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THE INDIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY REVIEW

Volume XIII July-September 1976 Number 3

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History Association
Delhi School of Economics
University Enclave
Delhi 110007

Business Correspondence

Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd
5 Ansari Road
New Delhi 110002

Subscription Rates

Institutions: Rs 60 \$ 16 £ 6
Individuals: Rs 20 \$ 8 £ 3



Published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd,
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

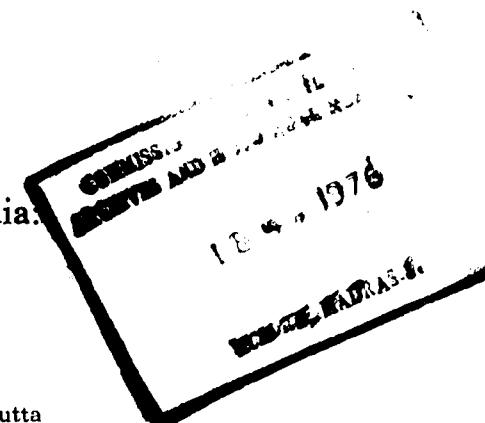
Printed at Sanjay Composers and Printers,
Green Park, New Delhi 110016

*The Indian Economic and
Social History Review, Vol. XIII, No. 3*

**Factory Labour in Eastern India:
Sources of Supply, 1855-1946
Some Preliminary Findings***

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For a long time it was held that landless wage-earners emerged in India only after the British colonial impact on her economy. Another proposition, closely related to the former, held that spatial mobility was unknown to the population prior to British rule.

Recent historical research has revealed the unsoundness of such views. Pre-colonial Indian society had not been able to dispense with different kinds of labourers including both rural and urban semi-proletarian elements hiring themselves out against wage payment. Further, considerable historical evidence is available to indicate that for a variety of economic, political and social reasons, a large number of people including peasants and artisans moved from one place to another. Even long-distance migration was not totally unknown.

These findings are sometimes used to emphasize that the changes which had taken place in colonial India were basically of an evolutionary nature. The social process of the formation and growth of the industrial working class is often considered as a further development of the existing labour force. Such a view implies that the process involved no qualitative change in the form of existence of social labour.

But there is some evidence to indicate that even during the period between the decline of effective central as well as regional Indian

* I have benefited greatly from discussions with many of my colleagues at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, particularly Dipesh Chakravarty, Asok Sen, Sunil Muni, Barun De, and Nripendranath Bandopadhyaya.

An earlier version of this paper was presented to a Seminar at the Centre held in March 1975. Thanks are due to the participants in the Seminar, especially to Sanat Bose, Satyesh Chakravarty, Anil Chatterjee, H.K. Chaturvedi, Sandip Sen, and Gautam Chattopadhyay for their fruitful suggestions.

I am also grateful to the anonymous referee of *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* and Dr V. B. Singh (Lucknow University) for their detailed comments and criticisms.

Rita Banerjee and Partha Mazumdar, technical assistants at the Centre, rendered considerable help in computing and putting in order a lot of material.

political authority and the establishment of direct foreign political domination certain significant changes began to take place in relation to different aspects of the labour force found at the different centres in which the European Companies, and particularly the English East India Company, operated. With the emergence and growth of Calcutta as the colonial metropolis in eastern India, the region first to come under foreign subjugation, further changes took place in the structure of the labour force. The increasing demand for labour from an enclave sector led to a considerable congregation of different types of semi-proletarian labourers in Calcutta and in the other port cities and major administrative centres. By mid-nineteenth century there was a sizeable urban labour force working for hire. In the main, they were the carriers of burden, the *coolies* as they were commonly called. But it remains to be investigated whether this labour force differed in any qualitative sense from the urban labour force found in the pre-colonial days.

It was primarily with the intrusion of metropolitan capital and the launching of colonial enterprises like tea plantations, collieries, repairing concerns (engineering), jute textile manufacture and new modes of transport (railways) that a distinctly new kind of labour force, the industrial working class, emerged. The development was accelerated by the entry of Indian capital into the sphere of modern cotton textile production and certain other fields of processing and manufacturing activity (cotton ginning and pressing, rice milling, oil milling, sugar production etc.).

The mark of this social process was the transformation of segments of the population. The most significant feature, common to all the varieties of workers engaged in these different industries and enterprises, was that labour was yoked to capital for generating surplus value. Together with it, an important feature associated particularly with the factory labour force was that it was a work force using new kinds of tools—mechanical tools or machines—and new kinds of energy—initially steam and later also electricity. The formation and development of this labour force also entailed significant change in work habit and adaptation to new skills. The rise of the industrial proletariat led in its turn to accelerated spatial mobility and extended the geographical dimensions of the labour market. A no less important feature was the demographic change involving expansion of the industrial work force and increase in the heterogeneity of its composition.

II

Thus, broadly speaking, the last century of British colonial rule in

India witnessed the formation and growth of, though to a limited extent, a wage-earning industrial working force. While the process contained some basic features similar to those found in many other countries, it had a number of significant problems, forms and attributes which were specific to India's colonial economy and society. But in spite of a considerable amount of detailed and fruitful scholarship regarding the industrial labour force our understanding of the *historically specific evolution* of this force remains incomplete and fragmented. It is out of a dissatisfaction with the present state of knowledge on this particular area that we have undertaken a study of the problems relating to the rise of the industrial labour force in eastern India. (Here eastern India refers to Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam taken together.)

This paper, emerging out of the above-mentioned broader enquiry, has, however, a very modest aim. It focuses attention only on certain aspects of the supply of labour to major factory industries in eastern India with particular reference to the jute industry, mostly for the period up to 1921. This may be further prefaced by the remark that though the jute labour force came to form the core of the industrial proletariat in this region—some notable exceptions apart¹—few attempts have been made to collect and systematize the information available as well as to investigate the process indicated above. Instead, not infrequently generalizations have been advanced without adequate empirical support.

One major reason for this state of affairs lies in the scattered and fragmentary nature of evidence. Here are two examples bearing on the problems discussed in this paper. One, birth-place data,² despite their known limitations, may throw much light on the composition of labour force in terms of areas of origin and labour migration streams. But no statistical evidence regarding the birth-place of the total labour force employed in each of the major industries of the region,

¹G.M. Broughton, *Labour in Indian Industries*, Oxford University Press, London, 1924; D.H. Buchanan, *Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India*, Frank Cass, London, 1966 (1st edition 1934), Chapters XI, XIV to XVIII; K.P. Chattopadhyay, *A Socio-Economic Survey of Jute Labour*, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1952; Indrajit Gupta, *Capital and Labour in the Jute Industry*, All India Trade Union Congress, Bombay, 1953; A.K. Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900-1939*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, Chapter 5, particularly pp. 121-31, 135-36, 139-40, 142; and P.S. Gupta, "Notes on the Origin and Structuring of the Industrial Labour Force in India—1880 to 1920" in R.S. Sharma (ed.), *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 414-34.

²For some of the difficulties see K. Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton, 1951, and M.D. Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1965, p. 226.

including the jute industry, is available except that presented in the Census Report of 1921. Thus, in the absence of any time series data one gets a "snap-shot" kind of picture. Similarly, there is a paucity of material showing the social and economic background of the growing industrial labour force. Literary statements, despite their lack of precision and certain recognized pitfalls, could have at least partly filled up gaps in this regard. Unfortunately, even literary references are scarce.

Given the constraint imposed by limited data-availability, for the earlier part of the period under study we have tried to deal with the issues indicated below by drawing upon whatever stray and sketchy statements are available and also upon assumptions and conjectures which appear as reasonable. Needless to state that we have used quantitative information wherever it has been available. For this we have relied mainly on Census Reports. But some other sources have also been tapped. And it may be mentioned that a major part of the paper is devoted to the collection and processing of evidence in relation to the specific issues at hand.

The third section traces in broad terms the formation and expansion of the jute industrial labour force keeping in mind the overall demographic situation in the region. This is followed by an attempt to locate the areas from which workers came to the jute, textile and other factory industries, and to indicate their cultural-linguistic composition. Certain aspects of labour migration have also been examined. The economic and social background of this labour force and some of its implications are considered in the fifth section. And in the last section, certain concluding remarks have been made. It should be added that a number of critical problems requiring exploration and analysis are thrown up by the present exercise. Some of these are indicated at relevant places.

III

The first jute mill in India was launched in 1855 at Rishra near Calcutta. The industry, however, actually got started in the years following the British re-conquest of India in 1857-59. And it experienced, with occasional ups and downs, a steady expansion during the period under consideration, particularly since 1895. Four distinctive features in the growth of the jute industry deserve mention. One, the expansion was caused primarily by an increasing foreign demand for jute manufactures and the industry remained basically an export-oriented one. Two, British businessmen, organized under the very powerful trade association, called the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA), had a monopoly or a quasi-monopoly hold

over the industry. Three, the managing agency system was the characteristic form of control. Four, the jute industry's growth was concentrated and localized around Calcutta. All mills were (and still are) located in a thin strip of land—roughly about 55 miles long and 5 miles wide—along both banks of the river Hooghly from Budge Budge in the south and Naihati in the north.

With the establishment and rapid growth of the jute textile industry and its localization in and around Calcutta a significant demographic change took place.

Firstly, there was the emergence of a wage-earning working mass employed in the jute mills and a fast increase in its number. Unfortunately, little is known about the early period. Stray information, like the fact that in 1866 four thousand men, women and children were engaged by the Borneo Jute Company at Baranagore, is given by a contemporary English visitor to India.³ From an official report we learn that in 1872-73 four mills were operating in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, providing employment to more than eight thousand people.⁴ Besides, there was another "large jute mill at Serajunge, the great emporium of the jute trade in Eastern Bengal."⁵

But systematic estimates of the number of jute mill workers are available only from 1879. In that year the average number of mill operatives employed daily was 27,494. It was 40,551 in 1881 and rose to 113,493 in 1901 and after that to 280,321 in 1921. In the forty years from 1881 to 1921 the jute textile labour force increased by more than seven-fold. Till 1930 there was further expansion, the peak figure being 339,665.⁶ But the formation of the jute labour force was completed by 1921, the census decadal rates of increase being highest in the periods 1891-1901 and 1901-1911, at 74.60 and 75.81 per cent, respectively (see Table 1). A closer examination of the available data shows that the expansion accelerated, particularly from the mid-1890s. Thus the percentage of the rate of increase in average daily employment rose from 85.83 for the 15 years between 1880-81 to 1894-95 to 237.88 for the next 15 years between 1895-96 to 1909-10 and then sharply declined to 56.05 between 1910-11 to 1924-25. A look into the annual variation data presented in Appendix A

³Mary Carpenter, *Six Months in India*, Vol. I, London, 1868, p. 248.

⁴*Bengal Administration Report*, 1872-73, Pt. III, p. 227.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁶For the total number of persons daily employed in the jute mills of Bengal in the years 1879-80 to 1904-05 see Government of India (hereafter GOI), *Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India*, in the years from 1905-06 to 1911-12 *Statistics of British India* and from 1912-13 onwards GOI, Labour Investigation Committee, *Report on an Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in the Jute Mill Industry in India*, Delhi, 1946.

also supports the contention just made.⁷ It should, however, be added that even during a period of fast expansion of the labour force there were sharp fluctuations from year to year in the average daily employment which reflected the varying market conditions and fortunes of the industry.

But it should be noted that the average daily employment figures are somewhat underestimated. These do not cover the workers who failed to attend their regular work. These figures also do not include the very large number of casual workers who gathered at the factory gates each morning to hire themselves out as substitutes or purely temporary replacements, usually on a day-to-day basis, for absentees. But as the relevant facts and figures are hard to obtain, we have used the average daily employment data.

TABLE I

INCREASE IN POPULATION OF BENGAL, OF CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN AREA AND JUTE TEXTILE LABOUR FORCE 1881-82 TO 1921-22

Period	Increase in population of Bengal	Increase in population of metropolitan districts	Increase in population of jute textile labour force
1881-82 to 1891-92	27,91,602 (7.54)	4,34,309 (10.90)	23,199 (55.50)
1891-92 to 1901-02	30,76,029 (7.72)	4,48,149 (10.14)	48,492 (74.60)
1901-02 to 1911-12	34,24,068 (7.98)	5,48,831 (11.28)	86,039 (75.81)
1911-12 to 1921-22	12,87,021 (2.77)	2,54,847 (4.70)	1,17,652 (58.96)
1881-82 to 1921-22	1,05,78,720 (28.57)	16,86,136 (42.33)	2,75,382 (658.78)

NOTES: (a) Figures in brackets indicate percentage variation.

(b) Metropolitan districts refer to Calcutta, Hooghly, Howrah and 24-Parganas.

SOURCES: Figures for columns 2 and 3 computed from population figures in *Census Reports* for the relevant period; and figures for column 4 derived from *Government of India, Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India, Statistics of British India and Report of Labour Investigation Committee (Jute)* 1946.

Secondly, because of the constraints imposed by colonialism, the sharp increase in the number of jute mill workers was not accom-

⁷For sources see the preceding footnote.

panied by similar development in other industries. Table 2 clearly indicates the insignificant strength of the labour force employed in other factory industries in eastern India. The table shows that only 65,000 workers were engaged in the other major factory industries of the region. The workers employed in the railway workshops constituted a large group. According to the Census of 1911, their number was 34,000. The machinery and engineering enterprises employed slightly more than 12,000 workers and the iron and steel works about 7,000 workers. The number of cotton textile workers was 11,752. Even if the term 'industrial labour force' is used in a wider sense to include all those employed in the tea plantations and the coal mines the jute industry remained the second largest employer of workers in the region, the first one being the tea plantations.

Thirdly, the fast expansion of the jute labour force took place in the background of a very tardy increase in population in the metropolitan area (that is, Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly and 24-Parganas taken together) growing in a colonial setting and a still tardier increase in Bengal as a whole. In the 40 years between 1881 and 1921, the jute industrial population increased by 659 per cent, while the population of the metropolitan districts rose by only 42.33 per cent and that of Bengal by a poor 28.57 per cent. But too much importance should not be assigned to this feature. The growth of the industrial labour force was actually very limited and this is indicated by the fact that even in 1921 the jute textile work force formed negligible fractions—only 0.59 per cent and 4.95 per cent—of the total provincial population and that of the four metropolitan districts respectively.

Another important feature was that because of the highly localized growth of the jute industry, the working mass became concentrated. The increase in the jute industrial labour force was confined to a relatively small number of jute mill towns. And these towns owed their growth to the starting of jute mills and the consequent increase in the working mass. In fact, many of the mill towns, such as Titagarh, Kamarhati and Budge Budge, were mere villages as late as 1872 when the first systematic Census was undertaken. Naturally, most of the jute mill towns expanded most in the decades of the highest growth of the labour force. To take only a few examples, between 1891 and 1911, the population more than tripled in Bhatpara and more than doubled in Bhadreswar. Within the single decade of 1901-11, Garulia added 57 per cent and Titagarh 181 per cent to their respective population. The striking growth of these towns was a consequence of the sudden influx of jute mill workers.⁸

⁸*Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Pt. I, Report, Chap. I, paras 87 and 88.*

TABLE 2
INDUSTRIES PROVIDING LARGEST EMPLOYMENT IN EASTERN REGION, 1911

Industries	Bengal			Assam			Bihar			Total		
	No. of factories	Persons employed	No. of factories	No. of factories	Persons employed	No. of factories	No. of factories	Persons employed	No. of factories	No. of factories	Persons employed	Persons employed
Jute Mills	50	2,00,446	—	609	—	—	—	—	—	50	2,00,446	—
Tea Plantations	240	1,91,286	—	6	4,93,483	6	—	535	855	—	6,85,624	—
Collieries	129	37,707	—	—	2,810	199	—	86,878	334	—	1,27,395	—
Railway Workshops	15	22,735	—	5	1,003	7	—	10,269	27	—	34,007	—
Brick & Tile Factories	161	22,019	—	—	—	8	—	1,223	169	—	23,242	—
Jute Press	109	13,842	—	—	—	8	—	230	117	—	14,072	—
Printing Press	103	12,171	—	—	—	7	—	364	110	—	12,535	—
Cotton Mills	18	11,752	—	—	—	—	—	—	18	—	11,752	—
Machinery & Engineering	37	11,714	—	—	—	7	—	562	44	—	12,276	—
Mica Mine	—	—	—	—	—	52	—	10,840	52	—	10,840	—
Iron & Steel Works	17	2,029	—	—	—	4	—	5,077	21	—	7,106	—

NOTE: Industries include concerns using and also not using mechanical power.

SOURCES: For Bengal Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Pt. 1, Table XV—E Pt. I.
For Assam Census of India, 1911, Vol. III, Pt. 2, Table XV — E Pt. I.
For Bihar Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Pt. 3, Table XV—E Sec. I.

IV

By 1921 the formation of the jute mill working force, the core of industrial proletariat in eastern India, was by and large complete. But where did they come from?

(a) From the beginning till the mid-1890s

In a most widely quoted statement, B. Foley who along with S. H. Fremantle was appointed in 1905 to enquire into the problems of labour supply in Bengal, suggested "Twenty years ago all the hands, [in the jute mills] were Bengalis."⁹ Though Foley himself did not adduce any direct evidence in support of his opinion, we have come across a few references to jute mill labour which tend to corroborate this. One of these references indicates that many of the workers employed in the Baranagore Jute Mill in the 1870s were local inhabitants of Baranagore and the surrounding localities.¹⁰ That the majority of Baranagore Jute Mill workers were Bengalis is also indicated by the fact that as late as 1895 only 500 out of 7,000 labour came from "up-country."¹¹

Was the composition of the labour force in other jute mills similar? No definitive answer can be given to this question. But a communication was sent to the Government of India in 1881 by Finlay Muir and Co. on behalf of the Champdany Jute Mill (established in 1874 and located near Bhadreswar in Hooghly district) which sought assistance for recruitment of labour in the densely-populated districts of Bihar and the United Provinces (then known as the North-Western Provinces and Oudh). In this communication it appears that till that year most of its operatives came from Hooghly and its adjoining districts.¹² Foley also was informed by the manager of the mill that

⁹B. Foley, *Report on Labour in Bengal*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1906, para 29.

¹⁰*Bharat Shramajibi* (a monthly magazine founded in 1874 by Sasipada Banerjee, a well-known Bengali social reformer), *Jaisthya*, B.S. 1286, May-June 1879. Recently a collection of all 1879 issues of this magazine has been brought out. K.L. Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Bharat Shramajibi*, Debalay Trust, Calcutta, 1975. See in this connection also Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Sasipada Banerjee: A Study in the Nature of the First Contact of the Bengali Bhadrakok with the Working Class of Bengal*, Occasional Paper No. 4, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1975. This is by all means an insight into the life and work of this Bengali social reformer.

¹¹West Bengal State Archives (hereafter WBSA), "Police Supervision in the Riverine Municipalities," *Police*, Nos. 8-9, January 1896.

¹²National Archives of India (hereafter NAI), Revenue and Agriculture, Emigration, February 1882.

initially it had a lot of indigenous labour.¹³ And at least as late as 1895 half the workers were Bengalis.¹⁴

From a survey made in 1895 by Pratt, a high police official, we get the information that till that year Bengali workers formed a substantial part of the labour force in many of the mills constructed in the earlier period of the growth of industry. Bengali mill operatives were in a large majority in Wellington (established in 1855), Gouripur (1862), Fort Gloster (1873), Budge Budge (1874), Howrah (1874) and Kamarhati (1877). Half the working force (or perhaps a little less than that) worked in the India (1866) and the Victoria (1884) Jute Mills.¹⁵ From this it may be argued that in the first few decades of the industry the working mass was composed mostly of Bengalis.

Again in 1888, Lord Dufferin instituted an enquiry into the conditions of the lower class of people in India, to which the Collector of Hooghly reported that many of the weaver class in the district, obviously Bengalis, "find work in the European jute mills in the Serampore sub-division."¹⁶ Referring to the information given by the manager of the Bauria Mill, the Howrah District Magistrate recorded that "many hands" came in "from neighbouring villages."¹⁷ According to the Commissioner of the Presidency Division, artisans, particularly weavers, worked in jute factories.¹⁸

Thus the manager of the Upper Hooghly Mills told Foley that around 1880, all weavers were Bengalis.¹⁹ Also, the manager of the Hastings Jute Mill informed the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 that in the earlier years weaving labour was recruited from Bengal.²⁰ In his evidence before the same Commission, the manager of the Kankinara Jute Mill said, "Nineteen years ago two-thirds of the spinners were Bengalis..."²¹ Corroborating this, Imaman Imami-sher, a sirdar in the weaving department of the same mill, said, "Before electric light was introduced many of the local Bengali men came to work..."²² (Electricity, first introduced in the jute industry in the early 1890s, came to be used widely after 1895.)

¹³Foley, *op. cit.*, Appendix, p. viii.

¹⁴Source as indicated in f.n. 11.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶NAI, "Reports on the Condition of the Lower Classes of Population in India," *Famine*, Nos. 1-24, December 1888.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Foley, *op. cit.*, Appendix, p. xxii.

²⁰GOI, *Indian Factory Labour Commission*, Vol. II, *Evidence*, Parliamentary Paper 1909, Vol. 63, Witness No. 162 (oral evidence), p. 239.

²¹*Ibid.*, Witness No. 170, pp. 253-55.

²²*Ibid.*, Witness No. 182 (oral evidence), p. 271.

There is, however, some evidence indicating a fair sprinkling of non-Bengali immigrants in the labour force since the early days. In 1878 the Commissioner of the Presidency Division reported, "The large factories [in the 24-Parganas district] attract hands from Behar."²³ Two years later the Commissioner pointed out, "...natives of Behar and the North-Western Provinces come to Barasat and Barrackpore for work in the factories in the sub-divisions..."²⁴

Some reports give the impression that most of the mill hands were non-Bengalis. In 1882 for instance, H.L. Harrison, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta, informed the Bengal Government that "at most jute factories the employees are ... principally composed of people from the Behar and other up-country districts."²⁵ The District Census Reports of 1891 also stated that in Hooghly district the jute mills "have attracted up-country coolies by hundreds"²⁶ and in the 24-Parganas "the up-country men form the majority of the employees."²⁷

But in view of what we have already noticed about the 1895 composition of the labour force in many of the early mills, it may be reasonably conjectured that *in the first four decades the bulk of jute labour force consisted of Bengalis, that is, local people.* And there are two points of evidence which corroborate this.

First, the Factory Commission of 1890 examined 25 witnesses—all factory operatives—in and around Calcutta.²⁸ Twelve out of these 25 witnesses (or 50 per cent of the workers) interviewed were

²³WBSA, Divisional Commissioner's Annual Report for the Presidency Division for 1877-78, General Miscellaneous, Nos. 5-6, September 1878.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Report for 1879-80, General Miscellaneous, Nos. 8-10, August 1880.

²⁵NAI, Home, Judicial, No. 220, September 1883.

²⁶Bengal, *District Census Report*, Report on the Census of the District of Hooghly, 1891, p. 5.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Report on the Census of the District of 24-Parganas, 1891, p. 3. It must be noted that no quantitative information in support of the statement is provided in the report. Perhaps it was a surmise on the part of the particular officer who submitted it.

²⁸The sample was small and might not have been representative in the statistical sense. But the way in which the sample was chosen suggests that the evidence merits some attention. The Commission headed by A.S. Lethbridge included, besides its members, selected representatives of the mill hands to assist in its enquiry. The representative in Bengal was one Babu Rasiklal Ghose. Ghose produced 7 witnesses and 18 were chosen by the Commission. The Commission visited local mills without giving any prior intimation and at different hours of a working day. On their arrival at the mill work was stopped and the operatives were paraded before the Commission, and the latter selected from them male, female and child labour witnesses. See *Report of the Indian Factory Commission 1890*, Parliamentary Paper 1890-91, Vol. 59, pp. 87-104.

residents of Calcutta and nearby places. Another 5 came from neighbouring districts. Thus about two-thirds of these were natives of Bengal, particularly of Calcutta and the adjoining districts. However, out of these 25 only 10 were employed in jute mills and the rest worked in other factories, such as paper mill, cotton mill, and ordinance factory. Again, 8 out of the 10 jute labourers were Bengalis.²⁹

The second piece of evidence relating to a later date is much more firm and representative. In July 1895, a fairly detailed enquiry was conducted—by the police official mentioned earlier—in 14 jute mills employing 49,729 persons covering more than 60 per cent of the then jute labour force of 77,618. Out of this, as it is found from the first row of the sixth table, 23,096 persons, that is, 46.4 per cent of the labour force came from up-country, that is, Bihar and U.P.³⁰ Assuming, not unreasonably, that the number of workers from other provinces was insignificant at that date, local people—Bengalis, that is—numbered 26,633, constituting more than 53 per cent of the labour force in these 14 mills.³¹

But even though till the mid-nineties workers of local origin were strong in the jute labour force, all evidence clearly suggests that its composition was already undergoing a noticeable change. And in the earlier paragraphs it is evident that by 1895 non-local, non-Bengali labour constituted a fairly sizeable share of the working mass employed in the jute mills. The Provincial Reports on the Working of the Indian Factories Act also disclose a picture of this change taking place.³²

(b) Labour migration from outside Bengal

In this connection it is of interest to note that the period of most rapid expansion of the jute industry and the concomitant growth of

²⁹Derived from *ibid.* For an earlier and more detailed scrutiny of this evidence along similar lines see B.P. Misra, "Factory Labour during the Early Years of Industrialisation: An Appraisal in the Light of the Indian Factory Commission 1890," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, July-September, 1975, pp. 205-6, 211-12.

³⁰WBSA, Police, Nos. 8-9, January 1896.

³¹*cf.* K. P. Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

³²*Cf.* the following. In the *Provincial Report on the Working of Indian Factories Act* in 1882 it was pointed out that many of the operatives, "especially in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, come from the North-Western Provinces" (that is, the United Provinces). NAI, Home, Judicial, No. 677, March 1894. The Report for a later year, 1898, noted, "The Civil Medical Officer of Serampore states that the hands are mostly low-class up-country people." It goes on to say that according to the Howrah District Magistrate the mill operatives came chiefly from Bihar and the North-western Provinces. NAI, Home, Judicial, No. 130, November 1899.

the jute labour force, that is, the period 1891-1911, corresponds to that of an enormous flow of people from Bihar, Orissa and the United Provinces to the metropolitan area. An examination of Table 3 will bear this out.

To be sure, the movement of people from these regions to Calcutta and the surrounding areas was not new. Scattered references to the fact of immigration, even though mostly of a temporary nature, from up-country and from Orissa to Calcutta are found in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century memoirs, reports, travel accounts, newspapers, periodicals and other such sources. Throughout the nineteenth century this immigration continued to expand. We learn from official reports relating to the 1870s that large numbers of people from Bihar came to the Calcutta metropolitan area for permanent or temporary employment in mills and warehouses, for brick-making and tank-digging and various other jobs; and many Oriyas came to work as palki-bearers, punkha-pullers and coolies.³³ Thus, already in 1881 all immigrants coming from outside Bengal, numbered 2,79,621 (including 1,25,210 and 34,123 immigrants from Bihar and Orissa respectively) and formed 7 per cent of the population of the four Calcutta metropolitan districts—which numbered 39,53,464. And in particular, they came in great numbers in the years 1881-1911. Actually, there were three major currents of migration—one from Bihar, a second one from the United Provinces and the third from Orissa. But these movements coincided with each other and merged together to form a great flow of people. Thus, within a period of 20 years the number of immigrants from Bihar, Orissa and U.P. swelled by more than 100 per cent to 6,95,855 in 1911. Tables 3 and 4 present some of the relevant data. As indicated above, people from other provinces also, perhaps mostly labourers, were migrating to the Calcutta metropolitan area. That these were mere trickles till the beginning of the present century is evident from the data that the total number of immigrants from Madras and the Central Provinces in this area were, in 1901, only 1,922 and 4,847 respectively.³⁴

A number of comments are to be made here. First, it may be assumed that most of these immigrants became members of the urban labour population.

Secondly, in spite of the absence of any quantitative information with regard to immigration from Bihar and Orissa and the United Provinces for the earlier period, it may be concluded that in relation

³³See, among others, *Bengal Administration Report 1878-79*, p. 124, and *Census of Bengal 1881*, Vol. I, Report, para 348.

³⁴See *Census of India*, Vol. VI, *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Pt. I, Migration Statements.

TABLE 3

IMMIGRATION FROM BIHAR AND ORISSA AND THE UNITED PROVINCE
INTO THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS DURING 1881-1921

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
1. (a) Total immigrants	2,79,621	3,34,405	5,16,941	6,95,355	7,11,43
(b) from Bihar & Orissa	1,59,333	2,39,059	3,28,398	4,60,368	4,95,47
(c) from the United Provinces		95,346	1,88,543	2,35,487	2,15,96
2. (a) Decennial increase in number of immigrants		54,784	1,82,536	1,78,918	15,58
(b) from Bihar & Orissa		79,726	89,339	1,31,970	35,10
(c) from the United Provinces	..	..	93,197	46,944	19,52
3. (a) Percentage decadal variations in 1 (a)	..	19.59	54.59	34.61	2.24
(b) Percentage decadal variations in 1 (b)	..	50.04	37.37	40.19	7.63
(c) Percentage decadal variations in 1 (c)	..	..	97.75	24.90	8.29
4. Metropolitan District population	39,53,464	44,16,756	48,64,905	54,13,736	56,68,58
5. Decennial increase in population of metropolitan districts	..	4,63,292	4,48,149	5,48,831	2,54,84
6. Percentage decadal increase in 4	..	11.72	10.15	11.28	4.71
7. (a) Share of 1 (a) in 4 (per cent)	7.07	7.57	10.63	12.85	12.55
(b) Share of 1 (b) in 4 (per cent)	4.03	5.41	6.75	3.50	8.74
(c) Share of 1 (c) in 4 (per cent)	..	2.16	3.88	4.35	3.81
8. Share of 2 (a) in 5 (per cent)	..	11.82	40.73	32.60	6.12

NOTE: The 1881 total immigrants include all those who came from outside Bengal proper. The number of the U.P. immigrants is not separately available. So, the 1881 figure for total immigrants is not strictly comparable with figures for the later years. It should, however, be mentioned that the number of immigrants from areas other than Bihar, Orissa and U.P. was not very large in 1881.

SOURCES: *Census of Bengal*, 1881, Vol. II, *Census of India*, 1891, Vol. III *Bengal* and Vol. V for the other years.

TABLE 4

MAJOR SOURCES OF MIGRATION FROM BIHAR, ORISSA AND THE
UNITED PROVINCES TO THE METROPOLITAN AREA BY DISTRICTS:
1901 AND 1921 (NUMBER OF MIGRANTS)

	1881	1901	1921
Saran	18,165	48,833	52,133
Gaya	25,896	48,248	62,483
Patna	28,247	46,602	43,497
Shahabad	24,613	35,768	47,471
Muzaffarpur	..	21,423	35,033
Monghyr	7,398	17,297	38,713
Ranchi	..	11,491	N.A.
Hazaribag	4,774	10,220	N.A.
Darbhanga	615	5,064	17,709
Manbhum	1,510	2,673	N.A.
Bhagalpur	1,813	2,121	N.A.
Santan Pargana	663	500	N.A.
Bihar (Total)	1,13,694	2,50,240	2,97,044
Cuttack	24,805	40,025	94,758
Balasore	9,318	15,454	35,914
Puri	N.A.	936	N.A.
Orissa (Total)	34,123	56,405	1,30,672
Ghazipur	N.A.	28,874	31,061
Azamgarh	N.A.	24,874	23,924
Ballia	N.A.	24,333	25,489
Benares	N.A.	20,296	24,554
Jaunpur	N.A.	17,438	20,511
Allahabad	N.A.	9,678	N.A.
Mirzapur	N.A.	9,484	N.A.
Rest of U.P.	N.A.	53,631	N.A.
United Provinces (Total)	N.A.	1,88,511	1,25,539

NOTE: N.A. indicates not available. Bihar and the U.P. totals do not include immigrants from Bihar-U.P. districts not shown here.

SOURCES: For 1881, *Census of Bengal*, Vol. II, Table XI.
For 1901, *Census of India*, Vol. V, *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Migration Statements.
For 1921, *Census of India*, Vol. V, *Bengal*, Part I, para 107.

to this immigration the two most crucial decades were 1891-1901 and 1901-11. With reference to the importance of immigration from the individual region of origin we find that the "immigration-peak" from the U.P. was reached in the first decade; from Bihar, however, it was heavy in the decade of 1881-91 and remained so in the succeeding two decades.

Thirdly, the quantitative contribution of immigration to the growth of population and working mass in the four metropolitan districts is very impressive (see row 8 in Table 3).

The fourth consideration follows from Table 4. Earlier, it has been mentioned that three immigration movements originated separately in Bihar, Orissa and the U.P. But a scrutiny of this table reveals that these movements were highly specific in origin. Thus the sources of most of these immigrants were confined to two narrow tracts: one, the western districts of Bihar (Gaya, Patna, Shahabad, Saran and Muzaffarpur) and the adjoining eastern districts of U.P. (Azamgarh, Ballia, Ghazipur, Benares and Jaunpur), and the third consisting of two Orissa districts (Cuttack and Balasore). Thus, actually, there were two major streams of migration from outside Bengal to the metropolitan area.

It should be noted that most of these Bihar and U.P. districts were also among the principal sources of colonial emigration.³⁵ Moreover, these districts sent a large number of people to East Bengal and Assam for harvesting, road making, railway construction, etc.³⁶ The U.P. districts were also among the major sources of labour supply to Assam, particularly the Surma Valley, to tea plantations in the late nineteenth century.³⁷

³⁵Ballia, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Benares, Jaunpur and Mirzapur in the U.P. and Shahabad, Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Saran were among the principal sources of colonial emigration during the latter part of the 19th century. However, by the turn of the century colonial emigration via Calcutta had narrowed down to the eastern districts of U.P. See H. Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*, Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 40, 54, 58, P. Saha, *Emigration of Indian Labour 1834-1900*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 29-30, and also *Census of India 1901*, Vol. 16, *North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Pt. I, para 55.

³⁶Government of Bengal, *Report of the Labour Enquiry Commission 1895*, Calcutta, 1896, para 86.

³⁷Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Ballia, Benares, Mirzapur and Jaunpur were also the districts that sent a large number of garden coolies to Assam, particularly Surma Valley gardens. See *Census of India*, Vol. III, *Assam*, Report, para 61 and *ibid.*, 1911, Vol. III, *Assam*, Pt. I, para 37. For most of the years between 1885 and 1904 the proportion of the U.P. emigrants in the total emigrants to Assam plantations was more than 20 per cent and in some years as high as between 30 to 38 per cent. See *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee 1906*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 14.

Fifthly, a glance at Table 5 shows that in three of the four metropolitan districts, e.g., Howrah, 24-Parganas and Calcutta more than half of the immigrants came from places outside Bengal. Thus at least for the decade 1891-1901 the bulk of the migrants to these districts came from distant areas.

Sixthly, one scholar has recently suggested that migration to the Calcutta metropolitan area in general and jute mill centres in particular took place by stages.³⁸ But our reading of the evidence available regarding the movement of population does not support this suggestion.³⁹

Finally, related to this is the feature that the process of migration tended, perhaps, to be of a "leapfrogging" nature in which the colonial metropolitan area turned out to be the focus of migration streams and opportunities for work in intervening areas (if they could be called opportunities) were skipped over. Thus in its concern for supply of labour to the collieries the Labour Enquiry Commission reported, "By this road [the Grand Trunk Road], thousands of emigrants find their way to the neighbourhood of Calcutta where they get work in the mills and other employment, and it has been always a matter for astonishment that so few of these travellers have hitherto stopped to work at the mines."⁴⁰

Though this paper is not concerned with the study of population or migration as such, it is perhaps not irrelevant to raise a number of questions. Who were the early migrants? What routes for transportation did they follow? Were there impediments in the way of the population movement?

³⁸See P. S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 422. According to E. G. Ravenstein, a noted authority on population movement, migration by stages means, among others, "The inhabitants of the country immediately surrounding a town of rapid growth flock into it, the gaps thus left in the rural population are filled up by migrants from more remote districts until the attractive force of one of our rapidly growing cities makes its influence felt, step by step, to the remote corner of the kingdom." Cited by E. S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration" in J. A. Jackson (ed.), *Migration*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 283. He used migration data of more than 20 countries and propounded "The Laws of Migration" in *The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, June 1885. For a summary see Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

³⁹Cf. in this connection the following: "We have little information on the stages of cityward migrations, that is, whether rural migrants first move to small towns which serve as a stage on the journey from villages to cities, or whether they move at one step from the village to city. Perhaps a very significant proportion of rural migrants move to the big cities directly without being acclimatized to urban life in smaller towns." K. C. Zachariah, "A Note on Internal Migration in India" in R. Glass (ed.), *Urban-Rural Differences in Southern Asia*, Research Centre on Social and Economic Development in Southern Asia, Delhi, 1964, p. 74.

⁴⁰*Op. cit.*, para 11.

In view of the fact of accelerated migration since the early 1890s the question arises, as to what factors were in operation in stepping up the flow of people. Were these factors primarily associated with the areas of origin? Or, were they responding primarily to factors operating at the areas of destination? Furthermore, was the observed phenomenon of the preponderance of long-distant migrants over the in-migrants in the four metropolitan districts, a long drawn out process or a process operating only for a short period? Did it represent a tendency which was specific to the kind of social and economic changes taking place during the period under study?

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS TO CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN AREA BY AREAS OF ORIGIN AND DISTRICTS OF DESTINATION, 1901

Percentage of immigrants from	Howrah	24-Parganas	Calcutta	Hooghly
Contiguous districts	34.20	29.41	17.12	65.83
Other districts in Bengal	3.32	10.94	28.75	—
From outside Bengal	56.56	55.19	51.00	28.36
From elsewhere	5.92	4.45	3.13	5.81

SOURCE: *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. VI, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Pt. I, Migration Statements.

What is the bearing of all this on our investigation of the composition of the jute labour force? No estimate is available about what proportion of these immigrants became jute mill workers. But considered singly, the jute industry was the employer of the largest body of working mass in the metropolitan area and the decades of heavy immigration from up-country were also the decades of very rapid growth of the jute labour force (see Table 1). It is thus reasonable to infer that this enormous influx operated to bring about a quick and marked change in the composition of that force.

(c) *From 1896 onwards*

With these observations, we may examine whatever statistical data are available regarding the areas of origin of jute workers for different years.

Firstly, there is one piece of considerably detailed information about 5,255 workmen of Shamnagar Jute Mill for 1896. This is shown in row 2 of Table 6. This information is, however, not statistically

representative. But it suggests at least two important features. The first one is that even in 1896, Bengalis formed as much as 37 per cent of the labour force in a mill where, later on, non-local and non-Bengali workers came to constitute the majority. Secondly, given the validity of our previous inference that Bengalis were preponderant till the mid-nineties, the process of switching from local Bengali labour to non-local non-Bengali labour is perhaps indicated here.

Data for the year 1897, relating to almost the total jute work force are presented in row 3 and these provide support to the suggestions made above. It is found that the local residents formed 38 per cent of more than 73 lakh workers engaged in 22 jute mills. (In that year, according to the 1897 source, the proportion of local residents in the 14 mills covered by the 1895 enquiry was also 38 per cent and was thus much less than the earlier figure of 53.6 per cent.)

The 1897 estimate that 62 per cent of the workers were non-local is, however, arrived at by lumping (a) up-country men and (b) operative 'foreigners' to the district in which a mill was located, presumably born in other districts of Bengal proper. And our source does not give the distribution between (a) and (b). But the evidence in our hand indicates that the number of (b) and its proportion among the local workers was not insignificant. (With regard to this, see below the paragraph relating to data on the Shamnagar Jute Mill.) Thus, one can conclude that the 1897 figures overstate the proportion of non-local labourers and that the percentage of local labourers coming from all the Bengal districts as distinct from local hands only, is understated.

Nevertheless, a careful examination of the 1895 and 1897 figures relating to the composition of the labour force in the 14 mills covered by the earlier enquiry, shows that the process of change in the composition of the work force had advanced and by 1897 non-local, non-Bengali labour constituted the majority. This change took place through (1) a general *displacement* of workers of local origin by non-local immigrants⁴¹ and (2) a recruitment of *new hands* to meet

⁴¹The 1895 and 1897 data for some selected mills, as presented below, clearly show the trend of substitution of non-local labour for local labour.

	Up-country		Local	
	1895	1897	1895	1897
Shamnagar	3000	4020	1500	500
Baranagar	500	5000	6500	1890
Lower Hooghly	1250	1820	1250	640
Gouripur	1000	1640	2000	1440
Hastings	3925	4470	2977	2370
Wellington	825	1820	1500	900

the growing demand for labour from the fast expanding industry, particularly from the new mills, and *mainly*, though certainly not exclusively, from the ranks of immigrants from up-country and other places outside Bengal proper. And these trends operated throughout the expansionist phase of the industry. Pertaining to (2) it is significant that according to both 1895 and 1897 sources of information, in all the mills established after 1884, non-local migrant workers formed a large majority. Indicating these two features in clear terms, an official report relating to 1905 stated, "New mills from their institution depended to a great extent on this migrating labour [that is, labour from the districts of Bihar and Benares Division], and the old mills, finding it more satisfactory and regular than the local labour, began more and more to rely upon it."⁴² And on the occasion of presenting the IJMA's Annual Report for the year 1907 the Association's President told the members, "Labour continues to come from distant parts of the country to supply the ever increasing wants of our industry."⁴³

Estimates for still later years are presented in rows 3 to 8, of Table 6. And we shall comment on these too.

The composition of skilled and unskilled jute workers is presented in Table 7 separately.

It is also of interest to note the districts of origin, of jute labour born in Bengal. From available information, regarding the persons employed at Shamnagar Jute Mill in 1896, we find that out of the total workmen of 5,255, Bengal supplied 1,956 persons. Of this 62 per cent were drawn locally within a radius of 5 miles on both sides of the river Hooghly. Another, about 17 per cent, came from the adjoining districts of Howrah, Hooghly and Nadia.⁴⁴

Similar information regarding all the jute mill workers born in Bengal for 1921 is to be found in Table 8.

(The 1897 up-country men figures also include local men who were foreigners to the districts in which the mills were located.)

A few years later Foley remarked in unmistakable terms, "The Bengalis have been ousted by the up-country men generally." *Op. cit.*, para 30. Some of the evidence adduced by him in support of this observation has been referred to earlier. Such replacement was also reported by S.H. Fremantle. See his *Report on the Supply of Labour in the United Provinces and in Bengal*, Nainital, 1906, para 43.

⁴²*Ibid.*, para 39.

⁴³*Op. cit.*, p. iii.

⁴⁴Derived from *Report of the Labour Enquiry Commission 1895*, Appendix 0.

TABLE 6

PRINCIPAL AREAS OF ORIGIN OF THE JUTE INDUSTRIAL
LABOUR FORCE 1895-1941

Year	Per cent of workers born in					
	Bengal	Bihar	Orissa	United Provinces	Madras	Others
1. 1895 ¹	53.6	46.4 ²	—	—	—	—
2. 1896 ³	36.82	43.96	1.90	17.32	—	—
3. 1897 ⁴	38	62 ⁵	—	—	—	—
4. 1902 ⁶	28.11	45.84	3.48	22.57	—	—
5. 1907 ⁷	25	75 ⁸	—	—	—	—
6. 1916 ⁹	10	58 ¹⁰	—	21	11	—
7. 1921 ¹¹	24.07	33.44	11.42	23.25	4.58	3.20
8. 1929 ¹²	17	60 ¹³	—	51 ¹⁴	14	41 ¹⁵
9. 1941 ¹⁶	11.6	43.1	3.4	36.4	1.56	0.84

NOTES: ¹The estimate is in respect of 49,729 labourers covering more than 60 per cent of that year's labour force.

²The estimate is with reference to all up-country workers.

³The information is about 5,255 workers employed in one single mill—Shamnagar Jute Mill.

⁴More than 73 lakh workers representing nearly the entire jute labour force in that year are covered here.

⁵Up-countrymen and local (i.e. persons born in Bengal) immigrants into the mill districts are lumped together in the source.

⁶The distribution is in relation to 17,110 labourers working in 3 mills.

⁷1907 estimate is for the entire work force.

⁸Our source states, "Approximately, quite 75 per cent of our labour is imported from the Upper parts of India, from Orissa and the Madras Coast."

⁹1916 breakdown covers 31,841 persons engaged in 7 mills.

¹⁰Per cent of workers born in Bihar and Orissa are shown together.

¹¹The coverage is for the total jute labour force of 2,79,854.

¹²It seems to be a rough estimate.

¹³Bihar and Orissa figures are not given separately.

¹⁴The U.P. figure is obviously an underestimate.

¹⁵The figure refers to percentage of workers from only the Central Provinces.

¹⁶1941 distribution is obtained from a 2 per cent sample drawn on a random basis from a little over 38 thousand workers in Jagatdal P.S. in the 24-Parganas district.

SOURCES: For 1895, WBSA, *Police*, Nos. 8-9, January 1896.

For 1896, *Report of the Labour Enquiry Commission*, Appendix 0.

For 1897, WBSA, *Police*, Nos. 95-99, September 1897.

For 1902, Foley, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. 11-22.

For 1907, IJMA Annual Report for the year 1907, p. iii.

For 1916, A.R. Murray, "Note on Industrial Development of Bengal" in *Report of Indian Industrial Commission, Evidence*, Vol. VI, (Confidential Evidence).

For 1921, *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part II, Table XXII.

For 1929, Royal Commission on Labour in India, 1929-31, *Evidence*, Vol. 5, Pt. I, "Memorandum of Indian Jute Mills Association" (Written evidence), pp. 278-330.

For 1941 "Bengal Labour Enquiry, Draft Report, Jagatdal, First Sample, 1941, Statistical Laboratory, Calcutta" from which the relevant portion is reproduced in K.P. Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p. 10, Table 2.

TABLE 7

AREAS OF ORIGIN OF SKILLED AND UNSKILLED JUTE WORKERS, 1921

Province	Skilled workers		Unskilled workers	
	No. of workers	Per cent of total	No. of workers	Per cent of total
Bengal	38,890	31.31	26,558	18.32
Bihar	45,716	36.81	47,919	30.78
Orissa	8,762	7.05	23,218	14.92
United Provinces	28,030	22.56	36,988	23.77
Madras	2,062	1.66	10,786	6.93
Other parts of India	600	.48	8,219	5.28
Outside India	161	.13	5	.00
Total	124,221	100.00	155,633	100.00

NOTE: Skilled work includes machinery operation and maintenance, preparing, spinning, winding, beaming and dressing, weaving, finishing and miscellaneous jobs. It should be mentioned that the Census classification has been followed here. But strictly speaking, all operations other than spinning, weaving, machinery operation and maintenance fall within the category of semi-skilled work.

SOURCE: *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Part II, Calcutta, 1923, Table XXII, Parts IV and V.

TABLE 8

BIRTH PLACE OF JUTE MILL LABOUR BORN IN BENGAL, 1921

Born in	Number of workers	Percentage distribution
Districts of enumeration	49,863	74.00
Adjoining districts	11,101	16.5
Other districts	6,424	9.5
Total	67,388	100.00

NOTE: Districts of enumeration refer to 24-Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly and Calcutta, that is, the districts in which the jute mills were located.

SOURCE: *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII, Pts. IV and V.

Needless to say that the data presented in Table 6 are not strictly comparable. For the total jute industrial labour force we have only a "snap-shot" picture obtained from the Census of 1921. But the 1895, 1897 and 1907 data, though not very accurate, also provide information about a very large part of the work force. And in the absence of fuller and more systematic information, the available data, whatever may be their limitations, have to be used, and these help us to arrive at certain plausible conclusions.

First, in the earlier years, to be specific, up to the mid-1890s, more than half of the jute mill workers were Bengalis. But from where were they drawn? In speaking of their conditions of work, four weavers of Budge Budge Jute Mills in their evidence before the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908, incidentally touched upon this question: "As most of us live in villages at a distance of two to four miles from the mill, it means that we have to get up in the morning between 3 and 4 a.m., and do not get home till 8-30 or 9 p.m."⁴⁵ What they said was presumably applicable to many of the workers, when a majority of them were Bengalis. Thus many of them, probably, had to tramp a considerable distance.

The second conclusion that follows from our previous discussion is that due to a variety of reasons which we need not consider in this paper, around 1895 a marked change in the composition of the jute industrial population (in terms of areas of origin) occurred. And all available data clearly suggest that the trend continued. While the absolute number of workers born in Bengal increased,⁴⁶ their proportion in the growing jute labour force steadily declined. To put it in a different way, there was a consistent switching from local to non-local labour, which reflects, as suggested earlier, partly a replacement of the already employed local labour by migrant workers from outside Bengal and partly, certainly more importantly, a recruitment of most of the new operatives from the non-local labouring population. The bulk of the latter came from the two tracts noted before.⁴⁷ The migrant workers from Bihar and U.P. spoke

⁴⁵*Indian Factory Labour Commission*, 1908, Vol. II, Evidence, Witness No. 192, p. 278.

⁴⁶In 1921 the number of jute mill workers born in Bengal was slightly above 67,000. See *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII, Pts. IV and V. In 1907, according to an IJMA estimate, the number of Bengali workers was less than 47,000.

⁴⁷Of the two tracts, by all consideration the U.P.-Bihar one was more important. In 1906 Fremantle reported, "The immigrant workers are now drawn almost entirely from six districts in Bihar and six in the United Provinces, i.e. the districts in the Benares division with the addition of Azamgarh." *Op. cit.*, para 44.

either Urdu or a dialect of Hindi and those from the Orissa districts spoke Oriya. Thus the linguistic composition of the working mass also went through a change.

In terms of distance, all this meant that most of the jute mill workers came from places 300 to 500 miles away from the jute mill towns. As the Royal Commission on Labour in India, of 1929, observed, "if a circle of 250 miles radius be drawn round Calcutta, the great majority of them [jute workers] come from outside that circle."⁴⁸ Thus compared to earlier years there was a *distinct shift from short-distance migration to long-distance migration* in relation to the growth of jute labour force.

It is worthwhile to note that this preponderance of long-distance migrants in a labour force is at variance with the English experience of labour migration during the crucial phase of the Industrial Revolution⁴⁹ or with what has taken place in many of the industrial centres in India, such as Ahmedabad,⁵⁰ Bombay⁵¹ or Kanpur.⁵² In a number of important industries in the industrial area of Calcutta, the proportion of local labour was not so low as it was in the case of the jute industry.

This pattern of labour migration and composition is, however, in full conformity with the picture of labour employment that emerged in many of the enterprises coming up in the colonial world, such as the Assam and Doars tea plantations in India, or the sugar estates in the West Indies, Mauritius and Natal, or the rubber plantations in Malaya, the rice fields and rice mills in Burma, the railway construction in Uganda, or the plantations in Ceylon.⁵³ The composition of labour force in most of these colonial enterprises was marked by the predominance of not only long-distance migrants, but also of non-local foreign labour. The composition of the jute industrial population fitted with this pattern. (This migration pattern has a

⁴⁸Royal Commission on Labour in India, 1929-31 (hereafter RCLI), *Report*, p. 11.

⁴⁹A. Redford, *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850* (1926), Manchester University Press, 1964. This migration pattern is contrary to Ravenstein's famous law of migration that "the great body of our migrants only proceed a short distance." Cited by Lee in *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁵⁰RCLI reported in 1931 that 65 per cent of the Ahmedabad Cotton Mill workers were drawn from Ahmedabad district, adjacent Native State of Baroda and other adjoining areas. *Op. cit.*, p. 10. See also K.L. Gillion, *Ahmedabad: A Study in Indian Urban History*, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 101.

⁵¹Up to 1921 more than 55 per cent of Bombay cotton mill workers were drawn from places within a distance of 200 miles of Bombay. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁵²RCLI, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵³See Tinker, *op. cit.*

number of dimensions. We intend discussing them in forthcoming papers.)

Thirdly, the proportion of Bengali labour was not low in all jute mill areas. In several mills south of Calcutta, Bengalis constituted, if not a majority, at least a very sizeable proportion. Even in 1905 when migrants from outside Bengal were already preponderant among the jute workers, Foley found that in some of the mills located south of Calcutta, such as Fort Gloster Jute Mills and Budge Budge Jute Mill, the majority of workmen were Bengalis coming from the neighbourhood.⁵⁴ In his evidence before the Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908, the manager of Fort Gloster Jute Mill stated that the mill employed 5,000 Bengalis out of 8,000 operatives.⁵⁵ In later years too the composition of labour in these mills did not, perhaps, change in any noticeable manner. In 1929 the Royal Commission on Labour in India (RCLI) was informed that in the Birla Jute Mills at Budge Budge "69 per cent [were] local Bengalis."⁵⁶ The Government of Bengal in its memorandum to the RCLI stated, "In the south of Calcutta ... a very considerable proportion of labour is recruited from the surrounding agricultural districts."⁵⁷ A survey conducted by the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, as late as 1941 revealed a similar composition—the percentage of Bengalis was 79.5 as against 12.8 of the Biharis and 2.4 per cent of U.P. labour.⁵⁸

Fourthly, in contrast to the overall composition of the jute mill population, the short-distance migrants formed the majority, among the local Bengali labour. Information in respect of Shamnagar Jute Mill as well as Table 8 exhibits that most of the local labour came from Howrah, Hooghly, 24-Parganas and Calcutta—the districts in which the jute mills were located. According to Census of India 1921, about three-fourths of the jute mill labourers born in Bengal came from these districts. Among the other districts of Bengal, Midnapore was an important source of labour supply.⁵⁹

⁵⁴Foley, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. viii-ix.

⁵⁵*Op. cit.*, Witness No. 187.

⁵⁶*Op. cit.*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 426.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁸Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵⁹As stated by the Government of Bengal, "The only areas in Bengal that can be said to supply industrial workers to the metropolitan manufacturing area... are Midnapore, and to a smaller extent, Bankura... Midnapore... does send large numbers to the industrial areas, as shown by the balances of migration from 1891 to 1921. The figures in 1891 were 44,958, and they grew through the decennial periodic figures of 67,663 and 96,743 to 114,176 in 1921. Thus, Midnapore has supplied large numbers of workers to the metropolitan mill area, and these numbers have shown marked increases from decade to decade." RCLI, *Evidence*, Vol. V, Pt. I, pp. 4-5.

Table 7 discloses the fifth interesting feature, that the proportion of Bengalis among the skilled workers (31 per cent) was much higher than that among the unskilled workers (17 per cent). Does this indicate that the Bengalis were more adept at skilled work? We do not intend to discuss this here. But still, the following can be noted: "In some quarters," reports Fremantle, "Bengalis are held to be the best of the skilled workers, being quicker with their fingers."⁶⁰ Foley too was given similar information by some mill managers.⁶¹ But the contrary view has also been expressed by many others.⁶²

It should also be noticed that skilled workers born in Bengal must have also included children of up-country immigrant workmen. So the proportion of Bengalis was actually lower than what the figures show.⁶³ This holds good for unskilled labourers too.

Table 6 shows the sixth important feature, that along with the rapid development of the jute industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries jute mill workers began to be drawn from an ever-widening area. That as early as the 1880s, labourers from Bihar and the United Provinces were employed in the jute mills has been noted already. It has also been noted that later on an enormous flow of labour took place, from an area on the border of these two provinces to the jute mill area. Labour from Orissa was also employed in the mills quite early. Still later on, labour came from the Bilaspur and Raipur districts in the Central Provinces and from Madras or more specifically from the Telugu-speaking areas of Ganjam and Berhampore. According to the memorandum submitted by the IJMA to the Royal Commission on Labour in India, "Madrasis were first seen in jute mill areas about 1906, when a few were employed in the Titaghur district. Since then their numbers have increased tremendously, and Madrasis are now in large numbers in most of the mill areas."⁶⁴ From Foley's report, however, it is found that Madrasi labour from Berhampore were employed in Standard Jute Mill still earlier in 1903.⁶⁵ The IJMA memorandum also pointed out that the Bilaspuris, though coming to Bengal for many years, were attracted to the jute mills, from about 1915. But Foley reported that already in 1906 Bilaspuris were employed in three mills.⁶⁶ And there is evidence to indicate that Bilaspuris worked in jute mills

⁶⁰Op. cit., para 43.

⁶¹Op. cit., para 29, Appendix, p. ix.

⁶²Ibid., Appendix, pp. xxii, xxvi.

⁶³Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. I, para 249.

⁶⁴RCLI, Evidence, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 279.

⁶⁵Op. cit., Appendix, p. xxvii.

⁶⁶Ibid., para 29.

as early as 1897.⁶⁷ But their number, perhaps, increased noticeably after 1915. All this corroborates our view on the widening geographical sources of labour supply. To quote from Foley's report. "The variety of districts supplying each mill and the variations in the number from each district are remarkable."⁶⁸

Another related feature also deserves mention. As Foley observed, "It looks probable that each mill has formed connections with certain districts, although these connections were not deliberately formed by the managers."⁶⁹

Finally, a striking feature was the virtual absence of the *Santals* and the *Bauris*, who constituted very large proportions of the coal miners, and the Chota Nagpur tribals, who formed the bulk of tea plantation labour, from the jute and other factory labour force.⁷⁰

(d) *Areas of origin of workers in other main factory industries*

(i) *Labour force in Calcutta industrial area.* It is of interest to compare the composition of the jute labour force with that of the workers employed in some other major factory industries, such as the cotton mills, iron foundries, iron and steel works, machinery and engineering works and railway workshops, all of which were concentrated in the Calcutta metropolitan area. But here too the major difficulty lies in the paucity of information for the earlier years. In fact, for the period prior to 1921 we have to depend mainly on two sources, the 1897 report by the Inspector General of Police, and a few very scrappy references in Foley's report.

We are informed by the Inspector General of Police that in 1897 local residents formed half of the 75,000 strong labour force employed in the cotton textile industry. However, in the Dumbur Cotton Mill, the biggest Bengal cotton mill of those days, the local residents numbered only 350 out of the 1,560 workmen engaged in it.⁷¹ Ten years later Foley reported, "I have no figures of the composition of

⁶⁷Foley was informed by the Fort Gloster Jute Mill's manager that "The Bilaspuris were introduced by a Christian missionary in 1897, who said there was famine in the Central Provinces, brought 25 Christians with their families from Bilaspur. These afterwards went back and brought others, and there is now [August 1905] 500." Ibid., Appendix, p. x.

⁶⁸Ibid., para 29.

⁶⁹Ibid., para 29.

⁷⁰In the Divisional Commissioner's Annual Reports for the Burdwan Division for 1881-82 and 1883-84 (WBSA, General Misc., Nos. 1-3, October 1882 and Nos. 2-4, October 1884) employment of Santals in the Howrah and Hooghly mills is mentioned. But these are virtually the only such references which we have come across. In 1921 the numbers of Santals and Bauris employed in the jute mills were only 290 and 399 respectively. *Census of India, 1921, Bengali, Vol. V, Pt. II, Appendices to Table XXII, Pts. IV and V.*

⁷¹WBSA, Police Nos. 95-99, September 1897.

the staff of any Cotton Mill, but a walk round one shows that the proportion of up-country men working is far smaller than is usually the case in a Jute Mill." And he found relatively large numbers of Bengali and Oriya workers in these mills.⁷²

Very little is known about the labour situation in the metal industries also, though these industries had grown noticeably since the early 1880s. From the 1897 source it is learnt that two-thirds of more than eight thousand workers engaged in the metal-based industries were local residents. Foley in his 1905 report does not give any picture of the entire labour force working in these industries. But on a visit to Burn Co.'s Works at Howrah, Foley noticed, "The workshop contained mostly Bengalis and Uriyas."⁷³ Most of the ordinary labourers, however, came from outside Bengal, particularly from Bihar and U.P.⁷⁴ From a visit to another such enterprise, the Bengal Iron and Steel Works at Barakar, he got the impression that the workers were mostly local.⁷⁵ Was the composition similar in the other units belonging to the metal group of industries? We do not know.

We are, however, on firmer ground when we come to the year 1921. The "snap-shot" picture obtained from the Census of 1921 is presented in Table 9. In the case of cotton mill workers, particularly skilled workers, the proportion of persons born in Bengal was somewhat higher than that found in the jute industry. And it is striking that only about 7 per cent of the cotton mill operatives were born in Bihar, while the immigrant labourers came chiefly from Orissa (29.26 per cent) and the U.P. (25.75 per cent).

With regard to the composition of the labour force in the three main industries comprising the metal-based industries group, it is found from rows 2, 3 and 4 that by sharp contrast to the state of affairs in the jute industry, workers born in Bengal participated to a much larger extent in these industries and, further, that the proportion of these workers was considerably higher among the skilled workers than among the unskilled ones. That the situation was broadly similar with regard to the railway workshop labour force also, is found from row 5 of the same table.

It seems that in the cotton textile and metal-based industries too in comparison to the 1897 position a shift from local to non-local labour occurred.

However, in the engineering industry the local Bengali labour

⁷²*Op. cit.*, Para 38.

⁷³*Ibid.*, Appendix, p. xxxiv.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Appendix.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, Appendix, p. xxxiv.

TABLE 9
PRINCIPAL AREAS OF ORIGIN OF THE LABOUR FORCE
EMPLOYED IN SOME SELECTED INDUSTRIES 1921

Industry	Category of workers	Number	Per cent of workers born in					Other parts of India	Outside India
			Bengal	Bihar	Orissa	United Provinces	Madras		
1. Cotton Mill	Unskilled	7,288	18.30	7.68	33.01	32.16	4.32	4.62	—
	Skilled	6,109	36.24	6.01	24.65	18.07	6.35	8.77	—
	Total	13,397	26.47	6.83	29.20	25.75	5.24	6.51	—
2. Iron Foundries	Unskilled	10,277	36.17	45.10	2.66	13.43	0.26	2.40	—
	Skilled	4,600	56.76	32.95	2.63	7.11	—	0.73	—
	Total	14,877	42.53	41.26	2.64	11.47	0.17	1.88	—
3. Iron & Steel Works	Unskilled	3,857	25.87	23.40	11.41	34.90	0.03	4.20	0.21
	Skilled	2,588	64.26	14.99	2.43	15.36	0.35	1.82	0.77
	Total	6,445	41.28	20.01	7.80	27.05	0.15	3.24	—
4. Machinery & Engineering Works	Unskilled	6,691	26.07	17.89	31.46	23.06	0.61	1.90	—
	Skilled	10,685	73.02	11.52	3.93	9.55	1.06	0.87	1.02
	Total	17,376	35.48	10.94	10.94	21.39	6.22	6.96	0.80
5. Railway Workshop	Unskilled	10,836	24.60	17.07	6.28	23.03	8.80	20.20	0.009
	Skilled	19,124	38.61	17.31	4.11	21.48	8.38	8.95	1.14
	Total	29,960	33.54	17.21	4.89	22.04	8.86	13.02	0.73

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1921*, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII.

came to occupy a preponderant position. The Labour Investigation Committee of 1946 reported, "In the Calcutta area the experience of the older engineering concerns is that a high proportion of the labour is Bengali in origin..." The Committee further stated that 60 per cent of the engineering labour force came from the Calcutta urban area or nearby places while the remaining 40 per cent was recruited partially from other provinces and partially from East Bengal.⁷⁶

(ii) *Workforce in two industrial establishments in Bihar.* In the account given above, the areas of origin of the workers employed in the biggest two industrial establishments in eastern India, the Jamalpur Workshops of the East Indian Railway and the Tata Iron and Steel Works, have not been considered. But it is of particular importance to note the areas from which labourers came to Jamalpur and Jamshedpur.

Of these two, the Jamalpur Railway Workshops, founded in 1862, employed a "large staff of workmen" including about 3,000 skilled workers in 1889 and most of them, we are informed by Collin, were drawn from the Monghyr district "which has always been famous for its iron workers."⁷⁷ Even three decades later the composition remained unchanged. In 1921 the Jamalpur Workshops engaged 11,061 skilled and unskilled operatives, and were manned in majority, by local people. Thus, over 93 per cent of the labour belonged to the Bihar districts and, what is more, nearly nine-tenths came from the Monghyr district. As P.C. Tailents, the Superintendent of 1921 Census Operations in Bihar and Orissa reported, "About 5,000 of the staff including the Europeans and Anglo-Indian operatives live in the town of Jamalpur, but the remainder live mostly in the villages along the 'loop line' between Kajra and Sultanganj stations. Workmen's trains run daily to bring them to their work in the morning and take them home again in the evening..."⁷⁸ While Bengal, the United Provinces and Punjab sent some workmen to Jamalpur, the share of not a single one of these provinces touched even 2 per cent. In relation to the skilled labour the picture was slightly, though not essentially, different.⁷⁹ The greater part of them, 81 per cent to

⁷⁶GOI, Labour Investigation Committee, *Main Report*, 1946, p. 70.

⁷⁷E.W. Collin, *Report on the Existing Arts and Industries of Bengal*, Extracts from Diary, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta, 1890, p. xii.

⁷⁸*Census of India, 1921, Bihar and Orissa*, Vol. VII, Pt. I, Report, Chapter XII, para 90.

⁷⁹With regard to the classification of Jamalpur Workshops operatives cf. the following observation made by P.C. Tailents: "No definite distinction of skilled and unskilled is recognised locally and therefore, after discussion with the manager it was decided to treat as skilled persons all persons drawing Rs. 20 a month or over. According to this classification all persons of the coolie type

be precise, belonged to the district in which the workshops were situated; Bengal, the U.P. and Punjab were the only other sources of skilled labour of any importance, their respective percentage shares being 2.89, 2.45 and 1.21.⁸⁰ Evidently, local labour coming from places of short distance constituted the majority of the labour force in the Jamalpur Workshops.

The works of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), which were much more sophisticated technologically than perhaps any other industrial concern in eastern India, were situated in an almost virgin forest area. The works launched in 1907 produced their first steel in 1913, and the number of TISCO workers which stood at 6,300 in 1911 and 9,507 in 1913 grew rapidly during the First World War period and after the war. From almost the very beginning the TISCO got its labour force from a number of linguistic-cultural and ethnic groups from nearly every province of India; and the aboriginals recruited from Singhbhum, a sparsely populated district of the Chota Nagpur plateau where the steel works were located, and from the neighbouring districts of Bihar and Orissa—the Hos, the Santals and the Bhumijes—and the Chattisgarhis from the Central Provinces formed a considerable proportion of the work force. In the initial years the tribals were employed on construction work and later when production started some of them began to adapt themselves to factory work. However, the local labour was for the most part unskilled, and the skilled workers were obtained from other provinces.⁸¹

A detailed picture of the areas of origin of the labour force employed in the iron and steel works is obtained from the Census of 1921. Of the 23,823 workers employed in the works, 14,584 belonged to the unskilled category and 9,229 to the skilled category. As already indicated, most of the unskilled workers—in fact, as much as 85 per cent—were of local origin. Thus the percentages of labour sent by Singhbhum district, its contiguous Bihar and Orissa districts and the Central Provinces districts were 47.18, 7.59, 8.92 and 20.90 respectively. In addition, a large number of *khalsis*, as the superior

with no special qualifications were treated as unskilled while the men, generally on a time-scale of pay, who start as unskilled and become skilled as the result of practical experience in the works, were treated as skilled if they had reached the Rs. 20 level. The more highly skilled mechanics, fitters and so forth have all been treated as skilled." *Ibid.*, Pt. I, Chap. XII, para 90.

⁸⁰Computed from data presented in *Census of India, 1921, Bihar and Orissa*, Vol. VII, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pts. IV and V.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Chapter II, para 30 and XII, para 73. Cf. Morris, "Labour Market in India" in W. Moore and A. Feldman (eds), *Labour Commitment and Social Change in Development Areas*, Social Science Research Council, New York.

type of coolie was called, came from the neighbourhood of Vizagapatam of the Madras province.⁸²

But the relative contributions of these places to the skilled labour force were much less. The skilled workers came in quite a large number from the United Provinces, Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the Punjab. All the Bihar and Orissa districts taken together and the C.P. districts neighbouring Bihar, supplied, respectively, 44.53 per cent and 4.76 per cent of the skilled workers. As compared to this, the percentage of workers sent by the U.P., Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the Punjab were 14.22, 10.30, 7.41, 6.84 and 4.63 respectively.⁸³ It should also be stated that the more highly skilled workers, the top technicians, came from further afield, Europe and America.

Here, we have not gone separately into the question of the distances of places of origin. But from Morris we learn that "almost three-fifths of the workers hired from 1932 through 1937 came from distances of over 200 miles, and almost a third came from distances greater than 350 miles."⁸⁴

(e) Summary

In summary, the composition of the emerging and growing industrial workforce in the Calcutta conurbation during the colonial period had three specific features. First, in the case of jute industrial labour force there was a distinct shift from local workers to non-local workers migrating from considerably distant areas and belonging to at least four major linguistic groups—the Hindi, Urdu, Oriya and Telugu speaking population. By the turn of the century, the non-local labourers were preponderant in the working mass employed in the jute industry and have remained so since then.

Two, the composition of the labour force employed in the metal-based industries and the railway workshops also shows that the non-local labour was in majority. It is, however, noteworthy that the weightage of non-local immigrants among the workers employed in these industries was much less than what it was in the case of the jute labour force.

Three, the share of workers born in Bengal among the skilled workers was larger than their share among the unskilled ones. Besides, one can notice further that they constituted more than half of the skilled workers in all the three metal-based industries.

⁸²*Census of India, 1921, Bihar and Orissa, Vol. VII, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pts. IV and V, and also Pt. I, Report, Chap. XII, para 73.*

⁸³Derived from *ibid.*, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pts. IV and V.

⁸⁴Morris, "Labour Market in India" in *op. cit.*

Also, the areas of origin of the workforce in the two major industrial enterprises in Bihar and, in fact, the largest two in eastern India as a whole, were somewhat different from those of the Calcutta metropolitan factory labour force and particularly of the jute textile workers. The TISCO had certainly much wider geographical sources of labour supply than those of any other industry in the region under consideration.

All these, however, raise a host of issues. How are we to explain the change in the composition of the jute labour force in terms of areas of origin? Why did a shift from short-distance migration to the long-distance one take place? What factors affected the composition of the labour force employed in other factory industries of the Calcutta industrial area? A related issue is: what determined the areas of origin of the Tata Iron and Steel and Jamalpur railway workshop labour forces? But all these indicate the need for further research.

V

In the preceding section we have considered the areas of origin of labour force in the major factory industries in eastern India. From the standpoint of social and economic history it is also highly important to know the background from which these workers came. With regard to this there are two related but distinctly separate questions. One, from which religious, social and occupational groups—landholders, cultivators, rural labourers with little or no land, artisans and craftsmen etc., community and/or castes and sub-castes—did they come? Two, did certain social groups and economic strata show a greater propensity to migrate and enter the factories? The answer to the first query will throw light on the socio-economic composition of the growing labour force. The answer to the second one may provide us with some understanding about the prevailing situation and the sort of forces operating in the areas of origin. It should be pointed out, however, that here, these issues—the second one in particular—would be discussed mainly in relation to the jute labour force.

But in examining these questions too we face the same kind of difficulty that we have mentioned. Paucity of data and evidence, even of a qualitative kind, and particularly for over a period of time, becomes a hurdle in the way of any such investigation. In fact, our source materials in this respect refer almost solely to the community and/or caste status of the jute mill workmen from which certain deductions can be made. But these materials have to be used with much caution.

(a) Distribution by community

As far as the distribution by community is concerned, the available data indicate the following position.

Muslims were employed in the jute mills, perhaps from the early years of the industry. To our knowledge, however, the earliest definite piece of information is relating to 1890. We are informed that 2 out of the 10 jute mill operatives interviewed by the Factory Commission of 1890 were Muslims.⁸⁵ The sample is undoubtedly extremely small.

The Pratt survey of 1895 has a much broader coverage. But it too presented the community-wise composition of only 23,300 workmen employed in six mills. Of them 49 per cent were Muslims, a very large number of the latter being up-country immigrants.⁸⁶ The fact that all the six mills were located in one zone, that is on the left bank of the Hooghly to the north of Calcutta, and that there was relatively greater clustering of Muslim operatives in this zone perhaps exaggerated the proportion of Muslim labour.

But, as observed already, in the closing decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries, thousands of immigrants from U.P. and Bihar flocked to the jute mills, and the Muslims undoubtedly constituted a special group in the immigrants' ranks. And the proportion of Muslim mill operatives probably increased during this period, and to a certain extent they replaced the Hindus. As Fremantle observed, "... the proportion of up-country men has increased, the more energetic Musalmans [mostly hereditary weavers] having displaced the local Hindus in the weaving sheds."⁸⁷ The factors that caused this change in the community composition of the jute labour force deserve, however, further investigation. It is also necessary to inquire about the implications of this change, particularly in relation to the feeling and action of the work force.

From the 1911 Census data we get the information that the Muslims contributed 31.81 per cent of all jute mill operatives.⁸⁸ And the proportion remained more or less unchanged in 1921. Some aspects of these Muslim workers, particularly their occupational background, are touched on below.

(b) Caste and/or occupational background

Coming to the question of caste composition as well as the occupational background of the jute workers, we find that most pieces of

⁸⁵See f.n. 28.

⁸⁶See f.n. 11.

⁸⁷Op. cit., para 43.

⁸⁸Census of India, 1941, Vol. II, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Pt. II, Appendix to Table XVI—Pt. IV.

evidence are of a scattered nature. And the use of these materials has its problems. For, perhaps in no period of history did castes provide an actual description of society. And this was specially true for the period under consideration—a period during which social institutions as well as other crucial aspects of life were in a state of flux. Keeping in mind this limitation let us examine whatever relevant information is available for the mill workers.

Here is one of the earliest references to the caste and/or occupational background of the jute mill operatives. In the Annual Administration Report for 1875-76 the Commissioner of the Burdwan Division drew attention to "the migration of weavers from thanas Chunderkona and Ghatal [in Midnapore district] to Calcutta [and neighbouring towns] to work in the new mills."⁸⁹ One 1879 source reported, "Import of English cloth has destroyed their [weavers'] occupation. In the Borneo Company's jute mill at Baranagore 5/6 thousand male and female labourers work. On enquiry we have learnt that among them there are many Jugis and Tantis [both belonging to the weaving castes]."⁹⁰

The Dufferin Enquiry of 1888 also disclosed that many people belonging to the weaver caste worked in the jute mills. Thus in response to the enquiry it was reported that "Perhaps the poorest class in the district is the weaver class, whose trade has suffered so severely from the competition of Manchester goods Many of them find work in the European jute mills in the Serampore subdivision"⁹¹ Similar reports came from the 24-Parganas district.⁹²

It is well-established that the indigenous artisan economy, more particularly the weaving craft, faced a serious disruption since the early decades of the nineteenth century. One of its consequences was a severe distress among the weavers and many other categories of craftsmen. The cases mentioned above indicate that many displaced weavers moved to the jute mills.

It is, however, not possible to indicate whether these industrial migrants, weavers-turned-mill-workers, constituted any large proportion of the labour moving into the growing jute mill centres during the late nineteenth century. Nothing is also known about the occupational background of the other labourers entering the jute mills. But that among them, many were people displaced from agriculture and the crafts and were left destitute of relations and friends can be surmised.

⁸⁹WBSA, Divisional Commissioner's Annual Report for the Burdwan Division for 1875-76.

⁹⁰Bharat Shramajibi, Jaisthya B.S. 1286, (May-June 1879).

⁹¹NAI, Famine Proceedings, Nos. 1-24, December 1888.

⁹²Ibid.

Such a surmise is at least partially supported by some information, though of an extremely fragmentary nature, obtained from the 1890 enquiry into the condition of factory labour in India. Of the 10 jute mill operatives appearing before the Indian Factory Commission of 1890, 3 were widows belonging to the weaving caste, 1 Bagdi, (a landless labouring caste), 2 Muslims (occupational background not given), 1 Sankari (another artisan caste) and 1 Bairagi (belonging to a religious sect). Of these, 6 workers had little or no link with the village. The remaining 4 had close links but it is not clear whether they possessed any land.⁹³ Evidently, these workers belonged to different caste and occupational groups. But what deserves particular attention is that all of them seemed to have been "rejects" from their traditional occupations. And none of them came from upper castes, such as Brahmins or Kayasthas.

The next evidence, though relating to only one mill, for example, the Shamnagar Jute Mill, has a much wider coverage. The Labour Enquiry Commission of 1896 gives the caste and/or community break-up of 3190 workers. Out of them the Muslims, who formed 44.35 per cent of the former, constituted the single largest segment. Though, unfortunately, in the Commission's Report there is no indication of their social and occupational background, there is some ground to consider that many of these Muslim workers came from the declining handloom weaving industry and the distressed cultivating strata. What about the rest? 20.83 per cent belonged to traditional labouring castes, 12.53 per cent to artisan-cum-labouring group (Chamars forming 10.65 per cent), 7.24 per cent to weaving caste, and 5.32 per cent to agricultural-cum-labouring castes. Those coming from traditional agricultural castes formed 3.28 per cent of the relevant total, Brahmins 2.19 per cent, trading castes 2.35 per cent and miscellaneous group 0.96 per cent.⁹⁴ Obviously, labourers failing to get employment and/or subsistence in rural areas and craft workers thrown out of their age-old occupations formed a sizeable proportion of the workers in this particular mill. Most probably the principal sources of labour supply to other mills were more or less similar.

Quantitative information of a more reliable nature and representing the entire industry are available from the Census of 1911. It gives a detailed breakup of the total jute industrial labour force into 71 castes and sub-castes, each with over 100 workers.⁹⁵ The

⁹³*Op. cit.*, pp. 87-91, 93, 95-100. Cf. also Misra, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-9.

⁹⁴All estimates derived from *Report of the Labour Enquiry Commission, 1896, Appendix 0*.

⁹⁵*Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Appendix to Table XVI—Pt. IV.*

Census of 1921 too provides caste information regarding jute mill workers. But an examination of any changes taking place over a period of time is seriously affected as the latter Census has a narrower coverage in this respect. Nevertheless, the available information can provide considerable and more or less reliable information on the social background of the workers entering the mills. In fact, one merit of the 1921 Census is that it presents caste information on jute mill workers, for the different categories of workers.⁹⁶

For the sake of convenience and meaningful analysis, by using traditional caste occupation as a criterion we have classified these castes and sub-castes and communities into 8 broad occupational groups.⁹⁷ These are the artisan, the artisan-cum-labouring, the labouring, the cultivating-cum-labouring, the landholding, the cultivating, the trading, and miscellaneous groups. But it must be admitted that there is considerable arbitrariness in this classification. Further, while the Muslims were most numerous as a single caste/community, we do not know much about their background.

Let us now note the relevant data obtained from the Census of 1911. (i) Following our classification, 16.29 per cent belonged to artisan castes of whom the most numerous were the weaving groups of Muslim Julahas and Hindu Tanti and Tatwas, the former representing 9.5 per cent and the latter 3.5 per cent of the industry total. The share of the weaving group in the labour force was still higher as it was reported by the Superintendent of Census operations in Bengal, that many Sheikhs in western and central Bengal were wea-

⁹⁶*Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II* presents a number of tables showing castes of jute workers. Of these the two Appendices to Tables XXII—Pts. IV and V give a breakup into 19 castes and sub-castes of skilled and unskilled workers. We have, however, used column 6 in Table XXII—Pt. IV as it gives the distribution of skilled jute mill workers by departments and castes. In Table XXII—Pt. V is found the distribution of unskilled workers by districts of location of jute mills and castes. Though none of the 1921 tables cover all the jute workers, the latter two tables contained much more detailed caste information than the other two.

⁹⁷(i) Tanti, Tatwa, Jogi, Jolahas, Halwai, Kamar, Kansari, Kapali, Kumhar, Maira, Patwa, Sonar and Sutradhar have been lumped together to form artisan group. (ii) Chamar, Muchi, Dhanuk, Kalu and Lohar are here considered to be belonging to artisan-cum-labouring group. (iii) Labouring group includes Bagdi, Dhoba, Dhuniya, Dom, Dosadh, Hajjam, Napit, Hari, Kahar, Kaora, Mali, Malla, Malo and Tiwar. (iv) Cultivating group comprises Bind, Chasa, Dhoba, Chasi, Kaibarta, Koiri, Kunjra, Sadgop and Goala, and (v) agriculturist-cum-labouring group Jalia Kaibarta, Kewat, Kurmi, Namasudra, Nuniya and Pod. (vi) Landholding group consists of Rajput, Khandait and Brahmins, (vii) trading group of Agarwala, Baiya, Gandha Banik, Kalcari, Subarna Banik, Teli and Tili and (viii) sub-castes like Bediya, Bhar, Turaha etc., have not been placed under category.

vers.⁹⁸ But there is no material to determine the proportion of weavers among the Sheikhs employed in the jute mills who constituted one-fifth of the labour force. It is, however, extremely curious that the Kapalis, the traditional jute spinning and weaving Bengali sub-caste, formed a very negligible proportion, only 0.12 per cent of the work force. For some reason or the other they shunned work in jute mills. (ii) More than 14 per cent came from the artisan-cum-labouring group among whom Chamars and Muchis were numerically the most important.⁹⁹ In fact, among the Hindu castes and sub-castes, the Chamars, accounting for one-tenth of the total, singly constituted the largest group. (iii) Persons coming from traditional labouring categories such as Bagdi and Dosadh formed about 12 per cent of the working mass in jute mills. This, however, is an understatement as Sheikh labourers are not included here.¹⁰⁰ (iv) Another 4 per cent belonged to the agriculturist-cum-labouring category. (v) As much as 8.89 per cent was accounted for by people belonging to the landholding group which included traditional landowning castes like Rajputs and Khandaits as well as upper castes like Brahmans and Kayasthas who were in general giving up their characteristic caste calling in favour of agriculture.¹⁰¹ (vi) Cultivating castes and others, including tenants with little or no land supplied 8.70 per cent. Within this category Chasi Kaibartas were singly the most important forming 5.77 per cent. (vii) The trading group contributed more than 5 per cent. (viii) Some castes or sub-castes whom it is difficult to place under any of our broad categories, accounted for 2.27 per cent.

Muslims constituting nearly one-third included the Sheikhs (19.86 per cent), the Jolahas (9.56 per cent), the Pathans (1.51 per cent) and the Saiyads (0.88 per cent).¹⁰²

Five features stand out sharply from the above as well as the detailed caste breakup given in the Census Report of 1911.

One, the overwhelming majority of the jute mill workers came from a *rural environment* and a sizeable proportion had *craft background*.

Two, they belonged to a variety of castes and sub-castes. Perhaps it would not be wrong to argue that migration to jute mill centres—be it from nearby places in Bengal or from distant eastern U.P. or western Bihar or Orissa—represented a sample of the rural population in the emigrating areas.

⁹⁸Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. I, Report, para 1116.

⁹⁹Cf. Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. I, Report, para 1116.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, para 1113.

¹⁰²See fn. 91.

From this follows the third important feature of a *highly heterogeneous composition* of the labour force. And in addition to the diversity arising out of caste and sub-caste divisions it may be recalled that the workers came from different and widely-separated areas and belonged to a number of distinctly different language groups. In this context the religious-community-wise division should also be kept in mind.

The fourth and a very significant feature, however, is that the *ruined artisans, labourers failing to get adequate employment and subsistence in the rural economy, agriculturists unsettled by the sort of changes taking place in the agricultural economy, unskilled of all trades, and peasants, artisans and labourers turned into destitutes and paupers* were the most numerous among the working mass employed in the jute mills.

Lastly, *the most downtrodden in the countryside, the lowest in the social hierarchy and the untouchables* like the Chamars, Muchis, Doms, Havis, Bagdis, Kewats, and the Namasudras between them formed a *very high proportion*, that is, 25.40 per cent of the labour force.¹⁰³ And, additionally, nearly 32 per cent were Muslims. In fact, from what is known about the caste composition of the Shamnagar Jute Mill labour force perhaps it is right to conjecture that from the very early days of the industry the share of low castes and untouchables among the labour force was quite high. And the Census of 1921 also indicates that it remained so till that year. Was there any significant change, particularly any decline, in their share in the succeeding years? There is nothing to show any such decline. This is in contrast to Morris's finding with regard to the Bombay textile labour force that from the days of the beginning of the industry the number of untouchables and their share in the total mill labour was very small.¹⁰⁴

The caste data for jute mill workers available from the Census of 1921 are not as detailed and of not as wide coverage as those obtained from the 1911 Census. Nevertheless, an examination of the 1921 statistical evidence regarding caste and sub-caste most certainly corroborate all the major conclusions made above, particularly the conclusions that from the angle of occupational groups cultivators with little or no land, members of traditional labouring and service categories and artisans from declining crafts and from the standpoint

¹⁰³In arriving at this estimate we have lumped together all those castes and sub-castes which have been shown as untouchables and scheduled castes in Census 1951, West Bengal, *The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal*, Calcutta. Cf. also *Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. I, Report*, para 519.

¹⁰⁴Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, pp. 73-74.

of social organization low caste people and untouchables provided the bulk of the total labour force.¹⁰⁵

Here is a later piece of evidence. Thirty-six jute mill workers examined by the RCLI in 1929 gave some information regarding their family and occupational background.¹⁰⁶ The sample is undoubtedly too small. But this is one of the very few cases where we get some kind of evidence from the workers themselves, and is thus of particular importance. We find that exactly half of them, that is, 18 workers, stated that they were landless or possessed only tiny plots. Of them 8 belonged to agricultural labourer families. For example, Tulsi Chamar and his wife Tilasari hailing from Gorakhpur in U.P. reported, "I have no land in my village. . . . Before we came here we were agricultural labourers."¹⁰⁷ Noormahamad was a weaver in Tita-ghur No. 2 Jute Mill. "His father, who had no fields of his own, used to work in the fields of others. . . ."¹⁰⁸ Myna Khandayt (Oriya), a jute selector in the Howrah Jute Mill, came from Puri, and was "the son of a labourer on the land."¹⁰⁹ Six others came from families engaged in non-agricultural occupations—other than weaving. Thus the father of Mangari (a woman worker from Mirzapore in U.P.) "used to work in [a] leather godown."¹¹⁰ Kamala's (an Oriya woman engaged in the Howrah Jute Mill) "father worked on the railway. . . ."¹¹¹ Noor Muhamad (a line-sardar coming from Arrah in Bihar) stated, "My father is a retired telegraph line-man. . . ."¹¹² The remaining 4 were women and were most probably engaged in domestic work.

Sheikh Babu Jan (Chapra, Bihar), Gobardhan, Biro (Cuttack) and 4 others belonged to agriculturist families and had some land.¹¹³

Weaving families supplied 6 of the witnesses. Here is one. Bochu Nilkanto (Madras) reported, "His father was a weaver or Tanti by caste. He weaved cloth and sold it in the market. . . ."¹¹⁴

For the next 3 we do not have any definite information about their occupational background, and the last 2 were used to do sundry jobs.

¹⁰⁵Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pts. IV and V.

¹⁰⁶RCLI, *Evidence*, Vol. 5, Pt. II (Oral evidence), Witness Nos. 5-11, 26-34; and Vol. 11, pp. 355-65.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, Vol. 5, Pt. II, Witness Nos. 5 and 6.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. 11, no. 4.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, Vol. 11, no. 14.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, Vol. 11, no. 13.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, Vol. 5, Pt. II.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, Vol. 11, nos. 6, 7, and 16.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. 11, no. 9.

A commonly held view is that the factory workers in India not only had close links with the village life but also possessed land.¹¹⁵ And jute mill workers were no exception to this. But our evidence, we believe, goes at least against the notion of land-owning factory workers nurtured over a long time.¹¹⁶ Any pronouncement on the other part of the view just mentioned—the extent and the kind of connections with the countryside which the jute mill workers certainly had—will have to await further investigation.

Having observed these, particularly the different sources and the economic and social groups from which people flowed into the jute mills, a number of issues may be raised. A crucial issue is: had the caste and community-wise division any relevance to the growing industrial proletariat as well as to the industrial growth? Did these factors significantly affect the formation and development of organization and the consciousness of the workers? If so, in what way? No less important is the question: did these in any way impede the absorption of the new migrant workers into the industrial life? A specific problem often discussed is whether "caste influenced specific occupational patterns."

We do not intend to discuss these issues here. In fact, what we still need is a further exploration of the relevant material and its analysis and systematization. However, we would like to touch upon the last mentioned problem.

(c) Clustering by caste, community and linguistic groups

In this connection the 1921 Census caste data about 1,24,221 skilled and 1,25,246 unskilled jute mill workers are of much use. A close examination of the statistical evidence thrown up by the Census most clearly shows that members belonging to certain caste and sub-caste categories, religious communities and cultural-linguistic groups tended to cluster in particular categories of work, in certain departments and in specific occupations within the industry. Caste-wise distribution of the mill operatives among the two broad categories of workers, skilled and unskilled, shows that while 17 per cent of all un-

¹¹⁵Indian Factory Labour Commission of 1908 observed, "...he [the Indian factory operative] is primarily an agriculturist or a labourer on the land..." *Report*, para 25. The Commission gave the impression that, if not all, at least most of the factory workers had some agricultural holdings. See *ibid.*, para 25. A. Wighton, the IJMA Chairman, in his evidence before the Commission asserted that "they [the jute mill workers] had land to till." Indian Factory Labour Commission, *Evidence*, Parliamentary Paper, 1909, Vol. 63, p. 246. For a similar view see also V. Anstey, *Economic Development of India*, Longmans, London, 1957, Impression, p. 118.

¹¹⁶Morris too has arrived at a similar conclusion in his *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, pp. 84-86.

skilled workers was composed of the Chamars and Muchis taken together, their contribution was only 5 per cent in the skilled workers category. Among other low caste groups the proportion of Bagdis among the unskilled workers was 3.5 per cent, while their share in total skilled workers was 3.5 per cent. All the low caste groups taken together made up more than 30 per cent of all unskilled workers; as against this they made just 9 per cent of the total skilled workers. Another large group of Muslims which consisted of Sheikhs and Jolahas, constituted 41 per cent of the skilled workers, their share among the unskilled workers was 26 per cent. Looking at the question from the standpoint of a cultural-linguistic division, it is found that while Madrasis made up about 5 per cent of the unskilled workers, their proportion in the other category was insignificant.¹¹⁷ The phenomenon of caste/community/linguistic group clustering in the two different categories is obvious.

Additionally, as already indicated, there was much clustering in different departments and occupations. 56.1 per cent of the Sheikhs belonging to the category of skilled workers were in the weaving sheds and 19 per cent in the spinning department, representing 57.8 per cent and 31.4 per cent of respective departmental employment. 71.9 per cent of the Jolahas (skilled) and 40.6 per cent of the Tantis were in the weaving department where they made up, respectively, 8.5 per cent and 3.8 per cent of all workers. A very large proportion of the Chasi Kaibartas and Jalia Kaibartas (both belonging to the skilled category), making up 27 per cent and 32 per cent respectively, worked in the machinery and maintenance department, the two castes between them forming 15.2 per cent of the department's workers. Since these castes are found only in Bengal, in terms of a linguistic group, they indicate to a certain extent, a concentration of Bengali workers in the particular department.¹¹⁸ For the early twentieth century there are pieces of evidence to show that at least in some mills a large proportion of weavers and spinners were Bengalis.¹¹⁹ And there are reasons to think that this pattern was present even in the later days. From the 1921 Census it is also found that though the number of total skilled Oriya (Khandaits) workers was very small, only 939, 81.8 per cent of them worked in the beaming and dressing department.¹²⁰ And even today, in many mills Oriyas are found in large numbers in this particular department.

In using and interpreting these Census data there are of course

¹¹⁷Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII, Pts. IV and V.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, Table XXII—Pt. IV.

¹¹⁹Foley, *op.cit.*, Appendix, p. VI.

¹²⁰Census of India, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pt. IV.

serious problems with regard to their reliability and their representativeness. Moreover, the 1921 Census coverage in this respect is incomplete. Nevertheless, the fact of "social group" clustering is well supported. Of particular interest is the feature of a special industrial migration in the sense that migrant workers with some kind of weaving craft background (Sheikhs, Jolahas, and Tantis) preponderated in the weaving sheds. Linguistic group concentration, perhaps, to a limited extent, was also present. Still a question that needs to be answered is: why did this sort of clustering of some social, occupational and linguistic groups in certain categories of work and in departments other than weaving, take place? A broader and more crucial question is: what was the significance of this clustering in the industrial environment, and particularly in the habits of thought and action of the industrial workers? Scholars interested in looking at the phenomenon from the point of view of American sociology will perhaps like to seek an answer to a different type of question: did the clustering impede the discipline of the labour force?

(d) *Issue of propensity to migrate by special groups*

Before proceeding further the second question raised at the beginning of this section may be considered. It is a commonly held view that the members of economically as well as socially the most depressed groups, particularly the untouchables, showed a greater tendency to migrate and become industrial workers. From his historical study of the labour force in the Bombay textile industry and the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Morris questions the validity of this view.¹²¹ Let us see what light is thrown on the problem by an examination of the jute labour force.

That the low caste people and untouchables constituted a sizeable proportion of the jute labour force has just been noted. A glance at Table 10 shows, among other things, the following features: (a) The share of the low caste people and untouchables in labour force was most certainly higher than their share in the region's as well as in the metropolitan area's total population. For example, the Chamars and Muchis, the single largest untouchable group, were 13.24 per cent of the total mill workers. As against this in both the region's and the metropolitan area's population their share was around 2.80 per cent. The same feature is disclosed if all the low caste workers listed in the table are lumped together. Thus compared to their low share of 4.86 per cent and 3.86 per cent shown, respectively, under columns 2 and 3, their proportion in the industry's labour force was

¹²¹Morris, "Labour Market in India" in *op. cit.*

TABLE 10

SHARE OF SELECTED CASTES IN EASTERN REGION POPULATION,¹ IN METROPOLITAN AREA POPULATION² AND IN JUTE TEXTILE LABOUR FORCE, 1911 (PER CENT)

Caste	Caste as a proportion of region's total population	Caste as a proportion of metropolitan area's total population	Caste as a proportion of total jute industrial labour force
Chamar	2.31	1.29	10.41
Muchi	0.50	1.51	2.83
Dhanuk	6.30	0.01	0.06
Dom	0.46	0.42	0.33
Dosadh	1.35	0.45	2.69
Jolaha	1.30	0.97	9.56
Jugi	0.39	0.43	0.19
Kahar	0.68	1.22	1.49
Koeri	1.70	0.27	0.92
Kurmi	1.92	0.48	1.27
Pasi	0.24	0.19	0.75
Kaibarta (Chasi + Jaliya)	2.71	13.11	6.84
Goala + Ahir	4.63	3.28	2.42
Brahmin	4.03	6.30	4.30
Rajput	2.42	0.67	1.33
Muslim	31.43	12.65	31.81

NOTES: ¹refers to total population of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and the principal recruiting areas in the U.P., that is, Benares Division and Azamgarh District

²Metropolitan area includes Howrah, Hooghly, 24-Parganas and Calcutta with its suburbs.

SOURCES: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V, Bengal, Pts. II and III and Vol. XVI, *United Provinces*, Pt. II, Relevant Tables.

as high as 17 per cent. (b) The displaced craftsmen, particularly the weavers, for example Jolahas, represented nearly 10 per cent of the industry's total labour force. This was considerably higher than their share in the other two population totals. (c) Members belonging to those castes and sub-castes having a high social status, like the Rajputs and Goalas, had a smaller share in the labour force than in the region's total population, or, as in the case of Brahmans, the two percentages were almost equal. (d) Muslims represented about one-third of the jute workers. This was noticeably higher than their percentage in the population of the four districts taken together (12.65) but equal to that of the region's population. (e) It is striking that the share of each of such groups, as low caste category, ruined artisans, and Muslims in the metropolitan area's population total was lower than its share in the region's total.

Here a few comments are called for. First, *the people belonging to the economically and socially oppressed groups, more specifically the low caste people and the untouchables, not only constituted a very substantial proportion of the jute labour force but also showed a high propensity to enter the jute mills.* Secondly, the preceding comment is also fully applicable for the persons moving out of declining industries. Thirdly, the proportion of low caste people and also the displaced artisans in the metropolitan population was somewhat lower than their respective share in the regional population. Fourthly, and not unexpectedly, the upper caste groups listed in Table 10 neither exhibited any distinct tendency to work in the mills nor formed a large proportion of the labour force.

This leads us to a number of questions. Was the large proportion of low caste groups and weavers, in the working mass employed in the jute mills the result of specific pressures in the rural areas on these groups? What does their low share in the metropolitan population indicate? Is this to be accounted for by the presence of obstacles in the way of spatial mobility embedded in the agrarian and social structure? Or is this to be explained by the absence of suitable opportunities in the metropolitan area? Perhaps part of the answer to the latter question lies in the fact that in the colonial metropolitan area, employment opportunities were extremely limited and jute mills along with a few other factory industries provided a relatively large scope for employment. Consequently, there was a disproportionately large migration of certain groups of people to the jute mill centres. But a really satisfactory answer to the questions raised above require a detailed analysis of the forces operating in the emigrating areas as well as in the areas of destination.

(e) Non-jute textile factory labour force

Very little information can be obtained on the social and occupational background of the workers employed in other factory industries in the Calcutta metropolitan area. The 1921 Bengal Census tables give the caste breakup of only 60 per cent to 65 per cent of the labour force in the industries indicated below, and that too, into only 18 castes/sub-castes and communities.¹²²

Keeping in mind the limitations of data available we may note with regard to the distribution in terms of religious communities that in 1921, the Muslims constituted nearly one-fifth of the workforce in each of the following three industries: cotton textile mills, iron foundries and iron and steel works, and machinery and engineering

¹²²*Census of India*, 1921, Vol. V, Bengal, Pt. II, Appendices to Table XXII—Pts. IV and V.

works. But not much is known about the specific economic situation from which these Muslims came.

Coming to the question of occupational background and caste/sub-caste status we find that at least one-tenth of the Bengal cotton mill labour force came from a weaving craft background (for example the Tantis and the Jugis). But most probably this is an understatement; for, though the Census tables do not provide any specific information on the background of the Muslims moving to the cotton mills, it may be reasonably surmised that many of them came from handloom manufacture. It is highly probable, however, that a large proportion of Tantis and others coming from weaving craft were already thrown out of their traditional occupation and had to eke out their livelihood from cultivation of small strips of land or from labouring for others. Anyway, apart from labour with some sort of weaving craft background (distant or immediate), Kaibarta (Chasi and Jalia together), Pod, Chamar and Muchi were the other important caste/sub-caste groups among the cotton mill operatives, each of these contributing more than 5 per cent of this labour force.¹²³

Among the workers engaged in the iron foundries and iron and steel works in Bengal the Kaibartas, Chamars and Muchis, and Bauris figured prominently. If the unskilled workers are considered separately, it is found that the contribution of each of the last three caste/sub-caste groups—all lying at the bottom of the social hierarchy—was more than one-tenth. And the percentage share of the Kaibartas among the skilled operatives was higher than 13. A very pertinent question is: did the Kamars and Lohars, the traditional iron workers, form an important group among the workmen engaged in the modern iron industries? No answer can be given to this question on the basis of census tables as these tables do not provide any information on this regard. Among the skilled workmen employed in the machinery and engineering works the Kaibartas forming nearly one-fourth were quite numerous. In relation to the unskilled labour, the Kaibartas apart, the Chamars and Muchis and the Goalas were the only other caste/sub-caste groups of some importance.¹²⁴

(f) *Labour supply to Jamalpur workshops and TISCO*

What was the distribution by community, occupational group and caste/sub-caste of the working mass employed in the largest two industrial establishments in eastern India? Here too we suffer from the limitation that the Census caste tables provide information for slightly above 60 per cent of the labour force engaged in these industries. No information is available for the others.

¹²³*Ibid.*, Pt. II, Appendix to Table XXII—Pts. IV and V.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

In the Jamalpur Railway Workshops the groups that provided large proportions of the skilled workers were the traditional artisan caste groups, such as Barhi, i.e., carpenters (5.4 per cent), Kamars (4.9 per cent), Kandus (3.1 per cent) and Kumhars (0.6 per cent), constituting as a whole 14 per cent, and the unspecified Muslims forming 13 per cent; but Goalas (6 per cent), a cultivating-cum-pastoral group, and Rajputs (2.3 per cent) and Brahmans (1.9 per cent) belonging to the landholding group were also important. And of these workers 4 per cent and 0.9 per cent were Anglo-Indians and Europeans in that order.¹²⁵ Among the unskilled workers the traditional cultivating groups—Goalas (12 per cent) and Koiris (6.46 per cent)—forming 18.46 per cent and the labouring groups—Dosadhs (8.31 per cent), Kahars (2.83 per cent) and Hajjams (2 per cent)—making 13.14 per cent were the two most important ones. Muslims constituting nearly one-tenth were quite numerous. The landholding group supplied 6.77 per cent, the artisans 4.08 per cent and the artisan-cum-labouring caste like Chamars, 2.54 per cent.¹²⁶

In the Tata Iron and Steel Works divided into various departments, the most essential being the blast furnaces, the steel works and the open mills, the Muslims constituted the largest group—21 per cent—among the skilled workers. Brahmans and Rajputs together constituted 20.6 per cent, and Kayasthas were also numerous. Of the skilled workers 7 per cent came from the artisan castes, the Kamars and Barhis being most important. Large numbers of these workers were also supplied by Sikhs (3.6 per cent), Goalas (3.4 per cent) and labouring castes, such as Kahars and Kurmis. A noteworthy feature was that the most highly skilled workmen in practically all the departments were Europeans or the allied races, chiefly Americans and Anglo-Indians.¹²⁷

With regard to the composition of the unskilled workers the most striking feature was that more than one-fifth of them were tribals or semi-tribals recruited chiefly from the neighbouring areas and the Central Provinces; and the Mundas (9 per cent), Santals (4 per cent), Bhumijas (2.72 per cent) and Hos (2.69 per cent) were the tribes that resorted most freely to the works.¹²⁸ While the majority of them were engaged in fetching and carrying materials or in shovelling or pig-iron breaking and various other manual jobs, a few of them rose on their merits from being mere coolies and proved themselves to be experts at some of the semi-skilled and skilled operations. Thus,

¹²⁵*Census of India*, 1921, Vol. VII, Bihar and Orissa, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pt. IV.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pt. V.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Report, Chap. XII, para 74.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pt. V.

in the rolling mills work of straighteners on which, originally, Europeans were employed was by 1921 taken over by the local Hos and Santals, and in the finishing mills too some tribals rose from ordinary coolies to the position of mates and mixer-men.¹²⁹ Apart from the local tribals, the other most numerous group of unskilled workmen was the Muslim community (7.33 per cent). There was also a fair sprinkling of Rajputs and Brahmans, of artisan castes (such as Tantis and Kamars), and Dosadhs and Kahars belonging to the labouring castes. Interestingly enough, the Telis (a trading caste group) supplied a large number of unskilled workers.¹³⁰

An important aspect deserving special mention was the clustering, not only in different categories of work (skilled and unskilled) and various departments but also in specific jobs within a particular department, by an ethnic group, a community and a caste or sub-caste.¹³¹ The tribals were numerous among unskilled workers, but their number was negligible among the skilled workers. In the lower ranks of the workers in the steel works or open hearth Brahmans, Rajputs, Goalas and Muslims were found in large numbers; and in the mechanical department, particularly among the fitters, Muslims were numerous, but Sikhs, Kamars, Kurmis, Brahmans and Rajputs were also important.¹³² Even in the different jobs and operations coming under the broad category of unskilled work there was noticeable clustering by various tribal groups. Thus, while the Hos, Santals and Bhumijas were found in the work of straightening rails, laying railway tracks etc., they not infrequently, resorted to more or less unskilled jobs in the production departments of the works, the Oraons were usually employed in outside work.¹³³ All these have significant bearing on the issues of adaptation to new kinds of work and the acquisition of skills discussion of which is not, however, within the scope of this paper.

From what has been stated earlier about the ethnic, community and caste/sub-caste composition of the workforce employed in the Tata Iron and Steel Works there emerge some other notable features. One most significant characteristic was that the labour force in the works was a heterogeneous collection of diverse ethnic, caste/sub-caste, community and linguistic-cultural groups. By contrast with the caste composition of the jute textile labour force the influx was significant of those in landholding, cultivating and such other upper castes (Rajputs, Brahmans and Goalas) accustomed for hundreds of

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Report, Chap. II, para 30 and Chap. XII, para 74.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, Pt. II, Table XXII—Pt. V.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Report, Chap. XII, para 74.

¹³²*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Chap. XII, para 75.

¹³³*Ibid.*, Pt. I, Report, Chap. II, para 30 and Chap. XII, para 73.

years to a settled way of life into the TISCO work force. But even then, it remained a particularly striking feature that a number of groups that were at the bottom of the social hierarchy and/or thrown out from a society violently disrupted by colonialism—the uprooted tribals who were usually looked on as *junglis*,¹³⁴ the artisans deprived of their property and the Muslims, many of whom may be safely presumed to have been displaced from land and craft manufacture—formed a very large part of the growing labour force.

VI

Before concluding, the major findings of this paper may be briefly summarized.

(1) We have not specifically examined the question of the adequacy of labour supply in the earlier phases of factory enterprise in eastern India. But there is enough evidence to indicate that the problem of labour supply never attained a significant magnitude. Labour shortage, if any, was confined to the earliest decades and was mostly of a short-run nature. However, some difficulties were experienced in obtaining certain skilled categories of labour, such as fitters, smiths, carpenters etc. Thus there was no general scarcity of labour, particularly of unskilled and semi-skilled labour. In other words, the supply of labour responded positively to the growing demand from the expanding factory.

(2) (a) In general, in all the factory industries situated in the Calcutta industrial area, a powerful influx of non-local labour took place. The majority of new labour required by the expansion of these industries came from a number of distant, geographical areas. In the jute textile industry the geographical composition of the labour force was marked by a change from local labour to non-local labour. And this labour force was obtained to a much greater extent from distantly situated outside-Bengal areas than that of the other important industries in and around Calcutta. (b) In the TISCO a considerable proportion of the labour force came from the immediate locality. At the same time, recruitment of labour was far more widely spread than in the factory industries of Calcutta and its neighbourhood. (c) One very striking feature of the growth of the working mass employed in the railway workshops at Jamalpur, initially a small village in Monghyr district, was that it was based almost exclusively on the labour drawn from the district itself. The influx of

¹³⁴We gather from the 1921 Bihar and Orissa Census Report the information that the local aboriginals were "known in the town as *junglis*. Chap. II, para 30.

labour, particularly of unskilled labour, from other districts and areas was insignificant.

(3) One especially notable aspect was industrial migration in the sense of the flow of weavers, iron-workers, carpenters and other such artisans which had been distressed or displaced from traditional craft industries. These industrial migrants constituted a kind of pool of skilled labour for the new factories.

(4) (a) Upper caste people showed less inclination than the lower castes to move out of villages for entering factory labour force. (b) A very great proportion of the factory work-force came from untouchables and low caste groups, from aboriginals thought of as *junglis*, set apart from the rest of the society, from craftsmen who had been dispossessed of their means and their equipment, from agricultural labourers who had not even a strip of land of their own and from uprooted people of all kinds. (c) The bulk of the manual, unskilled/semi-skilled, low-grade jobs were done by untouchables, low caste persons, tribals and similar groups. Thus the bottom of the industrial hierarchy was formed, in the main, by those at the lowest rung of the traditional social order.

To conclude, a wage-earning industrial work force emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from those coming from various parts of India and from a heterogeneous social, occupational, ethnic and religious background.

APPENDIX A

AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN
BENGAL JUTE TEXTILE MILLS

Year	Total No.	Annual percentage change
1879-80	27,494	
1880-81	35,235	28.15
1881-82	40,551	15.08
1882-83	42,797	5.54
1883-84	47,868	11.85
1884-85	51,902	8.42
1885-86	47,640	-8.21
1886-87	49,015	2.89
1887-88	56,007	14.26
1888-89	59,722	6.63
1889-90	60,630	1.52
1890-91	62,739	3.48
1891-92	66,333	5.73
1892-93	66,013	-0.48
1893-94	67,931	2.91
1894-95	73,725	8.53
1895-96	77,618	5.28
1896-97	91,254	17.57
1897-98	94,766	3.85
1898-99	93,789	-1.03
1899-1900	1,01,100	7.80
1900-01	1,10,051	8.85
1901-02	1,13,493	3.15
1902-03	1,17,810	3.80
1903-04	1,22,724	4.17
1904-05	1,31,886	7.47
1905-06	1,43,429	8.75
1906-07	1,65,692	15.52
1907-08	1,85,907	12.20
1908-09	1,89,888	2.14
1909-10	2,62,258	38.11
1910-11	2,14,507	-18.21
1911-12	1,99,532	-6.98
1912-13	1,99,725	0.10
1913-14	2,16,377	8.34
1914-15	2,30,627	6.59
1915-16	2,49,050	7.99
1916-17	2,60,787	4.71
1917-18	2,61,382	0.23
1918-19	2,70,964	3.67
1919-20	2,72,749	0.66

APPENDIX A (Contd.)

Year	Total No.	Annual percentage change
1920-21	2,80,321	2.78
1921-22	2,81,848	0.54
1922-23	3,17,184	12.54
1923-24	3,22,547	0.11
1924-25	3,34,731	3.78
1925-26	3,38,497	1.13
1926-27	3,27,547	-3.23
1927-28	3,25,865	-0.51
1928-29	3,31,899	1.85
1929-30	3,39,665	2.34
1930-31	3,28,177	-3.38
1931-32	2,68,289	-18.25
1932-33	2,54,314	-5.21
1933-34	2,46,717	-2.99
1934-35	2,51,747	2.04
1935-36	2,63,399	4.63
1936-37	2,71,746	3.17
1937-38	2,87,743	5.89
1938-39	2,79,034	3.03
1939-40	2,81,229	0.79
1940-41	2,84,720	1.24
1941-42	2,86,681	6.83
1942-43	2,87,920	0.43
1943-44	2,79,918	-2.78
1944-45	2,67,193	-4.55

SOURCE: For up to 1904-5 *Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India*, from 1905-6 to 1911-12 *Statistics of British India* and from 1912-13, *Report of Labour Investigation Committee (Jute)* 1946, Table 2.

APPENDIX B

CASTE DISTRIBUTION OF JUTE LABOUR FORCE 1911

Caste	No.	Per cent of total	Caste	No.	per cent of total
Agarwala	517	0.25	Khandait	2,809	1.36
Bagdi	6,094	2.95	Khatrri	225	.11
Baishnab	2,886	1.40	Koiri	1,894	.92
Baniya	702	.34	Kumhar	918	.44
Barui	392	.19	Kunjra	205	.10
Bediya	111	.05	Kurmi	2,627	1.27
Bhar	1,454	.70	Lohar	107	.05
Bhuiya	460	.22	Mali	463	.22
Bind	1,292	.63	Mallah	1,291	.62
Brahman	8,888	4.30	Malo	1,333	.65
Chamar	21,510	10.41	Mayra	1,239	.60
Chasadhoba	180	.09	Muchi	5,842	2.83
Devanga	2,216	1.07	Namasudra	635	.31
Dhanuk	130	.06	Napit	1,458	.71
Dhoba	272	.13	Nuninya	1,289	.62
Dhuniya	1,097	.53	Pasi	1,551	.75
Dom	679	.33	Pathan	3,118	1.51
Dosadh	5,555	2.69	Patwa	264	.13
Gandhabanik	526	.25	Pod	1,323	.64
Gnor	435	.21	Rajput	2,745	1.33
Goala	4,993	2.42	Sadgop	1,487	.72
Hajjam	198	.10	Saiyad	1,824	.88
Halwai	357	.17	Sheikh	41,029	19.86
Hari	416	.20	Sonar	599	.29
Indian Christian	386	.19	Subarnabanik	314	.15
Jogi	922	.45	Sunri	364	.18
Jolaha	19,745	9.56	Sutradhar	258	.12
Kahar	3,077	1.49	Tambuli	121	.06
Kaibarta	1,899	.92	Tanti + Tatwa	7,296	3.53
Kaibarta (Chasi)	11,922	5.77	Teli + Tilli	7,217	3.49
Kaibarta (Jaliya)	317	.15	Tiyar	1,306	.63
Kalu	1,138	.55	Turaha	110	.05
Kalwar	966	.47	Others	3,447	1.67
Kamar	1,171	.57			
Kandu	1,052	.51	Total	2,06,590	
Kansari	134	.06			
Koora	942	.46			
Kapali	258	.12			
Kayasth	3,476	1.68			
Kewat	1,117	.54			

SOURCE: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. V. *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Pt. 2, Appendix to Table XVI—Pt. IV.

India and the British Empire, 1935-1947

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This article is the second, and final, instalment of a piece of work that seeks to provide an analytical over-view of the purposes and policies of British rule in India during the last seventy years of the Raj. The analysis developed here is substantially the same as that which emerged in my earlier article, "India and the British Empire, 1880-1935" (*The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XII, No. 4, pp. 339-80), but it is now being applied to a different period—the years from the passing of the Government of India Act in 1935 to the transfer of power in 1947.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century India played a distinct triple role in the plans of imperial policy-makers. She was a market for British exports, especially of piece-goods, a remitter of sterling to pay debt charges and pay and pension costs, and a source of military strength to protect British interests from the Persian Gulf to the China Sea. However, the ability of India to fulfil this imperial commitment was dependent on a number of important variables—the performance of the domestic and world economies, the intricacies of government finance and, most important of all, the ability of the Government of India to balance internal and external demands upon its scarce resources. Between 1880 and 1935 India's imperial commitment became gradually more and more circumscribed as pressures grew from within the country, for a greater say in the spending of revenue, this was stimulated by internal disruption caused by the role forced upon India during the 1914-18 war and the great depression. At the same time the British were forced to modify the techniques employed to rule India in order to extract any advantage at all from the Raj. The retreat from the provinces, which was well under way by the time of the 1919 Government of India Act, was completed in 1935; even at the centre informal influence had had, by then, to be substituted for formal rule in several imperially important areas under British control.

India's imperial role was only revealed at times of imperial crisis. Between 1914 and the early 1930s successive British military, commercial and financial crises had strained relations between Britain and India and had resulted in the permanent diminution of metro-

politan control over Indian fiscal and monetary policy. No further crisis developed until the late 1930s, but then, as British defence planners grappled with the problems of rearmament, they revived one arm of India's traditional commitment—her role as the bastion of British power in the Near, Middle and Far East.

In the era of limited liability in the late 1920s and early 1930s, British pressure on the Government of India to prepare for an imperial strategic role had declined. Despite retrenchments and reductions in the size of the Indian army, the Indian taxpayer was still maintaining over 180,000 fighting troops and a substantial number of British personnel in the mid 1930s, but over half these men were required simply for frontier defence and maintaining internal security, while the Defence of India plans of 1927 and 1931 assigned defence against Afghanistan as the major commitment of the Indian army, with only a minor imperial role of garrisoning imperially important strategic bases in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Aden, Burma and the Anglo-Iranian oil-fields, at London's expense. Not only was the Indian army given only limited tasks, but India's role as a source of supply for other troops in other theatres was also kept to a minimum. As late as 1937, India's resources were only adequate to equip her own troops for frontier skirmishes or a limited campaign against Afghanistan: with each successive re-equipment scheme being axed by the Government of India on grounds of expense, here were no ordnance factories in the country and severe shortages of armoured vehicles, wireless and mobilization equipment and ammunition.¹

The Manchuria incident, Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and the outbreak of full-scale war between Japan and China soon exposed the hollowness of the enforced optimism on which British and Imperial defence policy had been based and raised before the eyes of British defence planners the horrendous prospect of simultaneous war against Germany, Italy and Japan.² From 1935 onwards, the British Chiefs of Staff constantly pointed out the dangers of this position. In 1937 and 1938 they warned that even in alliance with France and Russia "we cannot foresee the time when our defence forces will be strong enough to safeguard our trade, territory and vital interests against Germany, Italy and Japan at the same time,"³ and that such a conflict "would therefore

¹B. Prasad (ed.), *Official History of Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-1945*; N. C. Sinha and P. N. Khera, *Indian War Economy (Supply, Industry and Finance)*, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 14-18.

²For a fuller account of British strategic problems in the period up to 1939, see M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, London, 1972, pp. 115-39.

³C.I.D. paper 1366-B, "Comparison of the Strength of Great Britain with that of Certain Other Nations as at January 1938," PRO.

place a dangerous strain on the resources of the Empire."⁴

In these circumstances there was only one policy to follow: to reduce Britain's limited liability in Europe (in December 1937 the defence of the territories of Britain's allies in war was relegated to fourth and last place in the Chiefs of Staff's list of British military objectives, in 1938 it was decided not to equip the Field Army on a scale for European warfare); to try by diplomatic means to avoid conflict or at least to delay it until British resources could be built up; and to "develop the full fighting strength of the Empire."⁵ By 1939 it was estimated that these measures would bring success in a war against Germany and Italy, although if Japan were to come in as well then "the outcome of the war would be likely to depend on... other powers, particularly the United States, coming to our aid."⁶

Thus by 1939 the British Chiefs of Staff had written the scenario for the last and greatest imperial crisis. Their schemes for imperial defence were now based on countering the Italian threat to Egypt and East Africa, defending vital strategic interests against local malcontents in Palestine, Aden and Iraq, and maintaining Singapore, "the hinge of Empire," as a bar to Japanese expansion into South East Asia and the China Sea. The main burden for imperial defence fell on Britain: Singapore could only be defended by sending the British Main Fleet, although some ground troops were needed for the estimated 180 days it would take the ships to reach it; the Egyptian government might be induced to give some indirect aid to the British cause, as the Arab rulers might be persuaded not to attack British oil installations and lines of communication in the Persian Gulf, but defence of the countries in the imperial front line meant supplying men, money and equipment which had to be brought in from outside. In the late 1930s British politicians and defence planners were becoming obsessed with the financial limitations of the British war machine. British defence expenditure rose from £60 millions in 1936 to £273 million in 1939; Defence Loans worth £1,200 million were raised in the two years before the war. Yet British resources were not infinite—income tax had risen by nearly 40 per cent between 1936 and 1939 and a Treasury paper in early 1940 reported that Britain's balance of payments deficit was likely to be £400 million by the end of the year, while her disposable resources were no more than £700 million.⁷

⁴DP(P)32, "Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff Committee in the Event of War Against Germany," PRO.

⁵DP(P)44.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷See Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Ever since 1936 British policy-makers had turned longing eyes across the Atlantic for help; they had also begun to mobilize the more traditional bulwarks of imperial power. In 1937 the new Defence of India plan revived India's role in imperial defence. She was now ordered to be prepared to equip, send and maintain, at her own expense, two infantry battalions to Egypt and Hong Kong and one each to Burma, Singapore and Iraq in case of war.⁸ The 1937 Plan did not pass without comment from New Delhi. The Viceroy refused to make its terms public for fear of the political reaction in India and for the next two years he continued to argue with London about its details, finally being told by the Cabinet in July 1939 that India should bear some of the burden of defending Egypt and Singapore since these represented the western and the eastern gateways to India.⁹

London's insistence that India should play a large part in the new schemes for imperial defence did not remove the residual problems—of governmental finance and its political consequences—that had in the past bedevilled the use of Indian troops as an imperial task-force. The 1937 Plan did not resolve the important questions of who should pay for any further Indian military commitment to the imperial cause, or of who should pay for the new recruitment and re-equipment necessary in an army which, according to the Auchinleck Committee of 1938:

is showing a tendency to fall behind the forces of such minor States as Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan. Judged by modern standards, the *Army in India* is relatively immobile and under-armed and unfit to take the field against land or air forces equipped with up-to-date weapons.¹⁰

Twenty-one crores of rupees (£15.75 million) was needed to fit the

⁸Official History of Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-1945: N. Prasad, *Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisations 1939-1945*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 10-13.

⁹Lord Zetland to Lord Linlithgow, 31.7.39, Linlithgow MSS, Vol. 8. The western gateway to India was one of the more mobile strategic concepts in British defence planning. In the late nineteenth century it had been in Afghanistan and Persia, in 1918 it had reached the Caucasus and, as Balfour observed to the Eastern Committee, the gateways "are getting further and further away from India, and I do not know how far west they are going to be brought by the General Staff" (CAB 27/4, Minutes of the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet, 2.12.18, Annex PRO). By 1939 Balfour's question had been answered—the western gateway of India had reached the Nile.

¹⁰Quoted in S. T. Das, *Indian Military—Its History and Development*, New Delhi, 1969, p. 117.

Indian Army for its new role, but the Government of India simply did not have that amount of spare revenue. Like its predecessor in 1919, the 1935 Government of India Act had reshuffled the revenue allocations of central and provincial governments to the advantage of the latter. The separation of Burma cost the Government of India Rs. 2.33 lakhs a year in net revenue loss; the setting up of new provincial governments in 1937 meant an increase of Rs. 1.34 lakhs in central expenditure (in grants to the new administrations) and a loss of Rs. 51 lakhs in revenue (by granting a proportion of the jute excise receipts to the jute-exporting provinces). Further, the *Report of the Financial Enquiry Committee* (Niemeyer Report) of 1936 laid down that once the combined net receipts of the railways and income tax exceeded Rs. 13 crores, the remainder was to be distributed among the provinces, up to a total of Rs. 7 crores.¹¹

In the mid 1930s the Government of India achieved a series of revenue surpluses—Rs. 2.73 lakhs in 1933-34, 4.95 lakhs in 1934-35 and 1.84 lakhs in 1935-36. These were put towards reducing taxation, special grants to the provinces for earthquake repairs and rural development schemes, allocations to various central research institutes and for the development of civil aviation, and a Revenue Reserve Fund to meet the costs of provincial autonomy. By 1936-37, however, a slight depression in world trade had caused a small deficit and, from the next year on, the expenses of military operations in Waziristan and of setting up the new constitution ate up all the revenue the centre could raise.¹²

By 1938 Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member of Council, was adamant that the costs of refurbishing the Indian army must be met outside India. As he wrote to London:

I cannot tax for these extra demands... If I raid the Sinking Fund [raise capital for current expenditure] not to give the Provinces more revenue but to provide more money for less troops there will be a storm... such that the Congress Governments [in the provinces] would seize the excuse for walking out... India should be relieved of this new burden.¹³

¹¹Report of the Financial Enquiry Committee by Sir Otto Niemeyer (Cmd. 5163 of 1935-6), *Return of the Budget of the Governor-General of India in Council for 1934-5, 1935-6, 1936-7 and 1937-8*.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³P. J. Grigg to "H. J." [Sir Horace Wilson] 16.1.38, Grigg MSS, 2/23. The question of meeting current expenditure by raising capital was a touchy one, for in 1936, Grigg had roundly condemned the idea of doing so to meet the cost of rebuilding Quetta after an earthquake:

In the first instance let me say that it is contrary to strict financial orthodoxy

By 1938 the provinces were taking some income tax receipts; raising this revenue head any more would simply mean that the extra money went to the provinces; increasing the excise was impossible since a Federal Court judgement had recently given the Provincial Governments the right to levy such taxes on their own account, and there was a limit to what the market would stand;¹⁴ the adjustments necessitated by the new constitution had cost the central exchequer Rs. 9 crores between 1935 and 1938, even without the loss of Burmese import duties.¹⁵

In January 1939, Grigg was only able to buy off Indian attacks on his next budget by including in it provisions by which British firms and residents in India could have their earnings outside India included in assessment for Indian income-tax¹⁶ and by September of that year even the cautious Linlithgow was writing to Zetland:

You will not for a moment think... that even individually I am for a moment unconscious of the immense strain placed on His

to borrow for expenditure which does not yield a cash return equivalent to the interest and sinking fund charges on the amount borrowed... Borrowing for capital expenditure or shall we call it raiding the Sinking Fund, for it is nothing else, may not be a very heinous offence when the Sinking Fund is more than adequate but... we are faced with a situation in which the Sinking Fund contribution is no more than a quarter of one per cent of the debt—obviously a dangerously inadequate figure.

Return of the Budget of the Governor-General of India in Council for 1936-7.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1939-40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1938-39. The total amounts of central revenue diverted to the provinces after 1937 were as follows:

	Rs crores			
	Income Tax	Jute Duty	Subventions	Other grants
1937-8	1.25	2.65	3.12	
1938-9	1.50	2.51	3.03	
1939-40	2.79	2.56	3.03	
1940-1	4.16	1.85	3.03	
1941-2	7.39	1.95	3.03	
1942-3	10.90	1.40	2.75	0.01
1943-4	19.50	1.38	2.75	3.00
1944-5	28.56	1.49	1.70	7.00
1945-6	28.75	1.57	1.70	8.00
1946-7 (est)	29.87	2.80	1.70	
				Total
				7.02
				7.04
				8.38
				9.04
				12.37
				15.06
				26.63
				36.75
				40.02
				34.37

SOURCE: Reserve Bank of India, *Report on Currency and Finance for the year 1946-47*, Bombay, 1947, p. 80.

¹⁶See Zetland to Linlithgow, 15-17.1.39; 29.1.39, Linlithgow MSS, Vol. 7.

Majesty's Government and on the United Kingdom tax-payer in respect of the conduct of the war... But you and I, knowing as we do the delicacy of the financial situation here, and its immediate reaction on an even more delicate political situation, are bound I think at all times to give the very fullest possible weight to the Indian point of view...¹⁷

London policy-makers could not afford to ignore such insistence: the possibility of simultaneous warfare in Europe, the Near East and the Far East meant that India had to be made self-sufficient in armaments, explosives, ammunition and essential support industries even in the imperial cause, while the need for Indian troops to be available for use against major military powers necessitated an immense amount of re-equipment. It was now clear that the cash for this could only come from London. The Auchinleck Committee of 1938 recommended that the U.K. government should make an annual grant of £5 million for re-equipment. In 1939 the Chatfield Committee, reviewing the situation against the probability of war with Japan as well as in Europe, laid down that, in return for an Indian commitment to defend Singapore and the Anglo-Indian oil-fields, Britain should give over £25 million, and make a loan of another £9 million (a total of over Rs 45 crores), for the modernization of the Indian army and the initiation of a programme to make India self-sufficient in the production of explosives, ammunition and light armaments. Finally, in November 1939, a new agreement was hammered out to cover India's defence expenditure during the war. India was now to pay a fixed amount equal to the annual effective costs of the army in peacetime (Rs 36.77 crores), with an addition to allow for any rise in prices, a lump sum of one crore of rupees a year towards the extra cost of maintaining India's External Defence Troops overseas and the cost of all war measures (including the normal non-effective charges) regarded as being undertaken in India's interests. The British Government was to pay the rest as well as the full cost of modernizing the Indian army plus, up to 1943, the whole cost of capital outlay needed for industrial expansion for the war-effort.¹⁸

In the late 1930s the Government of India had placed domestic demands upon its resources above imperial ones. Central revenue had been diverted to further the political strategy of conceding provincial autonomy and to ride the growing wave of opinion in favour of government expenditure for economic development. In March

¹⁷Linlithgow to Zetland, 30.9.39, *ibid.*, Vol. 8.

¹⁸S. T. Das, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-18; *Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisations*, p.12; *Indian War Economy*, pp. 21-29, 308-9, 319-22, 325-26, 345; *Return of the Budget of the Governor-General of India in Council for 1939-40*.

1938, Sir James Grigg told the Central Legislative Assembly, "I think I may claim that, while I have been in India, I have kept two main tasks in view: the financing of the new Constitution and the provision of money for rural development."¹⁹ These achievements were necessary to maintain the position of the Raj within India, but the corollary of them was that there were no resources left for India's imperial commitment. In 1939, for the first time in her history, Britain was forced to pay something approaching the market price for her "English barrack in the Oriental seas"; between 1939 and 1946 this amounted to Rs 1832.75 crores (£1374.9 million).²⁰

* * *

The strains which her effort in the second world war placed upon India were similar in type, though greater in degree, to those of 1914-18. The size of the army increased dramatically—from 205,058 in October 1939 to 429,554 in January 1941, to 856,200 in January 1942, to 1,565,474 in January 1943 and to 2,251,050 by July 1945.²¹ The Government of India's defence expenditure more than matched this rise—between 1939-40 and 1946-47 the Indian defence budget was a staggering Rs 3813.08 crores, of which 48 per cent was recoverable in sterling balances from London.²² India was also a major supply base for the fighting in the Middle East and against Japan and between 1941 and 1946 provided £286.5 million worth of materials, mainly textiles, clothing and ordnance.²³ The war effort had a dramatic effect on many aspects of life in India and presented the government with a series of unprecedented problems, the most important of which—famine, shortages and price inflation—resulted directly from the impact of the war.

The defence expenditure agreement of November 1939 had relieved the Government of India of a great deal of the long-term cost of the war, but did not solve its short-term budgeting problems. The entire expense of India's armies and their equipment had to be paid

¹⁹Return of the Budget of the Governor-General of India in Council for 1938-9.

²⁰For full figures of Indian defence expenditure during the war see Table I at the end of text.

²¹Expansion of Armed Forces, Appendix 2.

²²See Table I below.

²³Between 1941 and 1946 India supplied over £80 million worth of textiles and clothing and over £174 million worth of ordnance, most of which was distributed through the Central Provisions Office (see *Indian War Economy*, Appendix II). For a more complete account of India's contribution to the Allied war-effort, see *ibid.*, pp. 1-293 and H. Duncan Hall and C. C. Wrigley, *Studies in Overseas Supply*, London, 1953, Chapter IX.

for in India as that expense was incurred; Britain's share was credited as sterling balances in London, but cash could not be shipped out to India in war-time. The Government of India drew on two major sources of revenue to meet this new commitment.²⁴ The first was direct taxation, both in the form of income tax and of a new corporation tax, the second was loans raised within India. Between 1939 and 1946, 56 per cent of the central government's tax revenue of Rs 1460.71 crores was raised from these sources—Rs 268.57 crores from corporation tax and Rs 405.55 crores from income tax.²⁵ The total interest-bearing obligations of the Government of India increased by Rs 1076.62 crores between 1939-40 and 1945-46, the sterling debt falling by Rs 431.1 crores, the long-term rupee debt rising by Rs 1,054.33 crores, small savings rising by Rs 80.07 crores, Treasury Bills and ways and means advances rising by Rs 37.03 crores and unfunded debt and deposits rising by Rs 336.29 crores.²⁶ Total central revenue amounted to Rs 2537.33 crores in the war years and this was enough to meet the Government of India's outlay on India's account of Rs 2235.91; however it was not enough to cover the cost of the recoverable war expenditure as well—a total of Rs 1739.73 crores—and so a "gap" of Rs 1457.21 crores was created. This "gap" could only be bridged by expanding the money supply against sterling reserves held in London by the Reserve Bank of India. Although this new money was technically covered by adequate reserves its effect was inflationary, for it increased purchasing power without increasing the supply of goods available for purchase.²⁷

India's war effort did not simply increase purchasing power without increasing goods—the country's role as a major supplier of war materials actually diminished the amount of goods available to the civilian population. Although industrial production increased considerably during the war²⁸ most of this was siphoned off by a system

²⁴A full statement of the Government of India's revenue and expenditure during the war years can be found in Reserve Bank of India, *Report on Currency and Finance for the year 1946-7*, Bombay, 1947, Table 15. An abbreviated version of this appears as Table II at the end of text.

²⁵See *Indian War Economy*, p. 356.

²⁶See *Report on Indian Currency and Finance 1946-7*, Table 15.

²⁷This problem was stated clearly and concisely by the Government of India Finance Member in his budget speech for 1944-45. For further details see *Indian War Economy*, pp. 293-405; R. S. Sayers, *Financial Policy 1939-1945*, London, 1956, pp. 254-63; S. L. N. Simha, *History of the Reserve Bank of India 1935-1951*, Bombay, 1970, Chapter 10.

²⁸Taking 1938 as base, the indices of industrial production by important commodities in 1945 were as follows: finished steel 135; cotton yarn 127; cotton piece-goods 109; jute manufactures 85; paper 168; sulphuric acid 151; ammonia sulphate 151; paints 180; matches 105; sugar 97; cement 157; salt 124; coal 101;

of military requisitions. Under Rule 81 of the Defence of India Act of 1939, the Government of India was given the power for "regulating or prohibiting the production, treatment, keeping, storage, movement, transport, distribution, disposal, acquisition, use or consumption of articles or things of any description whatsoever."²⁹ All in all, 75 Government Orders were made under this rule during the course of the war, mostly after the beginning of hostilities against Japan in late 1941. As the Government of India Mission to the United Kingdom of 1945 (Hydari Mission) pointed out, "since September 1939, India has progressively taken more and more from her civilian economy to meet Defence requirements." It was estimated that all mill production of wool textiles, all factory production of leather and footwear, all organized production of timber, nearly 75 per cent of steel and cement production, about one sixth of cotton textile production and the whole of the "normal" quota of 600 million yards of cotton yarn had been redirected away from the civilian economy to serve military requirements.³⁰

Increasing money supply while decreasing goods is a classic recipe for inflation and the rate of price rises following the start of the Japanese campaign was savage and spectacular. By 1943 wholesale prices and the cost of living index were almost two and a half times their 1939 levels.³¹ After 1943 the Government of India was able to prevent inflation increasing by a series of unprecedented interventions in the domestic economy. New taxes were ordered and new loans raised not for revenue purposes but to mop up surplus purchasing power; following localized food shortages culminating in the Bengal famine of 1943 a system of compulsory purchasing and grain rationing was introduced; £77 million worth of gold was imported from Britain and sold on the open market.³² Although the Government of India officials were reluctant to take such drastic action arguing, in 1942, that "we do not regard high powered control as constitutionally feasible,"³³ the impact of price inflation coupled to military requirements, shortages of essential commodities, an overstrained transport system and a slump in imports forced their hands. The cumulative list of central government Orders and legislation

electricity generated 159; electricity sold 157; kerosene 28. *Report on Currency and Finance, 1948-49*, p. 69.

²⁹Quoted in *Indian War Economy*, p. 403.

³⁰See *ibid.*, p. 58.

³¹See Table III at the end of text.

³²On fiscal policy, see *Government of India Budget for 1944-45*; and *Indian War Economy*, pp. 348-405; for the origins of food rationing and requisitioning, see N. Mansergh (ed.), *The Transfer of Power Vol. IV*, London, 1973, Chapter 4; on the shipping of gold, see R. S. Sayers, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-70.

³³Quoted in *Indian War Economy*, p. 49.

issued under the Defence of India Rules between 1939 and 1945 ran to seven thick volumes.³⁴

Summing up the events of the previous seven years in his budget speech of February 1946, the last Finance Member of the Government of India pointed out:

While India has been spared the material destruction that has befallen many other countries, she has suffered in full measure, and in some directions in greater measure than others, the economic consequences of the war.³⁵

India had suffered as a result of the war, but the effort needed to achieve victory had dealt the British Raj a mortal blow. Between 1939 and 1945 the Government of India had been forced to reverse its long-term policy of substituting informal influence for formal control in order to achieve the short-term objective of victory against the Axis. That victory was duly obtained, but the result of securing it was that India was lost to Britain and her empire.

* * *

During the course of the war the British relegated political considerations to third place behind those of strategy and economics. All strands of British policy became subsumed in the immediate end of obtaining the greatest amount of Indian support for the Imperial war effort. Baldly stated, the problem which faced British policymakers was that only rigorous executive action could ensure maximum efficiency in the Indian war machine; the tactic of producing a consensus of Indian and British interests was now irrelevant. However, the social and economic impact of the war on India led to increasing pressures, both inside and outside the sub-continent, for political concessions to Indian opinion during the war and a constitutional settlement after it. At the same time, because of the events of the previous decade, Indian opinion was now expressed through

³⁴Government of India Legislative Department, *Central Government Orders and Legislation under Defence of India Rules*.

³⁵*Legislative Assembly Debates 1946*, Vol. III, no. 1, p. 1717. Not everyone was prepared to admit this, however. Even after the event Churchill was still convinced that:

No great portion of the world was so effectively protected from the horrors and perils of the World War as were the peoples of Hindustan. They were carried through the struggle on the shoulders of our small island.

W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol. IV*, London, 1951, p. 181.

two strong and incompatible vehicles of political mobilization, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, so that any attempt by the British to find a short or long-term political settlement would result in increased divisiveness and tension within India, which would in turn put the Indian war-effort in jeopardy.³⁶

The two attempts at constitutional reform during the war—the “August Offer” of 1940 and the Cripps proposals of 1942—were both, in essence, attempts to attract Indian cooperation by adjusting the existing constitutional machinery; both broke down because the British were not prepared to relax executive control over the Indian war-effort and because the Indian parties trusted neither the British nor each other; both ended with the Congress launching a mass campaign against British rule.³⁷ In the summer of 1942 the British were forced to abandon any attempt at further constitutional advance, to fall back on repression to cover up their inability to solve the problem of devolving power in central government and to ignore the wider issues of India's future relationship with Britain in order to concentrate on winning the war.

By the end of 1944 the victory of the allies in Europe and Asia seemed certain and the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, turned his thoughts to internal political affairs. But the running down of the war-effort did not magically remove the weaknesses of the British position. The breakdown of the normal systems of food distribution, both within India and in south and south-east Asia as a whole, the desperate plight of refugees from the war zones, and the impact of the demobilization of the now vast Indian army, all presented urgent and difficult immediate administrative problems. At the same time, the universal feeling in India that the British would soon be leaving was demoralizing the British officials and inducing in their Indian colleagues a natural tendency to look for guidance to their future rather than their present masters.

By 1945 it seemed obvious to both Delhi and London that the British could not govern India at all without the added authority of the co-operation of the Congress and the Muslim League; the threat of new mass agitations, and Wavell's fears of an armed coup led by the Congress and the rump of the Indian National Army, made some immediate political settlement imperative. However both the Vice-

³⁶See, for example, the hostility of the Viceroy (Lord Linlithgow) and the Commander-in-Chief (Wavell) to Cripps's proposal that any province that wished could opt out of a post-war Indian federation which, they feared, would import communal tensions into the wartime Indian Army (see *Transfer of Power* Vol. I, London, 1970, nos. 246 and 248).

³⁷See B. R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj 1929-1942*, London, 1976, pp. 148-57.

roy and the Cabinet quickly discovered that the Congress and the Muslim League would not co-operate in any immediate political settlement unless their long-term political demands were met. These demands—for a united India with a strong centre and for partition or a very loose federal structure—were mutually exclusive and the mass agitations which both the Congress and the League seemed prepared to unleash against the demands of the other brought the spectre of anarchy, nearer still. In 1945 and 1946 India appeared to be becoming ungovernable and not the British, nor the Congress nor the League could alone provide an adequate authority.³⁸

In the constitutional negotiations surrounding the Simla Conference of 1945 and the Cabinet Mission of 1946, the questions of an immediate political solution and a long-term constitutional settlement became inextricably entangled. By the device of allowing an Indian constituent assembly, supervised by an Indian interim government, to make the new constitution, the British hoped to avoid the problem of having to arbitrate between the conflicting Indian claims. Neither the Congress nor the League leaders could accept this solution and both sides presented demands about the form of the constitutional settlement as the price of entering an interim government. Both tried to use the British as a pawn in their game against the other: as Wavell realized, the British were in danger of having to accept responsibility for a course of events that they had no power to control.³⁹

* * *

Before 1946 the British had always had an underlying purpose to their policy in India—the need to adjust the constitutional structure of the Raj to the changing place of India in the imperial system. “Imperial” requirements had always formed the positive, dynamic aspect of British Indian policy; it is therefore relevant to ask what Britain's imperial interests in India were after the second world war. All of the three staple factors in the British imperial position of the previous seventy years—commerce, finance and the army—had altered dramatically. It was now clear that London could hope for no direct influence in Indian tariff policy. The events of the 1930s had

³⁸This analysis of events from 1945 to 1947 is based on the accounts in H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan*, London, 1969; V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Princeton, 1957; Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951; P. Moon (ed.), *Wavell—The Viceroy's Journal*, London, 1973 and P. S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*, London, 1975.

³⁹Wavell—*The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 68.

already shown that British commercial interests in India could only be safeguarded by treating India as an independent nation. The Conservative members of the War Cabinet and the caretaker administration of 1945 still regarded the prohibition of possible discrimination against British firms in India as one of the top priorities of their policy, and managed to frustrate the Government of India's first attempt to draw up a scheme of economic development by this argument.⁴⁰ However, their Labour Colleagues and successors realized that such a policy was impracticable. It was realism, not ideology, that was at work here, for the Government of India had known as early as 1930 that British business interests could not be protected by statutory means.⁴¹

In the field of finance there was still a vital imperial interest, although this was not the traditional one of control over Indian currency and monetary policy, but the new problems raised by India's sterling balances. By 1946 Britain owed India more than £1300 million, over 17 times the annual income of the Government of India and almost one fifth of Britain's gross national product. The defence expenditure agreements of 1939 and 1940 had not taken a possible war against Japan into account. Owing to the separation of Burma in 1935, the Indian troops fighting against the Japanese from 1942 were largely fighting on "foreign" soil, and thus London was obliged to pay for them. Before 1942, India's sterling assets were realized by cancelling them against her Government sterling debts held in London, but by the summer of 1942 these British credits had been virtually paid off and Britain's debt to India was rising at an alarming rate. Both Churchill and Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, protested loudly against this situation but when Sir Jeremy Raisman, Finance Member to the Government of India, was brought into the Cabinet to explain matters, he produced the unanswerable argument that to create distrust in India about the future of the balances would only add valuable fuel to the flames of Congress propaganda. In view of this, the Cabinet decided to delay reconsideration until the end of the war; Churchill at least stating his intention of then putting in a counter-claim for Britain's extra expenditure on India's behalf. In 1944 this discussion was repeated.⁴²

⁴⁰*Transfer of Power* Vol. V, London, 1975, nos. 418, 432, 438, 447, 449, 456 and 469.

⁴¹Government of India Reforms Office file 85/VII/31 R & KW NAI.

⁴²*Transfer of Power* Vol. IV, Chapter 7. The opinion, prevalent in London, that British defence expenditure in India was uncontrolled, and that the prices charged were exorbitant, was unsound. Two British enquiries of the time—by the Select Committee on National Expenditure and by an official committee appointed by the Ministerial Committee on Indian Financial Questions—found

After the war, the British found themselves in a rather delicate position. No one in London wanted to pay the full amount of the balances, Keynes in particular being fully aware of the damage which this would do to the British balance of payments position and the strength of sterling.⁴³ But to attempt to repudiate the balances would jeopardize a constitutional settlement in India which would, in the long run, prove even more damaging to the British economy because of the continued need to keep troops there. As one of Keynes's close associates, Prof. James Meade, later wrote:

It now seems to me that the political settlement with India was of overriding importance. India's sterling balances were the largest and the crucial test. And would we have got and maintained a political settlement with India if at that very moment we had said to her: "For years you have been in debt to us and now you have paid up: our political control of you ensured that. Now the wheel of fortune has turned full circle; we are indebted to you. It is true that you are poor and we are rich and that you need our funds for your economic development. But I am afraid that we are not going to pay up"?⁴⁴

Britain's major interest in Indian defence was a negative one. In the absence of a political settlement in India, law and order could only be maintained by a substantial military presence and no British Government, anxious to bring its troops home, to cut down defence expenditure and with its main strategic concerns in Europe, could accept this alternative. There was also a subsidiary, positive, imperial interest—in its post war strategic planning the British Government wished to ensure that, as in Egypt and Iraq, British troops could use an independent India as a base for operations east of Suez. A good deal of the negotiations which led to the transfer of power in 1947 were concerned with finding a structure of informal British influence which would enable this aim to be secured. The Cabinet Mission plan of 1946 and Mountbatten's first plan for the transfer of power (of April 1947) made provision for a treaty between Britain and the successor states in India on these lines.

that H. M. G. was getting value for money from India (see R. S. Sayers, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-55).

⁴³See PREM 4/49/2 PRO.

⁴⁴Quoted in H. Dalton, *High Tide and After*, London, 1962, p. 83. An alternative "solution" to the problem was that an independent Government of India might confiscate the £1,000 million worth of British investments and business assets in India (as was suggested by J. V. Joshi, the Reserve Bank of India's Economic Adviser, in March 1946) (see S. L. N. Simha, *op. cit.*, pp. 613-14).

The Cabinet Mission scheme envisaged a unitary state in the sub-continent made up of groups of provinces linked in a loose federation to a central government with control over external affairs, defence and communications. The question that was not resolved was whether the British Government would then make defence agreements with the centre or with the regional units. Mountbatten's plan of April 1947 clearly implied that there would be two regional states (Hindustan and Pakistan) with, or without, a joint central administration. This scheme was studied by the British Cabinet in early May. The Cabinet approved the broad outlines, but hinted strongly that they would be happy to see more than two regional states emerge and that Britain would be free to make defence treaties with as many as these as she wished. Mountbatten was sure that the Congress leaders would accept his scheme and he did not think that the Cabinet had made any important changes in it. However, when Nehru was shown the London version unofficially, he declared that it was now unacceptable to the Congress, for the British Government was trying to Balkanize the sub-continent. The result was a compromise—the British accepted that there should be at most only two successor states, and no treaties, in return for a Congress promise that India would remain within the Commonwealth, at least for the immediate future.⁴⁵

⁴⁵See H. V. Hodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-321; V. P. Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-88; Campbell-Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-73, 83-113. In the spring of 1947 it seemed that keeping India in the Commonwealth would make it possible to retain her as a base for a post-war system of imperial defence. During the war various ideas had been floated, in Britain and certain Dominions, for a concerted Commonwealth defence policy. In 1944 and 1946, a conference of British and Dominion Prime Ministers had recommended close consultation and co-operation on this matter. In 1946 and 1947 the British Government started negotiations with Indian leaders for some sort of formal co-ordination in the defence policies of the successor states in a Commonwealth context. However, little was ever achieved on these lines. By 1948 the British had abandoned an integrated imperial defence policy, for financial reasons, substituting the idea of regional pacts of Commonwealth powers. In India, growing antagonism between the Indian and Pakistani governments over Kashmir prevented co-operation between them and resulted in the withdrawal of all British military personnel, who might otherwise have become involved in the fighting. By the early 1950s the idea of the Commonwealth acting in strategic terms as a third force in world affairs had been dropped. There are many reasons for this, but one may have been that India and Pakistan had by then set a new precedent in Commonwealth relations—for the first time two Dominions had fought a war against each other (see H. V. Hodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 292ff, 513-16; P. S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-98; N. Mansergh, *The Multi-Racial Commonwealth*, London, 1955, p. 40, 44; *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs, Problems of Wartime Co-operation and Post-War Change*, London, 1958, pp. 171-85; Viscount Swinton, *I Remember*, London, 1948, pp. 314-15, 324-29). Of the other successor states, Burma and

Thus by 1946 it was clear that Britain's imperial interests, in so far as they affected India, dictated an early withdrawal in good order. However, this situation was not accepted by Cabinet Ministers without some degree of regret. In December 1946 Wavell found that both Bevin and A. V. Alexander were "in reality imperialists and dislike the idea of leaving India."⁴⁶ Meanwhile it had become clear that it took Mountbatten's influence to finally convince Attlee that the Raj must be brought to an immediate end.⁴⁷ Yet there were really only two alternatives for the British in India: to declare that they would stay for fifteen to twenty years, come what might, and thus force a different attitude on the Indian politicians, or to announce that they were leaving unconditionally on a given date in the near future, and thus hope to force the Congress and League leaders to settle the constitutional question realistically.⁴⁸ Both these alternatives were dictated by the one really pressing requirement of British Indian policy—the need to secure some continuity of stable government to protect the lives of British personnel in India—and only the second one was really practicable. As Dalton confided to his diary on February 24, 1947:

If you are in a place where you are not wanted, and where you have not got the force, or perhaps the will, to squash those who don't want you, the only thing to do is to come out. . . . The Tories are making a good deal of hoot about India, but I don't believe that one person in a hundred thousand in this country cares tup-

Ceylon both made treaties on defence matters with Britain—Burma then left the Commonwealth, but Ceylon remained. Ceylon also made naval bases available to Britain and, possibly by coincidence, was allowed to keep her dollar earnings out of the sterling area dollar pool (India wanted to do this but was not allowed to). Britain and India did make one agreement on defence matters—in 1947 it was decided that British officers could continue to train Gurkhas for the British army on Indian soil. For a discussion of the question of how far British strategy was affected by the loss of India, see A. Bryant, *Triumph in the West 1943-1946*, London, 1959, pp. 491-92, 496-98, 502-4, 531-32; P. Darby, *British defence policy east of Suez 1947-1968*, London, 1973; C. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, London, 1972; M. Fitzsimmons, *Empire by Treaty*, London, 1965 and *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government 1945-1951*; E. Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*, London, 1964.

⁴⁶Wavell—*The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 394.

⁴⁷See *ibid.*, p. 457; H. V. Hodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-203.

⁴⁸For a clear exposition of this argument, see Woodrow Wyatt's speech in the House of Commons on 12.12.46 (*Parliamentary Debates [Commons]* 1946-7, no. 431, Cols. 1419-26) and Sir Stafford Cripps's of 5.3.47 (*ibid.* no. 434, Cols. 503-4).

pence about it, so long as British people are not being mauled about out there.⁴⁹

* * *

The administrative problems of India in the late 1940s, even when exacerbated by extensive communal warfare, did not turn out to be insoluble. After the Mutiny, after the first world war, during the great depression and, most recently, in 1942 the British had met and overcome major challenges to their rule in India. The problems facing the British in 1946-47 were not unprecedented; the aftermath of the 1914-18 war provides the best comparison, for then also the Raj faced severe administrative, political and financial problems and, as we have seen, there were fears in London that the whole structure of British rule was collapsing.

In the early 1920s the British had been forced to compromise the underlying principle of their rule in India, but they had managed to come to terms with the domestic pressures which had emerged from the trauma of the Great War. During the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s India still had an imperial role; in times of commercial, financial and military crisis the Raj had had a vital part to play in maintaining the British system of world power and profit. But in the period between the wars it had also become increasingly clear that London's influence in the commercial and financial policy of India was best secured by informal influence, by the concession of tariff autonomy and some monetary independence in the hope of establishing a more equal but more friendly relationship, rather than by formal control. Only in defence and foreign policy was there still a need for direction from London, but even in these fields there were real limitations on what British strategic planners could demand from India and, by 1947, the British could safely substitute influence for control in these fields also.

One essential concomitant of the transition from formal control to informal influence in the imperial aspects of India policy had always been the need to find powerful groups of Indian opinion who would cooperate in running the Raj in a way not inimicable to British interests. Thus the constructive sections of the 1919 and 1935 Government of India Acts were concerned with an attempt to bring forward adequate allies for the British cause first in the provinces and then at the centre. Both Montagu's and Hoare's reform schemes still maintained a formal role for British administrators, although the notion of eventual dominion status for India implied that this would wither away at some point in the distant future. By 1945-47 all Bri-

⁴⁹H. Dalton, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

tain's interests in India could be best served by influence rather than control, while the immediate political problem—that of forcing the two dominant Indian political groupings to come to terms with each other and to encourage their leaders to show some friendliness to Britain in the future—could only be solved by bringing the Raj to an end. The British were pushed out of India as much by the logic of their own interests as by the opposition of their nationalist opponents.

TABLE I

INDIAN DEFENCE EXPENDITURE 1939-1947 (IN RS. CRORES)

	1939-40	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46	1946-47
Normal cost of defence services	36.77	36.77	36.77	36.77	36.77	36.77	36.77	36.77
Lump provision for price increase	1.19	2.56	4.39	7.97	14.44	18.73	21.02	22.60
War measures on India's behalf	3.51	25.90	54.44	161.63	298.75	330.61	292.03	133.05
Total effective	41.47	65.23	95.60	206.37	349.96	386.11	349.82	192.42
Total ineffective	8.07	8.38	8.33	8.26	8.44	9.38	10.41	14.96
Total chargeable to India	49.54	73.61	103.93	214.63	358.40	395.49	360.23	207.38
Defence capital expenditure	—	—	—	52.51	37.46	62.83	35.09	2.23
Grand total chargeable to India	49.54	73.61	103.93	267.14	395.86	458.32	395.32	209.61
Total chargeable to H. M. G.	—	53.00	194.00	325.48	377.87	410.84	374.54	97.02
GRAND TOTAL	49.54	126.61	297.93	592.62	773.73	869.16	769.86	306.63

SOURCE: *Indian War Economy*, pp. 319, 321-22, 324, 327, 331-32, 336, 339.

TABLE II

REVENUE, EXPENDITURE AND PUBLIC DEBT OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA 1939-1946 (IN RS. CRORES)

	1939-40	1940-41	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46	Total 1939-40 to 1945-46
Total Revenue	94.57	107.65	134.57	176.88	252.06	335.57	360.67	1,461.97
Defence Expenditure in India*	49.54	73.61	103.93	319.64	433.32	521.15	430.41	1,931.60
Total Expenditure	94.57	114.18	147.26	341.56	479.30	559.54	449.50	2,235.91
Defence Expenditure recoverable from H. M. Government	4.00	53.00	194.00	325.48	377.87	410.84	374.54	1,739.73
Public Debt**	-1.90	+43.81	-38.46	+143.92	+179.34	+327.97	+421.94	+1,076.62

*Including Defence Capital Expenditure from 1942-43.

**Total interest-bearing obligations: net figure for sterling loans, rupee loans, small savings, Treasury Bills, ways and means advances, unfunded debt and deposits.

SOURCE: Reserve Bank of India, *Report on Currency and Finance for the year 1946-47*, Bombay, 1947, Table 15.

TABLE III
WAR-TIME TRENDS IN WHOLESALE PRICES AND COST OF LIVING

Annual Average	Index numbers of wholesale prices (Base: week ended 19.8.39 = 100)					Cost of Living Index for Bombay (January to June 1939=100)	
	Agricultural Commodities	Raw Materials	Primary Commo- dities	Manufactured Articles	Chief Arti- cles of Export	General Index	Annual Average
1939-40*	127.5	118.8	124.2	131.5	130.5	125.6	—
1940-1	108.6	121.5	113.4	119.8	114.1	114.8	110
1941-2	124.2	146.9	132.5	154.5	137.3	137.0	124
1942-3	166.2	165.9	166.0	190.4	161.7	171.0	168
1943-4	268.7	185.0	232.5	251.7	236.4	236.5	228
1944-5	265.4	206.0	245.5	258.3	243.9	244.2	228
1945-6	272.6	210.0	246.2	240.0	248.9	244.9	231

*For seven months, ended March 1940.

SOURCE: *Indian War Economy*, p. 461, Table B.

*The Indian Economic and
Social History Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 3

Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis

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The role of caste associations in Indian society and politics over the past 70 years has been the subject of extensive discussion, much of it theoretical and unrelated to the detailed study of specific associations. The Rudolphs interpreted caste associations as agents of "modernity," a means by which the social entities of traditional Hindu India were being reformed as democratic pressure groups.¹ Their ideas were elaborated by Hardgrave in his investigation of the once lowly Nadar community in Tamilnad. To Hardgrave the Nadar caste associations were central to the process of social elevation and to the accumulation of political influence by caste leaders during the early decades of this century.² The social anthropologists, Bailey and Srinivas, have also noted the birth and proliferation of caste associations as a modern adaptation of traditional caste forms. Bailey envisaged the associations as draining the catchment areas of what he termed "caste categories"—that is, "aggregates of persons, usually in the same linguistic region, usually with the same traditional occupation and sometimes with the same caste name..." He observed that the associations "function as welfare and improvement associations, and—notoriously in Kerala—as political interest groups."³ Srinivas has suggested that the origins of caste associations can be traced to Indian reactions to the recording and ranking of castes in government census reports at the end of the nineteenth century.

¹L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXIII, I, March 1960, pp. 5-22, and *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, Chicago, 1967.

²R. L. Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change*, Berkeley, 1969.

³F. G. Bailey, "Closed Social Stratification in India," *Archives europeenes de sociologie*, VI, 1, 1963, pp. 107-8.

What was intended as an exercise in the enumeration of a supposedly static hierarchy in practice "had the opposite effect of stimulating mobility, and also increased intercaste rivalry."⁴

In a review of Hardgrave's study, Washbrook went further than previous writers in questioning the extent to which caste associations correspond to social reality. He asserted that it was meaningless to treat the Nadar caste associations as genuinely representative of the interests and aspirations of the great majority of Nadars. On the contrary, Washbrook argued, caste associations were the creation of a few individuals eager to promote their own interests in local and provincial government by using caste appeals. For the organizers, the associations were

not exclusive but, perhaps, merely another way of building up a constituency in order to raise their bargaining power both with other politicians and the government. . . . Caste is certainly invoked with monotonous regularity but the more it is examined the more it appears to be propaganda unconnected with social reality and understood in so many different senses that it loses any specific meaning.⁵

Washbrook's remarks are a corrective to those who, like the Rudolphs and Hardgrave, take caste associations at their face value, as embracing a large part of a relatively homogeneous caste and expressing widely-shared grievances and objectives. But he is too hasty. Even if a caste association had no more than a dozen members, who were concerned with their own and not their community's advancement, it might, nonetheless, express the embryonic ideas and aspirations of a far larger social group. It might, by its very existence, serve as a matrix in which previously distinct elements mix and solidify. It might be a response by part of a caste to complex economic and political forces invading the entire community.

A need remains for a comparative analysis of several caste associations in order to suggest reasons for their creation, their different intensities of activity, and their evolution. This can only be done by giving full consideration to the historical and social context of each association. The task of the present article is to examine five associations in three areas of south India—Kongunad in western Tamilnad, and the former princely states of Travancore and Mysore.

⁴M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley, 1966, pp. 94-100.

⁵D. Washbrook, *Modern Asian Studies*, V, 3, July 1971, p. 282. Caste associations are also the subject of a chapter in C. J. Baker and D. A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change, 1880-1940*, Delhi, 1975.

TRAVANCORE

The Iravas and the SNDP Yogam

A polluting caste, traditionally associated with the manufacture of toddy and arrack, the Iravas of Travancore constituted about 17 per cent of the state's population at the beginning of this century. Far from being the lowest of the polluting castes, they were punctilious about enforcing subservience from the slave castes beneath them. Although the vast majority were poor labourers and sub-tenants, in northern Travancore in 1904, eight Irava families paid more than Rs 100 in land tax, and in central Travancore there were at least four great Irava families which rivalled those of the local Nayars.⁶ Against all Iravas, however, the state government enforced certain disabilities: they could not, even in 1900, use some roads, public buildings and schools, and they were banned from temples. Orthodox caste-Hindus had them beaten if they violated such restriction. Yet, according to the 1901 census, 10 per cent of Irava males were literate in Malayalam and 175 Iravas were literate in English. Iravas were divided into sub-castes, and though census commissioners took little interest in these,⁷ it seems probable that Iravas in one area were generally unaware of other Iravas living more than 20 or 30 miles away. Yet in Travancore the name was common to all, and so were the disabilities enforced against them by caste-Hindus and the state.

The Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was founded in 1903, using as its base the temple and *ashram* near Trivandrum of an Irava ascetic, Sri Narayana.⁸ The small western-educated elite lent its support to the organization, as did the great Irava families of central Travancore; Sri Narayana's religious reputation also made him an attractive figure to large numbers of poor, illiterate Iravas, and it was to these, as much as to the educated and wealthy, that the Yogam's message was directed. By 1914 the Yogam had 1,200 paying members and assets of Rs 1 lakh. Its orientation was chiefly religious: it maintained 59 temples and strove to abolish expensive and crude ceremonies and to propagate a simplified, monogamous marriage.⁹ Although most of the temples were in Travancore, Sri Narayana's influence extended to the Iravas in Cochin and the related Tiyyas in Malabar. Five successful annual meetings of the Yogam were held

⁶Dewan Peshkar, Kottayam, to the Dewan, 28 September 1904, Travancore Political Department, File 113A of 1904.

⁷V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore Census Report*, 1891, p. 980; C. Kesavan, *Jivita-samaram*, Kottayam, 1968, p. 38.

⁸R. Jeffrey, "The Social Origins of a Caste Association: The Founding of the SNDP Yogam," *South Asia*, IV, October 1974, pp. 51-52.

⁹*Madras Mail*, 11 May 1914, p. 3.

outside of Travancore between 1907 and 1919. From 1904 the association had its own Malayalam monthly, *Vivekodayam*, and it had close connections with *Kerala Kaumudi*, an Irava weekly founded in 1921. By the 1930s *Kerala Kaumudi* had a circulation of about 4,000. But it was in Travancore that the Yogam had most influence with the government. Its secretary, N. Kumaran Asan, cultivated good relations with the dewans, and through his recommendations educated Iravas found their way into government service.¹⁰

From about 1917 the Yogam's orientation shifted towards the building of schools and the attainment of equal civil rights—ultimately temple entry—for Iravas.¹¹ The Yogam lent cautious support to the Vaikam satyagraha of 1924-25 in Travancore, but its leadership of retired government servants was reluctant to offend the conservative Maharaja. In 1927, T. K. Madhavan, the leading Irava participant in the satyagraha, became the Yogam's organizing secretary, and within 18 months had boosted the membership from 4,200 to 50,000 organized into 255 branches and 10 unions. His methods resembled those of the Indian National Congress: public meetings, processions, and door-to-door collections of funds.¹²

After Madhavan's death in 1930, the Yogam abandoned his strategy of accommodation with sympathetic caste-Hindus in an attempt to melt the government's heart. Under radical leaders like C. Kesavan, it joined with Christians and Muslims to try to force the government to grant equal rights and opportunities. In the course of the campaigns of the Joint Political Congress thousands of Iravas were exposed to agitational politics. In 1936, however, the government conceded many of its demands and threw open government-administered temples to all castes, moves which went a long way to conciliating the Irava middle class. However, until 1940 the Yogam was in conflict with the government. After supporting the Travancore State Congress, all but smashed by the government in 1938-39, middle-class Iravas captured the Yogam (by then claiming a membership of about two lakhs),¹³ led it into alliance with the government and sought to reap in return as much patronage as possible. Their ultimate achievement in this direction was the establishment of a first-grade college in Quilon in 1948.

In co-operating with the government the Yogam had become the organization of the Irava middle class in Travancore. During the

¹⁰Diary of Kumaran Asan in the Asan Memorial Museum, Tonnakkal, Trivandrum district; Kesavan, *Jivitasamaram*, p. 415.

¹¹*Madras Mail*, 18 May 1920, p. 5.

¹²K. R. Narayanan, "Sri ti. ke. madhavan," *SNDP Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Quilon, 1953, pp. 221-22.

¹³*The Travancore Directory for 1938*, Trivandrum, 1937, p. 714.

Second World War the Communist Party consciously aimed at Irava workers, for whom the Yogam had lost the attraction it had held during the civil rights agitations of the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1950s the Yogam's membership included large numbers of communist sympathizers, and there were attempts to turn the Yogam's resources to the benefit of the Communist Party. Moreover, when Kerala state was formed in 1956, the essentially Travancorean Yogam found that it could no longer claim to speak for most Iravas: the kindred Tiyyas of Malabar were largely communist supporters. By the 1960s much of its organization was paralyzed, though from 1971, with Christian and Nayar-backed campaigns to eliminate certain "backward class" privileges, there have been signs of a revival. In 1974 it had 2,000 branches, organized into 40 unions, mostly in Travancore.¹⁴

The Yogam's success in recruiting large numbers of Iravas, initially from a wide economic range, resulted from its early emphasis on religious and ritual reform. Sri Narayana struck a responsive chord even among the illiterate. By 1920, when there was a significant Irava middle class (with 4,500 Iravas literate in English) who sorely resented government discrimination, the Yogam was already commanding wide attention and respect. It became much more militant in its efforts to achieve equality of civil rights. Discrimination brought Iravas together under one banner. However, in taking its campaigns to the Irava working class, the Yogam was awakening interests and ambitions which it could not satisfy. When it began to collaborate with the government in the 1940s, the Communist Party stepped in as the guardian of the Irava workers.

The Nair Service Society

As Travancore's population and the price of rice increased towards the end of the nineteenth century, the largest Nayar matrilineal joint-families were able to cope economically.¹⁵ This was particularly true of the aristocratic families of south Travancore, which had the closest connections with government service and the easiest access to the educational facilities in Trivandrum, the capital. The small-holding family, especially in areas of central and north Travancore

¹⁴Interview with Mr. T. P. Velayudhan, Quilon, general secretary of the Yogam, 6 June 1974. *Hindu*, Kerala edition, 10 May 1974, p. 10, said 1,592 branches and 60,000 members.

¹⁵For Nayar matriliney and associated practices, see K. Gough, "Femalé Initiation Rites in the Malabar Coast," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, LXXXV, 2, 1955, pp. 45-80, and "The Nayars and the Definition of Marriage," *ibid.*, LXXXIX (1959), 23-24; J. Mencher, "The Nayars of South Malabar," M. F. Nimkoff (ed.), *Comparative Family Systems*, Boston, 1965, pp. 163-91.

where its local dominance was challenged by Syrian Christians, found it more difficult both to perform the ceremonies which its status demanded and to meet the rising costs of food and education. The matrilineal system, in which the eldest male member managed the joint-family property and could deal with it largely unrestrained, was seen as the chief reason for the difficulties of the small-holding families. The Nair Service Society was a response to these problems which affected large numbers of the caste category. It was not primarily an organization of the English-speaking notables, though such Nayar associations had existed in the past.¹⁶ Even more than the Yogam, for it lacked a Sri Narayana, it was restricted to Travancore, where Nayars constituted a fifth of the population.

The background of Mannath Padmanabha Pillai, founder and for 40 years general secretary of the NSS, illustrates the problems which the society tried to solve. Mannam, as he was popularly known, was born in 1878 into a poor matrilineal joint-family of central Travancore. The family had been impoverished three generations earlier by having to perform the *talikettukalyanam*, the pre-puberty mock-marriage ceremony, of 11 girls, and Mannam was the first male to be born since then. After Mannam's birth, his father—a Nambudiri Brahmin—ended relations with his mother, who later formed a marriage relationship with a Nayar. Both his mother and grandmother were illiterate, but they eagerly sent Mannam to the traditional village school. Poverty impeded his progress: he left after passing the lower vernacular examination in 1893 to become a village schoolmaster. He knew only a little English. Having passed the pleader-ship examination in 1905, Mannam began to appear in the local courts where much of the litigation concerned matrilineal joint-family disputes. In 1911 he became secretary of an association of all the Nayar sub-castes in his neighbourhood. Its aims were to abolish sub-caste distinctions and such costly and unnecessary ceremonies as the *talikettukalyanam*. He collected contributions from each house and built a small office for the association. In 1914 Mannam and 13 friends formed the Nair Service Society on the model of Gokhale's Servants of India Society.¹⁷

The NSS campaigned successfully for a law, enacted in 1925 in Travancore, to allow a member of a matrilineal joint-family to take his share of the collective assets and leave the family. It meant the end of the matrilineal joint-family: by 1930 more than 30,000 families had partitioned themselves. But, at the same time, sub-caste

¹⁶R. Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, London, 1976, Chapter V.

¹⁷Mannath Padmanabhan [Pillai], *Ente jivitasmarandkal*, Trivandrum, n.d., 1957; second edition, 1964, pp. 1-35.

fusion proceeded more quickly. In 1931 the census recorded only two Nayar sub-castes compared to five major and 116 minor divisions noted in 1901.¹⁸

The NSS was not made obsolete by these achievements. On the contrary, the intense competition between Nayars, Syrian Christians and Iravas, which characterized central and northern Travancore, was increased by the depression of 1929. Nayars, moreover, were in a period of social transition. The NSS was a rock to cling to at a time when non-Hindus and low-caste Hindus were seeking to destroy Nayar dominance of the Travancore government service and legislature. By the 1930s the NSS had a membership of about 200,000, property valued at Rs 5 lakhs, and an annual budget of Rs 2 lakhs;¹⁹ and it staunchly supported the government during the civil disobedience campaigns organized by the Travancore State Congress in 1938-39.

The NSS and the SNDP Yogam fought the 1944 elections in Travancore on a joint platform and together won eleven seats. But with the Indian Independence close at hand, and smarting from the clash with the government over a first-grade college, Mannam deserted the government in May 1947 and joined the State Congress. This, the Travancore police lamented, "has created the impression among the Nairs that since Mannam has joined the Congress they should also join the Congress."²⁰ For a time in the early 1950s there were renewed efforts to ally the Yogam with the NSS to oppose Christian domination of the Congress in Travancore-Cochin. But the formation of Kerala state in 1956, and the inclusion of large numbers of Tiyyas and Nayars who had no connection with either association, reduced the utility of such an alliance.

The NSS has survived more vigorously than the Yogam. The properties accumulated during Mannam's time and the educational network then established have given thousands of Nayars a vested interest in the organization. In 1968-69 it had an annual budget of Rs 2.38 crores and a payroll for 5,000 full-time employees of Rs 1.25 crores. In 1974 it opened its hundredth school and was conducting 20 colleges.²¹ The declining Nayar families of central and north Travan-

¹⁸N. Subramania Aiyar, *Travancore Census Report*, 1901, I, pp. 321, 377.

¹⁹*Hindu*, 24 August 1939, p. 31. Commissioner of Police to the Chief Secretary, 5 July 1936, Travancore Government Records, Confidential Section [hereafter CS], 1092/1936. The NSS was operating more than 50 schools.

²⁰Report, 26 May 1947, CS, 226/1947. *Nayar sarvviss sosaitti caritram*, Changanacherry, 1972, pp. 479-80.

²¹*The Nair Service Society, Changanacherry—Kerala, A Marvellous Monument of Selfless Service*, Changanacherry, n.d., pp. 3, 18. *Indian Express*, Cochin, 19 April 1974, p. 3.

core—the group out of which the NSS grew—have evolved into a class of small land-holders with interests in government and the professions. There are, to be sure, landless labourers and other working-class people among the Nayars, but they are fewer than among the Iravas. The NSS, with its large property and educational interests, has clearly become a middle-class organization. In 1974 it established its own political party, the New Democratic Party, one of whose aims was to substitute a system of reservation based on economic “backwardness” for the present system of reservation based on “backward and depressed castes.” As Iravas are among the main beneficiaries of the present system, one may look for a revival of the SNDP Yogam as a response.

MYSORE

Vokkaligas and Lingayats

The Vokkaligas and Lingayats are commonly referred to as the “majority communities” and the “dominant castes” of Karnataka. They do not form the majority and the term caste imperfectly describes them, though they are very strong numerically and their control of much of the land justifies the term “dominant.” In 1931 Vokkaligas were said to account for 20.4 per cent of the population of the princely state of Mysore and in 1935 to control 47 per cent of village headships. The comparable figures for Lingayats were 12 per cent and 30.6 per cent.²² They had enjoyed such dominance in rural parts at least since the early nineteenth century; and their grip over the power structure in rural Mysore has been enhanced since 1947 through control of the Congress party and the state machinery.

In discussing the Lingayats and Vokkaligas the term “caste category” will be used to refer to each of these loosely-constituted groups in order to distinguish such large aggregations from smaller units of social organization encapsulated within them. As a caste category the Vokkaligas originated in the nineteenth-century British censuses of south India. The name was not originally used to refer to a particular community, but denoted grain cultivators generally.²³ The decennial censuses, begun in 1871, were less discriminating and the “Vokkaliga” label was attached not only to cultivators but to a wide

²²*Census of India*, 1931, XXV, No. 4, pp. 1-8, 45-72; *Proceedings...*, Legislative Council, December 1935, questions and answers.

²³The definitional problems surrounding the Lingayat and Vokkaliga categories and their subgroups are discussed at greater length in J. Manor, “The Evolution of Political Arenas and Units of Social Organization: The Lingayats and Vokkaligas of Princely Mysore,” in M. N. Srinivas (ed.), *Aspects of Change in India*, New Delhi, 1975.

range of occupational groups from cowherds and salt-makers to a Telugu group which followed a “vagrant and wandering life.”²⁴ The term was further blurred in its meaning in the censuses of 1901 and after, which listed the Vokkaligas as a single entity without reference to subdivisions. In time the old, purely occupational, definition of the category was largely forgotten and Vokkaligas were discussed as a single caste.²⁵

They were nothing of the sort. The six largest sections, into which the Vokkaligas were said to be subdivided,²⁶ had similarities in their rituals, sectional legends and social status, but they generally inhabited different areas of Mysore. Where an overlap occurred, the sections never intermarried, interdined only rarely and viewed one another as separate *jatis* pursuing similar occupations. The Vokkaliga category was a highly artificial entity.

The Lingayat category had more social reality. The Lingayats, as a sect, were united by common reverence for their founder and by their denial of the priestly authority of the Brahmins.²⁷ As the sect began as a challenge to casteism, the Lingayats incorporated converts from a wide occupational range: in Mysore they included washermen, barbers, oil-pressers, tailors and goldsmiths.²⁸ But such groups were a small minority. About three-quarters of the Lingayats were agriculturists, merchants and priests.²⁹ But since the Mysore government did not have sectional breakdowns of the Lingayats in its census reports in this century, it comprehended only the category unit. Non-Lingayats at the state level came to regard the Lingayats as a monolith. In Mysore, as in British India,³⁰ the treatment of Lingayats as a single, homogeneous group in the law courts reinforced this impression. In practice, the only inter-sectional marriage link until the mid-1930s was the occasional pairing of girls from the Banajiga or mer-

²⁴Extracts from the memoir of a Geographical and Statistical Survey of the Mysore Dominions commenced on the Partition of Mysore in 1799, Mysore State Archives, 2nd bound book, pp. 312, 452, 474; *Census of India*, 1891, XXV, No. 2, pp. 210-17, and J. A. Dubois, *The People of India*, Madras, 1862, p. 340.

²⁵B. L. Rice, *Mysore, A Gazetteer compiled for Government*, revised edition, London, 1897, I, p. 229.

²⁶*Report on the Mysore Census of 1881*, Bangalore, 1884, pp. 26-27; *Census of India*, 1891, XXV, No. 2, pp. 210-17.

²⁷W. McCormack, “Lingayats as a Sect,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XCIII, I, 1963, pp. 59-71; R. E. Enthoven, “Lingayats” in J. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburgh, 1915, VIII, pp. 69-75.

²⁸Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, II, pp. 29-31; *Census of India*, 1891, I, pp. 246-49. E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909, II, p. 98, IV, p. 288, VI, p. 390.

²⁹*Census of 1881*, pp. 26-27; *Census of India*, 1891, II, pp. 206-13, 225-25, 230-33.

³⁰McCormack, “Lingayats,” pp. 66-67.

chant section with boys of the priestly section. Though in theory all Lingayats could interdine, most sections refused to do so. Only priests and Banajigas could be found in all parts of the state and the latter lived almost entirely in the urban areas. The cultivating sections inhabited largely distinct areas of the state—like the Vokkaligas. Where the individual Lingayat sections showed far greater internal cohesion than those of the Vokkaligas, it was due to the influence of a few *mutts* which acted as focal institutions for most of the major sections. Their influence was partly derived from the high reverence Lingayats held for the swamis of the *mutts* as gurus.³¹

But it is necessary to stress that no supra-local unit of Lingayat or Vokkaliga social organization in Mysore state before 1947, possessed much substance or importance. The vast majority of Lingayats and Vokkaligas lived on the land, and the largest arena within which sustained social interaction occurred, was the area of marriage alliances. These marriage networks might extend up to 30 miles, but were seldom more than 10. The leading Lingayat or Vokkaliga families in a village would form alliances with families of similar standing no more than a day's journey away. Families of somewhat less power and prestige would seek links with families of comparable status, and so on down the scale. Such ties were reinforced by second and third generations, thus creating a pattern of marriage alliances based upon class differentiation.³²

In comparison with the Lingayat and Vokkaliga *jati*, such marriage networks were small, and no traditional supra-local institutions of caste government had any importance in twentieth-century Mysore. By contrast with British India, the princely administration was slow in developing communications, transport and education, factors which might have forged closer links between the villages and the towns. Again, too, in contrast to British India, the Mysore government refused to devolve a significant degree of power to local boards. As a result, men in the localities remained largely indifferent to supra-local politics which could affect their material interests for neither good nor ill.³³ Economic links with urban Karnataka began to bring the locality into a state-wide economy only during the

³¹H. M. Sadasivajah, *A Comparative Study of two Virasaiva Monasteries*, Mysore, 1967, p. 213.

³²Based on interviews with Lingayat and Vokkaliga leaders. See also H. D. Lakshminarayana, *Analysis of Family Patterns through a Century: Mysore State*, Poona, 1968; B. Banerjee, *Marriage and Kinship of the Gangadikara Vokkaligas of Mysore*, Poona, 1956.

³³Manor, "Evolution"; J. Manor, "Princely Mysore before the Storm: The State-level Political System of India's Model State, 1920-1936," *Modern Asian Studies*, IX, 1, February 1975, pp. 31-58.

Second World War, when a black market in grain developed. Before 1947 the concerns of almost all Lingayats and Vokkaligas were confined to the area which could be traversed in a day's walk from home.

Vokkaliga and Lingayat Associations

Brahmins from Mysore and other parts of south India established a clear dominance in the literate occupations and the Mysore Civil Service by the early years of this century through their success in exploiting new educational and urban opportunities.³⁴ The rural Vokkaligas and Lingayats, the majority of their caste categories, were unaware of this dominance; and, because they remained dominant in the villages, anti-Brahmin feeling in the rural areas was very weak. The town-dwelling, middle-class minority on the other hand deeply resented the power of the urban Brahmins and sought means by which to challenge it.

Because the government adopted the Lingayat and Vokkaliga labels as tags by which to identify the rural elite of Mysore, it was not surprising that when urban Vokkaligas and Lingayats decided to establish organizations to plead for special provisions for their advancement, they employed these labels. The Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association and the Vokkaliga Sangha were established in Bangalore in 1905 and 1906 respectively, shortly after the government had created special seats for representatives of "caste" interests in the state legislature. Each of the associations was founded by no more than a few dozen men who were in no sense representative of the two categories. At the heart of each was a group of men who had obtained appointments in the civil service; working with them were a few eminent professionals, wealthy businessmen and landlords.³⁵ They were drawn from only two or three sections of each category, and their enthusiasm for Lingayat and Vokkaliga solidarity did not extend to interdining or intermarriage between sections of their own categories.

Both associations were pledged to work for the educational advancement and the general betterment of their categories by raising funds for scholarships and student hostels and by petitioning the government for concessions for scholarships and civil service appointments. But the gulf separating the urban notables for the rural bulk of the Vokkaligas and Lingayats placed enormous difficulties in the way of the associations. They always had trouble in raising

³⁴*Census of India*, 1921, XXIII, No. 2, pp. 214-17; *The Mysore Gazette*, I, 10 June 1937, pp. 251-52.

³⁵"Vokkaligara sanghada ubdhava mattu vyapti," *Vokkaligara sanghada suvarna mahotsava*, Bangalore, 1961, pp. 25-35.

funds,³⁶ and both failed to develop popular support in the state. The membership of either association never exceeded a few hundred of the mainly urban elite of wealth and education. Most members came from Bangalore and its environs, and the distribution of scholarships favoured some parts of the state over others.³⁷

A major reason for the associations' failure in fund-raising and enrolment was the preoccupation of their leadership with public posturing and the bestowal of whatever patronage they could wean from the authorities on their personal networks of clients. On both counts they were temporarily successful. For nearly two decades they held forth on the floor of the state assembly, claiming to represent one in five or one in seven Mysoreans. Vokkaliga Sangha leaders were especially earnest in this public role-playing and they established a newspaper which ran at an almost constant loss, mainly because its circulation was limited to the few hundred Sangha members from the Vokkaliga upper crust.³⁸ The association leaders scored their greatest success at winning concessions from the government in 1918 when the Maharaja granted to the non-Brahmins, special educational and civil service concessions. Caste association leaders exercised considerable influence over the distribution of the spoils which followed.

But by the mid-1920s the Maharaja thwarted the leaders' posturing and patronage distribution. As early as 1907 he had urged that the Vokkaliga Sangha "... not be allowed to become a mere talking machine of self-advertisement."³⁹ In 1923, the year in which a new constitution was inaugurated in Mysore, the caste associations were stripped of their special seats in the legislature in order to deprive the leaders of a stage for their theatrics. Within the next three years the appointment of a new dewan, with orders to stop the flow of patronage to such lobbies as the Lingayat and Vokkaliga associations, made it apparent that the promised quotas for non-Brahmins in the administration would not be met. As a consequence of these changes the Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association and the Vokkaliga Sangha were finished as important forces in the public life of Mysore. Their main function since the mid-1920s has been as fund-raising

³⁶*Proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly*, 1913, pp. 182-83; October 1923, p. 96; MLEFA, *Suvarna mahotsava Kaipidi*, Bangalore, 1956, pp. 19, 37.

³⁷Interviews with officers and mofussil members of the Vokkaliga Sangha and the MLEFA; MLEFA archives.

³⁸Interviews with an officer of the Vokkaliga Sangha and a former journalist for the *Vokkaligara Patrike*.

³⁹Krishnaraja Wadiyar Bahadur, Maharaja of Mysore, *Speeches*, Bangalore, 1934, I, p. 66.

committees for scholarships and university hostels, a role in which they have been moderately successful.

After the introduction of the 1923 constitution, Vokkaligas and Lingayats who sought prominence in public affairs, operated not through caste associations but through formal political parties. By extending the electorate, the new constitution gave Lingayats and Vokkaligas overwhelming dominance on the electoral rolls. New faces entered the legislatures and local boards, and in the early 1930s the younger generation of politicians established a non-Brahmin party. The young men did not politely beseech the government for concessions as their predecessors had done. They had imbibed the assertive spirit of the Congress in British India, and their attacks on the authorities intensified during the 1930s. By 1937 their exasperation with the government's unwillingness to share power with non-officials drove them to merge the non-Brahmin party with the predominantly Brahmin Mysore Congress. United opposition to autocratic rule developed enough strength, mainly in urban Mysore, to launch substantial agitations against the government in the late 1930s and in 1942. During the weeks after the transfer of power in 1947 a full-scale satyagraha forced the state authorities to grant the Congress demand for popular sovereignty. The party then took office, entrenching itself in a position of dominance which it has enjoyed ever since. The pre-eminence within the Congress which the Lingayats and Vokkaligas achieved as early as 1938 was the central factor in the establishment and maintenance of Congress supremacy in Mysore.

TAMILNAD

The Kongu Vellalas

According to census reports the Vellalas were one of the largest castes in the Madras Presidency. However, the name Vellala merely signified a cultivator. The Vellalas were not an integrated social unit, but a caste category: they shared the same name, the same vernacular and traditional occupation, and throughout Tamilnad they were ranked high among non-Brahmin castes. The Kongu Vellalas or Gounders were one of the four principal divisions of the Vellala category, occupying the dry Kongunad plateau which during the British period was divided between Coimbatore, southern Salem, and the western fringes of Madura and Trichinopoly districts. In 1921, approximately a million Gounders lived in Kongunad.⁴⁰

⁴⁰*Census of India*, 1921, XIII, pp. 123, 155.

Traditionally the Gounders were not a single *jati*.⁴¹ Buchanan in 1800 noted that the Kongu Vellalas were split into numerous "clans" which could interdine but not intermarry.⁴² These internal divisions of the Gounders were a reflection of the extreme localization of Kongu society, caused, to a large extent, by poor communications, but reinforced by the organization of the Gounders into 24 territorial units, or *nadus*. The *nadu* was the operative unit for social interaction: it enclosed several clans and was the usual perimeter for marriage alliances.⁴³ Unlike other areas of ancient Tamilnad, Kongunad had not produced its own enduring state and considerable power remained in the hands of petty chieftains—Gounders among them—possessing military and judicial authority as well as land rights.⁴⁴ As in Kerala, where geographical factors also favoured extreme localization, fragmentary political systems discouraged broader social integration.

Against this localization must be considered two aspects of overarching caste unity. Firstly, the *nadus* were grouped under four Pattagars, hereditary chieftains revered as the religious heads of the Gounder community. Even after British annexation of Kongunad at the close of the eighteenth century, the Pattagars remained influential in caste affairs, bolstered by their resources as major landholders.⁴⁵ Secondly, throughout most of rural Kongunad, the Gounders shared the privileged position of being the dominant caste. The title "Gounder" denoted a village headman or a prosperous ryot: the Gounders were the lords of the soil.⁴⁶

A hundred and fifty years of British rule profoundly affected the economic and political character of Kongunad, and with it the Gounders' social organization. The old localized society was gradually replaced by a broader one in which social stratification became more important than geographical separation. The introduction of the ryotwari land tenure system did not completely displace the existing chieftains: some remained as zamindars, but lost their judicial and military powers. The majority of the Gounders became independent

⁴¹For the Gounders' background and caste traditions, see B.E.F. Beck, "A Sociological Sketch of the Major Castes in the Coimbatore District," *Proceedings of the First International Seminar Conference of Tamil Studies*, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, pp. 637-38; Thurston, *Castes*, III, pp. 417-21.

⁴²F. Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, London, 1807, II, p. 38.

⁴³Thurston, *Castes*, III, p. 418; E. J. Miller, "Caste and Territory in Malabar," *American Anthropologist*, LVI, 3, June 1954, pp. 410-20.

⁴⁴Buchanan, *Journey*, II, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*; Thurston, *Castes*, III, p. 418.

⁴⁶B. E. F. Beck, "The Right-Left Division of South Indian Society," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIX, 4, August 1970, pp. 779-98.

ryots with direct relations with the government in Madras, to which they paid their taxes and from which they sought protection and favours. This change was complemented by the integration of Kongunad into south India's colonial economy from the 1860s with the construction of railways and the rapid expansion of cotton and other cash crops. As the principal agriculturists, many Gounders derived economic gain from the new order, though not a few, overburdened by debts, became landless labourers or joined the workforce in the expanding urban centres.⁴⁷

Hesitantly at first, Gounders began to enter western education and the professions at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Initially the Pattagars and zamindars shunned higher education and the professions, but a notable exception was P. Subbarayan, zamindar of Kumaramangalam, advocate of the Madras High Court, and Chief Minister of Madras from 1926 to 1930.⁴⁹ Alongside the small professional middle class of Gounders there also developed by the 1920s, an urban commercial stratum of petty traders, grain and cotton merchants, and liquor contractors.

Improved communications by road and rail, economic integration and the spread of western education contributed to the decline of the old Gounder caste organization. New social structures formed in its place. Marriage alliances were no longer confined to the *nadu*, but were made with increasing frequency between the foremost professional and commercial families in different parts of Kongunad.⁵⁰ Such marriage ties helped to transform the Gounders into a single caste unit. They also consolidated the position of the leading Gounders into an upper stratum within the caste based on wealth and education, a pattern already described in the context of Mysore.

The Kongu Vellala Sangam

In August 1921, a Gounder caste association, the Kongu Vellala Sangam, was formed in Coimbatore district. Its leading figure was V. C. Vellingiri Gounder, a prosperous landholder with some western education, and it was supported by many prominent Gounders

⁴⁷D. Arnold, "The Gounders and the Congress: Political Recruitment in South India, 1920-1937," *South Asia*, IV, October 1974, pp. 1-20.

⁴⁸*Census of India*, 1921, XIII, pp. 128-29.

⁴⁹For Subbarayan's early career, see *Directory of the Madras Legislature*, Madras, 1938, p. 240. The Gounders' educational attainments are listed in a caste history, S. A. R. Chinuswami Gounder, *Kongu Vellalar*, Sinnampalayam, 1963, pp. 329-76.

⁵⁰N. Perumal, *Faded Flower: A Biographical Narrative of Mr. S. G. Senodayan*, I.C.S., Coimbatore, n.d., p. 32; interviews with Dr L. K. Muthuswami, Erode, 31 March, 3 April 1971.

including, although cautiously, the Pattagars. The first caste conference was held in January 1922, and was followed by six major conferences in the next 17 years and by a number of local meetings. The last session, held in August 1939, claimed an audience of 10,000, but by that date the association was already in rapid decline. Unlike the Iravas of Travancore, the Gounders were not goaded by extreme social disabilities. On the contrary, they enjoyed a relatively high and secure position comparable to that of the Lingayats and Vokkaligas of Mysore. Why then did they set up a caste association and why did it eventually collapse?

One reason for the founding of the Sangam was the desire of the western educated and the urban traders to establish the respectability of their caste in their own eyes and those of other communities. This could not be achieved through the traditional caste organization which had largely disintegrated and had the old chieftains at its apex, not the new caste leaders. Conferences of the Sangam exhorted Gounders to abstain from alcohol and meat, to take greater interest in religious learning, and to reform their marriage customs.⁵¹ Concern for abstinence from alcohol was not merely an attempt to adopt a high-caste attribute: prominent Gounders had become alarmed at the prevalence of drunkenness among their poorer castemen. The sentencing to death of seven Gounders for their part in a drunken fray and murder in 1921 was a major reason why the Pattagars joined with the western-educated Gounders to save the caste's reputation.⁵² Improving the status and power of the Gounders was a task conceived in more than traditional terms. Alongside reform through sanskritization,⁵³ the educated and urban Gounders passed for the caste's increased participation in higher education and the professions and, in view of the Gounders' strong agrarian interests, the adoption of improved farming methods.⁵⁴ Feeling backward by comparison with the leading castes in the local towns and in other areas of Tamilnad, the Gounder leaders sought to encourage the educational and economic advancement of the caste as a whole. Other castes had formed associations for this purpose and it was natural that the Gounders should imitate them.

The activities of the Kongu Vellala Sangam were sporadic. Conference resolutions called for the setting up of subsidiary branches and reading rooms, but few of these were ever created and, unlike

⁵¹*Hindu*, Madras, 28 January 1922, p. 7; 12 August, 1921, p. 6.

⁵²*Hindu*, 25 August 1921, p. 8.

⁵³For the concept of sanskritization, see M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, London, 1952, pp. 30-31, and *Social Change in Modern India*, pp. 1-45.

⁵⁴*Hindu*, 12 August 1921, p. 6; 28 January 1922, p. 7.

many such associations, the Sangam did not finance the education of young castemen. It was through journalism that the Sangam's objectives were most resolutely pursued. Two Tamil caste papers were published in the early 1920s: the *Konku Mandalam*, a monthly with a circulation of about 800, and the *Konku Velalar Mitran*, a weekly with a far smaller circulation. Both ceased publication in 1926.⁵⁵ In an attempt to revitalize the Sangam after initial enthusiasm had waned, a Kongu Vellala Youths' Conference was held at Kodumudi in Coimbatore district in 1928. After reiterating the resolutions of earlier caste meetings, the conference decided to collect funds for a magazine to publicize the activities of the Velalar Valiban Sangam (Young Vellalas' Association).⁵⁶ Entitled *Velalar Valiban*, the magazine was published as a fortnightly from 1929 to 1931. It ranged widely over communal and political issues, and its circulation reached about 1,200.⁵⁷

Social and economic reform was one side of the Sangam's function. Its formation was also inspired by rapid political change in the years during and immediately after the First World War. Before 1920, Gounders had begun to enter local government boards in Kongunad, but not the provincial legislature with its minute electorate and large constituencies. However, under the dyarchy constitution, in operation from 1920 to 1937, the electoral net was cast significantly wider. Although only about three per cent of the presidency was enfranchised, in Coimbatore this represented 50,000 voters of whom a majority were the wealthier Gounders; in Salem, Gounder voters were an important minority. The extension of the franchise was accompanied by an increase in the number of seats in the legislature: three for Coimbatore, two for Salem, as well as special seats like the landholders' constituency which Subbarayan held for 17 years. These changes tempted prominent Gounders to enter the legislature, and by 1937 five had successfully done so, including Vellingiri Gounder and two of the Pattagars.

Gounder participation in the legislature had other motives. Once the constitutional reforms had been proposed the Gounders' votes were eagerly sought by politicians of other castes: urban Brahmin Congressmen vied for their allegiance with members of the rival Justice Party.⁵⁸ A seat in the legislature gave a member not only

⁵⁵Tamil Nadu Archives [TNA], Madras, Public Proceedings, G.O. 671 (Confidential), 27 July 1927, p. 34.

⁵⁶*Madras Mail*, 12 June 1928, p. 6.

⁵⁷TNA, Public (Police), G.O. 1022 (Confidential), 26 July, 1932, p. 95. S. Krishnaswami of Madras Christian College provided information on *Velalar Valiban*.

⁵⁸E. F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, Berkeley, 1969.

personal prestige but also access to government decision-making and patronage. On issues which most concerned the Gounder community—irrigation, land revenue, local government and education—the caste leaders had to turn to the legislature.

The political function of the Kongu Vellala Sangam was twofold. Its meetings insisted that Gounders should vote for their castemen in elections,⁵⁹ but as the association was neither well-organized nor wealthy, appeals for communal solidarity were not backed by any active mobilization of Gounder voters. Secondly, the association gave Gounder politicians an unofficial mandate to support their demands in the legislature. Vellingiri Gounder had helped to form the Sangam after his election to the legislature in 1920 so as to publicize his activities in the council.⁶⁰ The caste association served as an abbreviated constituency.

It is significant that the Sangam declined once Vellingiri decided not to contest the 1926 elections. Its revival in the late 1920s was in response to new considerations: Subbarayan desperately needed backing for his unstable ministry, and the Pattagar of Palayakottai and the Vellingiri family were involved in a faction fight which prevented the election of a Gounder as district board president in Coimbatore even though the caste had a majority of board places. The revived association temporarily brought the two factions into alliance and secured Vellingiri's election as president in 1933.⁶¹

The period 1918-30 was a golden age for caste associations in the Madras Presidency. The stimulus of the non-Brahmin movement, the opportunities created by constitutional reforms, the growth of a non-Brahmin middle class—all encouraged new caste leaders to seek support for their personal and class ambitions by trying to mobilize their community behind them. But by the mid-1930s dominant castes like the Gounders had little further use for such associations. They had pushed their way into local boards and legislatures. They had made inroads into western education, the professions and government service. Without major grievances to bind them, factional rivalries assumed greater importance than communal solidarity. The 1935 Government of India Act, by a further extension of the franchise and multiplication of seats in the legislature, consolidated the position of the Gounders as the dominant element in the electorate in Kongunad. Accordingly, in the first elections under the new constitution, held in 1937, Gounders fought each other in nearly half of the general constituencies in Kongunad.

⁵⁹*Hindu*, 16 July 1924, p. 6.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 28 January 1922, p. 7.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 12 June 1928, p. 5; 1 February 1933, p. 10.

Factionalism, always endemic among the Gounders, belied the notion of caste unity and it drove the Gounder leaders into different political camps: Vellingiri and Subbarayan into the Congress, Palayakottai and his allies into the Justice Party. The sweeping Congress victory in the 1937 elections and the demise of the Justice Party did not end factional conflict: the factions resurfaced within the Congress. Gounders found other agencies through which to seek redress for specific grievances. The Coimbatore District Agricultural Association was dominated by Gounder ryots and Vellingiri, for example, used it in the mid-1930s to persuade the government to reduce electricity costs for agricultural consumers.⁶² At a lower social level, Gounders in the textile mills of the town of Coimbatore found expression for their grievances through membership of inter-communal trade unions rather than caste organizations. Furthermore, the character of caste in Tamilnad inevitably limited the scope for caste associations in provincial politics. The dominant caste in Tamilnad changed almost from district to district, and one caste acting alone could not hope to control a provincial ministry. Thus Gounder leaders worked from within provincial political parties to secure their personal and communal ambitions.

The case of the Kongu Vellala Sangam demonstrates the limited and transient role of a caste association for a dominant community with few pressing grievances. Communal solidarity was an attractive appeal in the new political conditions of the early 1920s, but an increasingly irrelevant one as factional and class divisions came to predominate by the late 1930s.

CONCLUSION

India's caste system was never a completely static social structure. Mobility was slow, but not impossible. The European conquest of India generated new forces—a cash economy, improved communications, western education, an expanding bureaucracy, legislative politics—which upset the old equilibrium and the process of gradual change. They did not strike the whole of India simultaneously: changes might be felt sooner among the Iravas of Travancore than the Vokkaligas of Mysore, but by the late-nineteenth century, as new economic and educational opportunities were created and exploited, growing numbers of men found that their new credentials no longer corresponded with the traditional occupation and social rank of their kinsmen. Custom and ritual prescribed rules for the relations between one community and another, one man and his castemen, but tradi-

⁶²TNA, Public Works, G.O. 2889, 15 December 1936.

tional rules did not provide a mutually acceptable code for relations between individuals whose occupation and status did not conform to traditional norms. And yet the notion and practice of caste was so pervasive that rules of social interaction made in complete defiance of caste would not receive general acceptance.

The caste association was a social adapter, improvised to connect two sets of social and political forms. It helped to reconcile the values of traditional society with those of the new order by continuing to use caste as the basis for social organization, but at the same time introducing new objectives—education and supra-local political power, for example—as the aims of that organization. It tried to relate the traditional geographical units—the marriage networks and petty chiefdoms—to the wider ones developed by the changing economy, by improved communications and tighter government control. The effective caste association thus constituted a stage on a continuum of development from the local *jati* relationships and village dominant-caste politics towards class relations and the state—or the province—level of political activity.

The caste association can be considered as having two dimensions. Internally, it was designed, though unconsciously in many cases, to compensate for the differentiation which had been taking place with accelerating pace during the period of British rule in India. To combat occupational diversity and disparity of wealth within the community, the caste association stressed unity; it rediscovered (and if necessary, it invented) a common heritage; it exploited the grievances shared by the community. The caste association leaders did not, however, come from the traditional caste authorities, but from the most enterprising of the misfits—the western educated, the lawyers, the urban businessmen, the retired government servants. These men were few in number; but they looked back over their shoulders, hoping that the rest of their community supported them and would help the misfits to establish themselves more firmly in their non-traditional careers. Sometimes the gulf between the new elite and the majority of the community to which they claimed to belong was too great and, as the Lingayats and Vokkaligas illustrate, there was no unifying grievance or sense of identity to unite the two. In the Gounders' case it was not so difficult to portray the caste as historically one community; the Iravas were drawn together by their social disabilities and by the religious appeal of Sri Narayana. But rarely did caste unity last very long. Once the first and second generations of the new elite felt more secure and had achieved their immediate social and political objectives, they tended to neglect their castemen and to identify to a greater extent along class lines or they split into rival factions.

Externally, the caste association tried to convince outsiders that behind the leaders stood a united community. In the old language and idiom of the people, the association proclaimed that the castemen were devout Hindus whose claims to higher status were substantiated by their social and ritual practices. Backed by the devices of modern political agitation—newspapers and printed tracts, conferences, petitions and deputations to the government—caste leaders lobbied for concessions from the state or provincial authorities. It was often easier, as Hardgrave's study of the Nadars shows, for caste leaders to advance their cause through the latter course than through the rigours of sanskritization; and, as Washbrook suggests, it was often closer to their personal ambition to do so. Caste lobbies were at their most successful in the first quarter of this century, partly because they were a novelty, partly because they flourished in political systems which dithered between autocracy and a limited kind of representative government. In Mysore between about 1905 and the introduction of the new constitution in 1923 and in the Madras Presidency during the years of the dyarchy constitution, conditions favoured the rise of associations claiming to represent specific communities. They were often useful to the administration as a short cut to popular representation without the dangers of universal suffrage and democratic control. The 1923 constitution in Mysore and the 1935 Act in Madras brushed aside the caste lobbies and the extension of the franchise then or subsequently prepared the way for the supremacy of the numerically and economically dominant communities. Caste associations had bloomed in the twilight.

They suffered one of two fates. One was for the association leaders to abandon the organization as a political vehicle, either letting it disappear completely or keeping it solely as a philanthropic agency. The transition to universal suffrage was often a decisive factor in this. Cross-caste alliances and state-wide political machines made the old caste associations obsolete. The other fate was for the caste association to evolve into a caste party. This was only likely with a numerically large community, like the Nayars and Iravas in Kerala or the Vanniyars in northern Tamilnad discussed by the Rudolphs, which could survive in the age of universal suffrage and had a lingering sense of grievance or isolation to encourage it to do so. But even caste parties, as events in Kerala have shown, are vulnerable to the divisive force of class. They cannot for long defy *that* social reality.

The Establishment of English Commerce in North-western India in the Early Seventeenth Century

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Surat, situated on the Tapti river, was the most important port of Mughal India. From here the pilgrim traffic took the devout on their *haj* to Mecca; while caravans from Golconda, Agra, and Lahore, ships from Konkan, Malabar, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Ceylon, and the East Indies visited Surat regularly. This type of commercial activity is not difficult to understand when it is realized that as the main port of the Mughals, joined to Agra by roads, the Burhanpur by river, Surat handled a great deal of commerce for the nobility and the great men of Mughal India.

It is a point which is often under-rated in many accounts of the period, but while the peddling trade constituted the bulk of trade from Surat, the real profits were being made by the nobility and court favourites. While much of this profit was in the form of extortion, the greater proportion was made in direct commercial activities. Two examples will suffice at this time. Hoja Nassan, one governor of Surat, held such influence that he could advance the prices of his own goods and abase the prices on all others purely through using his position as governor.¹ Again, in 1616, Kerridge informed Sir Thomas Roe that Surat's *shahbandar* had hindered the sale of goods, of both the Dutch merchants and the Company, and then purchased "the goods at his own price, and retailed them at his own pleasure."² However, this did appear to be somewhat unusual as *shahbandars* did not normally act in this way,³ but it shows the importance of such men.

The imperial family also involved themselves directly in commerce. In 1619 the Dutch captured the English ship "Dragon" and

¹Sir Henry Middleton, "Relations of the 6th Voyage...", 8 December 1611, in Samuel Purchas (ed.), *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, MacLehose edition, Glasgow, 1905, vol. III, p. 180. (Noted henceforth as *Purchas*.)

²F. C. Danvers and W. Foster (eds), *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, 6 vols., London, 1896-1902, vol. IV, pp. 351-52. (Noted henceforth as *Letters*.)

³*Ibid.*

discovered the presence on board of an Indian merchant acting for Sultan Khurram (later to become Shah Jehan).⁴ Three interesting points arise from this episode. The first is that the English were transporting an Indian representative of Mughal commerce; the second is that perhaps the role of the ruling nobility in commerce in India has been under-rated. The third, and most crucial point, was that this arrangement appears to have been a private one between the Sultan and the factors at Surat. Despite a detailed account of the English investment in the "Dragon"—some 211,613 *mamudis* and 22 *pice*—there was no mention of such an agreement in any of the official correspondence between Surat and London. If such an agreement had been made on the Company's behalf it would have appeared in one or more of the English letters concerning the fate of the "Dragon."⁵ From the Dutch records we find that the Dutchmen decided to demonstrate their good faith with the Mughals by releasing the merchant (one Malinshiary) and transporting both him and the Sultan's investment back to Surat.⁶ It is worth remembering that Khurram was at the time the "farmer of customs" at Surat.

There were frequent other occasions on which the English had direct dealings with Khurram, and often they had to stop his ships to extract agreements from him.⁷ At the lower social level, the English complained of cases when the Mughal governors granted monopolies to individuals in opposition to the Company, and of officials who continued to advance their own trading concerns through the exercise of their authority.⁸

The region of Gujarat was extremely fertile and supported a very

⁴H. T. Colenbrander and W. Ph. Coolhaas (eds), *Jan Pieterz Coen: Documents concerning his Activities in the Indies*, 7 vols., The Hague, 1919-1953, vol. I, p. 514.

⁵W. Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India 1618-1669*, 12 vols., Oxford, 1906-1927, volume for 1618-1621, pp. 73, 77, 167. (This series noted henceforth as *English Factories, dates*). It could be that the relevant documents have perished with the years, but those accounts still existing, yet silent about the relationship between the English and Khurram, make this an unlikely conclusion.

⁶Colenbrander and Coolhaas, *op. cit.*, III, p. 573. Khurram's commercial activities were considerable, and he frequently used his position to forbid the English any purchases of local cloth. In 1617 Khurram's current proscription was explained by Joseph Salbank in terms of Khurram's "great trade into the Red Sea," Salbank to the Company, 22 November 1617, *Letters*, VI, p. 192.

⁷See W. Foster (ed.), *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul 1615-1619*, 2 vols., London, 1899, vol. I, p. 139. cf. *Letters*, VI, pp. 302-3.

⁸For the case of Manmohan Das, see *English Factories, 1630-1633*, pp. 324-25. For other examples see *English Factories, 1646-1650*, pp. 98, 137, 139, 166, 198, 213, 273.

prosperous and active commercial organization, which attracted the English, when they first arrived to explore opportunities for trade.⁹ The wealth of Gujarat and its domination by the Portuguese were apparent to both the Dutch and the English before they went to Surat to trade:

...all the Country of Guzeratts & the K. himself, are greatly subject to the Portugalls and dare not do anything to displease the Portugalls.¹⁰

The Gujarat region was renowned for its textiles, and some indication of the variety available was given in a list prepared for the Company in a note on the trade in the Banda Islands in 1605.¹¹ The commission for the Third Voyage reflected this knowledge when the Company instructed Hawkins and Keeling to go first to the Red Sea ports, and if trade prospects were not as good as was supposed, to go then to the Gulf of Cambay and Surat to explore more fully, the prospects there. If trade appeared possible, then Hawkins was to remain at Surat and establish a factory.¹² On his arrival Hawkins was interviewed by the "Chief Customer" of Surat, to whom he reported:

that my coming was to establish and settle a Factory in Surat, and that I had a Letter for his King from His Majesty of England, tending to the same purpose, who is desirous to have league and amity with his King, in that kind, that his subjects might freely go and come, sell and buy, as the Custom of a Nation is: and that my ship was laden with the commodities of our land, which by intelligence of former travellers were vendible for these parts.¹³

⁹For a description of the "crop fields of Gujarat" see Copland, 24 December 1613, reprinted in *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, Bombay Government Press, vol. I, part i, p. 224.

¹⁰From what is considered to be a Dutch report circa 1603. Sir G. Birdwood and W. Foster (eds), *The Register of Letters & C. of the Governor and Company of Merchants Trading into the East Indies 1600-1619*, London, 1893, p. 85. (This volume is also known as *The First Letter Book of the East India Company 1600-1619*. I have chosen to use the designation found on the title page, abbreviated to *Register*.)

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 119-26. See especially items 18 and 20. Item 44 also suggests that the Bantam factors should investigate the prospects of trade in Bengal and the Coromandel coast. Hearne's letter from Bantam, 4 December, 1608, reiterated the need for settlement at Cambay and Surat to drive the English trade in the archipelago with Indian textiles. *Letters*, I, p. 18. By this time Hawkins was already in India.

¹³"Relations of the Occurrents...," *Purchas*, III, p. 2,

As long as Hawkins' ship remained at the bar of Surat he was made welcome. The Company was allowed to rent a house from which to trade, but Hawkins could not obtain permission to build a factory. William Finch was established as the agent in Surat, while Hawkins went inland to the Mughal court.¹⁴ As soon as the English arrived, the Portuguese began a programme of harassment, often keeping the Englishmen confined at home for long periods, and keeping them dependent on the protection of the Mughal authorities.

It is apparent, therefore, that the major obstacle which faced the English in establishing their trade at Surat was the presence of the Portuguese. The Mughals were paramount on land but their shipping lay vulnerable to the Europeans, and here the Dutch and the English learned valuable lessons from the Portuguese. John Jourdain was prevented from entering Surat in September 1609:

... not for any ill pretended against us, but to stop the Portugalls mouths, who threatened them to take their ships, which were coming out of the Red Sea if they entertained us into the town.¹⁵

Finch observed that the Mughals held the Portuguese in "slavish awe".¹⁶ The situation was still critical in 1611, when Sir Henry Middleton received letters from both Hawkins in Agra and Finch in Lahore:

advising me in any wise not to land any goods, nor hope for Trade in those parts: for that the people were all fickle and unconstant like the King and dare not offend the Portugals.¹⁷

Also in 1611, Downton was informed by the Indians that trading with the English was likely to bring the Portuguese down on their

¹⁴Thomas Jones, "Relations of the Fourth Voyage, 1609," informs us that William Finch kept a factory at Surat. *Purchas*, III, pp. 69-70. This is not, strictly speaking, accurate. It must be remembered that a "factory" was distinct from a rented house, and also from the subordinate agencies. The factory was a central warehouse surrounded by living-quarters for the servants. It was usually a permanent establishment in contrast to agencies which were often merely rented houses where the English lived during the season. Later on agencies did take on permanent status, but one which was distinctly subordinate to the central factory, which also took on the power to administer all the affairs of the English in its area. The factories which became Presidencies: Surat, Madras, Bantam, Calcutta, etc. also assumed the responsibility for their regions.

¹⁵W. Foster (ed.), *The Journal of John Jourdain, 1608-1617*, Cambridge, 1905, p. 130.

¹⁶*Purchas*, IV, p. 26.

¹⁷*Purchas*, III, p. 175.

villages, 'plundering and burning'.¹⁸ Downton was faced by much the same situation on his second trip to India in 1615, when he was entreated by the merchants of Surat to stay longer in the port in case the Portuguese came seeking reprisals.¹⁹

The effects of the Europeans on the life of Surat were quite obviously disruptive; the trade and religious life of Mughal India were under threat on the high seas where the Mughals were relatively powerless. In 1608 Hawkins had been confronted by a Portuguese captain who claimed that the Portuguese were the "Lords of the Seas," and that their permission was required before the English could trade.²⁰ Such a threat did not prevent the English from persevering, and the armadas sent from Goa to harass them became steadily larger.²¹ The Mughal policy towards the Europeans at this time was relatively open-handed; the Emperor kept the peace on land but did not interfere in the sea-war being fought along his coastlines. The fear of the Portuguese was still strong enough to prevent an open alliance between the Mughals and the English. The battles at sea thus assumed a significant position in the trade of India, despite the Company's assertions that war and trade did not mix. In the early seventeenth century in India, the English directors could not have the one without the other.

The Portuguese frigates had the upper hand in the waters around Surat because of their shallower draughts, and the English were constrained to go to Swally Hole, where they traded from their ships to the beach. Mukarrab Khan, Viceroy of Surat, visited the English at Swally in November 1611, and promised Middleton a factory in Surat; while there he watched the English skirmishing with the Portuguese.²² The promise of the factory proved an empty one, and in January 1612, Middleton was ordered to leave Surat.²³ The disappointed Middleton immediately sailed into the Red Sea and sought a recompense against the Indian ships, again demonstrating the weakness of Mughal authority over the seas. The lesson had been learnt well from the Portuguese and Middleton's activities were to prove of great value to Thomas Best in his dealings with the Mughals:

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁹*Purchas*, IV, p. 243.

²⁰*Purchas*, III, p. 5, cf. Finch, *Purchas*, IV, p. 20.

²¹Compare the twenty ships sent to meet Middleton in 1611, *Purchas*, III, p. 172, with the 71 ships of various sizes sent to attack Downton in 1615, *Purchas*, IV, pp. 230, 263-64.

²²*The Journal of John Jourdain*, pp. 182-85.

²³Middleton's "Relation...", *Purchas*, III, p. 185. cf. Downton's "Journall...", *Purchas*, III, p. 269. cf. *The Journal of John Jourdain*, pp. 186-87.

I think that Sir Henry's capture of those ships was the real cause of the grant of commerce to us; for they are as a people base and servile, and at sea are at the mercy of all nations, yet have a great trade and are very rich.²⁴

Meanwhile the problem of the Portuguese remained uppermost in the minds of the English. On November 30, 1612, Best wrote that on four separate days he had been in five separate fights with the Portuguese.²⁵ The results of Best "dancing the hay" around the Portuguese on the Mughals were profound, and they began to realize that the English could defeat the Portuguese almost at will.²⁶ As a result the merchants and the governor of Surat and Ahmedabad arranged a *firman* with Best, for the establishment of an English factory at Surat, and agencies in Cambay, Ahmedabad, Goga, and any other places within the great Mughal's dominions.²⁷ Best claimed the honour of gaining the first *firman*, but there is considerable doubt whether his role was as crucial as he claimed. It was discovered that the governor of Ahmedabad had been only a deputy and that the *firman* was not to be honoured in its entirety.²⁸ Factors Kerridge and Biddulph also claimed that Best had been about to leave India, withdrawing all the English factors, and only the strong line taken by Thomas Aldworth had restrained him.²⁹

In September 1613, the English were lucky, when the Portuguese captured a Surat ship, which completely alienated any support they might have received from the Mughals.³⁰ Emperor Jehangir besieged the Portuguese in Daman, as a consequence, and ordered the capture of all Portuguese ships, and the confiscation of all their goods in his dominions.³¹ While the Mughals were thus employed, Nicholas Downton sailed into the road at Surat. His aid was immediately requested by the Mughals, but having been instructed by the Company to avoid conflicts wherever possible, he refused his assistance. This was capitalized on by the Portuguese who tried to mislead the

²⁴Thomas Best, *The Voyage of... 1612-1614*, (ed.) W. Foster, London, 1934, p. 230. cf. the views of the Surat factors, 25 January 1613, *Letters*, I, pp. 234-35.

²⁵Best, *Voyage of...*, p. 230.

²⁶Nicholas Withington, "Extracts from a Tractate....," *Purchas*, IV, p. 164. cf. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, (eds) A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, reprinted, Delhi, 1968, pp. 274-75.

²⁷Best, *Purchas*, IV, pp. 125-27, 132, 141-42. cf. *Letters*, I, pp. 235-36.

²⁸*Letters*, II, pp. 157, 180. Downton claimed that the privileges granted were "too weak and need to be enlarged," *ibid.*, p. 133. cf. *Letters*, IV, p. 313.

²⁹28 October 1613, *Letters*, I, p. 301. cf. Kerridge to Aldworth, 15 November 1614.

³⁰*Letters*, I, p. 309.

³¹*Letters*, II, p. 96.

Mughals into believing that the English were about to join the Portuguese in a concerted attack against the Mughals.³² At this stage of the proceedings the Portuguese made another serious mistake when they attacked Downton's ships in the roadstead. The action forced Downton to fight, and in an engagement remarkable for the odds against the English and the foolhardiness of Downton's tactics, the English defeated the Portuguese and broke the back of their sea-power on the coast of North-western India.³³ That the English could overcome such overwhelming odds, strengthened the Mughal resolve not to come to terms with the Portuguese.³⁴ What was particularly significant about Downton himself in the period before the battle, was his awareness of the importance of his role:

... if I should now be overthrown: by reason the enemy in getting the upper hand of me, would make his peace with these people upon what conditions he must, to the expelling of our Nation this country for ever.³⁵

This awareness could probably explain the apparent desperation evident in Downton's tactics during the ensuing battle. In any case, the Portuguese were never to mount an attack of such a size again, although they continued to be a thorn in the Company's side until the Goa Accord in 1635.³⁶ The crucial results of Downton's victory were, that the Portuguese power was shown to be more conspicuous than effective,³⁷ and this changed the Mughal attitude towards the

³²Downton, "Extracts of the Journall...2nd. Joint Stock Voyage," *Purchas*, IV, p. 222, cf. pp. 225-26.

³³Downton's force consisted of four vessels: the "New Years Gift" (650 tons), the "Hector" (500 tons), "Hope" (300 tons), and the "Salomon" (200 tons), these last two being merchantmen. Arrayed against this force was an armada totalling 83 vessels, ranging in size and weight from the flagship "All Saints" (800 tons), through five galleons (total tonnage 2,800), three lesser ships (total tonnage 520), to small fire-ships. The Portuguese manpower totalled 2,769 and the ships mounted some 134 guns between them. See Edward Dodsworth, "A Briefe of Memorialls," *Purchas*, IV, pp. 263-64.

Also significant was the fact that the English sailors had to be both sailors and soldiers, the dual role being especially difficult in the enervating climate of Gujarat. Furthermore, the English could not replace their dead and wounded as quickly as the Portuguese. *Purchas*, IV, p. 232.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 230.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 230-31.

³⁶The Portuguese continued to give concern in their competition in trade. *Letters*, IV, p. 336.

³⁷The English had to fight a small engagement in the sand-hills behind Swally Hole in 1630, but this would appear to have been one of the last feeble efforts to dislodge the English at Surat. Surat factors to the Company, *English Factories, 1630-1633*, pp. 136-37.

English, who went on to become the maritime arm of Mughal power.³⁸ This shift in Anglo-Indian relationships reflected the Mughal's recognition of weakness. The English were able to exploit this weakness through their quasi-official status and develop a stronger position within the power structures within India.

Jehangir's own attitude had changed dramatically, and by 1616 he began to take a closer interest in how his officers were treating the English in India.³⁹ This new interest led to the grant of the Imperial *firman* in January 1616. Although it came from Jehangir himself, this *firman* was not all that the English had hoped it might be. What was significant, however, was that the *firman* conceded as much as it did, for this made the English traders freer in their activities and privileges than their Indian counterparts.⁴⁰ As with any other merchant in India the English were still subject to Mughal authority, and it was not until 1618, that Sir Thomas Roe managed to obtain the concession that the English be allowed to live "according to their own religion and laws."⁴¹ From 1633 the Company succeeded in securing further *firman*s, to trade on very favourable terms.⁴²

With Sir Thomas Roe established at the Mughal court, Anglo-Indian relationships entered a period of "gun-boat diplomacy." It was diplomacy in the sense that the Company maintained a position of petitioner to the Mughals, but such a position was firmly based on the knowledge of the English power on the seas. The factors at Surat were in no doubt that, "... fear of our ships hath and must hold us here if we continue..."⁴³ This opinion was reiterated by Sir

³⁸The English undertook to protect, where possible, the pilgrim traffic and the indigenous trade to the Red Sea. This situation was recognized by the Company in the instructions to privateer among any Portuguese shipping in the Persian Gulf, and to patrol the coasts of Gujarat and Malabar. *English Factories, 1624-1629*, p. 302.

³⁹In 1616 Jehangir recalled Zulfikar Khan from the governance of Surat, and reimbursed the English for Zulfikar's extortionate exactions in customs duties. This move was the more significant because Zulfikar was the favourite comrade of Sultan Khurram who was beginning to enjoy his father's favour. *Letters*, IV, pp. 335-36. cf. Roe's account of the proceedings, *Purchas*, IV, pp. 424-25.

⁴⁰The protection of the property of the English against the whims of the Emperor was conceded. The duties and cesses on the English goods were substantially lighter than those levied from the indigenous merchants. The English were, for a fixed rate of customs—3½ per cent on goods and 2 per cent on rials of eight—suffered to trade "without let or hindrance of any person whatsoever." *Register*, pp. 478-79. cf. J. Bruce, *The Annals of the Honorable East India Company*, 3 vols., London, 1810, vol. I, pp. 176-77. cf. Roe's own comments on the *firman* in his letter to Kerridge, 21 October 1617, *Letters*, VI, p. 133.

⁴¹*English Factories, 1618-1621*, pp. 39, 40.

⁴²*English Factories, 1655-1660*, pp. 410-16.

⁴³The factors at Surat to Sir Thomas Roe, 23 July 1616, *Letters*, IV, p. 321.

Thomas Roe, who also underlined his own importance in passing:

For the settling your Traffic here, I doubt not to effect any reasonable desire, my credit is sufficient with the King and your force will always bind him to constancie...⁴⁴

The psychological force of the latent threat did not escape Roe, and in calming the fears of the emperor, who suspected the English of plotting to overthrow Surat, he was careful not to be too reassuring, for he "knew as well as the heart that trembled, that fear of us only preserved our residence."⁴⁵ In this light he advised the Company to send a pinnasse of some sixty tons to patrol the Surat roadstead and protect the English goods from being attacked. More important, however, was Roe's belief that the pinnasse would "a little awe the town."⁴⁶ The English ambassador was not given to fanciful notions about the relationship with the Mughals, for he knew well that the Company had little real power on the land and that the best course was to trade peacefully wherever possible. The profit and power of the Company lay on the sea, and considerations of building forts and providing garrisons were errors of judgement.⁴⁷ The factors at Surat were of the same opinion.⁴⁸ After mentioning the costs involved, the factors referred the matter to Sir Thomas Roe as it was not really within their purview as merchants. The ambassador was certain that a fort was not necessary and would prove too costly to maintain.⁴⁹ Roe's wisdom in this matter was profound, for he was aware of the extreme fears held at the court concerning any possible English fortifications. When the English landed some bricks to build a kiln and "sound the ship's bell," the port authorities thought a fort was being built. Despite Roe's remonstrances at court the English were obliged to dismantle the kiln, and in the process, had a few of their privileges withdrawn.⁵⁰

The period was one in which the English relied on the latent threat of their power at sea to maintain their position in India, while

Interfering with the native shipping was long considered the "best remedy." *English Factories, 1618-1621*, p. 59.

⁴⁴*Purchas*, IV, pp. 466-67.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 466. The threat of English warships was used many times. For a later example, see Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, (ed.) W. Irvine, 4 vols., [1907-1908], reprinted Calcutta, 1965, vol. III, pp. 371, 384-85. (Note that the pagination in the reprint differs from that in the 1907-1908 edition.)

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 464-65.

⁴⁸Surat factors to the Company, 2 and 7 November 1616, *Letters*, IV, p. 342.

⁴⁹*Purchas*, IV, p. 464.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 422.

at the same time the Mughals did their utmost to limit the territorial powers of the Company. This uneasy relationship was to continue right through the seventeenth century, and is evident towards the end of the century in the conflict between Aurangzeb and Job Charnock in Bengal in 1689. That great "war-hawk," Sir Josiah Child, was perfectly certain about the relationship between the Company and the Mughals:

The subjects of the Mogul cannot bear a war with the English for twelve months together, without starving and dying by the thousands for want of work to purchase rice; not singly for want of our trade but because by our war we obstruct their trade with all the Eastern nations which is ten times as much as ours and all the European nations put together.⁵¹

Child was correct. Aurangzeb had to sue for peace and make concessions for trade in Bengal which gave the Company a stronger hold in the region.

The Company's fortunes at Surat were to fluctuate for a variety of reasons throughout the seventeenth century. Famines, the different attitudes of the Mughal governors, the wars in the Deccan and conflicts with the Marathas, all impinged on the activities of the English. There were frequent calls to change over to a more secure place than Surat; alternatives were sought at Goga, Broach, and Bombay. Goga proved unsuitable in 1617; the river approaches to Broach were not good enough for English shipping, and neither place was as defensible as Swally Hole.⁵² In 1626, the Company formed a brief alliance with the Dutch and captured Bombay from the Portuguese. However, they were unable to retain its possession.⁵³ The English attempted to purchase the island from the Portuguese in 1652 and again in 1654, but the enterprise was not encouraged by the Company in England.⁵⁴ The island was eventually leased to the Company by Charles II who had received it as part of the dowry given to Catherine Braganza.

Although other places on India's west coast were suggested at various times,⁵⁵ Surat remained the Presidency until 1687. The reason was relatively obvious. Surat was the best commercial centre

⁵¹Sir Josiah Child, cited: P. Woodruff, *Men Who Ruled India*, 2 vols., vol. I, London, 1953, p. 73.

⁵²For thoughts about Goga see the *Register*, p. 417. cf. *Letters*, IV, pp. 151, 328-30 for other suggestions.

⁵³*English Factories, 1624-1629*, pp. 142-44, 159, 197, 216.

⁵⁴W. S. Desai, *Bombay and the Marathas up to 1774*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 1.

⁵⁵See, for example, *English Factories, 1655-1660*, p. 214.

for trade in Mughal India, with its linkages into the archipelago and westward into Asia Minor. Because it was the centre of indigenous trade the English were saved a good deal of the cost and risks associated with transportation from the hinterland to the ports.⁵⁶ It was also considered unwise to attempt to establish a trade at any place which was not an accustomed mart,⁵⁷ and the factories and agencies set up by the Company reflected the necessity to concentrate on the indigenous commercial centres. In Mughal India, Surat was the chief port; Agra was the capital city, although the court was peripatetic for much of the seventeenth century; Ajmer and Ahmedabad were major towns on the main highway between Surat and Agra; while Burhanpur was the centre from which the Mughals carried their war with the kings of the Deccan. The settlements at Goga, Broach, Baroda, Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore, Tatta and Lahribandar all reflect the fundamental recognition that English commercial interests were best served by settlement at the established marts.⁵⁸

Ajmer and Ahmedabad were centres from which high quality indigo, which dominated the trading manifests of the Company in its trade to England during the first twenty years, could be purchased. Sir Thomas Roe was opposed to the expansion of settlement into these towns, and insisted that two factories, one at Surat and the other at Agra, would suffice to handle the trade. He also insisted that it was not factories but stock that was required to drive the trade. More factories would place extra costs on the Company, costs which would drain the money which could be utilized to greater profit invested in goods.⁵⁹ The factors at Surat replied that if the Company desired to save on costs, then it would be better to save the ambassador's salary! This was a constant theme in the relationship between Roe and the English merchants, although the latter also recognized that Roe's presence at court had been valuable. They also agreed with Roe that the factory at Burhanpur, which had been granted by Prince Parwiz in 1615,⁶⁰ could be closed without losing

⁵⁶The state of the roads was very poor. See Pietro della Valle, *The Travels of...in India*, (ed.) E. Grey, 2 vols., London, 1892, vol. I, p. 95. cf. Fray Sebastien Manrique, *The Travels of...*, (eds) Luard and Hosten, Oxford, 1927, vol. II, p. 145. cf. *English Factories, 1637-1641*, p. 2.

⁵⁷Remembrance of a Council at Surat, 17 October 1614, *Letters*, II, p. 132.

⁵⁸The establishment at indigenous centres was to remain the standard English practice until the settlement at Madras proved a success in 1640. The movement to Madras reflected a basic shift in Company policy, because Madras had offered little indigenous trade prior to its settlement. The reasons behind this change in attitude are too complex to be discussed at this time.

⁵⁹Roe to the Company, 1 December 1616, *Letters*, IV, pp. 250-51.

⁶⁰*Letters*, III, p. xli. cf. *Letters*, IV, pp. 294, 324. Burhanpur was an important military camp set in a fertile region. See R. Coverte, *A True and Most*

the custom of the Indians, and that the factory at Ahmedabad could also be closed—provided there was always a sufficient supply of ready money on hand to purchase goods in the season.⁶¹ Although Ahmedabad was the seat of the provincial governor, and a centre for cotton goods, settlement there had its disadvantages, of which the most disconcerting was the fluctuating rate of interest on borrowed money. Since the English were forced to borrow quite frequently, this aspect often proved most expensive.⁶² On the other hand, provided that the English had a ready supply of money, one of the advantages of trading regularly at Ahmedabad was the favourable exchange rate on commodities. It was common to find that goods in Ahmedabad could be purchased from 1½ to 2 per cent cheaper than in Surat.⁶³ The advantages were found to outweigh the disadvantages and the Company decided to maintain its factory at Ahmedabad, and instructed its servants there to conduct the Company's business in Cambay as well.⁶⁴

Apart from Ahmedabad and Agra, the Company considered Ajmer as its most important inland centre. Merchants visited these centres from all parts of India, and the Company found that its goods were especially popular with the merchants from across the northern boundary of Afghanistan.⁶⁵ On the coast Cambay appeared to offer most in the way of trade to the English, though the major problem was the competition from the Portuguese.⁶⁶ The pressures on the English at Cambay were such that there was little to be gained by maintaining a permanent factory in the port. Down the coast, at Broach, a factory had been conceded under a *firman* in 1616.⁶⁷ From here the English obtained a plentiful supply of fine cotton stuffs and rich *baftas*.⁶⁸ By 1630 the English factory had grown into a pleasant establishment, bounded by wide verandahs, in which the English lived like lords while conducting an active trade in textiles.⁶⁹

Incredible Report, London, 1612, p. 26. Burhanpur also produced high-quality *pintadoes*, *Letters*, I, p. 29. cf. *English Factories, 1646-1650*, p. 79. cf. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, I, p. 65.

⁶¹ Surat to the Company, 26 February 1616, *Letters*, p. 116.

⁶² Ahmedabad to Surat, 17 May 1647, *English Factories, 1646-1650*, p. 130.

⁶³ *English Factories, 1634-1636*, p. 218.

⁶⁴ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of...*, R. C. Temple (ed.), 4 vols., London, 1907-1925, vol. II, p. 28.

⁶⁵ Factors at Surat to Roe, 26 May 1616, *Letters*, IV, p. 315.

⁶⁶ John Jourdain, *The Journal of John Jourdain*, p. 173. cf. Finch, *Purchas*, IV, p. 64. cf. Sir Henry Middleton, *Purchas*, III, p. 174.

⁶⁷ Sir Thomas Roe, *Purchas*, IV, p. 343.

⁶⁸ Finch, *Purchas*, IV, p. 65.

⁶⁹ Christopher Farewell, *An East-India Colation*, London, 1633, pp. 31-32.

The Company had always been interested in establishing trade-links into Persia and the surrounding nations. This had been explicit in the commission given to Hawkins and Keeling,⁷⁰ and having settled trade in India this objective was given more attention. The merchants travelling south to Agra from the north-west frontier had brought with them the promise of a thriving trade for the English. The biggest difficulty was the sheer distance between the Indian factories and the Persian centres. Lahore was seen to be a convenient centre from which to organize trade. Even more attractive than its position as a half-way station, was Lahore's accessibility both by land on the route from Agra, and by sea from Tatta and Lahribandar on the Indus river. Two English merchants, Steel and Crowther, travelling the overland route in 1614, found Lahore a dynamic and cosmopolitan centre of commerce, and discovered that through Lahore, went most of the overland carriage of spices from Masulipatnam.⁷¹ William Finch was also fulsome in his description of Lahore and its prospects for trade.⁷² The factors at Surat were more cautious, and Finch himself found he suffered problems with the Portuguese and the authorities in Lahore.⁷³ Consequently it was considered expedient to defer the settlement of a factory at Lahore until a more thorough examination of its prospects had been carried out.⁷⁴

Tatta and Lahribandar appeared to offer more profitable prospects and both were more readily accessible from Surat. The Indus valley provided a rich hinterland for these centres and the list of commodities available for trade was impressive—rice, sugar, butter and salt; iron, pitch, and tar; saltpetre, borax and sal ammonia; provender, horses and cattle; both fine and coarse cotton-stuffs, and silks. The roads of Sind and its ports were reportedly free, which was an added incentive for the Company.⁷⁵ Lahribandar was the port for Tatta, and as such conducted a thriving entrepot trade. The problem for the Company was the presence of the ubiquitous Portuguese who maintained a large establishment at Lahribandar, and could influence the governor to prevent the free flow of Company goods. The Portuguese did not use force, they merely threatened to withdraw their custom, which was far greater than the English company's trade.⁷⁶ As time went by, however, the Company's trade became more sub-

⁷⁰ *Register*, pp. 119-26.

⁷¹ Richard Steel, "Journall of the Voyage...", *Purchas*, IV, pp. 268-269.

⁷² "Observations...", *Purchas*, IV, pp. 52-58.

⁷³ Sir Henry Middleton, *Purchas*, III, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Surat to the Company, 10 March 1616, *Letters*, IV, p. 300.

⁷⁵ Nicholas Withington, "Extracts...", *Purchas*, IV, p. 171. cf. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, I, p. 58.

⁷⁶ Factors at Surat to Roe, 26 May 1616, *Letters*, IV, pp. 315 and 326.

stantial and attractive to the port authorities, and in 1635, permission to settle a factory was granted.⁷⁷

As the problems with the Dutch in the trade to the East Indies increased, the Company found it more profitable to concentrate on the trade westward into Persia and the Red Sea. The initial disappointments experienced by the Company in not being able to sell its English cloth in Surat stimulated the drive towards Persia. The colder climate was seen to hold more potential for the sale of broadclothes and kersies, and the prices for silk were "more than fifty per cent better cheap" (*sic*) in Jasques than at Aleppo.⁷⁸ Sir Thomas Roe was unhappy about trading into the Persian Gulf, and entered into another controversy with the factors over the venture. The latter stood on their dignity as the "prime and supposed ablest servants of our worthy masters" in India, and that in their considered opinion, based on their experience as merchants, they had selected Jasques as the port from which to drive a trade into Persia.⁷⁹ Roe argued against the venture on the grounds of its uncertainty, its costs, and the proximity of Jasques to the Portuguese fortress at Ormuz.⁸⁰ The trade went ahead, and the English established factories at Jasques and Ispahan.⁸¹

From Persia the Company moved on to the Red Sea, and with the English went a new and aggressive confidence. This attitude was particularly noticeable when the English requested permission to settle a trade at Mocha in 1618. The Englishmen approached the governor:

...intimating that it was needless to press with the inconveniences which might arise from denying [them] Trade, who were able to force it, and hinder others from coming; the fear of which had caused some already to pass by this Town to Gudda, the Port of Mecca...⁸²

The English were granted their *firman* to trade at Mocha and at Sinan. Such was the position of the English by 1619, that three junks from Diu and four from Malabar asked permission of the English

⁷⁷*English Factories, 1634-1636*, pp. 127, 213. For the growth of the trade see pp. 234-44.

⁷⁸Surat to the Company, 19 August 1614, *Letters*, II, pp. 98-99.

⁷⁹Consultation of Agents at Surat, 2-7 October 1616, *Letters*, IV, pp. 189-98.

⁸⁰Roe to the Company, 27 November and 1 December 1616, *Letters*, IV, p. 245 *et seq.*

⁸¹The Company was granted factories at Jasques and Ispahan in 1617, *Letters*, VI, p. 34 *et seq.*

⁸²Edward Heynes, "Journall of the Voyage of the Anne Royall from Surat to Mecca..." *Purchas*, IV, p. 554.

so that they could bring their goods into harbour. This permission was given to demonstrate good faith with the local authorities.⁸³

Despite commencing with such confidence the English trade in Persia and the Red Sea struggled on slowly, and it appeared as if Roe's worst fears were being realized. A chronic lack of funds meant that the English could not compete with the other European traders, and Edward Connock, the chief merchant, recommended the import of spices from Bantam which were in strong demand in Persia.⁸⁴ The inter-related nature of the trade in the Indian Ocean was evident in this request. The Company was tolerated in Persia because it constituted a potential ally against the Portuguese, and it was in the realization of this alliance that the Company found its feet. The combined attack of Persian and Company troops and ships on the Portuguese fortress of Ormuz was successful, the Company receiving a grant of half the customs of the port and duty-free entry for English goods, in addition to the privileges already conceded, as its share of the rewards from the enterprise.⁸⁵ From this time on the English fortunes in Persia improved, and a period of prosperity was experienced until increased competition from Dutch and Arab traders slowed down the rate of progress in the late 1640s.⁸⁶ Most of the reasons for the prosperity after 1635 arose from events in India: the effects of Methwold's shipbuilding policy, recovery from the severe famine that struck Gujarat in 1630, the "Goa Accord" of 1635, and the occasional wars between the Mughals and the Persians, which stimulated the sea-borne trade.

While the Company was settling on the north-western littoral of India, its activities to the south-west were restricted. The strength of the Portuguese at Goa prevented the English from making any more than a token effort to trade on the Malabar coast. Thomas Best had charted the coastline in 1613, and had advised that country ships would be the best suited to trade at the ports from Goa to Cape Comorin.⁸⁷ The Zamorins of Calicut had long been opponents of the Portuguese and welcomed any ally they could find. In 1616 the English were invited to settle at Cranganore, and three factors, a gunner, and a boy were put ashore to settle a trade there.⁸⁸ The Zamorin's

⁸³*Ibid.*, pp. 560-61.

⁸⁴Connock to the Company, 2 April 1617, *Letters*, V, pp. 190-92.

⁸⁵*English Factories, 1623-1624*, pp. 13-16.

⁸⁶Concern over this issue was expressed by the Council at Surat, 5 April 1648, and again on the 31 January 1649, *English Factories, 1646-1650*, pp. 205 and 243.

⁸⁷Thomas Best, *Purchas*, IV, pp. 133-36.

⁸⁸Walter Payton, *Purchas*, IV, p. 299. cf. Roger Hawes' account, *Purchas*, IV, pp. 495 *et seq.*

intention was to enlist the Company's assistance against the Portuguese in his territories. When this assistance was not forthcoming he lost interest in the factory which could not survive without his patronage. The following April the Englishmen moved to Calicut, from whence they were rescued by Captain Pepwell in 1617.⁸⁹ The Company was not prepared to risk another venture of this kind on the Malabar coastline, until after the signing of the "Goa Accord" in 1635.⁹⁰

It was not the Company which first took advantage of the Accord; this opportunity fell to Courteen's Association, which settled at Carwar, Baticala and Rajapur in 1637. In this first Association fleet was Peter Mundy, who had been employed by the Company in India during the 1620s.⁹¹ After the problems and conflicts between the Association and the Company had been resolved in 1650, these factories were taken up by the Company. By this time, however, the Company had become too involved with the Coromandel coast and Bengal to be concerned with developing the factories on the Malabar coast.

From the evidence presented in this paper one particularly crucial conclusion is apparent: the commercial relationships between India and the English were heavily dependent on the activities and attitudes of the Indian polities. From the outset the Mughals were deeply concerned both with and about Anglo-Indian commerce. Sultan Khurram engaged directly in commerce with the English while continuing the more recognizable traditional methods of gaining profits from commerce through extortion. In a less direct way, yet still critical to the expansion of English commerce, Mughal authorities gave assistance by controlling the more excessive Portuguese hostilities. As the English gained a stronger hold of the Indo-European trade the Portuguese became less cautious, and by attacking Mughal possessions, they often helped to establish the English as allies of the Mughals. This led to an increased patronage of English trade in north-western India. It is clear, therefore, that Anglo-Indian commerce was dependent on the assistance given it by the Indian polity. Such assistance was not given accidentally, as the result of a *laissez-faire* attitude caused by the traditional militaristic polity's contempt for commerce. Such assistance was given because the Mughals were

⁸⁹The pepper at Cranganore had proved too dear to turn a profit, and there was little else worth purchasing. Most of the goods sold to the Indians were lost because the English could not collect payments once the Zamorin's protection had been removed. *Letters*, IV, pp. 64-66, 316-19.

⁹⁰For the reasons behind, and the negotiations for, the "Goa Accord" see *English Factories, 1634-1636*, pp. 89-99.

⁹¹Peter Mundy, *Travels of ...*, vol. III, part i.

closely connected with commerce. It has to be admitted that such a concern is not evident in the "official" histories of the period, such as the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*—rather it is found in the activities of the Europeans within the context of Indo-European commerce.

NOTES

Numismatic Methodology in the Estimation of Mughal Currency Output

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The increasing use of empirically derived source data by economic historians has been of considerable interest to numismatists. While coins have often provided crucial evidence for Indian historians, it is only relatively recently that the utility of coins in economic studies has been recognized. This has been due to the development of new methods for the statistical analysis of numbers of coins, which supplement the many traditional approaches to the use of coins as research material.

Techniques of hoard analysis in particular promise to be fruitful in yielding source data of use to economists. This is especially so where large quantities of coins are available for study, as in the Mughal period. It must be remarked that these techniques, which will be described in this paper, are new to numismatists and economists alike. As in most new disciplines, it is necessary to apply a rigorous methodology in order to avoid misinterpretation and distortion of results.

The introduction of statistical methods in numismatics is indicative of the changing perception of the role of coins as objects of study. The numismatists have been concerned, historically, with the publication of the unique, the singular and the remarkable specimen from the point of view of subjective criteria of artistic merit, symbolism or historical significance. The culminating publications of this school, reflecting the efforts of successive generations of scholars, are the museum catalogue and the corpus of coins. The statistical discipline, however, is concerned primarily with the inter-relationships of numbers of coins in a sample. The nature of the sample will dictate the nature of the results obtained. Caution is therefore needed when using published numismatic material for statistical analysis. Thorough understanding of the sample being used is the first step in achieving valid results.

A case in point is the study of Mughal currency output by Aziza Hasan.¹ One objective of Miss Hasan's work was to estimate the amount of silver coins minted annually in the Mughal empire during the period 1556-1707 A.D. Her methodology is best described in her own words:

Mughal coins always bear the name of the mint from which they were issued, and, for the reason that this affected their values slightly, also give the year in which they were minted. The latter fact enables us to assign the number of the Mughal coins preserved to definite years. Now, if we tabulate and add up the total number of coins of each year preserved in the various existing collections, we may get an indication of the relative quantity of silver currency issued each year by the Mughal mints. If the annual variations in the number of the coins preserved faithfully represent the variations in the total annual currency output, then, while reconstructing a curve of the total number of coins preserved, we may really be reconstructing (upon a scale which remains unknown to us) the curve of the currency output of the Mughal empire.

I have, therefore, tabulated, year by year, the number of rupees and their silver fractions, catalogued and preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta; the British Museum; the State Museum, Lucknow; and the Lahore Museum and Rodgers' collection...²

In order to judge the validity of this method, one must determine the nature of the sample being used. Specifically, the ground rules which governed the inclusion of Mughal coins in the museum catalogues must be made explicit.³

Examination reveals that the format for the catalogues is fairly uniform. Coins are listed in chapters on the basis of issuing sovereign. Individual entries consist of a catalogue number; metal; denomination; mint; date (calendar year, regnal year, month); obverse and reverse legends; mint marks or ornaments; weight; size. A coin

¹Aziza Hasan, "The Silver Currency Output of the Mughal Empire and Prices in India During the 16th and 17th Centuries," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. VI, No. 1, March 1969, p. 85.

²*Ibid.*, p. 86.

³Of the seven catalogues listed in footnote 8, page 87, of the cited article (Hasan, *op. cit.*), all were available to the author with the exception of the two Rodgers catalogues for the Lahore Museum, for which I used the later *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum, Lahore, Vol. II, Coins of the Mughal Emperors*, by R. B. Whitehead, Oxford, 1914. This presumably includes the specimens of the earlier catalogues. I was unable to obtain the *Supplementary Catalogue of Mughal Coins in the State Museum, Lucknow*, by C. R. Sanghal

is considered a distinctive type or variety if it is unique in any of these distinguishing factors (disregarding the catalogue number) with the exception of the weight and size, which both vary due to vagaries of manufacture and are not considered significant if within acceptable limits. Further, some of the catalogues do not consider the mint mark as a distinguishing factor.

Now a perusal of these catalogues will confirm that in general only one or two specimens of each coin type is catalogued. By a quick count this is seen to be almost without exception.

TABLE 1

	Coin Types Represented by One Specimen	Coin Types Represented by Two Specimens	Coin Types Represented by Three Specimens
I.M.C. + I.M.C. Sup.	1700	213	16
B.M.C.	461	52	5
L.M.C.	1887	551	5
P.M.C.	1222	63	4

This table shows the distribution of coin types represented by one, two, or three specimens in the museum catalogue sections on silver coins of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.⁴

From the internal evidence of the catalogues it can be seen that these collections restrict their holdings to one or two specimens of each known type of coin, which is consistent with the historical purposes of numismatic collections: to provide a corpus of coins issued by each ruler. With two of each type, both the obverse and reverse sides are available for display purposes; more specimens are not required except in rare cases or coins for which many specimens are required for the reconstruction of difficult legends. The latter are, evidently, a minuscule minority.

Remarks by officers connected with the great Indian museum collections, confirm this finding. Thus R. Burn, in discussing the distribution of coins found annually as treasure trove, comments, "One difficulty in distribution arose from the absence of catalogues, as it is unnecessary in many cases to send duplicates to a museum."⁵ Again, Dr A. K. Srivastava, in a description of the process of acquisi-

⁴I.M.C.—Indian Museum Catalogue; I.M.C. Sup.—Supplement to I.M.C.; B.M.C.—British Museum Catalogue; L.M.C.—Lucknow Museum Catalogue; P.M.C.—Punjab Museum Catalogue. For catalogue citation, see footnote 3 above.

⁵R. Burn, "The Law of Treasure Trove in India," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. I, 1939, p. 87.

tion of coin specimens for the Lucknow Museum has commented. "For selecting coins from the Treasure Trove hoards, normally we select those that we do not have. At times better specimens bearing complete dates, mints and inscriptions are also taken to facilitate the study thereof."⁶

If then a yearly tabulation is made, as in Miss Hasan's *Figure One*,⁷ what does the graph represent? Since there is in practice a limit of two coins per type per collection, the relative abundance of coins of different types cannot be indicated, except in a negative sense by the absence of any given type. Her's is a graph of the number of coin-types, by year of issue, found in the museum collections, modified by a factor of zero, one, or two specimens preserved per type.

Looking at her *Figure Two*, the graph "B" of rupees catalogued,⁸ which is a histogram of five yearly totals, the student of Mughal coins immediately recognizes a chart of numismatic history.

The first major rise in the graph ca. 1585-90 coincides with the reorganization by Akbar of the coinage and the imperial mints during which the Ilahi era was introduced.⁹ When a coin was dated in the Hijri calendar as previous to this date, only the year was displayed; the same was true for the first few Ilahi years, 30-34. In the year 35 (1589 A.D.), mints started including the name of the Ilahi month as well as year; thus, where previously the date caused one coin type per year per mint in the rupee coinage, there were now 12 coin types per year per mint; the catalogue totals reflect this precipitate increase in types. As the major mints successively converted to the new system,¹⁰ the graph continued to climb.

The sudden drop in the graph ca. 1605 coincides with the death of Akbar. For during the first five years of Jahangir's reign, with few exceptions,¹¹ the Ilahi month was not displayed on coins. With the resumption of monthly dating ca. 1610, the graph again climbs sharply. The temporary drop in the curve ca. 1620 represents the conversion from dating by month to dating by Zodiacal signs at some of the major silver mints. For, while monthly dating was issued

⁶A. K. Srivastava, Letter to the author, 4 February 1976. See also, his article, "Coin Collection in the State Museum, Lucknow." J.N.S.I., Vol. XXXV, 1973, p. 225.

⁷Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁸Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 94 and reproduced here as Figure 1.

⁹S. H. Hodivala, "Abul Fazl's Inventory of Akbar's Mints," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, N.S., XVI, 1920, p. 175.

¹⁰Delhi yr. 35, Lahore yr. 36, Ahmedabad yr. 37, Tatta yr. 38, Patna yr. 43, Agra yr. 44.

¹¹Ahmedabad dated by month in yr. 1 and 2, thereafter not until yr. 7. Lahore recommended monthly dating in yr. 5; Agra, Delhi, Patna, Tatta in yr. 6.

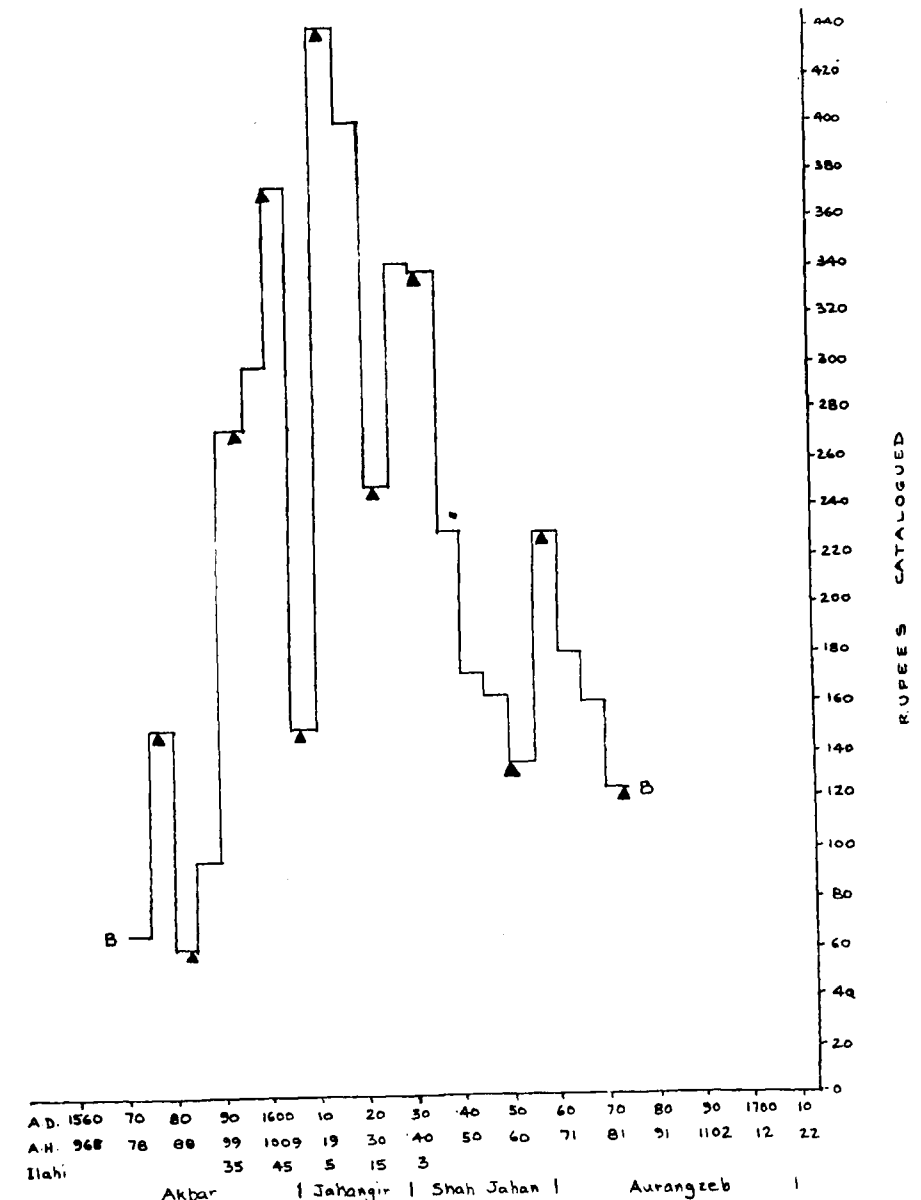


FIGURE 1

NOTE: Dates listed in Table 2 are marked with an arrow ▲.

SOURCE: Hasan, *op. cit.*, *Figure Two*, p. 94.

regardless, the Zodiacal sign seems to have been issued only with the presence of the sovereign in the city of minting. Out of delicacy for iconoclastic sentiment, it would appear that in the absence of the emperor, mint officials of those cities dropped the Zodiacal sign,¹² and indeed any reference to month, from their dies.¹³ This resulted in only a partial drop in the coin-type totals.

With the death of Jahangir in 1627 A.D. there is initially a rise in the histogram as the mint masters of his successor, Shah Jahan, re-instituted the policy of displaying the Ilahi year and month in the fifth year of his reign.¹⁴ The cessation of the Ilahi era on coins from the 6th regnal year is shown in the general drop in the number of coin-types in that period; the graph plunges ca. 1635 A.D. (8th regnal year).

In this manner Miss Hasan's graph may be seen to reflect nothing so much as the vicissitudes of minting practice during the period, and relates not to quantity of coins produced, but to numbers of coin-types or varieties produced. I have emphasized the Ilahi/Hijri dating as an obvious example of variation by type; but of course lesser examples may be found in the opening and closing of imperial mints, which may or may not relate to production quantities; increasing or decreasing use of mint marks and ornaments in various reigns; all of which produce valid types by the collector's definition and will be accounted for in the museum collections.

A final statistical demonstration of the nature of the museum collections is readily undertaken. In producing Table 2 all the maxima and minima of Miss Hasan's hologram of rupees catalogued¹⁵ were pinpointed, along with a few intermediate points. Her *Table One*, "Number of Rupee (and Fractional) Coins Catalogued (Annual Totals)" was then consulted.¹⁶ Within the five-year period encompassing each maximum, the highest total was selected, and within the five-year period encompassing each minimum, the lowest total was selected. This defined the extremes of the graph. For these

¹²S. H. Hodivala, "The Chronology of the Zodiacal Coins of Jahangir," *Numismatic Chronicle*, Ser. V., Vol. IX, 1929, p. 309. Also R. B. Whitehead, "The Portrait Medals and Zodiacal Coins of the Emperor Jahangir," N. C. Ser. V., Vol. XI, 1931, p. 103.

¹³Lahore dropped month names in 1025 A.H., Ahmedabad in 1027 A.H., Agra in 1031 A.H. However, Delhi, Patna and Tatta continued to show the month until the end of the reign (1036-37 A.H.).

¹⁴Delhi and Lahore used Ilahi months until yr. 3; Ahmedabad until yr. 5; Patna yr. 6; but Agra not at all. Tatta strangely enough continued Ilahi monthly dating until the end of the reign (1068 A.H.).

¹⁵Hasan, *op. cit.*, Figure 3 "B," p. 97. For the points chosen see Figure 1 of this article.

¹⁶Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

chosen years, every single silver coin in the four collections as catalogued was tabled, and grouped by separate coin-type. The total number of coin-types in all collections for each year was thus attained. The number of the specimens-per-year catalogued was divided by this figure of the types-per-year catalogued to obtain the number of specimens per coin-type preserved for each of the years chosen, in all the combined catalogues.

TABLE 2

Ilahi.	Year Hijri A.D.	No. of Coins Per A. Hasan Table One	No. of Coin Specimens Catalogued	No. of Coin Types Catalogued	No. of Specimens Per Type
	985 1577	32	34	13	2.62
	992 1584	6	6	2	3.00
39	1002 1593	76½	76	43	1.77
46	1009 1600	83	92	47	1.96
3	1016 1607	14	14	8	1.75
7	1021 1612	104	89	43	2.07
18	1032 1622	35½	32	23	1.39
4	1041 1631	94	86	49	1.75
	1060 1650	22	16	10	1.60
	1068 1657	58	62	28	2.22
	1084 1673	20	18	11	1.64
	1102 1690	63	62	28	2.22
	1111 1699	89	67!17	—	—
	1112 1700	55½	60	23	2.61

It will be seen that my count of specimens catalogued, varies slightly from Miss Hasan's due to the difference in catalogues used and the fact that I was obliged to count each fractional rupee as a single type. As would be expected from the above discussion on the rationale behind selection of specimens for these collections, there is almost no variation in the number of specimens preserved for each known type of coin. The lowest figure is 1.39, the highest 3.00, and the average is 2.02. In other words, this figure, for all practical purposes, is a constant, and the graph produced by Miss Hasan is a faithful chart of the number of coin-types produced annually by the Mughal mints. While this is an indication of varying ideological, metrological, political and artistic considerations, it cannot be said to be an indication of Mughal silver currency output.

¹⁷Here my count varied so far from A. Hasan's that the total for the next year was substituted, for which there was closer agreement.

Although this particular approach to the estimation of mintage quantities is invalid, there is, available to economic historians, a fairly reliable technique. This is the analysis of treasure-trove hoards by the comparison of die varieties. Called the "Die Count Method," it requires for purposes of inspection, a random sample of the coins in circulation during the period to be studied, such as is often provided by intact hoards of coins. These hoards, unearthed annually in India, are generally maintained intact in the principal museum of each state for some time previous to dispersal to other museums on the list of official receivers.¹⁸ Some museums such as the Andhra Pradesh Govt. Museum, Hyderabad, maintain and publish large numbers of coin hoards.

The statistical method has been adapted from other scientific applications.¹⁹ The formulae involved are essentially statements of coincidence probability in a population, and need not be examined here. Brunetti,²⁰ Brown,²¹ Sellwood,²² Metcalf,²³ and Grierson²⁴ have recently explored various aspects of this statistical approach to numismatics, and readers can refer to their writings.

Basically two steps are involved: firstly, the number of dies used in the minting of a coin-type is estimated, and secondly, the number of coins produced by the dies. The extrapolation in the first step is mathematically valid only if the sample is random in nature; thus attention must be paid to the detection of elements of selectivity in the process of accumulation of the sample. Failure to do so, as shown in our discussion above, can result in the failure of an otherwise painstaking study.

¹⁸For workings of the Treasure Trove Act, see P. L. Gupta, "Treasure Trove Laws in India—A Review," *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. XXIII, 1961, p. 137.

¹⁹R. C. Lewontin and T. Prount, "Estimation of the Number of Different Classes in a Population," *Biometrics* 12, 1956, pp. 211-23.

²⁰L. Brunetti, *Aspetti Statistici della Metanumismatica*, Rome, 1963; *Sulla Comparsa Armonica della Pluricita* 3, Trieste, 1964; "Die Höchstwahrscheinlichkeit bei statistischen Problemen der Numismatik," *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*, Vol. XV, 1965, p. 53; "Über eine Formel zur Berechnung der ungefähren Stempel-Schlagzahl," *ibid.*, pp. 65-74.

²¹I. D. Brown, "Some Notes on the Coinage of Elizabeth I with Special Reference to her Hammered Silver," *British Numismatic Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, 1955-57, p. 580.

²²D. G. Sellwood, "Medieval Minting Techniques," *British Numismatic Journal*, Vol. XXXI, 1962, pp. 57-65; "Some Experiments in Greek Minting Technique," *Numismatic Chronicle*, Ser. VII, Vol. III, 1963, p. 217.

²³D. M. Metcalf, "How Large was the Anglo-Saxon Currency?" *Economic History Review*, Second Series, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, 1965, pp. 475-82.

²⁴P. Grierson, "Byzantine Coinage as Source Material," Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, 1966, *Main Papers*, Vol. X, pp. 1-17.

Use of the "Die-Count" method at the University of Wisconsin has brought gratifying results with the Indo-Greek and Gupta coinages which will be published at a later date. Those interested in the Mughal field, where the volume of surviving coinage is particularly suitable for this type of analysis, will no doubt find this a most rewarding tool for economic research.



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BOOK REVIEWS

N. N. Bhattacharya, *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Contexts*, Manohar Book Service, Delhi, 1975, Pp. xi+184, Rs 40.

The early part of this book is an attempt to examine the principal ritualistic aspects of some of the major Vedic ceremonies in terms of the ritual reflecting the social background. Later the author takes up more widespread rites involving the *upanayana* (initiation of the twice-born), menstrual rites and cults and rituals of fertility. In another chapter he examines the rites performed at Divali and Holi in the context of symbols of death and resurrection. He concludes with a detailed discussion on the Dharma cult as one among what he calls, "the proletarian cults" of Bengal.

The Vedic ceremonies which he examines are those of the *asvamedha* (the horse sacrifice), *rajasuya* (consecration of the king) and the *vajapeya* (generally taken to be a rejuvenation ritual). They have as a common factor, an association with kingship. Bhattacharya argues that kingship was unknown to the age of the *Rgveda* and developed later, as is described in the later Vedic literature in which the ceremonies figure prominently. It is difficult to state categorically that the references to *raja* in the *Rgveda* are to tribal chiefs and not to kings, although it is certain that the concept of kingship in the early portions of the *Rgveda* was still embryonic and the tribe was as yet the more forceful institution. Bhattacharya maintains that the royal ceremonies are in essence fertility rites—as has also been argued by others—and that they point to a socio-political transformation, a process leading to detribalization and the growth of the concept and power of the state. The suggestion, that it was not originally the horse which was sacrificed but perhaps the chief priest, has been implied in other studies of the subject, but the linking of the ritual with the process of detribalization is a new contribution.

In the *rajasuya*, the author interprets the game of dice as symbolic of the earlier condition when the distribution of spoils was sometimes based on a kind of lottery, involving dice throwing. His interpretation of the *Sunahsepa* legend as the decline of Varuna, the god who is cheated out of his contract, is perhaps over-emphasized, and the other layers of the legend tend to get ignored.

The *upanayana* rites are compared with the initiation ceremonies of Buddhist and Jaina monks with interesting parallels. However, the point that the twice-born were being initiated into social obliga-

tions, whereas the monks were opting out of the society and being initiated into an alternative set of social obligations, does not feature in his discussion.

By way of comparative and explanatory material there is frequent reference to parallel rites in surviving cultures or earlier non-Indian cultures. These references could have been used more systematically. In the same way as phonetic resemblances can be found in unrelated languages, rites can also be duplicated in cultures. The argument would have been greatly strengthened if the context of the rite from surviving cultures had been examined in greater detail.

These comments however do not detract from the worth of the book. It is one of the few attempts to examine rituals, described in early Indian literary sources and known from early history, as part of an expression of social and political forms. Students of ancient Indian culture are already familiar with the author's other well-known writings on the Mother Goddess and on Puberty Rites. Even though there is an influence of George Thompson's studies of ancient Greece, which in the last decade or two have been modified, nevertheless, in terms of looking at the Indian material, Bhattacharya's analyses do represent a departure from the traditional views; a departure which is both new in its interests and which should provoke further research of a more meaningful kind.

ROMILA THAPAR

Susil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal 1650-1720*. Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975, Pp. 293, Rs 40.

The emergence of Bengal as a major buying market for European traders, as well as the remarkable expansion of English trade in that region in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries constitute a significant phase in Bengal's economic history. Removal of the Portuguese menace, following the Mughal occupation of Hooghly in 1632, and the rule of three princely subahdars for altogether more than half a century provided commercial security along with political stability to such newcomers as the Dutch and the English East India Companies. The author's aim is to examine the activities of the latter and the response of the indigenous commercial structure to their impact. The expansion of the EEIC (English East India Company) remains the central theme of the book, but never in isolation from the trade world of Bengal. Dr Chaudhuri deserves our gratitude for offering an able and scholarly survey of this world, in a

period of transition, which has remained very much neglected. The work is based primarily on unpublished records of the EEIC, supplemented by records of the Dutch East India Company, and relevant published material.

The work takes up the story where Dr Tapan Raychaudhuri has left it. The structure is revealed, as it stood, before Calcutta rose to dwarf Buxbandar Hooghly, and Patna came to usurp Kasimbazar's role as the greatest mart for imported goods; and before new elements entered in the region's political and commercial life with the emergence of Murshid Kuli Khan as Subahdar and the Jagatseths as the leading bankers in Bengal.

The opening chapter remains rather inadequate as a background. Several oft-quoted verdicts of foreign travellers are repeated in order to emphasize the renowned prosperity of Bengal. One misses more specific information on trade and traders of the previous period. The author has made no use of Dr Raychaudhuri's pioneering work in this context. Observations about the nature of the provincial administration are, however, very pertinent and they do prepare one for the shape of things to come.

The foundation of the EEIC's trade in Bengal is traced next, from an earlier lack of enthusiasm giving way to greater concern and the final declaration of Bengal trade to be the "principal object" of the Company's attention. Among the decisive factors, the lure of attractive private trade for the local employees is a significant one. Foundation of the English factory at Hooghly in 1650 also indicates a change in English trade objectives in India: from piece goods, suitable for bartering with the spice islands, they shift to saltpetre, silk and sugar, catering to new European demands.

The myth of the most coveted privilege of the English—that of carrying on duty-free trade in lieu of a small annual payment being based upon a *firman* of Shah Jahan—has been perpetuated till recently, notwithstanding the doubt raised by a few perceptive scholars. The author finally buries this legend ably proving his point from unpublished sources. The detailed refutation of certain claims made on behalf of Farrukhsiyar's *firman* however does not add much to our knowledge. The characterization of the relationship between the company and the local officials as essentially one of trade rivalry, is a significant formulation, although in another context the importance of the monopolizing attempt of the ruling class is minimized (p. 136). Moreover the Company's chief concern, here as elsewhere, for "exclusive and preferential privileges," (p. 30), should perhaps be understood in the context of the very nature of such a trading body and not only in the "multifarious bureaucratic exploitation" which was no doubt a factor to reckon with. The author has not probed

into the EEIC's relationship with Murshid Kuli Khan since his diwanship, which, it seems, would have thrown greater light on the problem.

The author gives an absorbing description of the Bengal merchants and the indigenous commercial organization. The vivid portrayal of several leading merchants of Balassor, Kasimbazar and Hooghly adds greatly to our knowledge about these individuals, who on the whole have remained faceless till now. Primarily merchants, dealing in any goods promising to yield profit, they also offered their services as brokers and bankers to the Europeans and even occasionally acted as mediators between the Companies and the ruling class. Their influence, wealth and independence are clearly brought out with relevant details. The English failed to prevent them from dealing with rival clients. Attempts to organize them on the basis of joint stock modelled on the system prevalent in the Coromandel coast failed, as social and political conditions were markedly different in these two areas. Even the greater English control over Calcutta was not helpful in coping with the "villainy" of such indispensable brokers as Benarasi Seth. The virtual absence of the future Jagatseth family is surprising as Manikchand with his family was already participating in local politics in the 1690s; he was also considered as the leading shroff in Bengal in the 1710s, by the French traders in Chandernagore. The section on the overseas trade of Khemchand and Chintaman substantiates the earlier findings of Dr Om Prakash on this very significant aspect of Bengal's traditional trade. The allusion to the overseas trade of Mathuradas is a little confusing, and in view of his association with Thomas Pitt, rather sketchy. But this does not take away from the importance of this excellent chapter.

The chapter on the structure and organization of export trade is the finest in the book. Financing of the Company's investment, procurement of export commodities and the organization of industries were the primary concerns of the EEIC. The first two are given considerable attention, and intricacies and problems brought out as much as possible. The sketch of the local capital market, with its links with Agra, the role of Kasimbazar in the pre-Jagatseth days as the principal borrowing centre, the discussions on the problems of borrowing and coining—all this make fascinating reading. Incidentally the high rate of interest which prevailed, constituting one major hindrance to borrowing, is stated at different places as 15-20 per cent (p. 96) and 12-18 per cent (p. 116) and needs revision. The importance of private trade of the local English agents is again reflected in their role as substantial lenders to the EEIC Company. The author, however, does not examine the impact of this trade

while analyzing the difficulties created by Indian and European rivals in the procurement of goods. The reference to arbitrary stoppage of the Company's boats by the local officials, another perennial trouble faced by the European traders, brings one back to the basic problem of determining the nature of this uneasy relationship. To what extent did such acts reflect "an extreme form of feudal exploitation" (such as depicted by Dr Raychaudhuri in his work on trade in the Coromandel coast) and how far were they a response to the frequent evasion of custom duties by the Company's officials and their proteges?

Many of the points raised in connection with the organization of industries have been followed up more thoroughly in subsequent chapters. The author's comments about the co-existence of the putting-out system with that of providing *dadney* or advance money to the middlemen, therefore, remain out of place and rather obscure.

The solidly documented discussion on export commodities focuses on the tremendous increase in the Company's export trade in Bengal. From a total of £ 7000 in 1652 its value rose to £ 336,973 in 1719-20. The tables at the end of the book are more helpful in following the trend, than the diagrams within the chapter. The use of dotted lines in the latter, representing parts of the curve for which data is not available, is often confusing. The shifting emphasis from saltpetre to raw silk and then to textiles is brought out very well, with many relevant details about the problems and peculiarities connected with trade in each commodity. Dutch rivalry in all cases, and stiff competition of Indian merchants in the sphere of trade in raw silk are to be specially mentioned. Dr Chaudhuri has provided a useful glossary of Bengal textiles, but he points out the difficulties involved in attempting a rigid classification of their seemingly endless varieties.

A final discussion of the Company's role in Bengal's commerce brings in some of the most important aspects of this subject. Bengal's steady demand for silver and the relative stagnation of its market for other imported goods are as true for this period as the rest of the pre-colonial era. The section dealing with the Company's country trade and private and interloping trade contains a lot of useful information. They do not however permit us to decide whether it was a period of transition for Bengal's Asian trade as well. A lucid and concise resume sums up the main points of the book.

INDRANI RAY

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph, *Pills Against Poverty: A Study of the Introduction of Western Medicine in a Tamil Village*, Series No. 23, 1975, Goran Djurfeldt Staffan Lindberg, Studentlitteratur, Curzon Press.

The authors have reported on their study of health and health policies in a Tamil village, Thaiyur, situated about 20 miles south of Madras City. The first few pages discuss the content of sociological terms and diseases as social phenomena, mostly on theoretical lines. Then there is the usual description of the area, the population covered, the disease panorama and the facilities available. The importance of infectious and parasitic diseases, which account for 63 per cent of the causes of death, has been stressed. A discussion of the nutrition gap follows with the conclusion that "feeding programmes cannot be substituted for a radical transformation of the system of food production."

The authors state that the people of Thaiyur would benefit much from drinking boiled water, but they do not boil it mainly because of its bad taste. They further recommend scenting the water to remove the bad taste. One would imagine, however, that the cost of fuel is the more obvious reason:

Thaiyur people will improve their health not by consuming more allopathic medicine, but by improving their economic lot, which they can only do by getting rid of the parasitic system which now oppresses them.... Allopathic medicine cannot take these people out of the poverty panorama (p. 101).

The rest of this book is an attempt to demonstrate the incapacity of allopathic medicine to solve the health problems oppressing the people of Thaiyur.

It is obvious that pills cannot remove poverty and that economic betterment will undoubtedly bring about a tremendous improvement in the health of not only Thaiyur but the entire nation. It is unfortunate that the authors have confused the issues and attempted to persuade their readers that no measure to solve the nation's poverty has been undertaken.

While the problem of solving poverty is engaging the attention of the administrators, economists and the government at the centre and state levels, it is wrong to argue that the simultaneous attempts to take the benefits of modern medicine to poor rural areas serve no purpose. That there has been a shortfall in the achievement of most of the targets, particularly the provision of simple "RCA latrines," has been brought out by a number of other studies in different states of India.

It is good that field experience has convinced the authors that "the Swedes and Indians not only have the same faculties of human intelligence, but that they use them in about the same way" (p. 165). A number of pages have been devoted to a discussion of the traditional beliefs of the village people, their superstitions and their wrong theories of disease causation. We believe that many university graduates also have wrong ideas about the factors producing disease and health and a questionnaire directed to them may not be more illuminative.

The exercise carried out by the authors during and as a result of their stay in Thaiyur has brought out no fresh information that was not already available to the health planners.

K. S. SANJIVI

Walter J. Fischel, ed., *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands, the Travels of Rabbi David D'Beth Hillel (1824-1832)*, New York, Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1973, Pp. 130, sketch maps.

The publications of Professor Fischel have thrown light upon the Jewish communities of Islamic lands and of South Asia, though his articles have often appeared in American and Jewish historical periodicals which do not easily attract the attention of, say, scholars working upon Mughal history. This is the republication of a narrative of travels, first written in Hebrew and translated into English by its author, which had been printed in Madras in 1832. The apparently longer Hebrew narrative is now lost and, as Fischel shows, copies of the original edition are extremely rare. Fischel knows of one in India, two in the United Kingdom and three in the United States.

In the journey which he records, Rabbi David passed from Jerusalem through the fertile crescent to Kurdistan and southern Iran, then embarked at Bushire, bound for Bombay. From Bombay he went by country craft to Cochin and back, and then crossed the Deccan by bullock-cart on his way to Madras. Though there is some parallel in the account of the intrepid Christian evangelizing activities of the Jewish convert, the Rev. Joseph Wolff, the intellectual environment, the economic status and the means of travel of Rabbi David distinguish this narrative from others published in English in the early nineteenth century. In the simple diction and the limitation of description to what he had seen and heard himself, Rabbi David's narration recalls much more closely the sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts of travel, the Elizabethan English visitors to the Indies (in W. Foster, ed., *Early English travels in India*,

OUP, 1921) or Nicolao de Rebelo Orta, who, two centuries earlier, had travelled through some of the same route up the Persian Gulf, through south Persia and the fertile crescent, by country craft and caravan (see J. V. Serrao, ed., *Un voyageur portugais en Perse au debut de XVII siecle*, Lisbon, 1972). Though Rabbi David's motive for oriental travel was religious, his record is valuable and a surprisingly late evidence of the routes, hardships and ingenuity of the small-scale "pedlar" who figures so largely in the theses of Van Leur and Steensgaard about Asian trade.

Rabbi David was born in Vilna, Lithuania, and received his orthodox eastern Jewish—*Ashkenazi*—education there. This was an age of the flowering of traditional Jewish culture, in the Slavonic lands almost untouched by the new rationalism and the philosophical enquiries of Western Europe. He was one of a small stream of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe settling in the Holy Land of Palestine. After several years of residence there, he became a messenger or *shelikh*, intent on discovering the small isolated Jewish communities of Asia beyond the Turkish empire, recording and making known their history and numbers, their preservation of Jewish observances, learning and manuscripts, desiring also to succour and strengthen them in their tribulations. Fischel makes clear that Rabbi David's account of the Jews of Kurdistan brings them out of centuries of historical darkness. Occasionally he was credulous in his belief of information about communities beyond the extent of his own travels, as when he records that there were 300,000 Israelites in the Caucasus (p. 98), but his narrative is the only source which preserves the history of the revival of the considerable Persian-speaking Jewish community of Bukhara by the efforts of a *shelikh* from Morocco, Rabbi Joseph al-Maghribi, who put them in touch with the educated Jewish communities of Turkey and Poland (pp. 93-94): Rabbi David's inquiries also provided a glimpse of the underworld of heretical sects who struggled to survive in the face of prevailing Islamic orthodoxies—Karaites or Samaritans, Qaddarites, Daudis (*Ahl-i-Haqq*) and Yazidis. It is not surprising that he regarded orthodox Muslims as generally "very wicked people" (p. 99).

The largest Jewish communities which Rabbi David found in the Middle East were in Jerusalem (an estimated 3,000 families) and Safed (2,000 families) in Palestine and at Baghdad (6,000 families). In Iran the greatest concentration was in Shiraz (700 families). Elsewhere, there are records of fifteen, ten and even single households, and usually recent migrants, but rather remnants of ancient communities dying out or being absorbed by conversion after many centuries of survival, as did the Chinese Jewish community of Canton in the twentieth century. The prevalent pattern of employment is

for the richer members of the community to be in commerce and probably in many cases engaged in moneylending, and for other families to be artisans, most commonly goldsmiths. Jewish agricultural communities are also found and there is even a Jewish Badawin tribe, the *Yahud al-Khaibar* of Syria, engaged like the Muslim Badawin, in preying upon cultivators and desert caravans. As Rabbi David's narrative makes clear—and contrary to the often expressed view that the rights of *dhimmis* were generally upheld in Islamic lands—the oppressed condition of oriental Jews under the Ottoman Pashas and Persian provincial governors was comparable to that of the Jewish communities of eastern Europe in his own day or of medieval England before the expulsion by Edward III. Occasionally their financial skills brought them high office despite the symbols of their lowly status, but such patronage easily led to their downfall, as was the case with two "princes" or leaders of the Jewish *millet* in Baghdad put to death by the Pasha while Rabbi David was there (p. 83), and Muallim Hayim Farkhi, "ruler of all Palestine and Mt. Lebanon" under Jazzar Pasha, who deprived him of his nose and one eye before restoring him to favour: Jazzar Pasha's successor, also under considerable obligations to Farkhi, had him strangled and thrown into the sea (p. 61).

Rabbi David proceeded to India on small vessels from Bushire via Langeh, Zoha and Muscat to Bombay. As might be expected, he has accounts of the Black Jews and the White Jews of Cochin, of the Bene Israel of Maharashtra and of the small immigrant community of Arabic-speaking Jews, mainly from the Yemen and Baghdad, who were to play an important part in the nineteenth century commercial life of Bombay. The Bene Israel were the most numerous Jewish community Rabbi David encountered in all his travels: he estimated that there were 600 households in Bombay and a further 8,000 "in the Marathi countries" around that city. He caught them at an interesting moment in their history when they were being re-Judaicized by the efforts of the immigrant Arab Jews after all but losing their sense of Jewish identity as a *jati* in the absorptive framework of Hindu society. Rabbi David also has interesting observations on other ancient communities with whom he came into contact, the Syrian Christians of Malabar and the Parsees, and his descriptions of conditions of travel and of urban life, particularly in Madras, are of value. With his range of languages (Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Turkish, English and even Portuguese) and his scholarly religious preoccupations, he was exceptionally well qualified to describe the minority groups with which his narrative is mainly concerned.

SIMON DIGBY

Surendra Gopal, *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat, 16th and 17th Centuries: A Study in the Impact of European Expansion on Pre-capitalist Economy*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1975, Pp. ix + 289.

This book has emerged out of a doctoral thesis completed at the Institute of Oriental Studies (Academy of Sciences, U.S.S.R.), and is the first full length study of trade and commerce of the Gujarat region during the 16th and the 17th centuries. That Gopal has studied a region which has been, by and large, neglected in historical studies is welcome. The author has given a detailed account of the crafts, industries and commerce of Gujarat in the context of the activities of the European trading companies in this region and various levels of political authorities. He has used diverse sources available in English and has drawn on the works of modern Soviet scholars. The maps which add to the value of the book are: Gujarat's trade with Asian and African countries, its trade with the other parts of India, and its manufacturing centres.

Gujarat had active trade relations with India's coastal regions and with the Asian and African countries when the Portuguese emerged as an important trading factor on the Indian Ocean in the beginning of the 16th century. Gopal describes how the Portuguese policies reduced Gujarat's share of trade. While the traditional port towns like Cambay and Rander began to decline, Goa, Diu, and later on, Surat grew in importance. The overland trade of Gujarat which had diminished by the 1550s on account of wars and political instability, got a new impetus by Akbar's economic and administrative policies in the 1570s. The arrival of the English and the Dutch in the second decade of the 17th century started a new phase in Gujarat's commercial life. While this phenomenon stimulated demand for Gujarati manufactures and introduced more sophistication in the forms of production, it also created ups and downs in the region's participation in the overseas and coastal trade. Gopal has skilfully described the activities of Gujarati, Dutch and English merchants, as those of the bureaucrat merchants who influenced the course of commerce and crafts of Gujarat in the 17th century.

Gopal concerns himself with a number of issues—politics, transport, trade routes, piracy, dacoity, insurance, banking, rural economy, and later on, in his conclusion, with religion, culture, and education. But he does not integrate them enough to show their interrelationship in the context of European expansion. For instance, the phenomenon of European piracy which gradually reduced India's share in overseas and coastal trade is explained in terms of the non-violent ethic of the Jain and the Vaishnava Vania merchants which prevent-

ed them from using violence against piratical activities. This is an intricate problem, and even granting that the Jain and Vaishnava Vantias were the most dominant business communities in Gujarat, it seems strange that the "bureaucrat merchants" should have allowed their material interests to suffer. Similarly the author does not explain the casual relationship between the emergence of the "money economy... in rural areas" (p. 152) and the existence of the trade centres and trade specialization. One would also like to know about the mechanism of "steady internal trade" (p. 152) in the midst of insecurity and a "number of extra-legal and legal levies exacted by the local chiefs and bureaucrats" (p. 164). How is it that while the Europeans arrested the development of the textile manufactures, they introduced capitalist elements in the manufacture of indigo (pp. 221-24)? Employing labourers "under one roof" is not enough for a capitalistic process as Gopal seems to suggest.

The author's choice of periods is puzzling: We are not quite sure about the author's criteria of periodization. Only one-third coverage is given to the 16th century. This may be due to the paucity of the English sources on which Gopal primarily depends, but this involves ignoring the source materials in other languages such as Portuguese, Persian and Dutch. One can appreciate Gopal's problems in view of the fact that we still have only a handful of historians in the country, well-equipped with the non-English European languages, let alone the Armenian and other Asian languages. However, it is not clear why the terminal point of the study is 1600 because the date had no particular significance in the context of the major theme of the book. After all, the periodization of a historical work must be with reference to the major issue it deals with.

Gopal would have well avoided his forays into the sociology of the Indian business system because this leads him to make certain assertions on the line of the Weberian observations which have come to be increasingly challenged by scholars in recent years. Some of the author's generalizations are: Castes precluded any meaningful dialogue between the traders, artisans and learned men resulting in technological stagnation; educational system of the Indians prevented them from introducing innovations; even the most successful businessmen having inferior status remained otherworldly and this slowed down business activities; the business communities were at the mercy of the ruling elite. Each of these assertions can, at best, serve as a hypothesis to be tested by further and more intensive scrutiny.

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M. A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1837*, Oxford, 1972, Pp. 300, £ 5.50.

The years at the turn of the nineteenth century in Bengal, were peculiarly blank as far as education was concerned. The neo-logic movement of Bhatpara and Nabadwip had exhausted itself. Muslim institutions of learning were without subsistence because of new British pressures for larger revenues. The "Bengal Renaissance" was yet to come. So a man like Ram Mohan Roy would go to Patna to learn. Dr Michael Laird now performs a most useful service with his instructive and important book which tells us in detail what the Christian missionaries were doing for education in Bengal and how we should understand their work. The major contribution of Dr Laird lies in the totality of his study which links the British background with the Indian experience. Based as it is on an exhaustive study of the relevant missionary archives the book maintains the important proposition that missionary education must not be seen as flowing from an advanced country to a less advanced area. It was in fact one continuous story of reform spreading from struggling Britain to disorganized India.

All recent work on the missionaries—that of Dr Potts, of Dr K. P. Sen Gupta and of Dr Ingham—has emphasized their importance as reformers while Dr Laird brings out in detail their significance as educators. To Carey, Marshman and Ward the major problem was one of adapting their schools to Indian conditions. They retained Bengali as the medium of instruction, and it was not till 1837 that English-medium schools were really in evidence. The curriculum did include a knowledge of Western science. The two-fold aim was "to bring their pupils to a personal undertaking of what they learnt" (p. 86) and to let science erode superstition.

Education in Britain was then similarly reforming itself. Young men were moving from Dickensian schools to the University of London. The missionary work spanned the two countries. Andrew Bell introduced the monitorial system in Britain after he had devised it in India, while in India, the progress of education came to be regarded almost as an end in itself, even among missionaries. Conversions were not directly aimed at and the new education was seen in the words of Michael Laird "as a *preparatio evangelica* which would enable their pupils to understand the Christian message more fully" (p. 272). The Bible as a textbook was an altogether later innovation and Dr Laird doubts whether that succeeded more as a weapon against Hinduism than modern secular knowledge. Historically the missionaries remained important not because they spread Christianity but because they introduced Western learning in India.

Apart from his scholarship, Dr Laird's distinction lies in a judicious approach to the subject, which, however, fails to conceal a personal appreciation of India. He is eminently qualified to write this book, as a man who has taught at Serampore and helped in cataloguing the Carey Collection there. He looks almost with the eyes of a native when he stresses the importance of missionary education in the *mufassil* rather than in Calcutta. He cannot of course tell us what the overall impact of it all was on the Bengali mind because no sources are known to deal with that problem. But Dr Laird has done a significant service for us in understanding the background of the "Bengal Renaissance."

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Hajime Nakamura, *Buddhism in Comparative Light*.

Professor Nakamura's *Buddhism in Comparative Light* is chiefly notable for its unquestioning tolerance, from which its other virtues flow. Professor Nakamura, tolerant himself, is a Japanese Buddhist, and therefore has the good fortune of belonging to a particularly tolerant branch of a very tolerant religion. He also writes as a senior and deeply learned scholar who can survey a great amount of religious material, easily and accurately. Hence this book, while not a major contribution, breathes a fresh spirit into comparative religion, which is so often stifled with more or less disguised theocentrism. Buddhist empiricism informs Professor Nakamura in the same way that the metaphysics of Vedanta informs Hindu writers on religion, and theology informs Christian writers.

Professor Nakamura's empiricism appears at the very beginning, where he outlines his programme. He differentiates between two senses in which we can investigate Buddhism as a universal religion. In the first place, we can treat its claim that "Buddhist teaching is of universal significance addressed to the spiritual and moral needs of all mankind" (p. 2). He declines to do this. On the other hand, we can treat it as a universal religion in the sense that it is "a tradition of religious faith and practice widely accepted by different peoples at different times" (p. 2). The question, then, is "how we may account for this general acceptance" (p. 5). At this point, Professor Nakamura has to smuggle back into his argument some of the "universal significance" he had first rejected. He intends to use the comparative examples—drawn mostly from Christianity, but also from Hinduism

—to show the extent to which Buddhism's response to particular historical situations is, in fact, a response to "universal human problems."

In the course of the book it becomes clear—and this Professor Nakamura recognizes—that comparative statements yield suggestive, but vague generalities, while statements about a particular religion's doctrine or history can be far more decisive. His lack of enthusiasm for the comparative is plain; as, for example, here: "It might be said that perhaps there has been more tension in the case of Christianity between demand for faith and regard for reason than in the case of Buddhism, but both have made some appeal to critical, intelligent minds" (p. 27). In his conclusion, Professor Nakamura states the relative virtues of the comparative and historical approaches:

In some instances we have observed comparable ideas or concepts. But what we have more frequently observed are terms of thought which are not strictly comparable when seen within their own related contexts, yet associated with similar practices, behaviour, and language suggesting comparable human situations, condition and consciousness (p. 151).

As we might expect, Professor Nakamura is more assured on the details of Buddhism. He says confidently, for example, that "the Buddha never quite faces the contradiction between his rationalistic psychology of non-self and his uncritical acceptance of rebirth or transmigration" (p. 46). A little later he puts the fundamental teaching of impermanence and non-self very succinctly and clearly:

There can be no individuality without a putting together of components: this is a "becoming". There can be no becoming without a becoming different: and there can be no becoming different without a dissolution, a passing away, which sooner or later will inevitably be complete (p. 48).

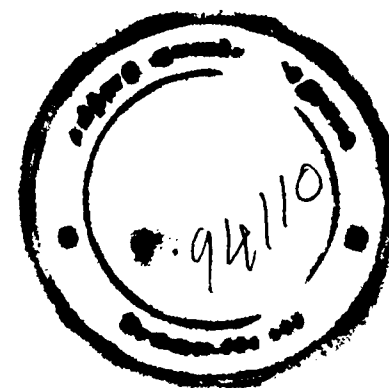
This is all sufficient to make the book worth reading, especially for those who seek a good introduction to Buddhism. What is most strikingly valuable, however, is the final chapter, which is addressed to the question of modernism. Here he argues that most of the attitudes and assumptions that characterize modernism, such as free thinking, empirical enquiry, and egalitarianism, have all appeared in the East at one time or another. He adduces a broad selection of examples to support his broad thesis, from ancient critics of the Vedic rites to modern Japanese Buddhist philosophers. These latter

are particularly interesting, both because they are so little known elsewhere, and because they are concerned for what Professor Nakamura elsewhere calls "the specific human nexus." By this is meant the circle of human relationships and common human problems on which Japanese (and to an extent Chinese) Buddhism concentrates. This human nexus stands in contrast to the metaphysics and cosmology, on a grand scale, which dominate other religious philosophies. This is a delightful chapter.

We have to thank the Islam and the Modern Age Society for producing this book. Should the book reach a second edition, though, the numerous proof-reading mistakes, which sometimes efface the sense, should be corrected.

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PAST AND PRESENT

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