[76]Home Judicial File No. 1-2 of 1922, National Archives of India; G.O. 664 Rev 5-5-1925.

while others found to collect the rent they had to introduce a new cadre of collection agents who almost immediately became locked in bitter conflict with the village officers.[77] Forty years after a Court of Wards official was to complain:

> When the Government undertook to pay such officers directly through its own agency, and when the amount of such payment was made independent of the manner in which they discharged their duties to the estate, Government did in fact shatter the very basis of the administration.[78]

The result as a prominent politician saw it was that 'the tenant has very little to do with the zamindar nowadays, except to pay his rent. All his relations are with Government and the Government have taken all the powers of the zamindar; the zamindar has only to pay his peishcush and receive what he gets from the tenant.'[79]

Moreover, as the scope of the government expanded, and the political systems of the province with it, zamindars lost their special position in politics. With local boards and legislatures, the government had ways to find new intermediaries in the rural areas. In the new councils there were many zamindari ryots, or their agents, and prominent men from non-zamindari areas, who all resented the favour that the zamindars had vicariously enjoyed at the hands of the government for so long. It was not long before the continued existence of the estates became a political issue.[80] It was against this background of change and uncertainty that the estates entered the economic depression of the 1930s.

IV

The depression had severe effects throughout the agrarian society in south India; more particularly, the slump in grain prices cut the monetary profits of agriculture in half, and this affected all involved in the distribution of the agricultural surplus—that is, government, traders, zamindars, and those wealthy ryots engaged in the market. In ryotwari tracts, the government made a slight remission of revenue and collected the rest with its usual efficiency, thus shifting the weight of the depression on to the shoulders of traders and cultivators. In the estates, zamindar and ryot fought bitterly with each other to divide up the reduced income from the land so that the other

[77] LRS 1398 22-6-1923; G.O. 521 Rev 3-3-1920.

[78] G.O. 989 (8-S) Rev 1-5-1936.

[79] *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, Vol. III, p. 360.

[80] See the controversy surrounding the attempt to reform the Estates Land Act: *The Hindu*, 7, 10 and 17 September 1932, 1, 2, 15, 24 and 30 November 1933.

party bore the full brunt of the slump. In areas where rents were paid in kind, both the ryot and the zamindar attempted to retain a larger proportion of the yield than normal so that they could sustain their incomes and, at some places, this resulted in pitched battles between ryots and zamindari officials on the threshing floor.[81] In cash-rent areas, ryots withheld rents and zamindars attempted to use all the powers at their disposal to realize them.

For the most part the battle went clearly in the ryots' favour. When it came to the crunch, the zamindars found that they simply did not have the resources of force necessary to make collections when the ryots were adamantly refusing payment. In this decade more than ever before, the zamindars bemoaned the 1894 Act which had deprived them of control over the village officers.[82] Moreover, throughout the decade a smouldering battle between representatives of zamindars and 'tenants' dominated the affairs of the Madras Legislature, and against this background, the zamindars found that they lacked not only the force needed to make collections, but also the prestige required to cajole them. Meanwhile, the government's clumsy attempts to regulate matters were inadvertently disastrous. In 1935, they amended the 1908 Estates Land Act, largely with the aim of clearing up difficulties in its operation. One clause of this amendment raised the cost of the procedure of bringing lands to sale for arrears, and made it uneconomic for the zamindar to use this procedure for an arrear of less than about Rs 20. This meant that the vast majority of tenants could now refuse rents with virtual impunity, as the zamindar's only other expedients were the inflammatory device of distraining moveable property, or the uncertainties of the law courts.[83] This was added to the general difficulties of selling land at a time when credit was short and landowning not remarkably profitable. The number of sales for arrears in the presidency dropped from 34,132 in the year before the amending act to 11,362 in the year after and to 5,548 two years later.[84]

In the following year, the Agriculturists' Debt Relief Act was passed, in an attempt to free the log-jam of debts which had caused a general shortage of fresh credit in the rural areas. One clause provided machinery to scale down arrears of zamindari rent as long as a certain proportion of current and arrear demand was paid up in 1937. In fact, little scaling down took

[81] *Report on the Administration of the Police in the Madras Presidency* for 1931, p. 18; for 1932, p. 15; for 1933, p. 13; for 1934, p. 14.

[82] See the numerous petitions begging permission to punish village officers: LRS 1737 4-5-1935; LRS 3103 21-10-1932; LRS 3349 14-11-1932; LRS 738 3-3-1932; LRS 159 17-1-1931; LRS 478 11-2-1931; LRS 4101 22-12-1931; LRS 1469 28-5-1933; LRS 2576 20-9-1933; LRS 756 14-3-1939; LRS 1383 24-4-1936; LRS 3255 16-11-1938; LRS 3254 16-11-1938.

[83] LRS 126 Press 30-9-1935; CoW 695 12-10-1936.

[84] *Report on the Working of the Estates Land Act* for 1934-5, 1935-6, 1936-7.

place, and the clause was widely misunderstood; many ryots withheld dues in 1936-37, in the belief that they would be wiped off by the Act, and continued to withhold dues in later years in the belief that another similar Act would soon follow.[85] 'The proposals,' complained one zamindar, 'were worse than the Treaty of Versailles.'[86]

In the same year, the Congress ministry was installed after an election in which there had been vague promises of reform in the zamindaris in the ryots' favour. In 1938, the Congress Revenue Minister, T. Prakasam, conducted an enquiry into the zamindaris and wrote a report which decreed that the soil belonged to the ryots not the zamindars and that rents should be reduced to the level they were in 1802.[87] While no other Congress minister would have anything to do with the report, and Prakasam did not manage to translate it into legislation before the resignation of the ministry in 1939,[88] it added to the difficulties of the zamindars. Against this background the ryots—especially the large ryots—in most of the estates managed to push the effects of the slump on to the shoulders of the zamindar.

During the first two years after prices started to fall in 1929, both zamindars and ryots treated it as an unremarkable short cycle. They drew on their stocks and resources of credit and waited for prices to recover. By 1931-32, many ryots found themselves in difficulties, both in raising money from sale of grain or cash-crops and in finding credit, and in that year rent collections started to suffer.[89] There were three middling estates in the Court of Wards; two, Bagalur and Poravipalaiyam, had enjoyed almost 100 per cent collection in recent years, yet in 1930-31 and 1931-32, Bagalur failed to collect 9.2 per cent and 11.6 per cent of demand, and Poravipalaiyam failed to collect 39.9 per cent and 49.1 per cent. Marungapuri, where a succession of bad seasons had already cut into the collections, failed to collect 24.6 per cent and 20.0 per cent in the same years, despite making significant remissions.[90] Several other estates complained of growing arrear balances and two depu-

[85]B. V. Narayanaswami Naidu, *The Madras Agriculturists' Relief Act*, Madras, 1938.

[86]LRS 2713 25-9-1939.

[87]*MELAC*, Pt. I.

[88]G.O. 252 (C) Rev 31-1-1940.

[89]'There was a sudden and unprecedented fall in the price of grain. This is the lowest on record for more than fifteen years and severely affected the ryot population particularly in the commuted areas as they depend on the sale of their paddy for payment of their rent. Their economic condition was made more acute on account of the sudden stoppage of a large portion of wealth from Burma and the Federated States through Chetties. As a result of this, ryots who are generally improvident could not secure petty loans on which they largely rely for the payment of their rents till they find a suitable market for their surplus grains . . . there was no market for a large portion of the surplus paddy as there was a sufficient stock of paddy almost everywhere.' CoW 31 Press 9-12-1931.

[90]CoW 1 Press 25-1-1932; CoW 1 Press 26-1-1933.

tations from the important zamindars of Salem begged unsuccessfully for remission (or delay) on the payment of their government dues.[91]

In the following years, zamindars began resorting to coercive processes, and the number of suits and applications under the Estates Land Act reached a record level. In Tinnevelly, for example, the number of suits for realizing rent increased from 195 to 565 to 952 in successive years.[92] In estates in south Tanjore which were still on waram tenure and which were owned by Nattukottai Chetties involved in the grain trade, there were fights between ryots and estate officials over possession of the year's yield.[93] In Bagalur, the uncollected balance continued its steady rise (17.7 per cent in 1932-33, 18.6 per cent in 1933-34), and the Court of Wards put in several rent suits, sacked or fined a large proportion of the village officers and also penalized the estate manager for negligence. In Poravipalaiyam, where a large part of the estate was leased every three years, the bids at the auction in 1933 were almost a third down on the level attained in 1930. In the following year, many of the lessees defaulted on even these low amounts, and the estate collected only 55.5 per cent of its current demand and 11.5 per cent of arrears. Mannarkottai and Kudapalli estates also found it difficult to auction leases, and in the latter 'the old lessees were not prepared to take up the lands for payment in cash owing to the abnormal fall in the prices of foodgrains and their fluctuation. Most of the lands, therefore, had to be leased out . . . for payment of rent in kind.' By 1933-34, in Marungapuri— an estate which had come into the Court of Wards in order to clear off a deadweight of debts — the collections did not even yield enough to pay off the interest on debts, let alone any of the principal. In the next year, the court found its efforts to pay off Poravipalaiyam's debts also ground to a halt.[94]

These were all estates where the administration was significantly helped by government agency. In the next few years, it was revealed that in estates not so well fortified, the zamindars were in an even worse state. From 1934, the zamindars gave up trying to use coercive processes. Many had run out of resources or credit to start legal processes, while others realized it was merely throwing good money after bad and embittering relations inside the estates.[95] In 1933-34 sales of land for arrears of revenue realized only 63.6 per cent of the arrears and 7.1 per cent of the value of the lands sold, and many zamindars

[91]LRS 751 4-3-1931; LRS 546 17-2-1932.

[92]The number of suits per annum in the Tamilnad region rose from an average of about 1,000 in the 1920s to 1,817 in 1931-32 and 2,088 in 1932-33. *Report on Working of Estates Land Act* for appropriate years.

[93]LRS 93 Press 29-9-1933; LRS 126 Press 30-9-1935.

[94]CoW 1 Press 29-1-1934; CoW 2 Press 24-1-1935.

[95]The number of suits fell rapidly to a low of 592 in 1937-38; see *Report on Working of Estates Land Act* for appropriate years.

complained that they were having either to buy in the lands themselves and then have difficulty in finding ryots to take it up again, or were having to encourage ryots to take it at ridiculously low prices which they then did not even pay in full. Sales dropped off steeply as did suits for arrears of rent.

Year	*No. of sales*	*Annual rental value of land sold*	*Estimated value*	*Arrears*	*Amount realized*	6 : 4	6 : 5
1926-27	16431	114150	1218237	419146	305183	25.1	72.8
1927-28		not available					
1928-29	18141	162347	1443474	476749	316533	21.9	66.4
1929-30	19174	99374	1781240	504215	342728	19.2	68.0
1930-31		not available					
1931-32	25374	237728	2378889	825736	449136	18.9	54.4
1932-33	30478	237732	2346516	1134048	818773	34.9	72.2
1933-34	34132	255327	8986682	1012864	644526	7.1	63.6
1934-35	14403	97520	632118	453353	356253	56.4	78.6
1935-36	11362	67808	636910	382593	326561	51.3	85.3
1936-37	18133	117164	1264207	558922	430087	34.0	76.0
1937-38	10895	69897	623087	367237	323898	52.0	88.2
1938-39	5545	30958	325229	188499	180165	55.4	95.6
1939-40	7582	47225	530548	307702	270709	51.0	88.0
1940-41	8812	65979	641042	409418	368463	57.5	90.0
1941-42	8526	48245	563255	385001	342401	60.8	88.9

SOURCE: *Report on Working of Estates Land Act in Madras Presidency* (Annual).

Some zamindars looked around for new methods. In Sivagiri and other estates, the officials hired gangs to accompany them on their forays into the villages.[96] In Bodinayakkanur the zamindar took to distraining plough cattle.[97] In several Tinnevelly estates the zamindars tried to levy illegal taxes on trees and on water,[98] while in some Madura and Tinnevelly estates the zamindars assigned away poramboke, tank-bed, and village-site.[99] Some zamindars had their ryots arrested and thrown into jail for debt—or at least threatened to do so. In Tanjore there were 113 such cases in 1933, resulting in two convictions, in Trichinopoly there were 847 cases in three years resulting in seven convictions, and in Ramnad there were as many as 10,901 suits between 1931 and 1933.[100] Most of these expedients provoked protests and reprisals. In both Sivagiri and Kannivadi estates where the zamindar tried to collect rents by force, strong ryot associations soon appeared.[101] In Avanam the association was so strong that the zamindar complained by 1938 that 'a very few of the ryots pay whatever they like or choose' and the rest not at all.[102] By the end of the decade, refusal of rent was general throughout the estates in southern Tanjore.[103] In many estates the village officers and other estate officials deserted the zamindar completely.

[96]G.O. 3105 (C) 5-12-1938; *MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, pp. 188-89, Vol. IV, pp. 236-37.

[97]*MELAC*, Pt. II, pp. 168-68.

[98]*MELAC*, Pt. II, pp. 181, 187; Oral Evidence Vol. IV, pp. 228-29.

[99]'It is stated that the wastes, porambokes, pasture lands, cremation grounds and other places originally held in common, are now separately assigned and rent collected. There are no roads in the village and no porambokes for answering calls of nature even.' *MELAC* Pt. II, p. 106.

Arrear balances grew steeply. In 1935 the Saptur estate reported that collection was down to 50 per cent of demand.[104] The large Kannivadi estate had shown increasing arrears from 1931; in 1936 it failed to collect Rs 1 lakh of its demand of Rs 1.8 lakhs and now had accumulated arrears of Rs 3.5 lakhs.[105] The slightly smaller Urkad estate was Rs 2 lakhs in debt.[106] The Tanjore Chatram estate (an inam estate of 129 villages) had by 1937 arrears of Rs 3 lakhs and 700 suits pending in the courts.[107] Gandarvakottai reported an uncollected balance of 47.4 per cent in 1937.[108]

In the late 1930s, many estates emptied their coffers and their credit, and the Court of Wards was besieged with requests from beleaguered zamindars who wanted their estates taken off their hands. The Court already had its own hands full, and in these circumstances the petitions of beleaguered estates merely served to bring out the 'anti-zamindari' strain in Madras official thinking. Talaivankottai was the first to fall when its creditors moved in and the estate went into the hands of a receiver in 1933. Its debts amounted to Rs 56,000, three times its annual income. The zamindar died three years later, leaving a minor heir, but the Court of Wards, which normally looked after estates during a minority, refused to have anything to do with it.[109] A few months later the holder of the Sivasamudram estate, where arrears had mounted up to a little over the level of the annual demand and where the village officers were leading a campaign to refuse rent, petitioned the Court to assume the estate and clear up its administration but again the Court refused.[110] In 1934, the debts of the Nelkattumseval estate reached Rs 45,000, 3½ times

[100]LRS 2506 28-7-1934.

[101]LRS 129 Press 28-9-1936.

[102]*MELAC*, Landholders' Statements Pt. III, pp. 1-2.

[103]LRS 114 4-10-1941.

[104]*MELAC*, Pt. II, p. 185; Landholders' Statements Pt. III, p. 201.

[105]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. II, p. 213.

[106]*MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. IV, pp. 228-29.

[107]*MELAC*, Pt. II, pp. 107-8.

[108]*MELAC*, Landholders' Statements Vol. III, p. 98.

[109]G.O. 1475 (C) Rev 23-7-1937.

[110]G.O. 946 (C) Rev 7-5-1937.

the annual income, and the zamindar petitioned the Court, but the first member of the Board of Revenue concluded: 'I am totally averse from trying to bolster up these petty estates [income Rs 12,632, population 4,329] unless very strong reasons exist on "public grounds" for doing so. None exist in this case. The family has no historic associations [it was a Nayak estate] and the whole estate is such a small affair that it is not worth bothering over .... It seems best to let this estate go out of existence.'[111]

As more and more estates applied to the Court, this attitude became a policy. Singampatti, a much larger and more important estate applied in 1935 on the grounds that it had run up Rs 2.5 lakhs of debts, three times its income, and was being threatened with dissolution at the hands of its creditors. Again the Court refused to take it over, until the zamindar died a few weeks later and the Court decided that it should be assumed for the period of its minority.[112] The zamindar of Palayavanam applied to the Court on the grounds that arrears were growing inexorably and got a curt refusal.[113] The Palaiyampatti zamindar, who had already persuaded the Board of Revenue to remit portions of his peshkash in 1935, applied to the Court on the grounds that despite paying off Rs 70,000 of debts in the last five years, the total debt was now Rs 230,000, 2½ times the annual income, the estate officials were unpaid, collections declining annually, and the creditors were flexing their muscles in the courts. The Court of Wards refused, remarking that 'if applications are to be accepted in cases of this sort it is difficult to see where to stop.'[114] A few months later the zamindar of Papanad told the Court he owed Rs 6,000 to the government and another Rs 70,000 to creditors and wanted the protection of the Court. This was refused, and in the next two years the estate slid even further downhill. In 1937-38 it collected only 49 per cent of total demand. Arrears had swelled to almost a lakh, 3½ times the annual income, and were being written off at the rate of Rs 10,000 a year. Besides this there were another Rs 140,000 of arrears which had been converted into pro-note debts, and which were not likely to be recovered. Salaries of the estate officials had fallen a year into arrears, and the zamindar borrowed Rs 45,000 from moneylenders (mostly in 1937) and also got in debt to some of his own tenants. The Court refused to have anything to do with the estate until the zamindar died in 1938 and again a minority provided an unavoidable reason for assumption.[115]

In 1937 the zamindar of Devacottah came to the Court and was refused. His debts amounted to 35 lakhs, over 1½ times the annual income, and arrears

111CoW 7 4-1-1934.
112G.O. 2819 (C) Rev 26-11-1935; G.O. 394 (C) Rev 22-2-1936.
113LRS 4204 4-12-1936.
114G.O. 1952 (C) Rev 4-9-1936.
115G.O. 2705 Rev 15-12-1936; G.O. 2268 Rev 6-11-1937.

had risen to the level of the annual demand.[116] Sivagiri estate, which owed Rs 44,000 in peshkash, had debts of Rs 210,463, and arrears of Rs 515,381 equal to three times the annual income, also petitioned in 1938 and was refused.[117] Doddapanayakanur, which only managed to collect 15.6 per cent of demand in 1938, had arrears of Rs 33,000 (twice annual income) a third of which had to be written off, was taken over when the zamindar died.[118] Death of the zamindar also led to the Court taking over Kadavur estate, where arrears had risen steadily from 1934 (Rs 2,134) to 1939 (Rs 23,160) and totalled Rs 93,452, about 1¼ times the annual income, and there was only Rs 685 in the estate treasury.[119]

Thus by the end of the decade, five of the most important of the middling estates—Papanad, Doddapanayakanur, Kadavur, Singampatti, Sivagiri—had been reluctantly taken over, several others had been refused, and the Court of Wards was groaning under the strain.

One of the chief reasons for the Court of Wards' reluctance to take on some of the middling estates, was that it already had its hands full. For much of the decade it was concerned with the affairs of the three largest of the Tamil estates—Ramnad, Sivaganga, and Arni (and also with several Telugu estates including Vizianagram, the biggest estate in south India).

The histories of the major estates in the depression were very varied. The quietest of the estates was Arni. A long minority had placed it in the Court of Wards since 1915 and its administration had the force and resolution which the Madras government reserved for matters of revenue-collection. There were two small rebellions by the village officers faced with the difficulty of realizing a high level of rent from their neighbours in the 1930s, but no serious disruption or decline in revenue.[120] Ettaiyapuram was also quiet, but for other reasons. On the one hand, the estate had weathered the changes at the turn of the century better than most others; the estate had experiences with cotton cultivation and marketing since the early nineteenth century, and by continued close involvement in the economy and social life of the estates (with consequent neglect of the alluring opportunities and delights of commerce, politics, and town life) the zamindar had retained a close control over his domain. On the other hand, the zamindar also took the problems of the depression very stoically; after attempts to realize full rents by litigation in 1934-35 had failed, he gave up his attempts to maintain the estate income, wrote off ten lakhs of arrears at the end of the decade without a murmur, and was quite pleased when after independence the Congress government

116G.O. 1759 (C) Rev 27-8-1937.
117LRS 889 28-3-1939; G.O. 3105 (C) Rev 5-12-1938; G.O. 2699 (C) Rev 16-10-1939.
118CoW 155 23-2-1939; CoW 26 Press 22-11-1940.
119G.O. 563 Rev 10-3-1941; CoW 118 12-3-1941.
120 CoW 72 22-3-1935; CoW 31 Press 31-10-1930.

relieved him of the burden of his estate.[121]

In both Udaiyarpalaiyam and Sivaganga, the estate managements tried to maintain the level of rent income and provoked concerted revolts among their mightier ryots. In both cases when the zamindar resorted to law, the ryots replied with organized force, and many of the estate officials and village officers clearly sided with the insurgents. In Udaiyarpalaiyam, the zamindar put in 4,500 execution petitions for rent arrears in 1930, and followed this with several suits to recover lease amounts and other dues.[122] The ryots responded with demands for remission of rent and, when this was refused, they set fire to the zamindar's property and threatened his life.[123] In the next round, the zamindar launched 12,000 suits (one for every family in the estate),[124] and the ryot opposition gelled into a formal association, supported by many village officers and led by a dismissed karnam. In 1936, the zamindar collected only 68 per cent of his dues, in 1937, 43 per cent and in 1938, almost no ryots paid up and the zamindar had to default on his government dues. The estate's dewan bemoaned the complete loss of control:

> In the face of such a strong combination coercive processes can have no effect. Distraints are easily frustrated and properties even if they are seized, are forcibly rescued.... There is no chance of a successful prosecution for such offences in view of the combination organised as aforesaid and the difficulty of finding independent witnesses to prove the facts of offences.... The village officers are themselves ryots and they are the foremost to default and also to advise the other ryots to refuse payments, though not openly.... At times when their presence is necessary they remain indoors and pretend absence.[125]

In Sivaganga, the difficulties of the depression were complicated by the aftermath of a commutation of rents from kind to cash carried out in the 1920s by the Court of Wards. The commuted assessments were pitched well above previous revenue realizations, especially in those areas and on those people who had been strong enough to manipulate the rent demand beforehand. Even before the slump, the estate was never able to realize the new rents fully, and the attempt had completely embittered relations inside the estate.[126] Many ryots simply stopped paying, and by 1933 arrears stood at Rs 30 lakhs, 1½ times the demand. In reply, the estate launched 7,246 distraints and 10,342 processes to attach property. The estate's annual outlay on litigation rose to the colossal figure of 3 lakhs.[127]

[121] LRS 126 Press 30-9-1935; I am grateful to David Ludden, who interviewed the Ettaiyapuram family in Tinnevelly in March 1975.
[122] LRS 74 Press 3-10-1930;; LRS 61 Press 19-9-1932.
[123] G.O. 97 (C) Public 16-1-1932.
[124] LRS 93 Press 29-9-1933; LRS 126 Press 30-9-1935; LRS 129 Press 28-9-1936.
[125] *MELAC*, Oral Evidence Vol. III, p. 230.
[126] G.O. 409 Rev 26-2-1929; G.O. 1071 (C) Rev 31-5-1929.

A Ryots Association was formed, and immediately bought a car and a typewriter and collected Rs 6,000 in subscriptions. It was led by a man who had been dismissed from estate service for embezzlement and included nine other dismissed or retrenched officials on its payroll.[128] Ryots started to resist the estate's coercive processes, particularly by cutting and concealing crops that the estate wanted to distrain, and soon the estate had 1,100 criminal cases arising out of these struggles also on its hands. 'The increase of this form of crime,' noted the estate manager, 'tends to become alarming and it would appear that further distraints will lead automatically to further breaches of the law.... We have our hands full already with the legal processes arising from [distraints] as well as with the law-breaking that seems to follow. It is clear that we cannot hold down an area of 1753 sq.m. by methods of mere force.'[129] Indeed within a year, the ryots formed *oppandams* (combinations) in many villages and succeeded in excluding the estate administration altogether. A tahsildar on distraint duty was assaulted, and another officer visiting the scene of the crime found the village deserted except for one woman who threatened personally to kill all the officer's children if he started breaking into houses to seize goods. One villager who defied his local oppandam and paid Rs 5 in rent was promptly fined Rs 20 by his neighbours, and an official who came to investigate was immobilized when members of the oppandam stole the bulls from his cart. When police opened fire on some ryots in 1934, collection ceased altogether. 'In some centres,' reported the Court of Wards, 'the combination of villagers was so strong that nobody dared to give any information about the lawless activities... the estate collector had not at all exaggerated the strength of the "oppandams" and the tyranny they exercised by levying fines, burning houses and cutting crops by night to intimidate those who paid rent to the estate or even spoke against the "oppandams".'[130] Most of the village establishment had deserted to the rebel side. The Court continued:

> On the one hand they exaggerated their difficulties and wrote alarming reports about the difficulties of collection, while on the other they slyly connived with the ryots in making any coercive steps and processes in Court infructuous by tampering with the evidence at the very source... [village officers] often... are the worst defaulters in the village... the estate hands

[127] G.O. 122 Rev 20-1-1933; CoW 35 30-1-1934.
[128] G.O. 1071 (C) Rev 31-5-1929; CoW 31 Press 9-12-1931.
[129] *Ibid.*, and G.O. 122 Rev 20-1-1933.
[130] CoW 31 Press 15-12-1932.

over the melwaram paddy to them for want of granaries and in a number of cases the melwaram paddy thus entrusted to them has to be recovered from them by civil suit. The moment the estate takes any steps against them they turn hostile to the estate; they even go to the extent of returning the distrained properties handed over to them to the defaulting ryots.[131]

Other estate officials were simply content to get what they could from the crumbling administration. Nine officials were found embezzling in 1929, a dozen in 1930, and 22 in 1933-34.[132] In 1934, the Court of Wards abandoned the estate, and the restored raja abandoned the attempt to collect revenue. He gave up litigation, allowing 20,000 rent court decrees for Rs 15 lakhs of arrears to lapse, and failed to collect another Rs 24 lakhs by the end of the decade. He thus stilled the revolt but consequently owed Rs 7½ lakhs to the government, Rs 2 lakhs to his own staff, and another Rs 85,934 to engineers, Rs 3,181 to lawyers, Rs 11,921 to village officials, and Rs 24,159 on day-to-day bills by the end of the decade.[133]

The Ramnad estate faced similar problems of non-payment by the ryots and desertion by estate officials, but it is unnecessary to repeat the narrative of such events; the history of Ramnad in the depression highlights other important changes which may not be so clearly seen elsewhere. Ramnad was both the biggest and the most ancient of the estates in Tamilnad, and also the most lawless for many of the descendants of his great grandfather's army captains had turned not to agriculture but to organized crime. More than any other zamindar, the raja of Ramnad needed to maintain the memory of his family's historical role and the raja's attentions had always focused less on economic welfare and more on the trappings of his ancestral 'royalty.'[134] As with the kings of medieval Europe, this entailed close association with the religious life of his domain and a concerted attempt to maintain links with the lower levels of his 'subjects' and to stand forth as the protector of the poor. In the twentieth century and especially in the depression, these activities became more and more difficult, and it was the raja's failures here, many ryots claimed, that caused the final eclipse of their loyalty.

The estate faced a financial crisis from the end of the nineteenth century when it was rescued with an enormous loan raised on the London money

[131] CoW 31 Press 9-12-1931; G.O.s 435-6 Press Rev 23-2-1932.

[132] CoW 384 20-8-1930; CoW 471 16-10-1930; CoW 497 31-10-1930; CoW 9 9-1-1930; CoW 484 28-10-1930; CoW 333 16-7-1930; CoW 472 17-10-1930; CoW 47 29-1-1930; CoW 445 25-11-1932; CoW 208 6-6-1932; CoW 258 18-7-1932; CoW 348 15-9-1932; CoW 241 7-7-1932; CoW 359 18-8-1931.

[133] CoW 679 27-11-1941; CoW 653 15-11-1941.

[134] Pamela Price of the University of Wisconsin is currently studying this and other aspects of the Ramnad zamindari.

market. After the 1894 Act,the raja complained, the village officers 'continued to keep up the appearance of working for the estate [because of] the opportunity it gave for bribery, embezzlement and illegal profit of every variety.'[135] Several lawless Maravar villages declared effective independence and managed to prevent estate officials entering the village, let alone raising rent, and when the raja attempted to collect through litigation it was equally fruitless for 'the ryots have become habituated to the repeated sales of their holdings [for arrears] without making any visible difference to themselves.'[136] The raja survived by raising more loans (often from the prosperous among his own ryots), pawning all the palace jewels and silverware, and leasing out blocks of villages for a number of years in return for a lump sum.[137] By the time the depression tipped this precarious accounting over the edge, the raja's financial troubles had already begun to intrude on his religious and social duties.

In the nineteenth century, the raja maintained direct links with many of the humbler members of his villages by directly supporting them. There was a long list of functionaries paid either in cash or in shares of the harvest, including messengers, irrigation overseers, paddy measurers, various guards and watchmen, potters, carpenters, smiths, washermen, shoemakers, and shepherds. Since the 1910s, these obligations had gradually lapsed, with, as the Court of Wards noticed, striking results:

> The administration lost every vestige of moral authority with the ryots who were thus presented with a glaring example of systematic disregard of legal obligations by the proprietor in a matter closely bound up with the revenue tenure. This placed the proprietor on a level in the public eye with the worst defaulting ryot. An appreciable body of villagers in each village used to have an interest in preserving the tank, in economically using the water, and sharing the total nanja yield of the village honestly with the proprietor instead of [as became customary] deceiving the proprietor in every possible way.[138]

The raja was also by custom one of the foremost curators of religion in south India, being hereditary protector of the pilgrim shrine at Rameswaram, and having a large interest in the Minakshi temple at Madura and numerous temples inside his estate. He also managed numerous charitable institutions attached to these temples. These activities were financed by the revenues from portions of his estate—about 14 per cent of the area went to finance the *devas-*

[135] G.O. 989 (8-S) Rev 1-5-1936.

[136] G.O. 2906 (C) Rev 6-12-1935; CoW 332 6-12-1935.

[137] G.O. 2253 (C) Rev 13-12-1933.

[138] G.O. 989 (8-S) Rev 1-5-1936; CoW 602 12-6-1937; CoW 42 11-1-1940.

thanam (temple) accounts, and another 4 per cent the *chatram* (trusts) account. In his attempts to stay solvent, the raja had leased out these villages as well, and the income consequently had dropped. Then in the early 1930s, he fudged the boundaries between ayan, devasthanam, and chatram in his accounts and devoted all incomings towards financial survival. By 1933 he had been taken to court by outraged tenants and accused of transferring Rs 10 lakhs from devasthanam funds into his own accounts, melting down gold and silver offerings so that they could be used as surety for raising loans, and eating off the temple silverware because he had pawned his own. Temple rituals were neglected, devasthanam servants and priests unpaid, and the local population incensed.[139]

The other special importance of Ramnad's plight in the depression was the effect it had upon the government. As the largest estate, it demanded the government's attention, not least because of the importance of its revenue dues. From 1932, the raja had difficulty paying his peshkash, and in 1934 he defaulted. The government sent the bailiffs in, but the raja had pawned so much that they could find only four cars, some tennis trophies, a billiard table, and a heap of furniture.[140] Next year, he also defaulted on the London loan and many other creditors started moving in for the kill. Rather than have so many people (including the government itself) fighting over an empty estate treasury, the government took the estate into the Court of Wards.[141] The revelations that emerged from the Court's attempt to sort out the affairs of this largest of the Tamil estates helped to convince the government that the zamindars could not be integrated into the administrative structure of the twentieth-century Madras.

It took the Court of Wards a year to sort out the papers in the estate office. There had been no estate budget since 1927 and the last four before that bore no relation to the actual income and expenditure of the estate. There was no list of estate villages in the office, nor was there any officer who could compile one. The records of the area of villages were not only out of date but 'in these accounts only the fields which were cultivated and which the karnams chose to include were shown. The level of accuracy of the accounts of such an important estate was thus on a par with the record of Podu Cultivation in the Agency Tracts of the Northern Circars,' that is, shifting cultivation in the jungle.[142] Forty per cent of the patta deeds were registered in the names of people who had long ago relinquished any interest in the land, and another 40 per cent in the names of people who had long ago been placed on the

[139] Printed memorial signed by P. S. Subramania Aiyar and D. Venkatapathi Aiyer dated 22-2-1933 in P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer papers, National Archives of India.

[140] G.O. 1915 Rev 16-9-1932; G.O. 2253 (C) Rev 13-12-1933; G.O. 461 (C) Rev 5-3-1934.

[141] G.O. 2239 (C) Rev 23-9-1935; G.O. 2906 (C) 6-12-1935; G.O. 1749 Rev 31-7-1935.

[142] CoW 858 12-12-1936; CoW 215 23-2-1937.

pyre. Finally they discovered that the assessment of rent relied on fluctuating units of measurement and antique coinage: 'Difficulty is experienced in the calculation of rent because of the fact that in addition to there being numerous assessments in force, they are expressed in units of pre-British money, which while bearing the same name have different values in modern currency in different parts of the estate; and further they are expressed in terms of the different units of linear measurement [two of which had the same name]. All of this makes the calculation of revenue demand a mysterious process.'[143]

The arrears of rent due to the estate was reckoned at Rs 23.41 lakhs.[144] Half was immediately written off as irrecoverable, and little of the rest had been collected by 1940. Lessees and village officers who had withheld rent dues owed another Rs 9 lakhs; these were equally irrecoverable. On the other side, were the estate's debts. Like any good monster, this one grew in size every time they opened the closet to have a look at it, despite their attempts to hack pieces off it from time to time.[145] 'The Court,' it noted, 'finds it difficult to contemplate a more hopeless state of effective bankruptcy.'[146]

Heading	*1935*	*1937*	*1940*
Government dues	300,000	1,304,237	1,115,225
London loan	132,000	650,000	589,560
Debts raised to pay peshkash	147,084	164,448	—
Other secured and decree debts	319,642	145,354	61,423
Debts for buying in land	71,867	5,425	—
Debts to maramat contractors	16,723	24,000	—
To temples		7,020	
Unpaid bills etc.	13,910	93,357	593,342*
Mahimai dues	30,096	10,400	20,601
Unpaid salaries	180,000	102,619	211,329
Allowances to family	106,072	254,472	196,269
Rough totals:	14 lakhs	26 lakhs	28 lakhs

NOTE: A lot of entries were approximations.

*This entry includes amounts shown under separate heads (e.g. temples, maramat) in other columns.

[143] CoW 330 5-12-1935.

[144] CoW 416 20-7-1936.

[145] G.O. 2239 (C) Rev 23-9-1935; CoW 938 21-9-1937; CoW 687 15-10-1940; the latter was probably the biggest file compiled by the Madras Government in the twentieth century.

[146] G.O. 1681 (C) Rev 18-8-1937.

V

Throughout the 1930s the government's exasperation with the estates increased. Events in Udaiyarpalaiyam, Sivaganga, and several lesser estates threatened the peace of the districts, and employed the police at times when the government needed them to deal with nationalists. The effective bankruptcy of the largest Tamil estate, Ramnad, the utter amazement inspired by the details of its internal management, and the realization that the government would have to cosset the estate for a long time, forced the government to think seriously about the zamindari system. The Court of Wards bowed under the strain of administering several beleaguered middling estates fighting off the petitions of lesser estates, and by 1941 managing Ramnad, Sivaganga, and several big Andhra estates. At the same time, the government's revenue was suffering. For the first time since agricultural prices had begun to rise in the middle of the nineteenth century, estates began defaulting on the payment of their peshkash and obliging the government to start coercive processes against them. Only then did the government discover that its facilities for forcing zamindars to pay up were very deficient. In 1934, the Tanjore collector had to proceed against several estates, and was worried that the only method of recovering peshkash arrears was to distrain crops belonging to tenants of the estate. 'It may be inequitable,' the Board of Revenue assured him, 'but it is perfectly legal.'[147] After 1935, many more estates defaulted, and the government found it had to give concessions—usually by allowing delay in peshkash, in taking the estate under the Court of Wards for a short time—or to consult with the zamindar so that they could at least distrain the crops belonging to tenants who were defaulting in their payments to the zamindar. But the government found these expedients objectionable; the distraints and the temporary managements were merely ways of doing the zamindar's job for him; delays in peshkash were hurting the revenues which the government was having difficulty in maintaining in the circumstances of the depression.[148]

By the end of the decade, no one had a good word for the zamindari system. Ryots meeting since 1931 had been calling for its abolition and by 1938 there was a Tamilnad Zamindari Ryots Association.[149] Several zamindars who had had to write off enormous arrears of rent had said they were willing to be relieved of their charges, and in 1937 one zamindar introduced a bill to abolish all but the ancient, impartible estates. In the prologue to the bill, he noted: 'The zamindars themselves have been hard hit during the period of depression and they would also not be unwilling to part with their zamindaris provided reasonable and equitable compensation is paid to them for the loss of their property.' The Board of Revenue calculated that the scheme would cost Rs 16.2 crores (an estimate whose inaccuracy betrayed their lack of concern) and that there was as yet no 'crisis' which would merit such expenditure.[150] Within three years, this attitude had changed.

[147] LRS 1368 1-5-1934.

[148] G.O. 2513 Rev 6-11-1942; LRI 790 (M) 4-12-1942; G.O. 2214 Rev 2-10-1942.

[149] G.O. 122 Rev 20-1-1941; G.O. 149 Rev 20-5-1941.

The Congress ministry came to power in mid-1937. The abolition of zamindars had formed part of its all-India manifesto, and the Congress revenue minister, T. Prakasam, was known to be hostile to zamindars. He immediately set up a commission to investigate the estates. In fact, this commission never contemplated the abolition of the estates. It collected a mountain of evidence (15 volumes running to some 6,000 pages) which for the most part it ignored in writing the report. Instead Prakasam resorted to legal and historical arguments to prove that the soil and all the facilities (such as irrigation and forests) were the property of the ryots not the zamindars, and that as the Permanent Settlement of 1802 was (or should have been) concluded with both the ryots and the zamindars, all subsequent rent enhancements were illegal and rents should be returned to the level of 1802.[151] The report was greeted with some amazement. A senior official noted: 'In view of the actual course which events have taken during the past 140 years, of the decisions recorded by the Courts and the laws enacted by the Legislatures, it is surely impracticable to scrap the whole present structure and to attempt to reconstruct it on *ex parte* interpretations of the pure principles of the Permanent Settlement Regulations, which were so vague that they gave rise to dispute and misunderstanding within a few years of their enactment.' Indeed, the sources on which Prakasam had based his historico-legal argument were so internally contradictory, that other members of the commission had used them to write minority reports which ran to almost half the length of Prakasam's effort and which directly contradicted his conclusions. The Congress Cabinet would have little to do with it; one minister noted that it was 'impracticable for us to go back to the days of 140 years ago and recreate all the features of the medieval life of those days,' and the Congress ministry resigned while the report's findings were still being written up as a bill.[152]

[150] LRS 3707 1-12-1937. In sales of land for arrears in the 1930s, many zamindars had been obliged to 'buy in' the land themselves; such land became part of their 'home farm' or private land (pannai or ela-pannai) and many zamindars supposed that if their estates were converted to ryotwari, they would retain these tracts, and would have, under the ryotwari system, more power over the tenants occupying that land.

[151] The Madras Estates Land Act Committee published two volumes of a report with another volume of documents as an appendix, four volumes of memoranda, four volumes of oral evidence, four volumes of landholders' statements, a volume of graphs and tables, a volume of reports from collectors and a volume of irrigation reports.

[152] G.O. 2526 (C) Rev 18-10-1940; G.O. 252 (C) Rev 31-1-1940.

The report did, however, give the government the idea that rents in zamindari areas were inequitably high, and that the zamindaris could not simply be left to decay. Although they agreed it was ridiculous to reduce rents to the 1802 level, they believed that zamindari rents were higher than ryotwari rates and might somehow be forced down to the ryotwari level.

This idea had a long history. It had been debated throughout the nineteenth century, usually rejected on grounds of cost, and finally abandoned in 1895, after which the Madras government proceeded to pass the 1908 Act as, they hoped, the final confirmation and charter of the zamindari system. This time the government reached the idea of revising the Permanent Settlement in November 1939, and decided it was inappropriate to undertake such a major project in wartime. For the next few months it cast around for other expedients to reduce rents and prop up the estates (including rent tribunals, better facilities for debt relief, and special banks) but each scheme quickly ran into complications. By July 1940, they had come full circle:

> The alternative of buying out the zamindar with full compensation seems to be financially preferable to retaining him with his present net income.... Apart from financial considerations there are other reasons for substituting direct Government control for zamindari management....In Madras, moreover, even with their present incomes most zamindari families are on the verge of bankruptcy and it is only the Impartible Estates Act which prevents their estates from passing to their creditors. Landlords in such economic circumstances can be of little benefit to their estates and it is doubtful if they will provide that conservative element in a society which a landholding class is expected to supply.[153]

The original justification had dissolved.

It was a measure of the seriousness of the government's intention to unmake the zamindaris that the inquiry that followed revealed for the first time how difficult it was going to be to dissolve the estates. If compensation was to be paid, who to? Surely the numerous under-tenure holders had some sort of claim. How was compensation to be calculated? If it was to be based on some multiplication of net income, it would (*a*) be difficult to discover net incomes since most estates did not keep orderly accounts, and (*b*) be objectionable because it would favour those zamindars who had most successfully rack-rented their estates. If compensation was to be based on assessment of the ryotwari demand on the area, how was that to be calculated? 8,540 square miles of zamindari remained unsurveyed, and not one estate had a classification of soils and irrigations works (which was vital for a ryotwari assessment).[154]

[153]G.O. 2526 (C) Rev 18-10-1940.

By the end of 1942, they decided that the principle of abolition was right, but the time inappropriate, and it would be best to leave the matter to a responsible government. But the wartime administration had made the decision in principle and worked out the difficulties, and it was their arguments that the Congress revenue minister echoed when he introduced the zamindari abolition bill in 1948:

> The zamindari system has perpetuated an assessment which has no relation to the productive capacity of the land. It has further led to a loss of contact between the Government and the actual cultivator and has acted as a brake in regard to agricultural improvement. Most of the irrigation works in estates are in a state of disrepair. The complexities of the zamindari system have led to an immense volume of litigation. Many of the records in the offices of zamindaris are indifferently maintained and the peasantry, most of whom are illiterate, are at the mercy of unscrupulous agents. There is acute discontent among estate ryots and there has been a good deal of agitation by them. The Government are convinced that the zamindari system in force in the Province has outlived its usefulness.[155]

Most of the major estates of Madras had their origin as quasifeudal territories, rather than as instruments of colonization, administrative grants, or accretions of landed property. They did not possess elaborate bureaucracies and they did not develop concepts of estate management. The organization and use of the land were not among the estate-holder's concerns. In the nineteenth century, they were obliged to exchange their military domination for a loose control over a local economy, coupled with ritualized remembrance of their past glory. When new economic and political forces started to invade the local fastness and to pull the major ryots away from their allegiance to the estates it quickly became clear that the legal and political foundations of the estates rested on sand. The zamindars tried to put a brake on economic development, and to seek better legal and political fortification from the government. Yet as far as the government was concerned, the growth of a new polity was making the estates obsolete. The onset of the depression turned these tensions into conflicts. The zamindars were forced to pay closer attention to the financial stability of their territories, yet they could not wrestle control of the land and its uses from the hands of their mightier subjects. Where they tried, they prompted revolts, and in the estates like Siva-

[154]G.O. 1432 (C) Rev 27-3-1943.
[155]Kala Venkata Rao, quoted in B. Sarveswara Rao, *The Economic and Social Effects of Zamindari Abolition in Andhra*, p. 28.

ganga and Udaiyarpalaiyam, the village officers and rich ryots set out to take over the entire administration of the territory and exclude the zamindar altogether. Once this had happened, the government's original reasons for protecting the estates dissolved, and the equivocation that had always marked Fort St George's attitude to the estates was turned to outright opposition.

The Evolution of Land Relations in Eastern India under British Rule*

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The economist's habit of building models can admittedly lead to gross over-simplifications in economic history. Nevertheless, the clear logical structure of a model at least sharpens the issues to be discussed and in this sense may provide the basis for a meaningful symbiosis of economic and historical research. The present paper is an attempt in that direction: its purpose is to interpret some broad historical trends in the evolution of the Zamindari System in the light of analytical economic argument.

I

The Permanent Settlement of 1793 meant a very sharp rise in the land revenue obligation of the zamindars. Between the last year of Mahomedan administration in 1764 and the first year of the operation of the Permanent Settlement in 1793-94, land revenue increased by more than 300 per cent.[1] In addition, this revenue was inflexible both in amount and in time. It had to be paid irrespective of a good or bad harvest and by a certain date. Two immediate consequences followed from this high and rigid land revenue falling on the zamindars. First, land as an income-bearing asset could not become very attractive immediately after the Settlement. This, in turn, slowed down the process of land becoming an easily marketable asset. With almost

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[1]R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, Vol. I (First Indian Edition, 1960), Preface, p. XXVII.

9/10ths of the 'net income'[3] from land taken away in land revenue and a high risk associated with proprietorship of land under the 'Sunset Law,' any discounted 'present value' calculation of land will show that land prices could hardly exceed land-revenue. This has now been historically established[3] and an algebraic demonstration in continuous time is simple: price of land = its present discounted value = V. If, a = net income from land, r = constant time rate of discount and n = length of time for which land is expected to remain on an average with the same zamindar, then,

$$V = \frac{1}{10}\int_{t=0}^{n} ae^{-rt} . dt \qquad \ldots(1)$$

while, the land revenue payable, $R = \frac{9}{19} a$ ...(2)

Working through (1) and (2), we obtain land revenue as a proportion of land price as,

$$\frac{R}{V} = \frac{9r}{-\left(e^{-rn}-1\right)}$$, which reasonably approximates to

$$\frac{R}{V} \approx 9\left[\frac{1}{n} + \frac{r}{6}\left(3 + \frac{rn}{2}\right)\right] \qquad \ldots(3)$$

for probable values of r and n. With r around 10 per cent and n around 30 years,[4] the ratio works out to .98, i.e., approximately unity, as suggested by some historical evidence.[5]

Apart from the low price of land in relation to revenue demand, the second important consequence of the imposition of a high and inflexible land revenue was to introduce an unprecedented element of risk into the land-holding system. The zamindars had to adjust to the new situation by devising some sort of an 'insurance policy' to hedge against risk. This came in several gradual stages.

[2]I use 'net income' roughly in the sense Ricardo used it. It is the gross value of agricultural output minus circulating capital cost, which in Ricardo's case included the consumption by direct producers also (wage was a 'cost' to the Classical Political Economists to be deducted to arrive at 'net income').

[3]B. B. Chaudhury, 'Land Market in Eastern India, 1793-1940, Part I: The Movement of Land Prices', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, January-March 1975, Vol. XII, No. 1, pp. 7-18.

[4]Assuming, on an average 3 per cent of land went up for auction sale annually (see B. B. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 6, Table I) between 1793 and 1807, n can be put around 30 years. The 10 per cent discount rate is guessed on the basis of interest rate on loans floated by the Government of Bengal between 1798 and 1800, which was around 8-10 per cent (see B. B. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 11).

[5]B. B. Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 9, cf: 'The purchase money as the multiple of land revenue demanded of the estates sold (i.e., V/R in our notation) was 1.57 in 1795-96, 1.25 in 1796-97, and .97 in 1797-98. The situation slightly improved for some years but again in 1803-4, the multiple decreased to .96.'

Regulation VII of 1799, giving landholders the right to attach and dispose of the property of their tenants for arrears of rent,[6] marks the beginning of this process of adjustment. This regulation not only removed the existing asymmetry between the government's right to evict zamindars and the zamindar's lack of any clear legal right to realize arrears of rent; it also replaced the old system of repayment of arrears by the tenant through direct labour-service by a more market-oriented system of attaching the tenant's property. It has been observed that this was particularly resorted to by the new zamindars who had come to hold land through auction purchase and were not inhibited by the traditional tenant-landlord relation.[7]

Far more important, however, was the emerging system of under-tenures which possibly became the most important component in the policy of insurance against risk adopted by the zamindars. 'A large number of under-tenures became a feature of the land-system of Bengal as a consequence of the Permanent Settlement. Under-tenures enabled old zamindars to retain a hold on property after it has been sold by the operation of sale law.... Nearly all the zamindars and talukdars also possessed subordinate rights in their estates.'[8] The development of this intricate system of extensive sub-letting of land must have, on the one hand, depressed further the auction-sale price of estates[9] and on the other, created at the same time an emerging market in the sub-tenurial rights in land. This latter tendency of a developing market in the intermediate tenure-rights in land was something that was not originally envisaged by the scheme of Permanent Settlement. The final outcome was somewhat paradoxical in the early years after the Settlement: the intended effect of making zamindari right an easily marketable asset did not fully materialize, because of factors (already mentioned) inhibiting the attractiveness of land as an income-bearing asset. But the original scheme was overtaken by the unintended effect of a rapidly emerging market in sub-tenurial rights in land! It is in this light that we must see the Patni System, particularly Patni Regulation VIII of 1819, which legally recognized the sub-letting right of the superior tenure-holder. This dichotomy between the intended and the actual outcome of the Permanent Settlement, we shall argue in the next section, heavily influenced the later stages in the evolution of land-relations in Bengal. But, for the moment its immediate economic impact should not be lost: born out of the zamindars' policy of insurance against risk, it triggered off a rapid process of *differentiation among the land-tenure-holders from above*. It was a process generated

[6]N. K. Sinha, *Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1968, p. 175.

[7]N. K. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[8]N. K. Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[9]For, the buyer was never sure, to what extent he was really buying the estate!

from above by the zamindars themselves in their attempt to hedge risk. And, during this process, a significant market in the sub-tenurial and sub-letting rights of land developed, which made such rights an easily marketable commodity. The Patni System gave legal recognition to this providing a distinct landmark in the *first phase in the commercialization of Bengal's agriculture*, which in effect, was *commercialization of sub-tenurial rights in land on an unprecedented scale*. Perhaps, the most serious implication of this commercialization of sub-tenurial rights in land was the tendency for rapid growth in the number of intermediate rent-receivers (between the zamindar and the direct cultivator) which accompanied the process. As a consequence, it paid nobody to invest *individually* in the improvement of land. For, gain from increased productivity of land had usually to be shared by the various layers of intermediaries, while there was *no viable mechanism of sharing the cost of land improvement collectively*. This, in turn, seems to have been a crucial economic factor in vitiating the original intention of the Permanent Settlement, which had expected that a high land revenue would compel the zamindars to raise the productivity of land to make the holding of estates an attractive economic proposition over time. Thus, rather than increasing the productivity of land (barring extension of area under 'Abadi' cultivation), the policy of insurance of the zamindars canalized the future, of course, of development of the Permanent Settlement into unsuspected directions.

II

The series of Bengal Rental Acts (of 1859, 1868, and 1885) which succeeded the 1819 Patni Regulation reflects the growing uneasiness of the government with the consequences of what I have just called, 'the first phase in the commercialization of Bengal's agriculture.' Land revenue being permanently fixed, the government was no longer so much of a gainer. The growing gap between land rent falling on the direct cultivators and land revenue collected by the government was appropriated by the elaborate hierarchy of intermediate tenure-holders in land who had emerged as a result of large-scale commercialization of sub-tenurial rights in land. As usual, the direct cultivating peasant was at the receiving end of the spectrum, supporting a whole hierarchy of intermediaries. But the prominent feature of this system of surplus appropriation was that the government was no longer the primary gainer, with a lion's share in the surplus. Perhaps this explains the objective basis of the relatively 'pro-peasant and progressive' nature of the Bengal Rent Act[10] of

[10]Act X of 1859 by Lord Canning legally fixed rent for those who held land at the same rate since 1793 or even for the last 20 years. Right of occupancy was also conceded to those who held land for the last 12 years. This 'right of occupancy' itself was soon to become a marketable asset as a part of the general process of commercialization of sub-tenurial rights!

1859 and the Bengal Tenancy Act[11] of 1885.

A most remarkable feature of the emerging system of surplus extraction was its virtually 'free-for-all' nature. Anybody with money to buy intermediate land rights—and, by then, land rights were sufficiently differentiated from superior to inferior rights to suit all types of budgets—had to be accommodated into the spectrum of 'rent-receiving intermediaries,' with a direct claim on the agricultural surplus. Statistical evidence from a somewhat later period[12] suggests that agricultural output of Bengal province did not rise rapidly enough to absorb this increasing claims by the expanding class of rent-receiving intermediaries; consequently, the peasants' consumption level had to be continuously forced down to generate enough surplus. An inevitable part of this process was the growing extent of rural indebtedness; the peasants had to take increasing recourse to borrowing in an attempt to maintain the bare minimum level of consumption. The resulting indebtedness in which the vast majority of small peasants were caught, set in motion a different process of commercialization of agriculture. This was the *second phase* in the commercialization of Bengal's agriculture.

The ensuring process of commercialization forcibly involved the peasants into market relations through the mechanism of debt. In essence, it was a forced process of buying and selling of paddy under the compulsion of debt, in which an overwhelmingly large number of small peasants were caught. Settlement of past debt plus current cash expenditure in any period forced the peasant to *sell under distress* too high a portion of his output. Indeed, the proportion marketed was often so high, that he was soon forced to borrow again (until the next harvest) for *distress buying* of paddy to supplement his own consumption. The indebtedness was carried over to the next harvest forcing him again to sell too much under the compulsion of debt, leading in turn to the next round of distress buying. The overall process was characterized by a spiralling sequence of distress buying and selling over time. For most peasants, the spiral meant mounting debt until they were hopelessly ruined in a state of manifest insolvency. For the fortunate few, the spiral might have ended to release them ultimately from debt; only in exceptional cases, a peasant might have even risen from the rank to become a moneylender himself.

[11]With amendments in 1928 and 1938. For details see Bhowani Sen, *Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 116.

[12]See George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India 1891-1947: Output, Availability and Productivity*, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 96. More detailed statistical evidence for the first two decades of the twentieth century has now been presented by Saugata Mukherji to show that the total output of rice in Bengal declined by about—0.34 per cent (average simple rate) per year, while yield per acre shows a decline of similar order. See S. Mukherji, 'Institutional Rigidities in the Agrarian Market in Early 20th Century Bengal,' *Current Dynamics*, Vol. I, No. 6, September 1970, Calcutta, p. 21.

Clearly, such a process of forced commercialization carried within it the possibility of further *differentiation among an initially indebted peasantry*. But it was a process of differentiation 'from below,' involving predominantly small, indebted cultivators, in contrast to the earlier process in the first phase of commercialization. For, that phase was characterized by differentiation 'from above', involving primarily land-tenure-holders and in the process commercialized sub-tenurial rights on a large scale.

It remains a matter of conjecture as to the factors that were most crucial in determining the course of commercialization in its second phase and particularly, the accompanying process of differentiation among the peasantry. Historical research can be more fruitful, it we can isolate the factors to be studied in greater detail. We took recourse to experimentation with formal model-building to see what factors might emerge as crucial determinants in such a process of differentiation. While the model has been set out in the Mathematical Appendix, we may mention at least two factors which appear to be of considerable importance, on the basis of such a priori theorizing: (*a*) the initial level of debt obligation of the peasant and, (*b*) the extent of thriftiness of peasant families in relation to the rate of interest charged on debt.[13] The model captures in a stylized form the process by which a high initial level of debt or even a relatively low initial level of debt coupled with high 'expenditure propensities,' can lead to hopelessly mounting debt, ultimately ruining a peasant family. This tendency towards ruin must have been even more pronounced than suggested by our formal model, in view of two specific historical circumstances of contemporary Bengal. First, output per peasant family was probably declining during this period (unlike a constant level of output assumed in the model)[14] and also, rent obligation of the cultivator was continuously rising (this too was assumed constant in the model) through

[13]See Mathematical Appendix, where these conditions are sorted out more clearly. It should be emphasized that we assumed constant levels of (*a*) output and (*b*) rent, per peasant family. Also, the price of paddy and the rate of interest on debt were assumed constant. As pointed out later in the text, declining trend of output and rising rent obligation per peasant family (which seems closer to historical facts) will strengthen the tendency towards ruin of small peasants.

[14]George Blyn's data (*op. cit.*, p. 96) suggests that total production as well as yield per acre of rice for India as a whole remained more or less constant, while the picture was probably even more bleak for the greater Bengal area (including Orissa and Bihar). Saugata Mukherji's data for the first two decades of the twentieth century confirms this (*op. cit.*, p. 21). For the period 1901-21, Rajat Ray computes a population increase of 10.8 per cent and a contraction in gross acreage of 3.6 per cent for Bengal as a whole, strengthening the impression of a fall in rice output per peasant household. See R. Ray, 'The Crisis of Bengal Agriculture, 1870-1927—the Dynamics of Immobility,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1973, p. 249.

the expansion of rent-receiving-intermediaries.[15] On the whole, it seems a fair conjecture that ruined peasants emerged as a dominant category out of this second phase of forced commercialization.

The emergence of a large body of ruined peasants in the course of the second phase in the commercialization of Bengal's agriculture, in turn, generated two exceedingly important historical tendencies. First, it opened up the possibility for the local merchants and moneylenders, to whom many peasants were indebted, to assume positions of intermediate rent-receiving tenure-holders.[16] The process was more complex than suggested by the classical (Marxist) model of peasants (e.g. 'occupancy ryots') becoming wage-labourers. A primary reason for this complexity lies in the fact that sub-tenurial and subletting rights on land had already got highly differentiated and commercialized, a process legalized at least since the Patni Regulation of 1819. Therefore, a ruined peasant could simply go down the ladder of land-rights with deteriorating tenurial conditions. The extreme was reached only when he was forced to hire land on *barga* (possibly without the legal rights) or hire himself out as a labourer. But the agrarian system permitted very many intermediate stages to this extreme. It is really this deterioration in the overall tenurial conditions of direct cultivators from their previous position which should be a proper subject of historical research, rather than a one-dimensional index of this deterioration in terms of say, the growth in the proportion of wage-labour.[17]

[15]On this point, see R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, Second Indian Edition, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 222-54.

[16]According to the memorandum submitted by the Bengal Provincial Kishan Sabha in 1939 to the Land Revenue Commission, 'the number of rent-receivers increased during the decade 1921-31 by about 62 per cent; this was simply an increase in the number of intermediaries between the zamindar and the cultivator.' The memorandum went on to suggest '... in the last few years, it has become a frantic scramble on the part of the usurers and petty professional middle class men to buy their way into the rent-receiving class.' Quoted in Sunil Sen, *Agrarian Struggle in Bengal 1946-47*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 25.

[17]Comparative data from various parts of India were presented by S. J. Patel to indicate that the growth of wage-labour in agriculture was probably lower in the zamindari areas during the period 1871-1931 compared to the Ryotwari areas in the South of India (on the basis of census data, later contradicted by Dharma Kumar in *Land and Caste in South India; Agricultural Labour in Madras Presidency during the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1965). He made the observation: 'In the raiyatwari region, a dispossessed owner of land became a labourer. In the zamindari region, however, before the landlord threw out his tenant into the class of agricultural labourers, he tried to rack-rent him as much as possible; therefore the terms of tenancy continued to deteriorate for the cultivators in the zamindari region. For each agricultural labourer in the raiyatwari region, there was a tenent-at-will and a share-cropper in the zamindari region.' See S. J. Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*, Bombay, 1952, p. 67.

The increasing loss of occupancy rights by direct cultivators and rapid expansion in the number of share-croppers is pointed out in the *Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal*, Vol. 2, p. 118-120.

In the second place, commercialization as a process of forcible market involvement of the small peasant through distress buying and selling of paddy, tended to blur the usual distinction between a 'subsistence-crop' (i.e., paddy) and a 'commercial-crop' (i.e., jute), which is otherwise considered important in determining the extent of commercialization of agriculture. Dictated by the compulsion of growing debt, a small rice-grower became almost as much a part of the market as his jute-producing counterpart, *both as a buyer* and as a seller under distress. Historically, this was evidenced in the wide prevalence of the 'Dadan System' in both rice- and jute-cultivation for small growers.[18]

A logical consequence of this process of commercialization, which proceeded by forcing a large number of small peasants into the cash-nexus of monetized exchange, was the *peculiar nature of exchange* which developed along with it. It was primarily exchange of paddy for paddy, often within the contrived arrangement of a future market for paddy, established under the Dadan System. Normal exchange among commodities (e.g. between agricultural and manufactured products) which may usually be expected to accompany the process of commercialization of agriculture got thwarted in the process; the mutual dependence between industry and agriculture from the 'demand side' could not also develop to a corresponding extent. A striking evidence of this peculiar nature of exchange is to be found in the trade statistics on the volume of rice exported and imported (from Burma) through Calcutta port around the turn of this century.[19] The time-series data (1902/03-1920/21) shows an unmistakable link between the volume of rice exported and imported. Till about 1912, both items rose moderately establishing a close *positive* association between them. While the volume of rice exported abroad started falling from about 1912 onwards (with some exceptional war-years), the 'inland export' within British India from Calcutta port showed marked increase.[20] In spite of a fairly sharp decline in the production of rice during this

[18]Undoubtedly, the Dadan advance was more common in jute- than in rice-cultivation. However, this should not obscure the fact that the Dadan System had become widespread in rice-cultivation also. Descriptions of the various forms of the Dadan System which operated both in jute- and rice-cultivation are available in *Marketing of Agricultural Produce in Bengal* (1926), Report prepared by the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Bengal, Calcutta, 1928 (Government of Bengal publication). See also Saugata Mukherji, *Trade in Rice and Jute in Bengal: Its Effects on Prices, Cultivation and Consumption on the Two Crops in Early 20th Century, 1900/01-1920/21* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Jadavpur University, Department of Economics, 1971), especially chapters 1 and 2.

[19]S. Mukherji, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[20]On the basis of data collected from the annual *Reports on the Trade Carried by Rail and River in Bengal, 1900/01-1920/21* (Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence, India), Saugata Mukherji calculated an increase from 35.2 to 121.2 lakh maunds of rice in the 'inland export' of rice between 1912 and 1920 (a three-year-average of base and final year). I am

period,[21] a substantial outflow of 'overseas plus inland export' of rice through the port of Calcutta was possible from 1912-13 onwards only by maintaining a steady intake of rice from Burma.[22] One cannot avoid the overall impression that the coarse variety of Burma rice largely went to meet the distress buying of rice by the Bengal peasants, while the finer quality Bengal rice was procured for exports by the merchants through large-scale distress sale by the same peasants. It does not seem valid to seek an explanation of this two-way traffic in rice trade—exchange of 'rice' for 'rice'—in terms of the existing price-differential between the two varieties of rice, as an inducement to *voluntary* trading by the peasants. For, it seems almost certain from the data that a small rice-grower paid a higher price for buying Burma rice than the price that he actually received in selling his finer quality Bengal rice.[23] The price-differential was important primarily for the traders to whom the profit went. Evidently, the textbook dictum of 'gains from trade and exchange' was not meant for the small producers who were involuntarily involved into the market. For them, market institutions simply operated as a highly exploitative mechanism from which they had no escape.

grateful for this data in his unpublished paper, Imperialism in action through a mercantilist function (originally presented at the XXXII session of the Indian History Congress in Jabalpur, December, 1970). Table VIII.

[21]Between 1902-03 to 1920-21, rice output declined by about 14.4 per cent and the decline was heavily marked after 1911-12. S. Mukherji, *Trade in Rice and Jute in Bengal* (MSS), *op.cit.*, Chapter 4.

[22]*Ibid*, Vol. I, Ch. II, Table 2.2.

[23]The export price of Bengal rice was 30-50 per cent higher than the import price of Burma rice. See S. Mukherji, *op.cit.*, Table V, p. 20. When one allows for 'trade and transport' margin on export and import price and takes into account the fact that contract price under the 'Dadan System' was typically half the market price in the rural market after the harvest (from extensive evidence quoted in *Marketing of Agricultural Produce in Bengal*, *op.cit.*), the conclusion follows that the selling price of (Bengal) rice for the peasant was probably considerably lower than his buying price of (Burma) rice,

Mathematical Appendix: A Model of Differentiation among Initially Indebted Peasants

[The mathematical model bears close family resemblance to the algebraic formulations in my 'A Study in Agricultural Backwardness under Semi-feudalism,' *Economic Journal*, March 1973 and in 'Towards a Theory of Pre-capitalist Exchange,' *Economic Theory and Planning: Essays in Honour of A. K. Dasgupta* (edited by Ashok Mitra), Oxford University Press, 1974.]

I

We assume paddy (like Ricardian corn) to be the only agricultural produce. Production-cycle of paddy is supposed to be constant, defining the length of the time period in the model. Time is treated in discrete units, the subscript 't' denoting the value taken by the relevant variable during period t. Let, Y_t $=$ *net available balance of paddy* remaining with the peasant *after* repayment of debt and rent and *after* the subtraction of *minimum* paddy consumption and non-food purchases. In other words, Y_t *is the balance available for 'discretionary' expenditure and for saving after the basic commitments and requirements of a peasant are met.*

If, B is the subsistence (i.e., minimum) consumption level of paddy, then, we postulate *Paddy-consumption equation of the peasant* (*Equation 1*)

$$C_t = B + b.Y_t,\ 1 > b > 0 \quad \text{for} \quad Y_t \geqslant 0$$
$$= B \quad \text{otherwise}$$

Similarly, we postulate,

Non-food purchase equation of the peasant (*Equation 2*)

$$N_t = N + n.p.Y_t,\ 1 > n > 0 \quad \text{for} \quad Y_t \geqslant 0$$
$$= N \quad \text{otherwise}$$

where, N = minimum non-food cash expenditure

and p = price of paddy, assumed constant over time.

From (1) and (2), the *available balance equation of paddy* (*Equation 3*) emerges as,

$$Y_t = X - \frac{(1+i)Dt-1}{p} - \frac{R}{p} - B - \frac{N}{p}$$

where, i = rate of interest charged on debt

X = amount of paddy harvested. This is assumed to be a constant magnitude, i.e. $X_t = X_{t-1} = \ldots. = X$

R = rent obligation of the peasant in money terms. This too is assumed to be constant over time, i.e., $R_t = R_{t-1} = \ldots = R$

D_{t-1} = money debt of the peasant at $(t-1)$

Finally, in money terms we have, *the debt equation of the peasant* (*Equation 4*) as,

$$D_t = p(C_t - B) + (N_t - N) - pY_t$$

Between them these equations are sufficient to determine the dynamics of debt over time, when the initial level of debt D_o is given.

Let us define a new variable A_t such that,

$$A_t = pX - pC_t - N_t - R \qquad \ldots(5)$$

The meaning of A_t is simple: it is the amount of cash available for repayment of debt and interest. Consequently, the peasant will get deeper into debt if and only if A_t is less than the interest due on his outstanding debt. Mathematically, this is true because,

$$D_t = -A_t + (1+i)D_{t-1}$$

i.e., $D_t - D_{t-1} = iD_{t-1} - A_t$ ...(6)

Now, it is clear that A_t takes its maximum value,

$$A_t = A_{max} = A, \text{ given as,}$$
$$A = pX - pB - N - R \qquad \ldots(7)$$

where, A is defined as the maximum 'surplus' (in money) available for 'discretionary' expenditure, interest and debt repayment.

Note that Y_t and A satisfy the following relationship,

$$Y_t = \frac{(A - (1+i)D_{t-1})}{p} \qquad \ldots(8)$$

Let us now consider how the dynamics of debt over time differentiates among the original set of small, indebted, paddy-growers *according to their initial level of indebtedness* (D_o).

Case I: $iD_o > A$ (The ruined peasants)

In this case the peasant is unable to pay his interest charges even though he reduces consumption and non-food purchases to the minimal levels of B and N. From (8), Y_t is always negative and the behaviour of debt over time is given (from 6) as,

$$D_t = -A + (1+i)\ D_{t-1} \qquad \ldots(9)$$

which can be solved to yield,

$$\left(D_t - \frac{A}{i}\right) = (1+i)^t \left(D_o - \frac{A}{i}\right) \qquad \ldots(10)$$

Since, $D_o > \frac{A}{i}$, as the initial condition, the level of indebtedness increases indefinitely to ruin the peasant.

Case II: $(1+i)D_o > A > iD_o$ (Peasants who may escape indebtedness at some future point)

In this case, the peasant is still living at the minimum subsistence level, but he is repaying interest charges and a part of his debt. Eventually, debt will fall to the point where the peasant can raise his consumption level. To prove this statement, we note that initially the peasant is at the subsistence level and

$A_t = A$. Consequently, the behaviour of debt is guided by the same equation (10), with the difference that $\left(D_o - \frac{A}{i}\right)$ is now negative by virtue of the initial condition. Hence indebtedness decreases over time, until at t^*, Y_t turns positive (from (8)) to permit the peasant to raise his consumption from (t^*+1) gradually above the subsistence level. This implies from (8), that,

$$A > (1+i)\ D_{t-1} \text{ for } t > t^* \qquad \ldots(11)$$

In view of equation (10) it is easy to show that,

$$h+1 > t^* \geqslant h \text{ where, } h = -\left[\frac{\log\ (1-iD_o/A)}{\log\ (1+i)}\right] \qquad \ldots(12)$$

Since for $t>t^*$, (11) holds and Y_t is positive from (8), (1), (2) and (4) can be combined to give,

$$-D_t = p[1-(n+b)]\ Y_t,\ t>t^* \qquad \ldots(13)$$

Possibilities of further differentiation among the peasants (who all started with the same initial indebtedness condition characterised by case II) now emerge *according to their thriftiness conditions.*

Case II a: Very thrifty peasants ultimately becoming moneylenders (sufficient condition $i > n+b$ and $1 > n+b$)

From (8) and (11), $Y_t > 0$; hence, for $1 > (n+b)$, (13) must imply $D_t < 0$. Thus, for $t > t^*$, the wealth of the peasant over time is given by $-D_t$ (i.e., his 'negative indebtedness'), where from (8) and (13),

$$-D_t = [1-(n+b)]\ [A+(1+i)\ (-D_{t-1})] \qquad \ldots(14)$$

$$= K+(1+\theta)\ (-D_{t-1}) \qquad \ldots(15)$$

where, $K = [1-(n+b)]\ A$ and $(1+\theta) = [1-(n+b)]\ (1+i)$.

It is easy to show that $\theta > 0$ if and only if, $n+b < \frac{i}{(1+i)}$ implying the simpler sufficient condition $(n+b) < i$, when the growth of wealth becomes *explosive.*

Case II b: The thrifty peasants becoming free of debt (sufficient condition $i < n+b < 1$)

Because of his relatively (to Case II a) high expenditure propensities, there is an *upper limit* to the wealth of the peasant given by

$$-\overline{D} = -\frac{K}{\theta} = \frac{A}{(1+i) - \frac{1}{1-(n+b)}} \qquad \ldots(16)$$

Case II c: The unthrifty peasants most probably getting ruined ultimately $1 > n+b$.

With his high expenditure propensities, the peasant is unable to accumulate wealth. He *oscillates* around the point of zero indebtedness, just managing to survive at the subsistence level. Any sufficiently big shock e.g., a bad harvest, will push him to the point where $D > \frac{A}{i}$ and then he will become steadily more indebted.

II

It is easy to incorporate the phenomenon of distress buying and selling into the model.

Distress buying: Distress buying occurs when the peasant purchases paddy for consumption. For simplicity, let us define r_t as,

$$r_t = \frac{D_t}{pC_t} \qquad \ldots(17)$$

In case I and in case II (for $t < t^*$), $C_t = B$ and thus substituting for D_t in equation (10), we get

$$\left(pBr_t - \frac{A}{i}\right) = (1+i)^t \left(pBr_o - \frac{A}{i}\right)$$

i.e.,

$$\left[r_t - \frac{A}{ipB}\right] = (1+i)^t \left[r_o - \frac{A}{ipB}\right] \qquad \ldots(18)$$

If $r_o > \frac{A}{ipB}$ then, $r \rightarrow \infty$ and the peasant becomes ever more indebted, while for $r_o < \frac{A}{ipB}$, the peasant becomes less indebted and within a *finite* time r_t reaches zero, when the peasant does not have to buy under distress any more. Also note, for $C_t = B$, $r_o > \frac{A}{ipB}$ implies $iD_o > A$ as in case I.

Marketed output: In case I and Case II (for $t<t^*$) the proportion of paddy output marketed is given by,

$$m_t = \frac{(1+i)\ D_{t-1}+N_t+R}{pX} \qquad \ldots(19)$$

For case I and case II (for $t<t^*$), $N_t = N$ and

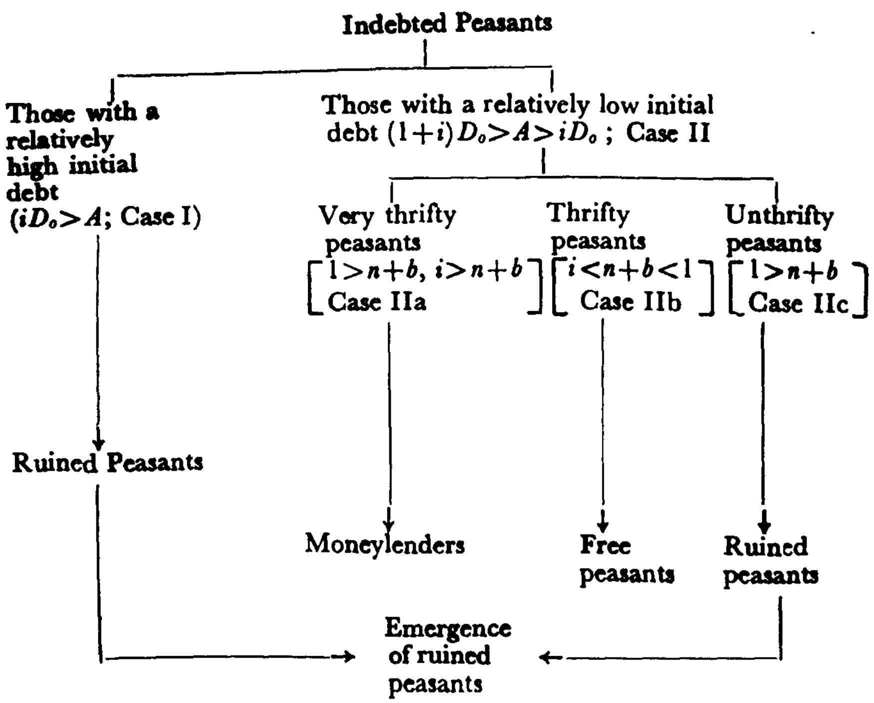
$$m_t = \frac{(1+i)\ D_{t-1}+N+R}{pX} \qquad \ldots(20)$$

If $iD_o > A$ (Case I), then D_t increases and m_t rises to 1 in a finite length of time. The peasant is then marketing his whole output (and no difference can be maintained between cultivation of 'cash-crop' and 'subsistence-crop').

If $iD_o < A < (1+i)\ D_o$, then D_t falls and m_t falls until in a finite time it reaches $\overline{m}$ given by,

$$\overline{m} = \frac{N+R}{pX}$$

After that the behaviour of m_t depends upon n, b and i, as previously discussed under case IIa, IIb, and IIc in Section I of this Appendix. The process of differentiation among the indebted peasants, as examined by the model, can finally be summed up in the following chart:



The Social Setting of the Champaran Satyagraha: The Challenge to an Alien Elite*

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In 1917-18 Champaran, a remote, unprosperous district in north India, was the scene for the 'Champaran Satyagraha,' an agitation which climaxed a long campaign by the local peasantry against their British planter-landlords. The events of 1917 and 1918 were notable for the participation of M. K. Gandhi. With discussion concentrated on the part played by Gandhi, there has been little attempt to increase our understanding of the Satyagraha through the study of its social setting. This article combines an analysis of the distribution of power in Champaran society with an examination of the events leading up to 1917-18 to portray the nature of the anti-planter coalition; to distinguish the political from the economic background to the upsurge; and to assess the contribution made to the final outcome by Gandhi.

I

The district of Champaran covers 3,531 square miles in northwest Bihar.[1] By the beginning of this century the district had nearly two million inhabitants. These people were members of an overwhelmingly agrarian society: 90 per cent of them were directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, and only two per cent of them lived in Motihari and Bettiah, the district's two towns.[2] Champaran society was fragmented both horizontally into different strata in terms of wealth and power and vertically along the cleavages between kinship groups and religious communities. It was a society made up of a variety of competing social groups; a society whose relative stability can be explained not by the lack of tensions, but by the way tensions

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[1]Detailed information on Champaran in the early decades of this century is available in L. S. S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Champaran*, Calcutta, 1907, and J. A. Sweeney, *Final Report on Survey and Settlement (Revision) Operations in the District of Champaran, 1913-1919*, Patna, 1922.

[2]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3, 25, 40.

cancelled one another out.

With land almost the only source of wealth, the income and power of most individuals depended on their relationship to the land. At the top of the social scale were those who owned or leased landlord rights in the soil; at the bottom were the landless labourers and menials. The landlords made up less than one per cent of the population[3] and were mainly drawn from the Bhuniar Babhan,[4] Brahmin and Rajput jatis.[5] There were also some European landlords, namely the indigo planters who had leased landlord rights.[6] The labourers and menials made up around 25 per cent of the population[7] and were generally members of Harijan and other low-status jatis.[8] Between the extremes of the landed and the landless there was a wide range of variation in the distribution of prosperity and power. The divisions between different strata were not clear-cut, but for the purposes of this analysis some broad distinctions can be made.[9] Near the bottom were small holding tenants-at-will and occupancy tenants, drawn mainly from the Nunia and Dosadh jatis. Around the middle were members of the Muslim Sheikh community and of the Kurmi, Koeri, and Yadav jatis. These groups held medium-sized occupancy tenures. Near the top were those from high-status jatis with substantial tenancy holdings. One member of this category was Raj Kumar Shukul, 'a well-to-do middle class peasant and money-lender who also managed the farm of a landholder belonging to Allahabad.'[10] Another was Khendar Prasad Rai who held 100 acres of land and a 'moneylending business to the extent of a lakh.'[11] Men such as these often held considerable power at the village level. In Champaran society there were also some groups which were only indirectly related to the land. These groups performed services of various kinds in return for a share of the agrarian produce. Scavengers and servants had little power and wealth. Herdsmen, fishermen, and artisans were more significant and traders, landlord's agents, laywers, and moneylenders were often of considerable importance. The moneylenders in particular often played a pivotal role in village society and there was an extensive overlap between them and the locally prominent tenants.

[3]This percentage was calculated from figures given in Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[4]The Bhuniar Babhans, also known as 'military Brahmins' and 'Bhumiars' were an important group throughout a wide area of Bihar.

[5]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

[6]J. Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*, London, 1961, p. 273.

[7]This percentage was calculated from figures given in Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[8]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 129; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[9]The information presented in the following sentences on the social position of different jatis is from O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

[10]B. B. Misra, ed., *Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi's Movement in Champaran 1917-18*, Patna, 1963. 'Introduction,' p. 20.

[11]*Ibid.*, 'Biographical Notes,' p. 567.

The structure of this society was relatively unchanging. For generations the landlords had dominated while those who held no land and sold their labour or menial service had been almost powerless. But there *had* been a transformation in the topmost social layer as a result of the development of the district's indigo industry. This change had been the expansion of the power of the European planter-landlords.

II

The indigo industry first became notable in Champaran early in the nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1850s that it began to become well established.[12] After the Mutiny of 1857 Europeans were encouraged to set up indigo plantations by a government which saw 'the expediency of creating pockets of. . . population. . . to support the Empire in times of emergency.'[13] At this time many of the traditional chiefs were obliged because of their improvidence to lease their proprietary rights, thus making it possible for Europeans to assume positions of great power. The profit margin of the lessees was very small and they often compensated themselves by illegal means. Native lessees

> . . . levied extra cesses and made other. . . exactions. Their European counterpart was no better. Being a member of a well organised community, he even adopted more effective means to serve his ends. He took to cultivation of indigo on the leased properties exercising undue and immoral compulsion on his raiyats. . . .[14]

In particular, the European planters introduced the highly unpopular Tinkathia system, under which each ryot was obliged to cultivate indigo on a section of his holding for a meagre remuneration and with no choice as to which land should be so employed.[15]

By the 1870s the planters, with their families and European subordinates, made up a community of around 200.[16] They were able to consolidate their control by taking advantage of the financial predicament of the Bettiah Raj,

[12]The rise of the industry and the planters is most fully chronicled in G. Mishra, 'Indigo Plantation and the Agrarian Relations in Champaran during the Nineteenth Century,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. III, No. 4, December 1966, pp. 332-57. See also Misra, *Select Documents*, 'Introduction,' pp. 1-25 and the opening chapters of Rajendra Prasad, *Satyagraha in Champaran*, Ahmedabad, 1949.

[13]Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 8.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[15]*Ibid.*

[16]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

a vast estate which covered more than half the district. The extravagance of the owner and the corruption of his employees had plunged the estate into debt, and in 1876 a new manager was appointed to rectify the situation. He arranged a loan to the value of nearly Rs 9,500,000 on the guarantee

> . . . of a substantial European security. To satisfy this condition and cover the interest on the loan, permanent leases of villages were granted to indigo planters, and the industry was thus placed on a secure basis. Permanent rights . . . being assured, the cultivation of indigo was widely extended, until by the end of the 19th Century no less than 21 factories, with 48 outworks, had been established . . . .[17]

One component of the planters' influence was the pressure which they could apply to the administrative superstructure which overlaid the society of Champaran. The key figure in this superstructure was the Collector/Magistrate, who was

> the pivot on which the whole administration turns; all those below him are under his orders and engaged in assisting him; all those above him depend upon him for information and are engaged in giving him orders and instructions.[18]

At his disposal in administering the district were several deputy and sub-deputy Collectors, a Superintendent and three Inspectors of Police, and a large number of Indian subordinates.[19] Because they were so few and were thus obliged to look outside their coterie for companions in recreational activity, British officials tended to become closely involved with the planter community, the only section of the population with a similar cultural and ethnic background. Yet the degree of identity of interest between the two groups should not be exaggerated: civil servants were aware of the mixed backgrounds of many of the planters and realized that the urge of a planter to maximize profits could easily conflict with official efforts to ensure that the indigenous population was treated reasonably fairly. This tension surfaced quite early in the history of the industry in the district: in 1866, when John Beames arrived to take up the post of Collector/Magistrate, he found that the planters were

> . . . rough uneducated men, hard drinkers, loose livers and destitute of sympathy for the natives . . . [whose] policy [it] was to get rid of as much

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 110. See also Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 352.
[18]Beames, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
[19]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 132, 139.

> as possible of the authority of the Magistrate, because it interfered with the despotic control which they considered it essential to exercise over the ryots.[20]

The planters only found it necessary to seek near dictatorial powers because of the peasants' great disinclination to employ part of their land for the cultivation of indigo. The peasants resented the extra trouble and hard labour required for the successful production of the plant, and thought that the rates the planters paid were not an adequate recompense. In addition, the steady rise in the profitability of foodgrain cultivation had made the growing of indigo on land that could be used otherwise unpopular. There was also objection to the oppression of the factory agents, who invariably appropriated a sizeable percentage of the peasants' earnings.[21] Moreover, the planters' insistence on selecting the fields for indigo and closely supervising its cultivation embittered the ryots, who thought this intrusion on their rights had reduced them '. . . for all practical purposes . . . to the state of serfdom . . . .'[22] The peasantry of the district did not hesitate to protest against the actions of the planters. Several times in the latter half of the nineteenth century, mainly through petitions and mass rallies, they set in train major disturbances of the peace.[23] In doing so, they were well served by the political skills of native lawyers; in the campaign of 1867-68, for instance, a prominent role was played by '. . . some pleaders and law agents . . . who . . . had been going about amongst the villages preaching to the ryots about their rights.'[24]

Protest obliged the planters, on one or two occasions, to increase the prices they paid for indigo;[25] it failed, however, to achieve substantial reforms. The main obstacle to the redress of the ryots' grievances was the equivocal stand taken by the administration, which was aware that various benefits resulted from the presence in Champaran of the indigo industry. The indigo concerns were the security for the massive Bettiah Raj loan; they created employment for the labouring classes; and the planters often used their authority to adjudicate in petty disputes between ryots which would otherwise have had to be resolved through the lengthy and costly processes of the legal system.[26] British officials were generally inclined to judge the planters

[20]Beames, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-73.
[21]The grievances of the peasants are fully detailed in G. Mishra, 'Socio-Economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. V, No. 3, September 1968, pp. 245-75. See also M. K. Gandhi to Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, Ranchi, 13 May 1917, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, pp. 126-27.
[22]Misra, *Select Documents*, 'Introduction,' p. 7.
[23]Mishra, 'Indigo Plantation and the Agrarian Relations. . .' pp. 349-52.
[24]Beames, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
[25]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 110.
[26]*Ibid.*, p. 117; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

leniently and to suggest that content or discontent depended

> much on the management. If that is left too much to the [factory agent], or is in the hands of a young and inexperienced assistant, there are pretty sure to be murmers of zulum [oppression] and petty exactions... otherwise, with a considerate and just manager, who looks himself into all affairs, and checks the work . . . the ryots are philosophically resigned . . .[27]

But after 1898 the members of the administration were forced to reconsider their attitudes. A synthetic dye was invented in Germany with which the natural product could not compete, and there was a subsequent decline in the area under indigo cultivation. In 1898 indigo was grown on 95,970 acres but by 1914 it was only being grown on 8,100 acres.[28] With the interruption of supplies of the synthetic dye during World War I the industry had a temporary revival, but it never reached its pre-war peak; in 1917, the highpoint of wartime production, indigo was being grown on only 26,848 acres.[29] It might have been expected that with the decline in the acreage under indigo the bitterness the ryots felt towards the planters would ebb away. This did not occur because the planters, who had used their rights in land so successfully to enforce the cultivation of indigo, now employed them to ensure that the main burden of the slump in the industry was borne by the peasantry. To do so, they took advantage of a clause which they and the other landlords of the region had pressured the government into including in the *Bengal Tenancy Act* of 1885. The clause provided that when a ryot had held land at a special rent in return for cultivating a particular crop for the convenience of the landlord, nothing was to prevent the ryot from agreeing, on condition of his being released from the obligation to cultivate that crop, to pay an increased rent.[30] The planters employed this provision to force enhancements of around 60 per cent on the rents of their ryots. The transaction was effected by registered documents, and was popularly known as *Sharabeshi*. The planters also used other means to protect their interests. Some of them continued the old *Tinkathia* system but applied it to the cultivation of other crops such as sugar and millets, while others took a single lump sum, or *Tawan* from the ryots in return for releasing them from the obligation to grow indigo. Many planters also began to impose on their ryots a number of *abwabs* or miscellaneous contributions of the kind which native landlords had customarily relied upon to

[27]Collector/Magistrate Norman, quoted in *British Parliamentary Papers, 1890-91*, Vol. 59, No. 157, p. 12.

[28]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[29]Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 17.

[30]Misra, *Select Documents*, 'Introduction,' p. 13.

boost their incomes.[31] These efforts by the planters to protect their interests resulted in acute tension between them and the ryots. The situation was further complicated because those ryots who were not released from indigo cultivation became resentful when, from the late 1890s, the opening of canals and the expansion of the road and railway system improved market facilities for food crops and made the opportunity cost for cultivating indigo even greater than before.[32] The first manifestation of heightened tension was the beating to death in 1907 of Bloomfield, the manager of the Telhara factory, after a dispute over his refusal to sanction a transfer of holdings.[33] This event was followed by a series of protests: the Shikarpur disturbances of 1907-8, the Bettiah riots of 1908-9, the demonstration before the King-Emperor in 1911, the petitioning against abwab of 1914, and the Sharabeshi disturbances of 1915-16. The leadership of these campaigns was supplied by

> . . . former factory employees who had built up assets and purchased landed property; . . . money lenders, businessmen and landholders who found their interest prejudiced by the operation of European capital interfering with a free and undisturbed transfer of tenants property into their hands, and some teachers and local lawyers who maintained links with the press and political organizations outside the district.[34]

The disturbances of 1907-8 occurred at the Sathi indigo factory in the Shikarpur thana of the Bettiah subdivision and mainly involved members of the Muslim Sheikh community. The kernel of the disturbances,

> as of all the subsequent agitation, was the Tinkathia system. The petitions filed by the ryots contained one perfectly true statement, that is, that there was no sattas or agreements for indigo growing, and that harja or compensation was being taken for not growing it.[35]

Protest continued for more than a year and only subsided when the administration arranged that dissatisfied ryots were to be released from Tinkathia if they agreed to pay higher fee for the use of the irrigation works the factory had supplied.[36] The riots of 1908-9, which spread throughout the whole Bettiah subdivision, were of a more serious nature; order had eventually

[31]*Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 21, 22.

[32]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-18; Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 14.

[33]W. H. Lewis, Subdivisional Officer, Bettiah, to W. B. Heycock, District Magistrate, 19 April 1917, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, pp. 102, 103; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[34]Misra, *Select Documents*, 'Introduction,' p. 18.

[35]Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[36]*Ibid.*

to be restored by military police, 57 criminal cases were instituted and 226 people were convicted of acts of violence. Concessions were again made to popular feeling: the price per acre paid for indigo cultivation was increased from Rs 12 to Rs 13 and the area to be used for indigo cultivation was reduced from 3/20th to 1/10th of the ryot's holding.[37] The next major disturbance was the demonstration at Narkatiaganj railway station in December 1911 for the King-Emperor, George the Fifth, who was then on his way back from a hunting expedition in Nepal. 15,000 peasants assembled and shouted, in the local Bhojpuri dialect of Hindi, slogans which outlined their grievances. Their efforts miscarried: when George enquired about the meaning of the slogans he was told that they were expressions of joy and welcome. This protest was followed by a press and petition campaign which continued until October 1912.[38] Tension further increased when Survey and Settlement operations, which would necessarily involve the re-evaluation of all existing rights and obligations, began in October 1913.[39] In 1914 a series of petitions was sent protesting against the imposition of abwabs which stimulated official investigation and efforts at reform.[40] Then, in 1915-16, large-scale unrest developed in the Motihari subdivision when the peasants contested the legality of the sharabeshi or indigo enhancements, claiming that force had been used to procure the agreements.

> ... the raiyats, throughout this period, manifested remarkable cohesion and persistence.... [They], especially the Bhuniar Babhans of the Pipra and Turkalia areas, were inclined to be turbulent... and the settlement officers had a continuously unpleasant experience....[41]

The peasants did not limit their agitation to demonstrations, representations to the administration, and press campaigns; they also ensured that their case was publicized in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, the provincial Congress at Chapra in 1915, and at the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in 1916.[42]

The protests of the peasantry and the conditions which inspired them were a source of great embarassment to the administration. Many officials had been ready to argue, during the late nineteenth century, that the benefits the indigo industry brought to Champaran outweighed the disadvantages. By the second

[37] Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 15; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[38] Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 42; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[39] The previous Survey and Settlement operations were begun in 1892 and completed in 1898-99. O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 126; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[40] Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[42] Misra, *Select Documents*, pp. 18, 19, 20.

decade of this century this position had become untenable. With the decline in the acreage under indigo, the industry's significance as an employer of labour decreased greatly, while the advent of Sharabeshi and Tawan and the imposition of abwabs seemed to indicate that the European landlord was no better than his native counterpart in the treatment of his tenants. The series of disturbances over indigo, moreover, made it clear that the planters were as much a source of disorder as a bulwark of order. Many officials gravitated towards the view expressed in December 1908 by the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, E. N. Baker.

> India has none too many industries, and no-one wishes to destroy or discourage any that she has; indigo as little as any—but the indigo industry must stand on a commercial footing and be dependent in no degree whatsoever on compulsion or even pressure. I am ready to help the planters in every legitimate way. But if indigo cannot subsist without coercion, indigo must perish.[43]

Yet though it was widely accepted that there was much to be called into question about the indigo industry, it was very difficult for the administration to institute radical reforms. The planters were a powerful vested group and any sudden change in their situation could have disastrous effects on the district's economy and stability. They formed an influential and articulate lobby in defence of their interests,[44] while the members of the local and regional elites who had taken up the cause of the ryots could be easily accused (sometimes with considerable justice) of being malcontents with their own axes to grind.[45] It was considered, moreover, that it would be cheaper and less unsettling to postpone change until the completion of the current Survey and Settlement operations in 1919,[46] while with the coming of World War I

[43] Cited in *ibid.*, p. 17. See also the following documents from the above collection: W. H. Lewis, Subdivisional Officer, Bettiah, to W. B. Heycock, District Magistrate, 29 April 1917, p. 101; Government Resolution No. 1890-C, dated Ranchi 10 June by Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, p. 231; J. A. Sweeney, Settlement Officer, North Bihar, to the District Officer, Champaran, 2 July 1917, pp. 262-63.

[44] They were represented in the Bihar Planters' Association which had been set up in 1877-78 to protect the indigo industry and to influence planters to observe reasonable standards of behaviour. See *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 59, No. 157, p. 8.

[45] J. T. Whitty, Manager, Bettiah Raj, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 87; W. S. Irwin to the *Pioneer*, May 1917, quoted in D. G. Tendulkar, *Gandhi in Champaran*, Calcutta, 1957, p. 71.

[46] H. McPherson, Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, 20 April 1917, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 77; E.A. Gait, Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa, to W. Vincent, Home Member, Government of India, 20 May 1917, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 139.

it was argued that no energy and resources to implement reform could be spared from the war effort.[47]

In the light of this the administration delayed reform until the culmination of the anti-planter movement in 1917-18. It will be possible now to discuss the contribution made to our understanding of this culmination by our examination of its social setting and the events that preceded it.

III

The Champaran Satyagraha began in April 1917 when M. K. Gandhi, in response to invitations from local leaders, arrived in the district to study the disputes that had arisen over the cultivation of indigo.[48] The local administrators were at a loss to know how to deal with the austere newcomer: they decided to prosecute him on the ground that his presence in the district was a threat to public order,[49] but were ordered by the higher authorities to suspend proceedings.[50] The higher administration wished to give Gandhi no chance to attract publicity by martyring himself: the future Mahatma took advantage of the latitude thus given to embark on a full-scale enquiry. In doing so he relied greatly on three local leaders—Raj Kumar Shukul, Khendar Prasad Rai, and Sant Raut. These men were rich peasants who had been formerly employed as factory agents; Shukul and Rai had also engaged in money-lending.[51] Gandhi also drew support from such members of the regional intelligentsia as Rajendra Prasad and Professor J. B. Kriplani.[52] His activities in the district brought several decades of fermenting tensions to a head. Mass demonstrations and two cases of arson were features of a 'state of unparalleled excitement'[53] which forced the government to institute an official Committee of Enquiry. The Committee, on which Gandhi was the ryots' advocate, met between July and October of 1917 and suggested substantial reforms which, with one exception,[54] were embodied in the Champaran Agrarian Act of May 1918. The Satyagraha had been relatively successful in that it had led to the partial redress of the peasants' grievances, yet it had not been entirely successful. A section of the population was not satisfied with the compromise settlement Gandhi had negotiated:

> ... the more turbulent elements among the raiyats frankly repudiated him and his agreement on their behalf, and raised all possible frivolous objections ... the action of the ... Babhan raiyats in particular merely confirms the unpleasant impression which [had been] gathered from a somewhat long experience of them.[55]

Nor was the Satyagraha successful in its implementation of the Gandhian programme of 'Constructive Work' which sought to uplift local society through improving sanitation, fostering handicrafts, and disseminating basic education in village schools. After a promising start the programme petered out due to a lack of support.[56]

The more conventional accounts of the Satyagraha argue that Gandhi's intervention in the district was a response to the needs of a gentle and long suffering peasantry which was being exploited by the European indigo planters.[57] Gandhi was assisted, this perspective contends, by public-spirited members of the local elites and also, and more importantly, by the 'charismatic authority' with which his 'saintliness' endowed him. His activities in Champaran, it was further claimed, were a great success in that they resulted in a workable compromise solution of the peasants' problems, the establishment of a dedicated group of Gandhi's followers in Bihar, and the confirmation that Satyagraha could be applied to Indian conditions. More recent assessments have modified this account by pointing out that the ryots were vigorous and assertive rather than gentle and long suffering, and that the way in which Gandhi gathered a following should be explained mainly in terms of his utilization of members of the local elites as 'political subcontractors' to mediate between him and the masses.[58]

All the existing accounts, despite differences in interpretation, focus on the role and activities of Gandhi during the Satyagraha. Because of this

47L. F. Morshead to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar and Orissa, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 65; H. Cox, Secretary, Planters' Association, to L. F. Morshead, 28 April, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 96; 'Ruat Caelum,' (*psued.*), to the *Statesman*, 2 December, 1917, quoted in Prasad, *op. cit.*

48Efforts to bring Gandhi to Champaran had begun in March 1916. See 'Bihar Intelligence Report,' 4 March 1916, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents.*

49L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar and Orissa, 13 April 1917, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 65; W.B. Heycock, District Magistrate, to M. K. Gandhi, 16 April 1917, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 62, n. 4.

50H. McPherson, Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

51*Ibid.*, 'Biographical Notes,' pp. 567, 576 and 580.

52*Ibid.*, 'Biographical Notes,' pp. 567, 574; See also W. H. Lewis, Subdivisional Officer, Bettiah, to the Commissioner, Tirhut Division, n. d., quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 337-43.

53Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

54'It must be said, however, that the legislative body rejected the clause in the Bill which was most of all designed to protect the raiyats interest, that is, the clause conferring on the collector summary power to fine landlords for the exaction of *abwab.*' *Ibid.*, p. 24.

55*Ibid.*, p. 25.

56M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, London, 1966, pp. 350-53; Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-97.

57Prasad, *op. cit.*; Tendulkar, *op. cit.*

58J. M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power, Indian Politics 1915-1922*, London, 1972, Chapter 3; R. Kumar, 'The Political Process in India,' *South Asia*, No. 1., 1971, pp. 94-95.

several interesting facets of the events of 1917-18 have received insufficient attention. The balance can be restored if we employ the information and insights derived from our study of the structure of Champaran society, the distribution of power within it, and the events which led up to the campaign of which Gandhi was the figurehead.

One contribution that such an approach has to make is in terms of our understanding of the nature of the coalition that engaged in the so-called 'great mass upsurge'[59] of 1917-18. Writers have been

> . . . content to speak of an all encompassing 'peasantry' without further qualification. But . . . there are differences in behaviour and outlook between tenants and proprietors, between poor and rich peasants, between cultivators who are also craftsmen and those who only plow and harvest, between men who are responsible for all agricultural operations on a holding they rent or own and wage labourers who do their work under supervision of others in return for money . . .[60]

There were, in addition, cleavages between distinct kinship and community groups. The consequence of a more 'finely grained' appreciation of the variety of peasantry in the district is that one immediately becomes aware that there was a significant section of the population who, it seems almost certain, showed a limited inclination to participate in the anti-planter movement. Many members of the labouring classes, who made up about one-fifth of the population, and had been subject to advantages as well as disadvantages through the presence of the indigo industry in the district, were within this grouping.[61] Also to be considered was the five to ten per cent of the district's population that lived by fishing, herding, hunting, or handicraft manufacture, and were largely outside the sphere of influence of the planters.[62] Even among the cultivators who were under pressure from the planters there were many who combined cultivation with another activity,[63] and were likely to be only partly committed to a movement seeking to redress grievances which affected only a portion of their lives. The 'masses' or 'peasantry' were not, then, members of quite such an all-encompassing group as is implied in the general terms that have been used to describe them. Yet the collection of people involved

[59]The phrase is G. Mishra's. See his 'Socio-Economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement,' p. 245.

[60]E. R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, London, 1971, p. xv.

[61]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 129; Sweeney, *op. cit.*, p. 3; C. M. Marsham, Superintendent of Police, Champaran, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, 12 September 1917, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 331.

[62]O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-56.

[63]*Ibid.*, p. 46.

was a large one because the planters had used their landlord rights to 'squeeze' a majority of those within their sphere of influence. Not content merely to exploit cultivators, they had sought to profit by placing constraints on the exercise of their occupations by leatherworkers, traders, and carters.[64] In consequence, a broad coalition was ready to campaign against planter oppression. An impression of the numbers involved can be gathered from Rajendra Prasad's description of the arrival of Gandhi's train at Bettiah Railway station on the 22 April 1917.

> There was such a huge crowd . . . that to avoid any accident the train had to be stopped some way off from the platform. The Mahatma was travelling in a 3rd class compartment. The people of the town and villages welcomed him. . . . More than 10,000 people were present. . . .[65]

These people were members of a loose coalition which was united only in opposition to the planters. They had little sense of identity with their society as a whole, a fact which helps make comprehensible the abject failure of Gandhi's 'Constructive Programme.' It also helps explain the variation in response between different groups within the society to the enactment of the *Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918*. The groups drawn into agitation had different conceptions of the kind of settlement that would be acceptable. Most of them were mollified by the reforms, but the Bhuniar Babhans were unsatisfied.

The particular reason why the Bhuniar Babhans were unsatisfied will become clear as we discuss the political as distinct from the economic dimension of the Satyagraha. Most accounts of the background to the 1917-18 campaign argue that the peasants of the district participated in the agitation to force the redress of their severe economic grievances. This perspective assumes that political agitation and the eventual redress of grievances necessarily follow from the existence of economic discontent. Yet in every society, exploited groups exist whose frustration never finds coherent political expression; the salient question, perhaps, is not whether oppression exists, but how well the dominant groups within a society are able to control the overt expression of discontent.[66] The European planters asked why they, alone among the landlords of Bihar,[67] became the targets for a long-term, large-scale, and

[64]Mishra, 'Socio-Economic Background to Gandhi's Movement,' pp. 269-74.

[65]Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

[66]For an interesting discussion of this issue see the 'Introduction' to K. Kumar (ed.), *Revolution. The Theory and Practice of a European Idea*, London, 1972.

[67]J. T. Whitty, Manager, Bettiah Raj, to L. F. Morshead, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, 27 April 1917, quoted in Misra, *Select Documents*, p. 87; W. B. Heycock, District Magistrate, Champaran, to Commissioner, Tirhut Division, 19 June 1917, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 226; Representation, dated 30 September 1917, from the Champaran Members of the Bihar

eventually successful popular agitation. A probable answer to this question is that the planters were less effective than the indigenous elites in controlling the discontented.

The planters, alien to the peoples of the district, could not bulwark their position through the manipulation of tradition and kinship ties. Their intrusion into the affairs of Champaran had antagonized the local elites, whose members saw the exercise of domination as their birthright. The planters sought to appease these leading elements by giving them positions as factory agents in which they could enrich themselves at the expense of those in the lower strata of society. This policy had been only partially successful; the chief local protestors, Raj Kumar Shukul, Sant Raut, and Khendar Prasad Rai, were prosperous, high-caste men who had worked for planters but had later turned against them. The local elites had economic grievances but were also strongly motivated by the urge to exercise greater power. Thus the Bhuniar Babhans continued agitating: their political as distinct from their economic ambitions were unfulfilled by the *Champaran Agrarian Act*. Their ineffective handling of the local elites was but one aspect of the planters' mismanagement of the groups that made up Champaran society. The planters, instead of using the cleavages between different social groups to play one off against another, pursued policies which served to unite againts them a coalition of diverse groups.

The planters were also, in the long term, disadvantaged by the curious position they occupied vis-a-vis the administration. The rough equivalence between the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of planters and officials meant that strong ties could be established between the two groups. This placed certain restrictions on the planters. Conscious that its efficiency would suffer if officials became the targets of an agitation that had originally been directed against their non-official fellow nationals, the bureaucracy sought to influence the planters to deal fairly with the peoples of Champaran. The usefulness of the planting community as a bulwark of British rule would disappear if it stirred up anti-British feeling. The support the planters could expect was conditional, and would diminish in proportion to the growth of an anti-planter agitation based on legitimate grievances. The other landlords of Bihar were expected to be 'no better than they should be,' but the British landlords were required to observe high standards so as not to jeopardize the stability of the Raj.

The planters, as an alien elite, had several problems to overcome; they were also subject to other difficulties. They had to contend, like other lessees of

Planters' Association to the Chief Secretary to Government of Bihar and Orissa, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 369.

proprietary rights, with the rapacity of superior landlords;[68] they had to face the challenge made by the invention of a cheap synthetic substitute for indigo. By the second decade of this century, the prospects of the industry were bleak—British officials were more interested in easing its death throes, by postponing reform until the completion of the Survey and Settlement operations in 1919, than in making possible its resurrection. The planters relied on an administration that proved to be a fair weather friend; they also created, in the decades leading up to 1917-18, large-scale discontent and antagonized the local elites who were to lead the opposition to them. Their position was inherently unstable; through their ineffectiveness as a dominant social group they became victims of a movement motivated by political ambition as well as economic discontent.

An appreciation of the political dimension to the Satyagraha illuminates the limited nature of the role played by Gandhi. A series of agitations had eroded the authority of the planters; in 1917 and 1918 a campaign of which Gandhi was the figurehead delivered the *coup de grace* to a group whose position had deteriorated beyond recovery. Through his persistent, eloquent advocacy of the peasants' cause, Gandhi assumed considerable importance in the final stage of the events. Yet the battle had already been won by the mobilization by the local elites of large-scale opposition to the planters and the grudging acceptance by the bureaucracy of the need for reform.[69] It is an irony of history and a result of hagiography that the anti-planter movement in Champaran, in which Gandhi played a relatively restricted part, has come to be regarded as one in which he assumed a role of the foremost importance.

[68]Mishra, 'Socio-Economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement,' p. 265.

[69]As Sweeney suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 25), there are some interesting parallels between the anti-indigo movement in Champaran and that in Bengal in the mid-nineteenth century. See B. B. Kling, *The Blue Mutiny, The Indigo Disturbances in Bengal, 1859-1862*, London, 1966.

Local Sources for the Study of Rural India: The 'Village Notes' of Bihar

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Our intention here is to give a description of one set of survey and settlement records, the 'village notes,' and to make some preliminary observations about their uses for investigating the social and economic history of rural India. The notes stem from the surveys and settlements of Patna district from 1907 to 1912, and of Saran district from 1915 to 1921.[1] These materials were utilized in 1973-74, during the course of dissertation research in Chapra and Patna, the headquarter towns of the Bihar districts of Saran and Patna.[2]

Village notes were compiled during the attestation period, which generally took place in the third year of the survey and settlement operations.[3] Attestation, according to official guidelines, was to be carried out within the village to which the records belonged, or in a nearby centre not more than three miles from the village.[4] From the text of the village note it can be ascertained whether the note was done on site or at a nearby attestation camp.

Each of Patna's 2,595 and Saran's 4,883 'villages'[5] has a village note. These are preserved in bound volumes according to the serial number of the villages

[1]Saran's 1915-21 settlement was a revision of the first settlement conducted in 1893-1901. 561 village notes were also located for the first settlement.

[2]Other survey and settlement-generated materials in the Collectorate record rooms deal with such topics as record of rights, irrigation, rent enhancements and disputes. For a complete listing of such records, see Bihar and Orissa, *The Bihar and Orissa Survey and Settlement Manual, 1927*, Patna, Government Printing, 1927. We would like to thank the Collectorate record-keeper of Saran district, Maqbool Alam, and the head and assistant record-keeper of Patna district, Sheoprasad Singh and Sharmaji, for their assistance and cooperation.

[3]The usual programme was traverse survey and preparation for settlement in the first year, cadastral survey and record writing during the second year, attestation and draft publication in the third year, and in the fourth year, publication. For details, see *The Bihar and Orissa Survey and Settlement Manual*, p. 91.

[4]*The Bihar and Orissa Survey and Settlement Manual*, p. 91.

[5]As defined by the survey and settlement operations, a 'village' meant a revenue 'mouzah.' On the basis of the village notes, however, it is possible to determine what *mouzahs* are villages in the functional/sociological sense.

in each *thana*, or administrative sub-division,[6] every hundred village notes generally being bound together in one volume. Thana Mirganj, in Saran district, for instance, has 1,064 villages comprising 11 volumes. As this numbering system is maintained by many other kinds of records it allows for easy cross-reference.[7] 98 per cent of the notes are in English and the rest in *Kaithi*, essentially the scribe's shorthand script.

Each village note consists of a five-page form. The first page is a tabulated form in two sections. The first part gives the area in the village under various classifications of land according to present and past surveys, if any. Two additional columns have information under the same classifications but according to area 'irrigated' and 'irrigable but not irrigated.' The major part of the tabulated form consists of a *khatian* (a record of land use rights) abstract which deals with aggregate area and rent according to the different 'classes of cultivators' in the village. Very few of these sections were filled in, because the same data are preserved in the khatian register itself. The other four pages consist of 15 main categories which we include in the appended table.

As the headings of the 15 categories suggest, the village notes deal with some of the major agricultural, social, and economic complexities of rural India. What enhances the value of this information is that it provides the same kinds of data for all the villages in a district. The following examples indicate how specific and disaggregated the data are, containing not only insightful qualitative remarks about rural society, but also quantifiable information. Although collected at the time of attestation, our instances will also show that village notes often discuss topics over time. For purposes of clarity, we have further divided the 15 categories of the village notes into four main headings: population and caste; family and village histories; land rights and rent; and finally, markets, soil and irrigation, and village officials.

POPULATION AND CASTE (See category XV)

Approximately 70 per cent of the village descriptions distinguish their population by number of persons, families, or houses of each caste and community. Sometimes the breakdown is more detailed, giving population and caste figures by numbers of males, females, and children.

Eighty-five different caste names have thus far been identified for the two districts. They vary from *varna* category names such as 'Brahman' down to

[6]Saran has ten thanas; Patna, 12.

[7]Modern censuses, for instance, still use these same thana numbers. See 'Village Directory' and 'Village Statistics' section in *Bihar, Census 1961, District Census Handbook 4: Saran*, Patna, 1966. Thana maps which can often be consulted in the district collectorates also show villages by these numbers. Scale of these maps is usually one inch to a mile.

gotra names such as Ghamela Kurmi. Generally, the majority of names used follow the terminology found in these censuses. Muslims are usually designated by their caste names which allows us to identify what kind of Muslim groups were located in certain villages. For Patna district this is important because the relatively high literacy rate among Muslims is usually attributed to the large number of 'non-peasant Muslims' living in the city and towns of the district. These kinds of data can be used to test this explanation of literacy.

Much of the information on population and castes lends itself to quantification. For example, in a preliminary computer study of the one-way frequency distribution of castes in Bikram thana, in the western part of Patna district, it was found that 20 per cent of the thana was Bhumihar Brahman; this 20 per cent was often distributed either in numbers of five families or less, or in villages where Bhumihars are represented by over 50 families. Very few villages had more than five or less than 50 Bhumihar families.[8] Continued studies using these data should generate new understanding of the settlement pattern and distribution of castes from village to village over large areas.

FAMILY AND VILLAGE HISTORIES (See categories V, VI, IX, XII and XV)

Data on important landholding families are found in approximately 80 per cent of the village descriptions. Often there is a history of the sequence of landholders during the previous 150 years, information on why changes of landowners occurred at different points over time, and genealogies of families descending from an original common ancestor. Sometimes information on the *thikadar*, or rent collector, is also furnished.

It is thus possible to see what actually happened to land control and social structure from the perspective of a village. For the information is not only a listing of names of proprietors and their shares in the villages, but also a record of the traffic in proprietary rights. Yet as the notes often suggest, gaining control in a village involved more than just an acquisition of the formal landholding right. In village Kishunwar, in Saran, for instance, although the old proprietor had lost his holding, he 'tried his level best to throw obstacles in the way of peaceful possession of the present maliks.'[9]

Unlike conventional sources on land control, the village notes shed much light on the so-called 'petty zamindars,' who comprised the great majority of landholders in North Bihar.[10] A genealogy and an extended account in

[8]James R. Hagen, 'A Computer Study of Village Characteristics in Patna District, 1908-1910' (Mimeographed).

[9]*Malik* is the local term for small landholders, as in Saran District Village Notes, 1917-19 (hereinafter cited as Saran VN), Darauli Thana No. 478, Village Kishunwar.

[10]For an attempt at reconstruction of the histories of important rural magnates using official correspondence, estate histories, and Court of Ward records, see Anand Yang, 'The

the Bhagar village note, for instance, record the history of a Rajput family that migrated into the area and by 1788 had acquired control of both the neighbouring village of Gangapur and Bhagar. The note then traces the numerous partitions in this family, showing the gradual dissipation of their property as successive generations of descendants inherited smaller and smaller shares, finally leading to the sale of many of these minute holdings.[11]

Although village histories beyond those concerning the landholding families were less often recorded, we find them exceedingly rich. This kind of general history, usually describing important events in the village's past, further illustrates the qualitative aspects of the notes. For example, some Patna villages were confiscated by the government following the Mutiny because they were owned by 'rebels,'[12] and then were given out after the Mutiny to 'loyal' sepoys as 'English jagirs.'[13] According to the note for village Suarha, in Saran district, the village was formerly called Dular Patti after its first settler, Dular Rai, who came from Awadh, to the west of the district, and cleared the area for settlement. Subsequently, the name was changed to Suarha because of the many wild boars in the area. Another version suggests that the name was a derogatory reference to the 'refractory and mischievous Rajputs' of the village.[14]

In other villages, the notes describe how landholders at some point over time forced groups of tenants out of villages and resettled the vacated land with more amenable groups.[15] In other cases the village may have had a special cropping history as with the betel-growing villages in Patna district. In these latter cases, the descriptions include details on the relationship between the special betel-growing castes, the village landholders and the betel-marketing system outside the village and the district.[16]

RENTS AND LAND RIGHTS (See categories IIIa, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XI, and XIII)

The village note data on rents and land rights are an invaluable source for the study of agrarian relations. The kinds of information included range from

Local Connections: State-Local Relations in Pre-20th Century Saran District,' paper presented in the University of Virginia South Asia Seminar Series, 15 November 1974.

[11]Saran VN, Darauli Thana No. 507, Village Bhagar.

[12]Patna District Village Notes, 1908-10 (hereinafter cited as Patna VN), Bikram Thana No. 62, Village Baghakol.

[13]Patna VN, Bikram Thana No. 52, Village Hathsar.

[14]Saran VN, Mirganj Thana No. 108, Village Suarha.

[15]Patna VN, Bikram Thana No. 29, Village Janpara.

[16]Patna VN, Islampur Thana No. 130, Village Bauri Dih.

rates of cash rent in some villages to 20-page descriptions of rent disputes. There are often data on rent type (cash or produce), whether rents were enhanced during the previous 50 years, and suggested causes of such enhancements. Details are given on the whole range of exactions in addition to land rent, such as *abwabs* (unofficial cesses) and cesses for public funds such as roads and *choukidars* (village watchmen). The distribution of rights over water, fish, and trees is also discussed.

The description of rent types and cesses are consistent enough for quantitative analysis, although the exact proportions of land under each rent type is usually not given. Studies of these data can improve our understanding of the multi-variate relationships, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, among rent, soil and irrigation types, marketing facilities, and various social and political variables.

Like other topics included in the notes, data on rents are accompanied by useful qualitative descriptions which in this case provide the context within which rents and land rights functioned. This includes relations on the land either specifically in terms of landlord-tenant relations in a particular village,[17] or more generally, through their discussion of formal and informal rights that define these relationships. These data discuss superordinate-subordinate rights, rates and enhancements of rent, and a series of customary ties that demonstrate the extra-legal mechanisms of social and economic control exercised by landholders. In the villages of Saran district's largest landholder, for instance, *hukumat* or customary 'commands' bound every tenant to give his time or professional services gratuitously on certain occasions.[18] These kinds of data suggest the importance of both material and symbolic means of control.

Village descriptions almost always focus on the subject of tenant rights, especially whether they were transferable or not, and to what degree they varied from estate to estate.[19] As in the case of transfer of proprietary rights, the information on tenant rights extends beyond the formal sales and transfers to give insights about what actual movement in land rights took place.

MARKETS, SOIL AND IRRIGATION, AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS (See categories II, IIIa, V and XIII)

The extent of coverage on markets, soil and irrigation, and village officials is fairly uniform for 90 per cent of the village in both districts. The rubrics for

[17]As in Saran VN, Sonepore Thana No. 1, Village Sitalpur.

[18]As in Saran VN, Mirganj Thana No. 1040, Village Belsara.

[19]In category V data are usually in terms of estates. An estate may include an entire village or several villages, or there can be several estates in a village.

all of these topics are consistent for each village and therefore quantifiable. Whether or not a village has a permanent or temporary market is indicated. If the village has no market the first and second most frequently used market villages are noted. These kinds of data lend themselves to studies and mapping of the networks and systems of consumer marketing at the turn of the century. The market network can also be related to other aspects of life such as education. A preliminary study of this relationship has indicated that schools were generally found in market villages, which implies that consumer marketing flow lines often coincided with the feeding of students to schools.

Over 90 per cent of the village descriptions include data on soil types and irrigation facilities. Other sources, such as gazetteers and settlement reports, usually divide a district into broad regions of soil types that give little indication of local variation. The notes, however, describe the kinds of soils in each village and relate soil types to choice of crops. Similarly, a village by village view of irrigation is provided. The discussion is usually in the context of who controls and maintains the water, the type of irrigation (well, river, canal), and the cropping pattern of the village. The details on both soil and irrigation often extend to an examination of the recent past. For example, in areas where canals were introduced during the nineteenth century, the impact of these canals on soil, cropping pattern, and land value is described.[20]

Information on village officials is one of the most consistently reported items in the notes. In most cases, the names of *gomastas* (rent collection overseer) and *patwaris* (village accountant), the system of remuneration and the number of villages and estates in which they serve are given. Although many of these officials had a legal status delegated from the government, the notes describe them as functioning more as the paid employees of the landholders.

TOPICS LESS CONSISTENTLY COVERED

The topics of cropping pattern, *jajmani* system,[21] rural credit, schools, literacy, and migration are less frequently noted. They differ in coverage between the two districts and are often extensively reported for particular groups of villages. In both districts, cropping pattern data are consistently given and indicate whether the village is rice- or wheat-growing or both. The exact extent of these and other crops, however, is rarely mentioned. For particular groups of villages, great details exist on yields, as well as techniques of growing and processing of such crops as betel and sugarcane.

[20]Patna VN, Bikram Thana No. 75, Village Bishumpore.

[21]A system of reciprocal relationships between patron and client. For a standard description of this system, see William H. Wiser, *The Hindu Jajmani System*, Lucknow, Lucknow Publishing House, rev. ed., 1959.

The discussion of cropping pattern usually consists of a listing of crops grown in each harvest in the village and their average outputs. Some notes provide information on the rotation system of crops. There are also many references to indigo-growing villages in Saran's notes, which range from a discussion of how this particular crop fits into the general agricultural system to concern over what kinds of rights indigo planters have.[22] But the notes from the earlier settlement in Saran are much more revealing, because indigo was gradually being phased out by the time of the revision settlement. In Patna, indigo was never extensively grown.

Many village notes for Saran attempt to estimate the profits of growing different crops, generally by figuring out the costs of capital investment and labour, and the returns the crops would bring in the market.[23] Other descriptions focus on family budgets. Ghuna Sinha, a raiyat of village Bhataura, for instance, is described as having 18 *bighas* of land to support his joint family of 18. In favourable seasons this land produced just enough for subsistence. Thus in 1918 when there was a flood and a consequent failure of crops, he was compelled to borrow Rs 181. Information is also provided on the money-lending rates in that particular village.[24]

The data on the jajmani system are quite extensive for 40 per cent of the villages in both districts. It usually lists the amount of produce given to different service castes and the differential pattern of rights to trees and fish.

The notes for both districts occasionally give thorough coverage on rural credit systems. This is discussed in relation to important moneylenders in a multi-village locality and with regard to the credit extended by the local landholding families. Rural indebtedness is consistently reported upon in Saran's notes.

The topic of schools and literacy is not one of the official categories in the notes but such information is included in category XV for about 30 per cent of the villages in both districts. For some entire thanas such as Bikram and Islampur in Patna district, these data are consistently reported. We are told whether or not the village has a school, what kind it is, how many students attend, how the teachers are paid and the name of the teacher's caste. For example, the note for village Soniawan in Patna district describes one *pathsala* (primary school) as having six girls and 32 boys as students, the 'schooling fee' was two annas (one-eighth of a rupee) per month. The caste of the teacher in this school was Kurmi and three female ex-students could read both *Kaithi* and *Nagri* scripts.[25]

[22]As in Saran VN, Mashrak Thana No. 263, Village Ramkola. Also as in Saran District Village Notes, 1893-1901 (First Settlement), Chapra Thana, Nos. 1-136.

[23]As in Saran VN, Mashrak Thana No. 213, Village Sauli.

[24]Saran VN, Mashrak Thana No. 238, Village Bhataura.

[25]Patna VN, Islampur Thana No. 24, Village Soniawan.

The number of literates in each village is estimated in most of the villages for which educational data appear. The lack of observations on schools in selected village notes does not indicate that there were no schools in the villages concerned. In other words, the writers of the notes indicated by a 'yes' or 'no' whether they were interested in tabulating schools but the lack of such reference in other notes is not proof that other villages had no schools.

Migration is especially noticed for many of Saran's villages. Descriptions usually focus on the seasonal nature of migration, the class of people who left, and where they went. Generally emigration began in late October-November and migrants returned in late April-May. In some notes the information is very specific. In Sonebersa village it was observed that only four men went to Calcutta that year whereas previously people had migrated in large numbers. According to the villagers, fewer people went because they thought they would find no 'ready employment' in Calcutta because of the 'dullness in business' there.[26] Clearly, very important propositions can be formed about the nature and role of migration in the rural economy from the village notes.

How reliable is the information in the village notes for studies of rural society? A preliminary look at who the writers were and recognition of the specific and localized nature of the information they presented indicates their reliability to be relatively better than sources which give the researcher only aggregate numbers and generalities.

Attestation usually involved junior civilians, deputy and sub-deputy collectors, and specially trained *munsifs* (the lowest judicial officer). A preliminary analysis of 75 per cent of the village note writers shows that these men were largely Biharis, with approximately one-year service in the survey and settlement and more than five-year service in the subordinate services by the time of attestation. Their average age was 31 and all except one had a B.A. degree.[27]

The village notes, however, are only one of the many kinds of sources relating to the district and village levels of society. Unlike the published local records, such as district settlement reports and gazetteers, these unpublished sources will permit studies of trends and processes in indigenous society. Because of the specific nature of these data, relatively few British policy and

[26]Saran VN, Darauli Thana No. 437, Village Sonebersa.

[27]A good example of a village note writer is Mathura Prashad Chaube, B.A., born 3 November 1883, Muzaffarpur district. Joined service 3 December 1907, Probationary Sub-Deputy Collector. December 1909 to May 1913, Sub-Deputy Collector in Darbangha district. October 1914 to August 1916, Sub-Deputy Collector and Assistant Settlement Officer, Gaya district. October 1916 to March 1922, Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector and Assistant Settlement Officer, Saran district. For details, see *History of Services of Gazetted and other Officers* (serving under the Government of Bihar and Orissa), 1922.

ideological concerns found their way into the notes. Inasmuch as these data cover all the villages in a district, internal checks on the reliability of individual writers become possible. Often the most explicit biases reflect the perspectives of various groups within the local society itself. Of course, the topical and conceptual categories used in the notes themselves were largely products of Western social thought and represent probably the strongest bias stemming from outside the local society.[28]

We find the village notes valuable for getting away from using administrative divisions (village, thana, district) as units of analysis. Although the revenue village (*mouzah*) is the descriptive unit used in the notes, the data are usually presented in terms of *tolas*, or hamlets. With this kind of disaggregation, we can begin to reconstruct more functional, and operative spheres of activity, such as networks of social, economic, educational, and religious behaviour.[29] In this way it should be possible to develop a more accurate idea of local networks of political power and control in rural India.

Table

CATEGORIES INCLUDED IN THE 'VILLAGE NOTES'

I. Blank, used for general comments.
II. Physical Description. (Note: soil, position, productiveness, and changes in fertility, e.g., sand deposit, silt, salt-water, inundation.)[a]
IIIa. Irrigation and Embankments.
IIIb. Supply of Drinking Water. (N. B. Enter after personal inspection the plot numbers of tanks: (*i*) already supplying drinking water, (*ii*) fit to supply drinking water if cleaned of weeds, or if re-excavated, and (*iii*) fit to be 'reserved' solely for the supply of drinking water. After due enquiry note whether the recorded owners of the tanks are willing to make them over to the management of the District Boards without prejudice to the title of the recorded owners. Add also, in cases where this appears to be urgently needed, the plot numbers of lands suitable for new tanks.)
IV. General crop and agricultural notes. (e.g., as to harvests, out-turn of crops, rotation of crops, unusual failure crops, etc.)
V. Village history. (With special reference to history of proprietors and tenure-holders, partitions and sub-infeudation, change in the value of land.)
VI. Rents and Government revenue. (Note: rates and history of any general enhance-

[28]For an analysis of British perspectives of Indian society, see Bernard S. Cohn, 'Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture,' in Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co., 1968, p. 15.

[29]See, for example, Anand A. Yang, 'Control and Conflict in Agrarian Societies: A Study of Saran District, 1866-1920,' and James R. Hagen, 'An Interactional Study of the History of Education and Society: A Case Study of Patna District, 1811-1941.' (Dissertations in progress at the University of Virginia.)

ments of rents, and state how the rates compare with rates in the neighbourhood. Explain produce rents if taken.)

VII. Kists for payment of rents.

VIII. Cesses and abwabs, if any.

IX. Rights of tenants. (e.g., whether occupancy rights are transferable by custom without consent of landlord. To what extent transfers made. By what classes tenant-rights are purchased. Whether under-raiyats can acquire occupancy rights by custom.)[b]

X. Markets and communications.

XI. Sairat (e.g., fisheries, etc.)

XII. Trees (Customs as to.)

XIII. Village officials and service tenure-holders. (State how village officials are paid.)

XIV. Village measures and weights.

XV. General notes. (e.g., as to population, caste, occupation, trades and manufactures, village customs not mentioned above, fuel and fodder reserves and sanitary arrangements, any special facts about public health.)

[a]The notes in brackets are instructions for the village note writers.

[b]The details under this category varied between Patna and Saran's survey and settlement periods.

Arab Merchants of Bombay and Surat (c. 1800-1840)

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It is generally recognized that the Arab merchants played an important role in mediaeval India's foreign trade. It is also believed that with the advent of Europeans in the Indian waters in the sixteenth century, the role of Arabs declined. In the present paper, an attempt is made to show that towards the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the Arabs once again tended to be a dominating force in the maritime trade of Bombay and Surat.

The Arabs were insignificant in the commercial life of India around the mid-eighteenth century. The Imam of Muscat, for example, possessed only two or three old ships purchased in British ports by which he aggrandized himself in the Persian Gulf. Small Arab crafts came to Bombay to purchase the produce of Bengal to the great benefit of the British ship-owners. Rice brought from Bengal to Bombay, for example, left them a clear profit of 100 per cent, having first distributed 40 per cent more amongst the rest of the community such as the underwriters, commanders, officers and crews of the ships. On this, the wholesale merchant further earned a profit of 50 to 75 per cent on his final sale to the Arabs. But a change took place towards the close of the century. The Imam of Muscat, bound by no ties or obligations but such as his interests or ambition dictated, gradually increased the number of his vessels and those of his subjects to 50 fine ships of 300 to 800 tons burthens. These ships went both to Bombay and the ports eastwards.[1] The natural consequence was that in proportion to an increase in Arab shipping, that of the British and others declined.

IMPORTANCE OF ARAB MERCHANTS IN THE TRADE OF BOMBAY AND SURAT

During the period under study, ships under the following colours entered and cleared outwards the ports of Bombay and Surat:

(1) American; (2) Arab; (3) Brazilian; (4) British; (5) Danish; (6) Dutch;

[1]'Report on the Commerce of British India in 1802-3,' *Papers relative to East India Affairs*, House of Lords paper No. 23 of 1813, para 75.

(7) French; (8) Hamburg; (8) Persian; (10) Portuguese; (11) Spanish; (12) Swedish; and (13) Turkish.

From the standpoint of the number of ships arriving and departing, those plying under the Arab colours compared favourably to the ships sailing under the colours of other foreigners (the British excepted) for most of the years. More importantly, from 1802-3 to 1817-18, the number of Arab ships arriving at Surat and departing from there was even more than the number of British ships reaching and leaving that port. The tonnage of Arab ships was also often —but not always—more than the tonnage of British ships. Similarly, from 1821-22 to 1831-32, ships arrived at Surat and departed from there only under the British and Arab colours with the exception of the year 1825-26 when only one Portuguese ship (tonnage 450) reached there.[2]

The relative strength of the number of Arab ships with respect to that of the British ships was much better than what the unprocessed available figures indicate. This is owing to two reasons:

(1) The commercial reports do not contain separate data regarding indigenous shipping although this shipping touched the ports of the Arabian and Persian Gulfs on the one side, and Canton on the other. Much of it plied under British colours. That, apart from China, the Parsi merchants of Bombay maintained commercial relations with the Arabian ports is proved by Jonathan Duncan's enquiries with them and from their replies drawing up a report on the naval and military strength of the pirate ports during 1809-10.[3] William Heude also observed in 1817 that Bushire was 'usually visited by ten or twelve vessels from India of a considerable size which trade within the Gulf under the protection of our flag; seven or eight of these usually making a double trip within the year.'[4]

[2]*Bombay Commercial Reports, 1802-03—1805-06 and 1807-08—1839-40* (indexed in the Bombay Government Proceedings, India Office Library, London). The *Commercial Report* of 1806-07 is not available and so the data for this year could not be included.

[3]J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 117.

[4]William Heude, *A Voyage up the Persian Gulf and a Journey Overland from India to England, in 1817. Containing Notices of Arabia Felix, Arabia Deserta, Persia, Mesopotamia, the Garden of Eden, Babylon, Bagadad, Koordistan, Armenia, Asia Minor, & c. & c.*, London, Longman, Hurst Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819, p. 42. Also see Mrs Colonel Elwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England, by the Continent of Europe, Egypt, and the Red Sea, to India, including a Residence there, and Voyage Home, in the years 1825, 26, 27 and 28*, Vol. I, London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830, p. 415. Frere wrote many years after: 'The Indian traders seem never to have quite forsaken the East African trade in the latter part of the last and the earlier years of the present century, a few ships made an annual voyage from ... Surat, Bombay, and occasionally from other ports ....' 'Memorandum by Sir B. Frere regarding Banians or natives of India in East Africa,' 31 March 1873, *Correspondence respecting Sir Bartle Frere's Mission to the East Coast of Africa, 1872-73*, House of Commons command paper No. 820 of 1873, p. 99.

(2) Many Arab ships also sailed under British colours. In 1802-3, the Reporter of the External Commerce of the Bombay Presidency sarcastically referred to 'the English Arabs.' He also lamented: 'These men, altho' residing for a while among us, and never truly domiciliated (?)... to the last, retain all their deceit and their parsimony.... In time of war, they alternately use the British, and Arab flag, as interest and circumstances prompt them....'[5] This practice was continued by them in the following years also.

Thus, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Arab merchants came to play a prominent role in the commercial life of western India. Apart from the specific factors affecting the commerce of individual European countries, the circumstances which led to this favourable situation specifically for the Arabs can be traced thus:

(1) France was at war with the continental powers and England. French pirates and privateers, operating from their bases at Isle of France and Bourbon, caused crippling losses to mercantile ships. But the Arab ships, sailing under neutral colours, seem to have generally escaped their vengeance.

(2) The policy of the British government in India was also to befriend the Arabs, the underlying idea being to contain the French influence in West Asia. Officers of the East India Company's navy had standing instructions to avoid attacking even Arab pirates on pain of severe displeasure.[6] They had been asked to act only in self-defence, where necessary. The Arab merchant vessels were also not molested by the British cruisers. This seems to have given a considerable advantage to the Arabs over other seafaring nationalities, for at least in 1796 some French and Dutch ships had plied under Arab colours.[7]

(3) The piratical activities of the coastal Arabs were at their height till the early nineteenth century. Subjugated and then incited by the fanatical Wahabis, the pirate tribes, chief of which was the Joasmi, sallied out of their concealed retreats. As years passed, their arms, ammunition, and organization improved. They persistently moved about in the Arabian Sea—even in the coasts of Sind and Bombay—pillaging the ships and murdering their crews.[8] Their audacity reached to the extent of serving an ultimatum

[5]'Report on the external commerce under the Presidency of Bombay—for the year 1802-3,' *Bombay Commercial Report, 1802-3*, Range 419, Vol. 40, India Office Library, London.

[6]Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean: A Study of Maritime Enterprise 1810-1850*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 241.

[7]*Home Miscellaneous Series*, 1797, 606(1), India Office Library, London, p. 347.

[8]An idea of the enormous extent of cargo losses of the ships can be had from the emergence of a regular market in the Bahrain islands where the articles captured by the pirates were bought and sold. J. G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia, Vol. I. Historical. Part I*, Westmead, Gregg International Publishers Ltd. and Shannon, Irish University Press, 1970, p. 195.

to the Bombay government, demanding a regular tribute as the price of unmolested passage for the East India Company's ships.[9] Arab piracy must have put a check on the growth of European commerce in the Arabian sea. However, Arab ships were also not completely free from this scourge. The commerce of Muscat, for example, was affected by the Joasmi piracy for some years.

(4) An improvement in the number and quality of ships possessed by the Arabs might have facilitated their maritime progress. The increase in the number of ships possessed by the Arabs of Muscat has already been stated. The number of ships owned by other Arab tribes also enhanced. At the same time the quality of ships possessed by them improved. As J. M. Kinneir wrote: '. . . the chief part of the traffic is carried on in Arabian bottoms; and the merchants of *Muscat* now possess some of the finest vessels that navigate the *Indian seas*.'[10] Three important sources for the supply of ships to the Arabs were:

(*i*) The British ships captured by the French and purchased from them by the Arabs.[11]
(*ii*) Ships made in India, specially those at Bombay and Cochin.[12]
(*iii*) A few ships were also indigenously made in Arabia. Timber was exported there from Malabar to this end since time immemorial.[13]

William Heude was probably correct when he wrote: '. . . an Arab ship [as it is styled] is usually built and navigated on European principles . . . the owners being Arab merchants, an Arab ship may be ranked amongst the inferior classes [for ships] of our country trade. . . .'[14]

(5) The tariff policy of the Bombay government was also conducive to the growth of Arab trade. Arab vessels were not treated as foreign vessels for many

[9]Gerald S. Graham, no. 6, p. 238.

[10]J. M. Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire, accompanied by a Map*, London, John Murray, 1813, p. 290. Maria Graham also noted: 'The harbour [of Bombay] is filled with vessels from all nations, and of all shapes, but the largest and finest of the foreigners are the Arabs.' *Journal of a Residence in India*, Edinburgh, 1812, p. 12.

[11]Shaik Mansur, *History of Seyd Said, Sultan of Muscat; together with an Account of the Countries and People on the Shores of the Persian Gulf, particularly of the Wahabees*, London, John Booth, 1819, p. 30.

[12]W. M. G. Colebrooke's evidence, *Report from the Select Committee on Steam Navigation to India; with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, House of Commons paper No. 478 of 1834, Q. 1570.

[13]*Ibid.* Owing to the piracy practised by the Arabs on the British ships, it was often urged that the export of ship-building material to them from British India should be stopped by the government.

[14]William Heude, no. 4, p. 19.

years. Thus, when foreign vessels were excluded from the coastal trade of British India during 1811-13, the Arab vessels remained unaffected. In 1813 the Bombay government introduced the principle of discriminating duties with reference to the nationality of ships as a result of which the duties on the commodities carried in foreign ships were to be more than those in British and Indian ships. From 1815, the principle of discriminating duties was applied with reference to the place of production of a commodity so that the duties on 'foreign' commodities were more than those on 'home' commodities. Foreign goods carried in foreign ships had thus to pay much more duty than 'home' goods carried in 'home' ships.[15]

Some Aspects of Arab Trade

Of the various Arab tribes having commercial relations with western India, the people of Oman seem to be the most important.[16] The sailing timings from Arabia for the ships of various tribes were different. T. L. Peacock believed that for a voyage to Bombay (and presumably Surat) from the Persian Gulf Coast, the Arab vessels plied all the year round. But ships from the Red Sea ports generally undertook their voyage from July to September and returned with the north-east monsoon.[17] This statement seems to be correct, for it is supported by the stray information which is available regarding the movement of Arab ships towards Bombay from 9 June 1832 to 27 January 1834.[18]

Table I

TIME OF DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL OF ARAB SHIPS

Name of the ship	*Date of departure*	*From the Red Sea Port*	*From the Persian Gulf Port*	*Date of arrival in Bombay*	*No. of days taken in voyage*
Nasser	19-8-1832	Mocha		4-9-1832	16
Cyrene	9-11-1832		Busra	8-1-1833	60
Futteh Rahaman	3-2-1833		Muscat	18-2-1833	15
Nasser	1-8-1833	Mocha		17-8-1833	16
Atteet Rahimon	14-11-1833		Busra	26-12-1833	43
Nassareth Shaw	15-1-1834		Muscat	27-1-1834	12

[15]For details see N. J. Shah, *History of Indian Tariffs*, Bombay, Thacker and Company Limited, and London, W. Thacker and Co., 1924, Ch. 2.

[16]*Affairs of the East India Company; continuation of Appendix to II. Finance and Accounts—trade, Part 2—Commercial*, House of Commons paper No. 735—II of 1832, p. 637.

[17]T. L. Peacock's evidence, House of Commons paper No. 478 of 1834, No. 12, Qs. 42 and 75.

[18]*Ibid.*, Appendix No. 5, p. 21.

The Arab merchants had various types of vessels. But those most commonly used were bagalas and batillas. Generally speaking, the former were large boats having, besides the principal mast, a smaller one with a latine sail at the stern. Those destined for a voyage to India varied from about 70 to 300 tons burthen and occasionally even more. The bagalas were usually rigged with two masts carrying latine sails.[19] They were often built for the Arabs at Cochin and other places on the Malabar coast.[20] The smaller vessels were called either trankeys or batillas. Little or no iron was used in putting their timbers together—its place being taken by coir string and the seams payed with bees' wax. The Arabs first tied the planks together and then fastened them to the ribs. In consequence of the elasticity which it imparted to the vessels, this method gave them some advantages in sailing over the vessels fastened entirely with nails.[21]

The overall tonnage of Arab vessels was usually far less than that of vessels sailing under other colours. Even then, on the whole, the total tonnage of Arab ships was much more than that of other foreign ships—except the British—because of the large number of their ships. But when compared to the indigenous coastal crafts, they appear to be of an intermediate size. As A. C. Staples writes: 'More than half of the shipping from the western part of the Indian Ocean consisted of small crafts, most of which consisted of Arab vessels. Having further to travel than vessels from Malabar and having to make more use of the open sea, they were on the average nearly three times the size of the larger type of Indian coastal craft.'[22]

During 1802-3 to 1809-10, 1810-11 to 1819-20, 1820-21 to 1829-30, and 1830-31 to 1839-40, the number of Arab ships arriving at Bombay was 73, 61, 89, and 42, and their tonnage 26,283, 20,839, 34,577, and 15,312 respectively. The Arab ships leaving Bombay during this period aggregated to 79, 56, 90, and 49, and their tonnage was 28,309, 20,873, 37,549, and 19,736 respectively. Parallel details are found regarding Surat. The Arab ships reaching that port numbered 125, 140, 62, and 9 respectively. Their total tonnage was 12,691, 14,445, 5,081, and 1,119 respectively. The

[19]F. R. Chesney, *The expedition for the survey of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris carried on by order of the British Government, in the years 1835, 1836, and 1837: preceded by geographical and historical notices of the regions situated between the rivers Nile and Indus. In four volumes. With fourteen maps and charts, and embellished with ninety-seven plates, besides numerous wood-cuts*, Vol. II, London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850, p. 645.

[20]J. H. Stocqueler, *Fifteen months' Pilgrimage through untrodden tracts of Khuzistan and Persia, in a journey from India to England, through ports of Turkish Arabia, Persia, Armenia, Russia, and Germany. Performed in the years 1831 and 1832*, Vol. I, London, Saunders and Otley, 1832, p. 1.

[21]F. R. Chesney, no. 19, pp. 645-46.

[22]A. C. Staples, *The Trade of the Eastern Indian Ocean 1830 to 1845 With Special Reference to the Internal Maritime Trade of the Region*, unpublished thesis, University of London, 1965, p. 61.

number of Arab ships departing from there came to 116, 139, 56, and 10, their tonnage being 12,744, 14,566, 4,798, and 997½ respectively. In relation to the number and tonnage of ships sailing under British colours these figures may not appear very impressive. But, as stated before, they compare favourably to the data pertaining to the remaining foreign ships. Information is available regarding the movement of the Arab vessels. Most of them plied between the Arabian and Persian ports on the one hand, and Bombay and Surat on the other. Among the Indian ports which they covered in their itinerary from Bombay, those of Bengal were of greater importance. The remaining Indian ports which they frequented on their way to (or from) Bombay and Surat were in Sind, Kutch, Canara, and Malabar. They also moved to and fro between Bombay and Surat. Among the foreign ports from which they arrived (or departed for), mention may be made of those in the African coast Penang, and eastern islands, etc. Incidentally, in 1833-34 an Arab ship (435 tons) arrived in Bombay from the United Kingdom. Similarly, in 1835-36, another Arab ship (171 tons) reached there from as far as America! However, such cases represent the exceptions and not the rule. During the period under study, of the total tonnage of Arab ships arriving at Bombay from various ports, the share of the Persian Gulf, Bengal, and Arabian Gulf ports was 41 per cent, 22 per cent, and 19 per cent respectively. The corresponding figures relating to the Arab ships departing are 44 per cent, 29 per cent, and 6 per cent, respectively. The *Commercial Reports* contain similar details regarding Surat. Of the aggregate tonnage of Arab ships reaching there, the contribution of the Persian and Arabian Gulf ports was as high as 56 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. As against this, 36 per cent and 47 per cent of the Arab shipping tonnage left Surat for these two sets of ports respectively.[23]

The articles usually brought by the Arab merchants were: (1) aloes, (2) copper, (3) elephant's teeth, (4) false beads, (5) gum Arabic, (6) gum olibanum, (7) horses, (8) lamita, (9) pearls, (10) piece-goods, (11) shark fins, and (12) sundries.

In return they took: (1) China-ware, (2) edible grains, (3) iron, (4) pepper, (5) piece-goods, (6) shawls, (7) tobacco, and (8) sundries.

A reference should also be made here to the cargo of slaves which the Arab ships were said to have contained. By Act 51 Geo. III, cap. 23 (1811), the transportation of slaves by sea by British subjects or by persons residing in the East India Company's territories was treated as felony. This statute was supplemented in Bengal in the same year by Regulation X which made the importation of slaves a crime punishable with imprisonment. A similar regulation was passed by the Government of Bombay in 1813. The great

[23]*Bombay Commercial Reports, 1802-03—1805-06 and 1807-08—1839-40*, n. 2.

extent of the slave trade from Africa and the virtual certainty that slaves would find their way to India on Arab vessels was brought to the notice of the Bombay authorities by Capt. Smee's report of his visit to Zanzibar in 1811. But Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of the Presidency, was not much disturbed, as also his successor Sir Evan Nepean. However, at the instance of some Directors of the Company in July 1815, he urged Saiyyid Said, the Imam of Muscat, to abolish the slave trade. The latter did not even reply to the letter.[24] It is almost certain that slaves were brought to this country in Arab ships. As Fontanier, the Vice Consul of Busra, wrote: 'No great researches are necessary to prove that the slave trade is carried on at Bombay . . . the Africans from the coast of Mozambique. . . are disembarked in woman's apparel, and conveyed away in palanquins. The custom-house guards show themselves very complaisant, and the slaves once lodged in the native town, the Mahomedans traffic amongst themselves. . . .'[25] Though not allowed legally, a combination of circumstances appears to have enabled the Arab merchants to import slaves. Firstly, some slaves could be shown as hired domestic servants. Secondly, others could be treated as part of the ship's crew. Thirdly, the female slaves could be dressed as wives and concubines. Fourthly, the slaves were likely to co-operate with their owners in duping the government servants. Fifthly, most government employees themselves were incompetent to cope with the situation, for they did not know the Arabic language. The Arab merchants were also alleged to be exporting slaves from India. Indian girls were occasionally seen in the middle-eastern ports. But they probably represented isolated cases.

The balance of trade of the Arab merchants was normally favourable to this country. Quantitative details regarding the value of this export-import trade depend on the discovery of Arabic sources, if any.[26] This trade appears to be highly profitable. C. H. Head noted: '. . . Indian goods are... purchased on the arrival of the India ships, and raised ten per cent almost immediately; they continue to rise, and always forty per cent on the cost price before the arrival of the next annual supply.'[27] To this should be

[24] J. B. Kelly, n. 3, pp. 419-20.

[25] Letter from Fontanier, Bombay, 19 October 1838, *Return of all copies or extracts of correspondence between the Directors of the East India Company and the Company's Government in India, since 1838, on the subject of slavery in the territories under the Company's rule; also respecting any slave trade therein; also of all orders and regulations issued, or any proceedings taken by order or under the authority of the Company with a view to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade; also of any correspondence between the Board of Control and the Court of Directors on the same subject*, House of Lords paper No. 218 of 1841, p. 208.

[26] Data are available regarding the quantities of select articles exported by the Arab merchants from Surat during 1794-95—1797-98. *Papers presented to the House of Commons, relating to East India Affairs, Surat, 1795-1800*, House of Commons paper No. 308 of 1806, p. 257.

[27] C. H. Head, *Eastern and Egyptian scenery, ruins & c. accompanied with descriptive notes, maps, and plans, illustrative of a journey from India to Europe, followed by an outline of an overland route, statistical remarks, & c. intended to shew the advantage and practicability of steam navigation from England to India*, London, Smith, Elder, and Co., 1833, p. 9.

added the profits earned by merchants on their imports into western India. The Arab merchants of Bombay and Surat must have also secured handsome profits on their trade.

BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS ARAB MERCHANTS

As might be expected, the British attitude towards the Arab merchants was hostile. The principal grounds of opposition were three:

(1) The growth and prevalence of Arab shipping adversely affected the scope for the employment of British ships. The freight rate charged by an Arab ship was about a third of what a British ship charged. This was because the working expenses of the former were lesser. Manned by slaves and low-paid workers, their cargo was not insured and their owners paid no interest charges.

(2) The Arab ships often had the French in disguise. Heude says that 'under the protection of a beard and a turban,' Europeans 'land on our shores with perfect freedom, and traverse our dominions with entire security as peaceful travellors.'[28] Moreover, the French who came thus collected information regarding the cargoes, sailing dates, and destinations of British ships and transmitted it to the Isle of France.[29] This, it was feared, led to their capture. Moreover, the Arabs were suspected of providing necessary supplies to the French.

(3) The Arab ships were suspected of spying for the Arab pirates. A glaring case came to light in 1816. Three merchant ships—the *Ahmedi, Futteh Mubarak*, and *Sufer Salamut*—left Surat for Mocha with unusually valuable cargoes. On 19 March the *Ahmedi*, having outsailed the other two, was nearing Mocha when it sighted eight pirate ships lying at anchor. As though awaiting the *Ahmedi*'s arrival, they made sail and bore down upon her. In less than half an hour, the pirates murdered 56 persons and looted cargo worth Rs 10 lakhs. Then the *Futteh Mubarak* and *Sufer Salamut* arrived—only to be captured and plundered.[30]

Owing to continuous opposition, circumstances tended to become unfavourable for the Arab merchants in the 1830s. By Act XIV of 1836, Section 21, the Governor-General of India in Council enacted: '. . . vessels

[28] William Heude, n. 4, p. 19.

[29] 'Report on the External Commerce of British India, as carried on by Individuals, in the Year 1804-5,' House of Lords paper No. 23 of 1813, n. 1, para 64.

[30] H. Moyse-Bartlett, *The Pirates of Trucial Oman*, London, Macdonald and Co. Ltd., 1966, pp. 69-70.

owned by Natives of Arabia, and coming from the Ports thereof... shall be deemed foreign vessels.'[31] As a result, the imports and exports of the Arab merchants were no longer entitled for tariff preferences. Together with other foreigners, the Arab merchants were also badly hit. Fortunately for them, H. T. Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of India, notified on 9 January 1839 that goods imported into the several ports of the Bombay Presidency in the vessels of the ports of Arabia and of the Persian Gulf (in which the British vessels were treated on terms as favourable as native vessels) and exported by them thereto should be treated as goods imported and exported in the British vessels.[32] This eased the situation for the Arab merchants.

CONCLUSION

In the end, a few words may be added to explain the impact of Arab trading activities on the economic life of the western coast. The presence of Arab merchants must have enriched the local market on the one hand, and created/extended an overseas market for the Indian commodities on the other. In this sense, their trade was beneficial. But the country shipping was adversely affected by their operations. James Horsburgh reported in 1820, for example, that about half of the country ships (including British country ships?) lay unemployed in Bombay (and also Calcutta) owing to the advent of (*i*) British free traders, (*ii*) Americans, and (*iii*) Arabs.[33] As a result of their commercial connections, some Arabs had settled down on the western coast. This, however, can hardly be viewed with anxiety. The problem of overpopulation was not faced during the period under study. Moreover, many Indians had settled in the middle-east. As J. R. Wellsted observed:

> Between Basrah in the Persian Gulf and Hodeidha in the Red Sea, almost every town on the coast of Arabia contains several families of this wily race [banians], who confine themselves exclusively to commercial pursuits, their first object in all cases being... to exclude other classes... from any participation in their gains. Detested and despised as they are by the Arabs, they have nevertheless... been able, in most instances, to effect their purpose; and at Bahrein, Maskat, and other ports, they monopolize the whole of th- pearl fishery, amounting, it is supposed, to thirty or forty lacs of rupees annually.[34]

[31] *Papers relative to Discriminating Duties in India & c. & c.*, House of Lords Paper No. 144 of 1848, p. 5.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 6. Discriminating duties were finally abolished by Act VI of 1848.

[33] James Horsburgh's evidence, *Brought from the Lords 7 May 1821. Report (relative to the trade with the East Indies and China) from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to inquire into the means of extending and securing the foreign trade of the country, and to report to the House: together with the minutes of evidence taken in sessions 1820 and 1821, before the said Committee: 11 April 1821*, House of Commons paper No. 476 of 1821, p. 136.

[34] J. R. Wellsted, *Travels in Arabia*, Vol. II, London, John Murray, 1838, p. 368.

The Moplah Rebellions between 1800-02 and 1921-22

CONRAD WOOD

The 1921-22 insurrection of the Moplahs, as the Muslims of Malabar are called, is familiar to students of Indian history. The rebellion of 1800-02 has also received attention.[1] Between these two risings against British authority in Malabar 'fanatical' disturbances or 'outbreaks' were staged by small groups of Moplahs in the south Malabar interior, the Malabar 'fanatic zone' of contemporary British official writers. The present writer has argued elsewhere[2] that these outbreaks, though evidently a means of curbing the power of the high-caste (Brahmin and Nair) Hindu *jenmis*, or landlords, were also ritual challenges to the British administration which nurtured that power. Indeed, it was the support extended to the high-caste Hindu 'notables' in the rural interior of south Malabar (Ernad and Walluvanad taluks) by British rule that was the source of Moplah resistance to the white man's raj from 1800 to 1922. But in the inter-rebellion period this resistance also took forms other than that of the Moplah outbreak. Nor did that resistance remain immune to either British formulation of policy measures to deal with it or Moplah conception of the threats to the power of their imperial masters emanating from outside Malabar.

Even before extraordinary measures were adopted to deal with the Moplah outbreak it had been observed that the 'lower order of Moplahs and particularly those of the inland Talooks's' were 'not to be depended upon when an apparent opening for their acting against [the British] might occur.'[3] When the government in the mid-1850s finally felt impelled to deal with 'Moplah fanaticism' via the 'tremendous penalties'[4] of the Moplah Acts it merely

[1]See Conrad Wood, 'The First Moplah Rebellion against British Rule in Malabar,' shortly to appear in *Modern Asian Studies*.

[2]*Social Scientist*, August 1974, and in a paper to be published shortly with others by the Athlone Press in its 'Commonwealth Papers' series.

[3]The opinion of T. L. Strange, then a judge in Malabar, to Malabar Collector, 27 May 1842, quoted in minute of T. M. Lewin, acting third judge of the Foujdaree Udalut, 30 June 1842; P/326/21, MJP October 1842, p. 4942.

[4]W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 584.

increased the existing hostility to British rule among the Muslim population of Ernad.

When, in 1851, a group of Hindus from the 'fanatic zone' demanded a series of repressive measures including the confiscation of the property of outbreak participants and the disarming of the local Moplahs as a means of checking their violent outrages,[5] the Government of Madras had pointed out that such measures would only aggravate the evils they were intended to remove.[6] In fact, when, in the following year, outbreaks spread to hitherto unaffected north Malabar with the exceptionally bad disturbance in Kottayam taluk in January 1852, the local government reluctantly decided on the appointment of a Special Commission,[7] one outcome of which was the Moplah Acts of 1854 which provided for measures in line with those of the Hindu petition of 1851.

Although the Moplah Acts certainly succeeded in repressing outbreaks for long periods at a time their nature was such that aggravation of Moplah bitterness towards British rule was inevitable. British officials who supported such measures openly acknowledged that legislation of this kind involved the risk of injustice to individuals.[8] This was unavoidably the case since the provision which extended to Moplah outbreaks, Madras Regulation II of 1819, described by the government pleader in 1855 as 'perhaps the most arbitrary act within my knowledge'[9] permitted the deportation at the government's pleasure of anyone merely suspected of intending to participate in an outbreak. Moreover injustice to the innocent was entailed in the provision (to which the local government attached much importance[10])

[5]'Petition of 29 Hindus of Ernaad, Walluvanaad and Shernaad,' 12 August 1851, to H. V. Conolly, Malabar Magistrate, enclosure in Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 16 October 1851; P/327/42, MJP No. 720, 2 December 1851, p. 4354.

[6]Minute No. 720, 2 December 1851; P/327/42, MJP, p. 4358.

[7]Minute No. 123, 17 February 1852; P/327/44, MJP, p. 674. The opposition of the Governor, H. Pottinger, to the appointment of a Commission (see his minute of 6 February 1852, *ibid.*, p. 626) was, apparently only overcome after a member of his Council, J.F. Thomas, had come out strongly in its favour (see Thomas' minute of 10 February 1862, *ibid.*, p. 633).

[8]Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 6 November 1850, P/327/33, MJP No. 767, 3 December 1850, p. 5051; memorandum on the draft Moplah Acts by Conolly, 10 October 1853, P/327/63, MJP No. 714, 30 November 1853, p. 5960; minute of H. W. Bliss, member of the Madras Governor's Council, 15 August 1896, L/PJ/6/433, 2060/96, MJP No. 1567, 30 September 1896, p. 126. Bliss was frank enough to point out that the Acts were not passed 'with the object of doing justice between man and man or between the community and the individual' but to suppress outrages for which the general law was not adequate.

[9]J. B. Norton to Chief Secretary, 1 December 1855, P/328/8, MJP No. 925, 8 December 1855, p. 4874.

[10]Secretary to Government of Madras to Officiating Secretary to Government of India, 16 May 1854, P/327/67, MJP No. 352, 16 May 1854, p. 1530.

for collective fining of *amsoms* (parishes) in which disturbances occurred, whilst at least one Malabar magistrate discovered unfairness in the fact that only Moplah residents were liable to this penalty.[11]

But official measures tending to direct Moplah fanatical hatred towards British rule were not restricted to the deportations and amercements of the Moplah Acts. To prevent the remains of outbreak participants becoming objects of veneration by the Moplah populace[12] it was the invariable custom[13] to dispose of the bodies by burning. This was sometimes carried out in the most provocative manner, as when, after being gibbeted in the heart of the fanatic zone[14] the corpses of the assassins of Collector H. V. Conolly in 1855 were publicly burnt in a Moplah suburb of Calicut.[15] In this particular instance the Company's servant on the spot, C. Collett, had attempted unsuccessfully to dissuade the government of Madras from pursuing this course. Collett argued that since the burning of the body was 'regarded by the Moplahs with much horror' the execution of the administration's orders would greatly offend caste prejudices with a result 'similar to what usually follows religious persecution': to 'excite a degree of sympathy which would not otherwise have existed.'[16] In spite of such admonitions and the unease occasionally expressed by the Government of India[17] the policy of disposing of the corpses of outbreak participants by

[11]H. Bradley, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Secretary, 6 June 1894, P/4621, MJP Nos. 2186-92, 8 September 1894, p. 118.

[12]Chief Secretary to C. Collett, Joint Magistrate, Malabar, 19 September 1855, P/328/6, MJP No. 4, 19 September 1855, p. 3558; 'Account of the Mappilla Outbreak of Feb.-Mar. 1915,' annexure in confidential letter No. 1, Judicial, 5 May 1915, Government of Madras to Secretary of State, L/PJ/6/1360, 2230/15 in 1003/15, p. 3.

[13]J. F. Hall, Malabar Collector, to Secretary, (Home) Judicial, 25 April 1919, L/PJ/6/1608, 4582/19, MJP No. 1310, 9 June 1919, p. 13; C. A. Innes, Malabar Collector, to Secretary, Judicial, 29 March 1915 (Conf.), MJP Nos. 2080-84, 3 September 1915 (Conf.), p. 18, Kozhikode Archives.

[14]C. Collett, Joint Magistrate, Malabar, to Chief Secretary, 21 September 1855; P/328/6, MJP No. 716, 3 October 1855, p. 3589.

[15]Collett to Secretary, Judicial, 8 October 1855, P/328/6, MJP No. 46, 16 October 1855, pp. 3956-57.

[16]Collett to Chief Secretary, 27 September 1855; P/328/6, MJP No. 716, 3 October 1855, p. 3666. The concern felt by 'fanatics' as to the mode of disposal of their remains is revealed in the specific demands they sometimes made for their bodies to be interred in mosques; see, for example, 'Memorandum of the Conversation between the Walluvanaad Tahsildar and the Fanatics,' 28 August 1851, in Collett to Conolly, 20 September 1851, P/327/41, MJP No. 700, 20 November 1851, pp. 3775-76 and statement of Valiya Mannil Chek, a witness of the 1896 outbreak, in preliminary report of H. M. Winterbotham, member of the Madras Board of Revenue, 10 April 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p. 20.

[17]See, for example, Secretary, Govt. of India to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Madras, 29 September 1896, MJP No. 1680 (Conf.), 24 October 1896, MRO, and MJP No. 1379 (Conf.), 25 August 1896, M.R.O.

fire was continued up to the end of the outbreak period in 1919.[18]

A further measure regarded (by the Court of Directors in 1850) as calculated to produce a sense of unfair treatment at British hands was the disarming of the Moplahs.[19] This was eventually carried out in 1885 after the use of firearms in one outbreak had increased apprehension about the risks run by the government forces responsible for the task of suppression.[20] Although this disarmament was a general one, involving the receipt of firearms and swords[21] from *all* inhabitants of four south Malabar taluks,[22] the strategy of issuing all subsequent licences only to carefully selected individuals with substantial property effectively discriminated against the Moplahs as a whole, since big landownership was largely a high-caste Hindu monopoly in that area. Thus, of the 588 licences for firearms issued in the disarmed zone in the first few months of the operation of the new policy in 1885 only five went to Muslims who formed 36 per cent of the population of the four taluks.[23] Once again British administrators responsible for Malabar had felt it incumbent on them to adopt policies which earlier officials had warned against as infringing on what the Moplahs believed to be their vital interests.[24]

In their anxiety to protect the high-caste Hindu notables of Malabar from Moplah violence the British authorities, whilst rejecting the more provocative proposals for dealing with the Muslim community such as mass depor-

[18]J. F. Hall, Malabar Collector to Secretary, (Home) Judicial, 25 April 1919, L/PJ/6/1608, 4582/19, MJP No. 1310, 9 June 1919, P. 13.

[19]Court of Directors to Govt. of Madras, 17 April 1850; P/327/29, MJP No. 419, 3 July 1850, p. 2040. Warnings of the discontent liable to ensue from such a measure were frequently voiced by those in positions of authority whenever the policy was pressed. See, for example, proceedings of Foujdaree Udalut, 20 July 1842, P/326/20, MJP 2 August 1842, pp. 4380-81; minute of John Bird, member of Council of Governor of Madras, 24 August 1842, P/326/21, MJP October 1842, p. 4955; minute of J. F. Thomas, member of Council of Governor of Madras, n.d., *Moplah Outrages Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 233.

[20]W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 565.

[21]One of the Moplah Acts, Act XXIV of 1854, had already proscribed possession of the formidable 'war-knife,' the favourite weapon of the Moplah 'fanatic.'

[22]The notably 'fanatical' taluks of Ernad and Walluvanad plus the two adjacent ones having a large Moplah population, Ponnani and Calicut.

[23]W. Logan, Malabar Magistrate, to Chief Secretary, 1 May 1885, P/2634, MJP No. 1337, 21 May 1885, p. 100; W. Logan to Chief Secretary, 30 June 1885, P/2635, MJP No. 1830, 13 July 1885, p. 36.

[24]See, for example, the cautioning by W. Page, Malabar Commissioner, against giving a privileged dispensation to high-caste Hindu chiefs and their adherents to carry arms in exemption of a proposed prohibition, minute of 8 December 1798, P/380/74, BPSP 11 December 1798, pp. 4809-10. In fact, ever since a proposal of R. Rickards, a former Principal Collector of Malabar (to Lord Bentinck, President and Governor in Council, 20 February 1804; P/275/71, MRP 24 April 1804, p. 1036) the Hindu aristocracy of the district had been given a special dispensation to maintain their own armed guard.

tation from certain areas,[25] and the razing of mosques,[26] had thought it necessary to resort to measures the great object of which was, in the words of the originator of the Moplah Acts, 'to operate in terrorem.'[27] In attempting so to deter the commission of outbreaks the 'Jungle Moplah,' as the Muslim of interior south Malabar was sometimes called, was to be 'coerced into submission'[28] despite the hazards the policy entailed.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that on one occasion (in 1896) when a severe outbreak resulted in the recording of Moplah attitudes at the time of the disturbance an unmistakable sense of oppression at the hands of authority should have been revealed. The reports on the 1896 affair indicate that remarks such as 'there is no room for Mussalmans in the country,'[29] 'we Mussalmans can't abide here,'[30] 'there [is] no standing room in the country,'[31] 'we have had much oppression at the hands of the white folk,'[32] and 'a dozen of us Moplahs can't meet any where but we are at once suspected to be plotting an outbreak!'[33] were current among the Moplahs of the outbreak area whether participants or otherwise.

The intensified antagonism to the British administration in Malabar entailed in the policy of repressing Moplah 'fanaticism' was disclosed in the most unequivocal fashion by the two outbreaks in which a Collector became the object of attack. The murderers of H. V. Conolly in 1855 in the weeks leading up to the assassination appear to have made it clear that they were motivated to 'go out' to avenge the hounding from the country of Syed Fazl, a Moplah 'Syed' (descendant of the Prophet) thought to be fomenting outbreaks, an act for which the Collector bore the chief responsibility.[34]

[25]W. Logan to Chief Secretary, 7 February 1885; P/2634, MJP Nos. 1169-74, 2 May 1885, p. 25.

[26]C. Collett, Joint Magistrate to T. Clarke, District Magistrate, 20 October 1855; P/328/7, MJP No. 862, 27 November 1855, pp. 4618-19. Collett also wanted the destruction of the tomb of Syed Fazl's father at Tirurangadi (*ibid.*, p. 4619) and his proposals received the support of Clarke (Clarke to Secretary to Government, 23 October 1855, *ibid.*, p. 4605).

[27]T. L. Strange to Secretary, Judicial, 25 September 1852; P/327/60, MJP No. 483, 23 August 1853, p. 4635.

[28]The phrase is that of J. D. Sim, member of Council of Governor of Madras, minute, n.d.; P/403, MJP No. 1606-A/5A, 28 August 1874, no page numbers.

[29]Statement of Puzhutini Kunyayu, 14 March 1896, in preliminary report of Winterbotham, 10 April 1896, L/PJ/6/422, 996/96, p. 12.

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]Statement of Kaidhavalappan Kunyalan, n.d., *ibid.*, p. 16.

[32]Statement of Valia Mannil Chekkutty, Police Inspector, Malappuram Division, n.d., *ibid.*, p. 18. See also statement of wounded Moplah 'fanatic' Aruvirallan Mutthu, 13 March 1896, *ibid.*, p. 11, for further evidence that outbreak participants were voicing such sentiments.

[33]H. M. Winterbotham to Chief Secretary, 5 May 1896, L/PJ/6/433, 2069/96, MJP No. 1567, 30 September 1896, p. 56.

[34]C. Collett, Joint Magistrate to T. Clarke, Collector, 15 December 1855, P/328/10,

Moreover, during the six weeks that the assassins spent before the murder traversing an extensive tract of south Malabar 'with the undisguised design' of accounting for Conolly, they were 'fêted, encouraged, prayed with, and consecrated to the deed' by 'hundreds and probably . . . thousands' of Moplahs.[35] In the 1915 outbreak in which C. A. Innes narrowly escaped assassination, the perpetrators had felt impelled to attempt the Collector's life after he had acted to restore a young Tiyyan 'convert' to his relations.[36]

The 1915 outbreak, not uniquely, coincided with a period of unrest among the Ernad Moplahs when rumours of the impending downfall of the British raj were circulating.[37] In a series of contemporary confidential letters Collector Innes revealed that the 'fanatic zone' Moplah was retailing the 'news' that the British army had been destroyed and the King-Emperor captured and that the Germans and their allies were winning 'all along the line' and were on their way to Malabar to give the Moplahs there a free hand.[38] In fact, the rural Moplah population of interior south Malabar was highly sensitive to the slightest challenge to British power, real or insubstantial. Rumour of every armed collision with the forces of their imperial masters ignited hopes that the white man's rule in Malabar was about to be ended:[39]

MJP No. 36, 14 January 1856, pp. 117-18; Collett to Clarke, 7 January 1856, P/328/10, MJP No. 85, 28 January 1856, p. 444.

[35]Govt. of Madras to Govt. of India, 20 May 1856, P/328/14, MJP No. 545, 20 May 1856, pp. 3301-02. See also T. Clarke, Collector, to Chief Secretary, 24 December 1885, P/328/10, MJP No. 36, 14 January 1856, pp. 95-96, and Collett to Clarke, 15 December 1855, *ibid.*, p. 118.

[36]'Account of the Mappilla Outbreak in the Malabar District, Feb.-Mar. 1915,' annexure in Govt. of Madras to Secretary of State, 5 May 1915, L/PJ/6/1360, 2230/15 in 1003/15, p. 2; C. A. Innes, Malabar Magistrate, to Secretary, Judicial, 29 March 1915 (Conf.), MJP Nos. 2080-84, 3 September 1915 (Conf.), p. 11, Kozhikode Archives; statement of Tangayathil Alavi, 2 March 1915, *ibid.*, p. 40.

[37]'Account of the Mappilla Outbreak in the Malabar District, Feb.-Mar. 1915,' *loc. cit.*, pp. 2 and 4; Remarks of Innes, Acting District Magistrate, 10 March 1915 on South Malabar Police Administration Report for 1914, P1, II, 1913-24, p. 83; Police Administration Report of Madras Presidency for 1915, *ibid.*, p. 13; *Madras Mail*, 25 January 1915, p. 3; 'Week by Week' by 'Onlooker,' in *Cochin Argus*, 16 January 1915, MNNR 1915, L/R/15/120, p. 200; C. A. Innes [to Govt. of Madras?], 26 December 1914, MJP No. 360 (Conf.), 18 February 1915, p. 4, M.R.O.; Innes to 'Butterworth,' 30 December 1914, *ibid.*, pp. 12-13; extract from Malabar Collector's weekly report on the internal situation for week ending 3 February 1915, *ibid.*, p. 72.

[38]Innes to 'Butterworth,' 30 December 1914, Innes to 'Rajagopalachari,' 9 January 1915, Innes to 'Rajagopalachari,' 13 January 1915, Innes [to Govt. of Madras, presumably] 20 January 1915, Innes' weekly report on the internal situation of Malabar, 3 February 1915, MJP No. 360 (Conf.), 18 February 1915, pp. 12, 36, 61, 68, and 72, M.R.O.

[39]For example, Moplah hopes of British defeat in the Boer War and the Tirah campaign against the Afridis were depicted in an article, 'The Mappila's Powerful Imagination,' *Times*

hopes so desperate as to be, at times, insusceptible to reason.[40]

The form of response of the 'fanatic zone' Moplah to such reports depended on the seeming proximity and imminence of each threat to British rule. The far-off thunder of rumoured colonial wars might stimulate the kind of mass restlessness which was so often the signal for an outbreak.[41] This appears to have been the case in 1884-85 when fanatical preaching in Malabar about the exploits of the Sudanese Mahdi and the 'fulfilment of the Prophet's words' contributed to a state of excitement among the Moplahs which saw the occurrence of three outbreaks in a period of only 12 months.[42]

This instance of their reaction to report of a pretender to the style of the Muslim Messiah is by no means the only example of the attraction the idea of a heaven-sent deliverer had for the Moplahs. Belief in 'a Mahdi who is going to conquer the world for Islam'[43] seems to have been endemic among the Moplahs.[44] However, on occasions when, as in the final stages of defeat of the 1921-22 rebellion,[45] no earthly candidate appeared to be forthcoming to supply the means of salvation, predictions of the *imminent* arrival of an unspecified Mahdi who would save the Moplahs from the consequences of British rule could gain currency.

In another case of desperate resort to messianism, in the 1840s, 'a sect of enthusiasts' which sprang up among 'the lower orders of Moplahs' in one

of Malabar, 13 January 1900, MNNR 1899-1900, L/R/15/109, p. 18.

[40]In 1914 Collector Innes regarded the 'ignorant Mappillas' as 'amazingly perverse and stupid' in the tenacity with which they clung to the belief in British military defeat despite a lecture tour by a Moplah Sub-Assistant Inspector of Schools. Innes to 'Butterworth,' 30 December 1914, MJP No. 360 (Conf.), 18 February 1915, p. 17, M.R.O.

[41]For some occasions when this 'spirit of unrest' phenomenon was remarked, see Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 2 January 1844; P/326/35, MJP No. 69, 27 January 1844, p. 266; Malabar Magistrate to Chief Secretary, 12 July 1869, P/441/19, MJP No. 1278, 6 August 1869, p. 1314; Acting Chief Secretary to Consul-General, Cairo, 23 June 1871, P/399, MJP Nos. 831 and 832, 23 June 1871, p. 485; W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 595; report of F. Fawcett, Malabar Superintendant of Police for week ending 16 March 1895, 18 March 1895; MPolP. No. 282 (Conf.), 30 April 1895, para 12, M.R.O.; report of F. Fawcett, 5 June 1896, L/PJ/6/433, 2060/96, p. 105; *West Coast Spectator*, 30 December 1914, MNNR 1915, L/4/15/ 120, p. 90; report of R. H. Hitchcock, Superintendant of Police, S. Malabar, 5 November 1915, P/11 (Conf.), MJP No. 3008, 6 December 1915, p. 3; R. H. Hitchcock, *A History of the Malabar Rebellion*, 1921, pp. 32-33.

[42]W. Logan, Malabar Magistrate, to Chief Secretary, 17 July 1885, P/2635, MJP No. 2725, 8 October 1885, p. 6; see also W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 595.

[43]C. A. Innes, Malabar Magistrate, to Acting Chief Secretary, 30 September 1912, MJP No. 1780 (Conf.), 1 November 1912, p. 21, M.R.O.

[44]Interview with Variankunnath Ahamed, Vellangad, in the old Ernad *taluk*, 27 December 1974.

[45]R. H. Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, pp. 131 and 136.

part of the 'fanatic zone,'[46] bore the hallmarks of a millenarian movement[47] of what has been called the 'activist' type.[48] The members of this *Hal Ilakkam* (frenzy-raising) sect displayed a bizarre but evidently fervent belief in the miraculous. This manifested itself in a conviction of their being endowed with prodigious powers such as that of flight and the ability to conjure food from nothing.[49] Portents, including the springing up of mosques at night and complete darkness for a period of days, were also confidently anticipated.[50] It would appear that the adherents of the sect, the Halar, considered themselves to be in a period of preparation (involving activities such as proselytism, the abandoning of their secular occupations and the meeting together for devotional purposes many times a day[51]) for the seizure of control of the country. The arrival of a mysterious ship with the necessary arms, provisions, and money for 40,000 men was awaited in the belief that could that number in the meantime be recruited the country might be conquered.[52] The happy state that would thereby ensue was cast in terms typical of the 'Jungle Moplah's' conception of the millennium. After the final Armaggedon 'the Hindus would then totally vanish.'[53]

In fact, *Hal Ilakkam* seems to have posed only a trifling threat to British rule. It is true that the adherents of the sect seem to have shown an attitude of resistance to authority and impatience of subordination[54] resulting in cases of assault on government servants.[55] Even so few Moplahs seem to have been prepared to commit themselves to a body promising such an incredible means of impending salvation and the number of Halar may not have greatly exceeded 100.[56] The sect was in fact impracticable not only as a mass movement (since it required retirement from secular occupation)

[46]Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 4 November 1843; P/326/35, MJP No. 69, 27 January 1844, pp. 193-94.

[47]See Norman Cohn's definition in *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, p. 13.

[48]Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, p. 12.

[49]'Particulars of the Hal Ilakkam among the Mappillas in Chernad taluk and the neighbouring parts' by a 'native subordinate,' November 1843, in W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, pp. 561-62.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 562.

[51]Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 4 November 1843, *loc. cit.*, pp. 194 and 198. Significantly some of the devotions took place at the tomb of a rebel of 1800, Chemban Poker; 'Particulars etc.,' *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 562.

[52]'Particulars etc.,' *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 561-62.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 562. Not surprisingly this itself proved to be a powerful inducement for numbers of Hindus to convert.

[54]Conolly to Secretary, Judicial, 4 November 1843, P/326/35, MJP No. 6, *loc. cit.*, p. 200.

[55]*Ibid.*, pp. 201-02.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 194. On the other hand they were 'made much of' in the period when the mysterious ship was expected; 'Particulars etc.,' *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 562.

but also as a durable one (since the promised miracles inevitably ended in ludicrous failure[57]). Moreover, the death in 1844 (soon after the sect attracted the attention of the authorities) of the elder Tirurangadi Tangal[58] (the father of Syed Fazl and also suspected by the British of instigating outbreaks) in whose company the Halar apparently intended to engage in final battle with 'the Kafirs'[59] may well have helped doom the sect to extinction.

Moplah challenge to British rule more formidable than the millennial preparations of the Halar or the stylized defiance of the outbreak was likely to materialize only in the event of the Moplahs perceiving the raj to be shaken to its foundations on a sub-continental scale. Up to almost the end of the outbreak period of 1836-1919 such an episode occurred only once: in 1857-58. In fact, although Malabar has been said to have been in 'a very disaffected state' because of the Mutiny[60] nothing more challenging than an attempted outbreak in Ernad occurred.[61] So confident were the authorities about the state of the district that it was even considered safe to send the Malabar Police Corps, which had been raised to deal with Moplah outbreaks, to the nearby district of Canara to help in suppressing rebellion there.[62] Without doubt Malabar owed its relative tranquillity to the stunning impact on the Moplahs of the first implementation of the provisions of the Moplah Acts after the murder of Conolly in late 1855.[63] In the year before the outbreak of the Mutiny it was reported that 'so far from the Moplahs designing to injure anyone, they are themselves in great fear, and over-awed by the measures of Government.'[64]

In 1857-58 the British owed their good fortune in avoiding serious trouble in Malabar to the effect of a novel measure of repression on the 'Jungle Moplahs.' When, in the immediate post-First World War period, they faced

[57]'Particulars etc.,' *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 561-62.

[58]T. L. Strange, Special Commissioner to Secretary, Judicial, 25 September 1852; P/327/60, MJP No. 483, 23 August 1853, p. 4605. The *Tangal's* successor, Syed Fazl did not pretend to the character of a saintly *fakir* until 1849 (*ibid.*) and was therefore presumably not a suitable object for Halar hopes.

[59]'Particulars etc.,' *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 561.

[60]W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, p. 579.

[61]See W. Robinson, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Acting Chief Secretary, 8 October 1857; P/328/24, MJP No. 1359, 16 October 1857, p. 142.

[62]W. Robinson, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Chief Secretary, 9 April 1858; P/328/27, MJP No. 562, 30 April 1858, p. 149.

[63]W. Robinson, Acting Malabar Magistrate to Acting Chief Secretary, Judicial (draft), 11 July 1857, Malabar Collectorate Records, Vol. 7379, Police Letters, pp. 456-58, M.R.O.

[64]T. Clarke, Malabar Magistrate to Chief Secretary, 15 May 1856; P/328/15, MJP No. 607, 7 June 1856, p. 1664. See also Clarke to Chief Secretary, 24 December 1855; P/328/10, MJP No. 36, 14 January 1856, p. 106.

another great challenge to their control of the Indian subcontinent, the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement, they were not to be so fortunate.

ABBREVIATIONS

BPSP	Bombay Political and Secret Proceedings
MJP	Madras Judicial Proceedings
MNNR	Madras Native Newspaper Reports
MPolP	Madras Political Proceedings
MRO	Madras Record Office
MRP	Madras Revenue Proceedings

All notes refer to material consulted at the India Office Library, London, except where otherwise stated.

NOTES

Factory Labour During the Early Years of Industrialization—A Comment

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While Baniprasanna Misra's attempt to extract the maximum amount of quantifiable information from the Report of the Factory Commission of 1890 is a useful and necessary exercise, his views on the incidence of child labour and labour turnover need qualification.[1] The published report of the Commission did not divulge all the findings on child labour, which remained buried in the archives. In a long note given to the Legislative Department on 22 November 1890 A. S. Lethbridge, the chairman of the Commission, wrote:

> . . . The following facts have come to my knowledge during the time I was President of the Factory Commission, and they show how the work of factory inspection is now being done in India:
>
> (1) On the 11th October the Factory Commission visited the Empress Mill belonging to Messrs. Greaves, Cotton, and Co. at Bombay. Mr Lokhanday, the local representative, was a little late, and we waited for him in the office. When he joined us, he informed me that while walking up the public road he had seen a large number of little children running away from the mill we had come to examine.
>
> (2) Mr Cotton, Vice-president of the Millowners' Association . . . evidently had this fact reported to him, for on my next meeting him, he told me of what had actually happened to himself. He was expecting a friend who wanted to see one of his mills. On his friend's arrival Mr Cotton noticed a general stampede of the children from the other end of the mill building. On enquiry, he found that his friend, who wore brown top boots, had been mistaken for a former Factory Inspector who was in the habit of appearing in similar boots.

[1] B. Misra, 'Factory Labour During the Early Years of Industrialization: An Appraisal in the Light of the Indian Factory Commission, 1890,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XII, No. 3, July-September 1975, pp. 203-28.

(3) The appearance of the Factory Commission was usually followed by a general rush of children in all directions and their hiding away under the machines or running out of the building. It often required us to be very quick in our movements to catch some of the children we examined . . .

. . . (5) In the evidence recorded on the 23rd October (sc. at Kanpur), the boy Audhor, aged 11 or 12, in reply to question 10 said—'There are younger boys [than himself]. They come with the men. There are much smaller boys [than I am], but they have not come today. The Master has given them leave for today . . . .'[2]

On Lethbridge's note Sir Philip Hutchins, the Law Member of the Viceroy's Council, commented, 'We may thank Dr Lethbridge for bringing the matter to our notice, and especially for his discretion in having kept it out of his public report.'[3]

In the light of this evidence it can be argued that the figure of 31 factory labourers being under 15 years of age (out of a total of 96) as given in Table 3 of Misra's article considerably underestimated the incidence of child labour in 1890.[4] Since child labour was cheap one would expect their recruitment to have been prevalent from the beginning of the development of the textile industries, as indeed had been the case in Lancashire in the early years of the industrial revolution. Instead of assuming this Misra tries to argue the opposite when he says, 'up to around 1875 the problem of child labour in Indian factories was negligible.'[5] This cannot really be derived from Table 8 (which he cites as evidence) unless one postulates that most factory workers in 1890 had been continuously in factory work since they started earning their livelihood. In other words labour turnover had to be exceptionally low. Misra tries to accommodate this postulate by arguing, in the next section, that traditional views on high labour turnover were misconceived, but is not very convincing. On his own admission his cross-classification of the data (Table 9) cannot throw any light on labour turnover due to either reversion to the village, joining non-industrial occupations, or ceasing to work altogether. Yet each of these situations would fit the behaviour pattern of child factory labourers. Both child or adult workers might occasionally revert to the villages, boy labourers might try non-industrial occupations (like pankha-pulling, work in catering establishments, domestic service, etc.), and girl workers might (at least temporarily) cease to work because of marriage.

[2]National Archives of India, Legislative, April 1891, Part A 74-392, p. 76.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 83.
[4]Misra, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

BOOK REVIEWS

ALLEN C. KELLEY, JEFFREY G. WILLIAMSON and RUSSELL J. CHEETHAM, *Dualistic Economic Development, Theory and History*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1972.

Dualism has been a much discussed topic since the early fifties. Pioneering contributions have been made by Arthur Lewis, Richard Eckaus, and Dale Jorgenson. The present volume explores the topic further by presenting a more elaborate growth model which does not lend itself to simple analytic solutions.

The core model is a miniature Walrasion system involving two product markets and two factor markets. The two factors are labour and capital. Capital is regarded as a homogeneous physical magnitude which can be shifted without cost from one sector to another. Land is ignored as a factor of production. One of the products corresponds to what would be described as manufactures whereas the other product corresponds to agriculture. There is no unemployment and no departure from perfect competition. Thus far, the model would appear to be no different from the simple Solow-Uzawa two-sector model of growth.

Can such a model be used to throw any light on the phenomenon of dualism? Our authors say, 'yes,' provided we make a few additional assumptions. Let us assume that the elasticity of substitution in 'industry' always lies between zero and one whereas the corresponding elasticity coefficient for 'agriculture' always exceeds unity and never approaches infinity. Assume further that technological progress is of the disembodied factor augmenting type with a labour-saving bias in industry and a labour-using bias in agriculture. Also assume that an agricultural population grows faster than a population engaged in 'industry.' With these additional assumptions supplemented on the demand side by a linear expenditure system which is modified to make the industrial product a non-essential item in consumption, they seek to demonstrate that the model can replicate most of the features highlighted in the literature on dualistic growth processes.

However, since the model is too complex to permit any closed form solutions, and since the behaviour of a crucial magnitude, i.e., the relative increase rate in the capital-labour ratio measured in efficiency units, is not unambiguously determined, they have to rely on simulating the model with the help of 'plausible,' i.e., 'non-econometrically guessed' parameter values based on available data relating to low-income countries in South Asia.

In the special case, where no demographic dualism is present, the basic dynamics reduces to that of the standard 'Uzawa model.' If certain additional restrictive assumptions are made, the model reduces to the well-known Jorgenson model. However, in this case much of the additional insight is lost because Jorgenson does not include capital as a factor of production in agriculture.

The simulations carried out by the authors are quite interesting. There is a fairly extensive comparison between the simulated economy and the record of growth worked out for Japan and Ohkawa and his associates. The Japanese economy appears to have performed systematically better in terms of growth rate than the simulated model. There are also certain additional possibilities which are generally missed by the simpler models which the present volume brings out. These relate to the question of urbanization and the treatment of technological change. Most important, the model is capable of throwing light on the phenomenon of 'phase changes' without assuming changes in parameter values. The disequilibrium exercises are particularly interesting in their treatment of demand effects although here the discussion is very sketchy.

Quite apart from the basic limitations attached to all neoclassical models that assume a single capital good, disembodied technical change, etc., there are a few important issues which, I believe, have been largely ignored by the authors. There is an assumption underlying the whole analysis that the real wage rate is always greater than or equal to the minimum subsistence level. This would appear to be a particularly restrictive assumption, especially when the models do not permit any unemployment. There is no economic demographic reasoning given in this book which would justify the assumption. This naturally rules out 'trap' situations, which leads to a serious loss in terms of understanding.

Secondly, it is assumed that technological change is inherently labour-using in agriculture while it is inherently labour-saving in industry. This assumption, along with the other specifications, rules out the Preobrazhensky dilemma which has figured so prominently in the discussion of dualism. Once again, this almost by definition eliminates some of the most crucial choices that a policy-maker needs to make in situations characterized by dualism.

Finally, there is no discussion of foreign trade nor of the services sector. These are obviously omissions which taken literally may take away some of the motivation behind the study of dualism.

The final point relates to the purpose of the model-building exercise. The models dealt with in this book are not so simple and incisive that they can be regarded as illuminating parables to help the policy-maker in a crucial area of choice. Nor are they comprehensive enough to capture all the relevant characteristics connected with dualism, some of which have been mentioned

above. They fall into an intermediate category. Furthermore, most of the interesting results are based on simulation studies and we are not always sure how robust these conclusions are. All this leaves the reader with a somewhat uneasy feeling, unless he is a strong believer in the Friedman methodology. It would appear to the present reviewer that further gains to understanding will come through a detailed analysis of several concrete historical situations. It is hard to decide amongst alternative strategic simplifications merely on the basis of simulation experiments, valuable as they are.

S. CHAKRAVARTY

JAN BREMAN, *Patronage and Exploitation: Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, USA, 1974. (Distributed by UBS Publishers' Distributors Pvt. Ltd., Delhi.) Pp. xvi+287. $ 15.00.

So much has been written on the relations between landlords and agricultural labourers that it would seem further research can hardly throw new light on the problem. Yet, with intensive fieldwork in a small region in South Gujarat, Jan Breman is able to reveal nuances in this relationship which improve our understanding of the situation, and alters the stereotype images based on superficial observations.

The study is concerned with the *hali* system of bonded labour characterizing the relations between the Anavil Brahmin landowners and Dubla agricultural labourers, as they prevailed in the past and have evolved during the recent period.

Servitude as a labour relationship is a complex phenomenon. The author suggests that the bondage of the *hali* Dublas to their landowning Anavil masters cannot be explained in purely economic terms. The landowner's need for an assured supply of labour, which he could obtain on a low subsistence wage because of the helplessness and indebtedness of the Dublas, offers only a partial explanation of the *hali* system. The landlord and the *hali* were not simply employer and employee. This was only one aspect of the relationship. Elements of prestige and patronage were equally dominant. The Anavil landlord's need of the services of a farm servant and his wife was in part ritually and in part socially determined. His prestige in the village was determined by the number of servants he employed and not by his efficiency as a cultivator. 'The question before the Anavil landowner of the past was not how many servants he needed but how many he could provide for.' A reduction in the number of *halis* maintained by the landlord was often considered as evidence of decline in his prosperity and hence his prestige.

In spite of the servitude it involved, the *hali* system provided security from starvation to the farm labourer when his labour was not needed, and especially when the crops failed. The Dubla himself, in fact, preferred permanent attachment. 'Servitude was sought rather than avoided' and 'the *hali* did his best to maximise his indebtedness.' This seemingly perverse attitude was wholly sensible in the prevailing circumstances when the choice was between servitude and starvation. The *hali* knew that he would not be able to repay the debt in his lifetime, so it did not matter whether the debt was Rs 200 or Rs 400. The helplessness of the Dublas was so total that becoming a *hali* did not involve social degradation in the eyes of his fellowmen. 'Not only he was not held in contempt, a Dubla was gratified if his daughter married a *hali*. Only then he was sure she would be provided for.'

Scholars generally agree that during the past few decades, drastic changes have taken place in the relations between landlords and agricultural labourers in South Gujarat which could be described as disintegration of the *hali* system. However, explanations of the factors responsible for this change differ. The author rejects the explanation that the *hali* system disappeared as a result of accelerated expansion of the population of agricultural labourers, thus relieving the landowner of the need to ensure a regular supply of labour. The rise in the cost of recruiting and maintaining a *hali*, along with the deterioration in the landlord's economic standing is also rejected as an explanatory factor. A more plausible explanation, according to the author, is a drastic change in the cropping pattern—from a highly labour-intensive crop like sugarcane to cultivation of a mango crop. An equally important factor was the increase in the opportunities for farm servants to obtain a livelihood outside agriculture, permanently or through seasonal migration. The author again emphasizes that 'economic changes aside, factors of a political-social nature also played a role in the disintegration of the *hali* system.' Also, since the beginning of the century, the patron-client dimensions in the relationship between landlords and agricultural labourers has lost much of its importance. 'The vertical pattern of relationships that was characteristic of the traditional situation was replaced by mutually antagonistic attitudes.'

Does this mean that the Dublas, formerly bound farm servants, have now become free day labourers? The author takes a cautious view on this issue and distinguishes between the element of servitude and that of patronage in this relationship. He observes: 'to suggest a transition from bondage to freedom is to give an incomplete picture of the process of change that has taken place.' He attaches greater importance to the elimination of the element of patronage in the relationship between landlords and agricultural labourers in South Gujarat.

The rest of the book consists of an account of intensive field investigation in two villages, distinguished mainly by the differing cropping pattern and intensity of its labour requirements. By and large, the field investigation

confirms the analysis presented earlier by the author. In some ways, the conditions of farm labourers have worsened. 'Depatronization' has left the agricultural labourers in a condition of isolation. Landlords are no longer prepared to accept responsibility for the well-being of the Dublas who depend upon them. They are dependent on the landlords as much as the *halis* were, but no longer receive the aid and protection their predecessors received. Unlike in the past, the Dublas consider their dependence dishonourable and degrading. Unfortunately for them, the government has not been able to provide the protection and social security which the landlord provided in the past, albeit by enforcing servitude. The minimum wage legislation has remained inoperative and the abolition of bonded labour—as a part of the 20-point Programme—is not likely to fare better. Leftist political parties have also failed to effectively mobilize their dissatisfaction—perhaps with the exception of the PSP in land agitation—whose impact seems to be underestimated by the author. In the political power structure, the hegemony of the Anavils is undiminished. The radicalization of the economic programme in favour of the weaker sections is not likely to materially affect their position, since 'the old elite has managed to accommodate itself anew to a governing party.' Further, 'the Dublas' hamlets have become the vote banks of the regional leaders of the N.C.P., most of whom derive from the higher social strata.' The author does not think much of the *ashrams*, and the *halpati seva sangh* either, because they are primarily concerned with education and social reform, with accent on 'adjustment rather than awareness'—perhaps not a fair observation. The author makes a sly statement and hedges it with a disclaimer: 'They [Dublas] regard the *halpati seva sangh* members who function as brokers and mobilizers as agents of the upper castes, but this is not always true.' The *sangh* may not have preached or encouraged class struggle, but the author's assertion that in the Gandhian view 'any schooling to promote class consciousness and class struggle is not so much tactically injudicious as sinful' is either made out of ignorance or betrays a pronounced ideological bias which one did not suspect in his earlier analysis.

The author concludes on a sombre note. 'The economic situation of the Dublas, miserable as it was, has deteriorated even more.' And finally, 'the situation does not offer much hope for the near future.'

M. L. Dantwala

Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, Pp xii + 552, Rs 50.

Dr Sumit Sarkar's massive and authoritative study of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal is a major contribution to the study of Indian nationalism. Based on painstaking research, at points it rises to the distinction of a work of literature.

The research behind this work has not merely unearthed important private papers; it has also made effective use of contemporary Bengali literature in a way which should stimulate further efforts in this direction. By assimilating this literature, especially the contemporary works of Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Sarkar has produced an extremely sensitive portrait of the age. He is at his best in describing the currents of thought and the ideological conflicts of the Swadeshi era. The rich intellectual and cultural contributions of the age are described with a sensitivity, and the days of Swadeshi endeavours are recalled with a vividness, which makes this a fine work of historical literature.

Two contrasting but by no means—as the author successfully demonstrates—irreconcilable impressions emerge from this study of the Swadeshi era at the beginning of the twentieth century: on the one hand, 'a sense of richness and promise, of national energies bursting out in diverse streams of political activity, intellectual debate and cultural efflorescence'; on the other hand, 'a feeling of disappointment, even anticlimax, at the blighting of so many hopes.' At the end of the era, when the techniques of mass struggle had given way to communal riots and terrorist plots, and the boycott of British manufactures had subsided, the grip of imperial interests remained as strong as ever. Swadeshi enterprise had managed to make no serious inroads into the stronghold of British capital—the inter-linked complex of tea, jute, and coal that continued to dominate the economy of Eastern India.

Why did the early promise of mass participation—held out by meetings and demonstrations, boycott of foreign goods, national schools, passive resistance, and labour unions and strikes—fade out within a short span of three years? Dr Sarkar identifies two crucial areas in which the movement failed: in the effort to evolve a radical agrarian programme for drawing in the peasants and in the attempt to integrate the two major communities in Bengal. The problems of peasant apathy and communal antagonism were interrelated. The Muslim separatist movement was anti-landlord and anti-moneylender, and in East Bengal both categories were predominantly Hindu.

Yet this oversimplifies the situation. More than three decades earlier, when peasant disturbances had broken out in Pabna and elsewhere in East Bengal, there had been no communal overtones to the agrarian struggle. Clearly, in the intervening period a new social and political trend had set in to change the situation. As Dr Sarkar points out, 'The communal minded *maulvi*, *mukhtar* or petty official represented in fact a definite trend within Muslim rural society, brought into existence by the spread of education stimulating social ambition among the upper stratum of the peasantry now becoming relatively prosperous through jute cultivation.' It was precisely

this better-off *jotedar* section of the tenants, who were demanding the right of free transfer of *jotes* during the Mymensingh riots of 1906, that were most susceptible to revivalist propaganda by the literate *maulvi* element. Since the richer peasantry controlled a large portion of rural credit and were engaged in fierce rivalry for local power with the socially superior Hindu gentry, the tensions in rural society were a good deal more complex than the anti-moneylender and anti-landlord rhetoric of the Muslim political leaders (headed by the Nawab of Dacca, one of the biggest zamindars of East Bengal) implied.

Paradoxically, it was in East Bengal, where communal riots ended the promise of mass struggle, that the Swadeshi movement was strongest. In Calcutta, a main centre of nationalist agitation since the Mutiny, the national volunteers did not manage to recruit the disorderly mob elements that were to play a vital role in 1921; nor was there an effective link-up with the ephemeral trade unions of the Swadeshi era. In the street clashes of October 1907, the volunteers were beaten up by the lower classes. City-bred youths prudently stayed aloof. Students in Calcutta hostels from the *mofussil*—apparently from East Bengal—were the main recruits. Not merely in Calcutta, but throughout West Bengal, Swadeshi agitators were much less active than in East Bengal. Dr Sarkar's account shows that in East Bengal the agitation was strongest in areas of *bhadralok* concentration, such as Bikrampur in Dacca and Jhalakati in Bakarganj. There were equally prominent *bhadralok* areas in Nadia and Bankura districts, in West Bengal—why did these districts remain so quiet? The differences in the social and political geography of Bengal need to be more adequately explored before we can expect an answer to this question.

Even in East Bengal the volunteer movement did not extend beyond respectable society to the peasants. New techniques of mass contact were used during the Swadeshi era. The effects remained confined to the educated *bhadralok*. This, however, was not a matter of small achievement, considering that according to the caste-oriented definition of *bhadralok* adopted by some Western scholars, the respectable folk constituted as much as ten per cent of Bengali society—a proportion substantially higher than that of comparable social categories, i.e., the Chitpavans of Maharashtra or the urban Punjabi Hindus (both categories were politically active in the Swadeshi era). This highlights the need for a comparative study of regional politics in the Swadeshi era throughout India—there were pockets of intense agitation in Poona and Bombay, the towns and canal colonies of the Punjab, and in some coastal towns of the deep South. This quickened pace of political activity in certain restricted areas clearly had important consequences for the Indian National Congress, which split raggedly down the middle in 1907 as a result of political developments in Bengal and Maharashtra.

The fundamental point of view which clearly distinguishes this work from Western studies of comparable quality is a welcome re-emphasis on the overall climate and ideology of nationalism, as contrasted with the minute analysis of particular interests which characterizes the works of J. H. Broomfield, J. A. Gallagher, and A. Seal. Both approaches can, of course, be fruitful in explaining the diverse strands of a complex process of political change. One senses in Dr Sarkar's approach to labour unrest and trade union leadership a faint reluctance to dwell on the less savoury and more ridiculous aspects of the movement—his evidently thorough mastery of the private papers of these labour leaders makes it clear that he could not possibly be unaware of these aspects. The same tendency leads him—in spite of his evident Marxist disapproval of terrorist strategy—to treat the revolutionary terrorist movement with unexpected sympathy, to the extent of underplaying its demoralizing brutality, just as he plays down the mercenary streak in the labour movement. His refusal to give sufficient weight to the factional alignments of political leaders hampers his explanation of the unexpectedly nationalist attitude of the Bengal Landholders' Association, which took considerable interest in promoting Swadeshi enterprise and national education, in strong contrast with the loyalist British Indian Association. But then the Bengal Landholders' Association was a breakaway movement of zamindars with strong *mofussil* links, who had been ejected from the British Indian Association (like *ryots*—it was commented in the press—from their tenancies) in a battle for control of the executive committee, by the triumphant Calcutta coterie of perpetually absentee landlords.

For explaining the ideological divisions and shifts within the Swadeshi movement, Dr Sarkar has adopted a very illuminating four-fold distinction between the moderate tradition, constructive Swadeshi on the lines suggested by Tagore, the passive resistance model, and revolutionary terrorism. His analysis of these different ideological trends, which alternately gained prominence in successive stages of the Swadeshi movement (though not in a clear chronological sequence), imparts revealing insights into the dynamics of the movement. As such it improves considerably upon a simple moderate-extremist dichotomy, which has been challenged, but in a very different context, by Gordon Johnson in an unpublished Cambridge thesis. Dr Johnson has argued that the moderates and the extremists, who belonged to the same narrow interest groups in spite of wearing conveniently different ideological labels, were in fact set apart mainly by factional considerations. Dr Sarkar's treatment, quite appropriately in the opinion of this reviewer, assigns the sovereign role of ideology in explaining the dynamics of conflict within the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Significantly, however, he comments that the economic thought of the extremists was based on that of the moderates and he explicitly concludes that the social basis of the moderate and extremist groups within the movement was not different, at any rate at the level of leadership. In his analysis there is a tendency to minimize the compulsions of factional alignments which interlocked in complex manner with the ideological trends so ably analyzed in the work. Certainly political alignments often cut across ideological beliefs, however genuinely held; and even a casual glance at the camps of both the moderates and the extremists reveals that there were almost as many factions as there were leaders, just as (Leonard Gordon's recent study is revealing in this respect) there were as many *dals* within the Jugantar and Anushilan 'Parties' as there were 'dadas.'

In the analysis of Indian nationalism, Dr Sarkar's most impressive achievement has been to demonstrate the crucial role of ideology as a binding force. Nevertheless, his is not a work of uncritical adulation. His massive narrative reveals in its cumulative detail sufficient awareness of the complexities of the situation to suggest that expedient alignments were not incompatible in the short run with long-term commitment to ideologically defined goals.

RAJAT K. RAY

H. B. VASHISHTA, *Land Revenue and Public Finance in Maratha Administration*, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1975.

Fairly detailed descriptive accounts of the land revenue and public finance system of the Marathas are available since the days of Mountstuart Elphinstone, the first Deccan Commissioner of the British Government. From Elphinstone's *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa* (Calcutta, 1821) to this day, we have some half a dozen books in English language presenting descriptive accounts of the Maratha revenue system. For the furtherance of knowledge in this subject, however, it is now really necessary that the researchers, especially those newly entering into the field, penetrate deeper into the subject, and confine themselves to a particular aspect or period. Fortunately, as is well-known, there is abundant source material on the subject, mainly at the Alienation Office at Poona. Apart from *rumals* (bundles) containing diplomatic and other correspondence, there are about ten thousand classified *rumals*, pertaining to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, containing government account papers of various sorts—*roj-kird* (cash journals), *ghadni* (departmental ledgers), *prant ajamas* (regional budget papers), land revenue accounts, etc.

Unfortunately, in his present book, H. B. Vashishta has not done justice to the subject as he does not appear to have consulted any of the source material in the original. He has chosen an easy, but less useful, path by compiling under various heads the descriptive accounts already appearing in a few well-known works—especially Surendranath Sen's *Administrative*

System of the Marathas (Calcutta, 1925), and V. T. Gune's *The Judicial System of the Marathas* (Poona, 1953).

Here again, even if we restrict ourselves to material published in the English language, the author has failed to take notice of some important works, as, for example, Elphinstone's *Report*, mentioned above. Some information contained in the volumes of the *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* (Bombay, 1930-1934), and *Selections from the Satara Rajas' and the Peshwas' Diaries* (Bombay, 1906-11) is, no doubt, used here and there, but it adds very little to what Sen and Gune have already said. The author has relied so much on Sen and Gune that often even works like the *Bombay Gazetteer* have been referred to 'as quoted in Sen's *Administrative System of the Marathas*', or, to mention another type of such reliance, in chapter four, footnotes number nine to fourteen refer to different well-known authors, but all of them appear 'as quoted in Gune's *Judicial System of the Marathas*.' Thus, there is hardly any new material or analysis and interpretation in the book, which the reviewer would like to examine and criticize.

The book covers the period *c.*1650 to 1818, and is divided into ten chapters. The first four are introductory ones. Chapters four and five are on land revenue, chapters six to ten deal with various other heads of revenue—customs, excise, taxes, fees, licences, etc. Although in the title of the book the word 'public finance' is used, the chapters deal only with revenue, and nowhere with the expenditure side of public finance.

A glossary of Maratha revenue terms is given at the end—prepared with the help of glossaries appearing in Sen's and Gune's works. The book does not contain any bibliography, nor any list of works consulted. The index is very small and misleading. The footnotes are far from satisfactory, with all possible defects, inaccuracies, and mistakes.

V. D. DIVEKAR

K. SUBRAMANIAM, *Brahmin Priest of Tamilnadu*, Wiley Eastern Private Limited, Delhi, 1947, pp. 159, Rs 40.

The Brahmins of Tamil Nadu are composed mainly of three different sects viz., the Smarthas, the Srivaishnavas, and the Madhvas. These can be divided into lay and priestly Brahmins. The latter would include two categories: those who officiate at rituals to be performed at homes and those who conduct worship in temples. The book deals with the former category of priests belonging to the Smartha sect of the Brahmins.

The book gives a good deal of information regarding the recruitment and training in the *Veda Pathasalas*, the trainees' functions as domestic priests and the rewards they get for these functions. It deals with their self-image and status in the changing society— status in the wider society in general and in the Brahmin society in particular. The first-person accounts of the priests add richness and depth to the study.

The author notes that students join the *Veda Pathasalas* mostly for two reasons—either they are too poor to afford secular education (while in *Pathasalas* one gets the minimum necessities of life free of cost) or they are failures from secular schools. They take to vedic training because 'some education is better than none.' It is small wonder that most of them do not bother to study the intellectual aspects of the vedas. Rather they concentrate on those aspects, such as vedic rote recitation and *Kalpa Sutras* which would equip them to conduct domestic rituals and thus help make some money. As for the rewards, there is an increasing tendency to give payment or gifts in cash rather than in kind. And this cash payment often tends to be a merely symbolic payment and far from the worth of the payment in kind prescribed in the texts. For instance, a coconut and cash up to rupees five is treated as equivalent to the gift of a cow, and a piece of sandalwood to land. Their average earning amounts to barely Rs 70 to 80 per month. The first-person accounts are full of their economic problems. Most of them are getting their sons educated in secular institutions and prefer to have sons-in-law from secular professions. They themselves seek additional income from secular fields (insurance agency, chit fund, bills and tax collection, agriculture, cattle breeding, bee-keeping). All of them speak of decreasing regard for vedic knowledge among the lay Brahmins. And it is this relation between the lay Brahmin and the priestly Brahmin that is most important in understanding the subject. The priests complain of dual standards on the part of the lay Brahmin: while the latter attach very little importance to the rituals prescribed for them they expect the priest to lead a life of 'high thinking and austere living.' And the priests are prohibited by the texts to demand or bargain. Many priests resent the treatment meted out to them by the lay Brahmin but they put up with it due to economic compulsions.

The question then arises, 'is the profession dying?' The author does not think so. There are serious attempts to rejuvenate vedic knowledge and preserve it. The attempts of Kanchi Sankaracharya are noteworthy in this respect. However, even these do not concern themselves with the material aspects of the problems of priesthood. The author concludes that the priests 'stand precariously on "stairs of sand." But the stairs, it seems, would hold out for some considerable time to come.' Her conclusion may be right, but it does not follow from her data. She does note the fact that the lay Brahmins continue to perform the important rituals for which they need the priests. Nevertheless a systematic consideration of the attitudes of lay Brahmins to priestly Brahmins and to the rituals would have added to the depth of the study. For the role of the lay Brahmin who needs and employs priests for the performance of certain rituals is crucial to understand the present and future of the priests. The author tends to confine herself entirely to the priestly Brahmin category and seems not to relate it adequately to the lay Brahmin and wider society. Another area to which attention could have been paid is the nature of interaction between the priests and the non-Brahmins. Also the sample seems to be too small for the conclusions to apply to the whole of Tamil Nadu. The book gives the impression of being sketchy. Nevertheless it is valuable not only as an academic exercise but may also prove useful to those concerned with the preservation of sanskritic tradition.

UMASHANKARI

S. N. SINHA, *Subah of Allahabad Under the Mughals (1580-1707)*, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 1974, Pp. v+238, Rs 30.

The idea of writing regional and provincial histories of medieval India is of comparatively recent origin. A few books written during the last decade indicate a healthy trend in this regard but none of these can be called the study of a particular provincial unit in the Mughal administrative set-up. Dr S. N. Sinha must be congratulated for his pioneer and microscopic study of some of the aspects of the *subah* of Allahabad.

The first four chapters of the book deal entirely with political history from Akbar's expansion and consolidation of authority to the second half of Aurangzeb's reign when the established Mughal authority received a setback from the Bundelas under Chhatrasal. The failure of Aurangzeb's successors to deal effectively with the uprisings helped the Bundelas to carve out an independent principality for themselves from this *subah*. This fifth chapter makes a brief but succinct survey of Mughal administration while the sixth, the last chapter, deals with economic conditions—more of the provincial government than the people as such. The book also contains fairly good data in the form of seven appendices about the names of *subedars*, *faujdars*, and *quiledars* of the *parganas*; average agricultural efficiency of the *subah* based on fifteen *dasturs* or revenue units; and lastly *pargana*-wise information on the military and revenue aspects of the *subah*.

Akbar's creation of Ilahabas or Ilahabad or modern Allahabad in 1580 as one of the twelve units known as the *subah* has been attributed to political necessity rather than administrative convenience. Jaunpur had been a centre of rebellions and in order to keep it under permanent control Akbar merged it with two other convenient units: Kara Manikpur and part of Bandhogarh. Likewise, the choice of Allahabad as the capital city of the *subah* was primarily due to its geographic and strategic situation, i.e., the Jamuna connected it with the imperial capital while the city as such was on the imperial highway to Bengal.

The author points out that before 1582 (and also after) the *subah* was in a state of political turmoil due to various uprisings. Such uprisings formed an integral part of medieval history. Akbar's genius in converting the rebellious area into an administrative unit did lessen such uprisings after 1582 but could not stop them altogether. The author does not clearly indicate why the peasants supported the zamindars and not the *jagirdars*, nor whether the rebels tried to identify themselves with fellow rebels in other areas of the *subah*. He also does not say anything definite on the factors behind the Fatwa of Maulana Muhammad Yazdi (p. 24), the Sadr of Jaunpur, once the centre of Islamic education. Was it not that the Fatwa of Maulana against Akbar was politically motivated? The Maulana was openly in league with Mir Muizzulmulk and might also have secretly conspired with Masoom Khan Farankhudi in 1581. It seems quite probable that the Sadr was making Islam an instrument to further the cause of the rebels, especially at a time when the Emperor was confronted with a serious threat of invasion from Mirza Hakim from Kabul. The fact that after this incident there was some tranquillity until Prince Salim's rebellion (which occurred for a different reason) supports the hypothesis. Again, in the light of these circumstances the author's statement that Sadrs were held in high esteem needs rethinking. The malpractices of the Sadr and the Qazis had shaken Akbar's faith in them and this is one good reason why the Mughal Emperors gave more powers to the Governors, including strict vigilance over the Judicial officers of the state.

The author's statement that the Qazis' jurisdiction was only confined to civil cases and religious affairs is doubtful because of the following reasons: (*a*) Almost all the Muslim jurists agree on the independent position and manifold functions of the Qazis. To deprive the Qazis of criminal functions is to subordinate their independent position. (*b*) According to *Selected Waqai of the Deccan*, published by the Central Records Office of the Hyderabad Government (1953), the Qazi decided not only civil cases but took up criminal proceedings. He was also responsible for holding enquiries and conducting investigation in criminal cases. There are many examples in Mughal history when Qazis heard criminal cases in every important part of the empire, though at times help was also sought from the Pandits if one or more of the parties in question happened to be Hindus (cf. M. B. Ahmad, *Administration of Justice in Mughal India*; Joseph Schact, *Introduction to Islamic Law*).

To say that the Islamic law under the Mughals was not properly codified does not seem to be wholly correct (p. 93). In this regard a definite attempt was made by Aurangzeb in *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* which, *inter alia*, also discusses the position of the Qazis.

Referring to *faujdari* areas the author accepts the view of Moreland that 'within a *subah* there were two separate divisions entirely distinct from each other, one *sarkar* for fiscal purposes and the other a purely administrative division under the *faujdar*' (p. 102). While rejecting the view of P. Saran, the author should have substantiated his stand with evidence and arguments. Taking a few stray instances of some *sarkars* falling under a *faujdar* cannot make a complete picture of the province. Such appointments might have been a temporary phase to suppress rebellious elements in those particular *sarkars*. In the normal course of events, the head of the *sarkar* looked after both administrative and revenue affairs while the *faujdar* of a *faujdari* looked after its administration primarily from the military point of view. From the duties assigned to the *Kotwal* (pp. 102-103) it is clear that he had inherited a few of the duties of the *muhtassib* besides his own duties and powers.

The author has not discussed how 'the *zamindari* in the period under review was regarded as an article of private property' (p. 107). It would have been useful if he had examined the extent to which proprietary right was over the land and to what extent and manner the property consisted of the commission for revenue collection. While referring to the castes of the zamindars the author attempts to compare the different castes of zamindars as found in the *Ain* with those mentioned in the *District Gazetteers* of the early twentieth century, and concludes that 'out of twenty-eight castes of zamindars, only seven castes continued in their respective *parganas*, while others in due course of time were expelled or migrated to some other places.' However, it would have been more convincing if the author had studied this aspect in greater detail before arriving at his final observation that 'the social heterogeneity of their class must have increased still further the sale and purchase of *zamindari*. One clan or caste when it gained power expelled the established one till another adopted the same method. The victorious caste crystallized into *zamindari* right' (p. 115).

The author's collection of revenue statistics over the period 1594 to 1707 is interesting and useful but he has not examined the different questions that emerge from these figures. In the provincial revenue system, land revenue formed a major source of income. Dealing with the crops the author observes that 'a comparative study of principal crops mentioned in the *Ain* and in the *District Gazetteers* concerned shows a continuity of crop-cultivation up to the early years of the twentieth century. Such crop-continuity is found in the case of wheat, barley, peas, linseed and poppy among the *rabi* crops and cotton, rice, *kodon*, sugarcane, etc., among the *kharif* crops.' The studies of these regions are useful in linking the medieval with the modern.

There is a detailed season-wise break-up of a number of crops cultivated, in different areas; the average agricultural efficiency crop-wise, season-wise, and area-wise, figures for the total cultivated area, assessed revenue, and also the *suyurghal*. These details are based on the *Ain-i-Akbari*. A note on the available sources would have helped in further investigation and comparison for the

period 1605 to 1707.

The author has mentioned all the sources of revenue of the *subah* including minor ones but has not mentioned anything about *jizya* that might have been collected from the *subah* at least between 1679 and 1707.

The bibliography consists both of Persian and non-Persian sources but a short note on each would have enhanced their value. The author should also have added a note on the nature of the Allahabad Documents and pointed out the extent to which they refer to the *subah* of Allahabad and the extent to which they pertain to the *subah* of Awadh, which would have cleared certain doubts about the sources. Such minor shortcomings are bound to occur in a pioneer work which has filled a major gap in the historiography of medieval India. The book deserves the attention of all scholars of medieval India.

U. N. Day

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