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THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE MADRAS  
PRESIDENCY ON THE EVE OF THE BRITISH CONQUEST

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# THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY ON THE EVE OF THE BRITISH CONQUEST

(BEING THE SUBJECT OF TWO READERSHIP LECTURES  
DELIVERED BY HIM IN JANUARY, 1929.)

BY

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## I

### (1)—THE JAGHIR DISTRICT

A high authority to whom Government, in the time of Lord Connemara, entrusted the preparation of a memorandum on the economic condition of the Province since the stabilisation of British rule, says that, while in the earlier centuries, although the country had suffered from frequent wars, it had with some intervals the advantage of a more or less settled government, in the eighteenth century the completest anarchy prevailed and the condition of the people was miserable in the extreme.<sup>1</sup> It was marked by insecurity of property, obstructions to trade, heavy taxation, uncertainty in the value of the currency and by distressing poverty among the agricultural classes. The wars of the Mughal captains in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, the struggles that ensued consequent on the inroads of the Marathas, the disputed successions to the thrones of Hyderabad and Arcot, the bitter struggle between the English and the French, and the subsequent English wars that had to be waged in the Carnatic and elsewhere, had so devastated the land and demoralised the people, that, in the words of the *Fifth Report*, "the system of internal management had become completely disorganised, and not only the forms, but even the remembrance of civil authority, seem to have been wholly lost." The *Jaghir* or Chingleput District was twice ravaged by Hyder Ali, once in 1768 and again in 1780. It had been obtained from the Nawab by grants of the years 1750 and 1763 and rented to him on renewed leases, principally from year to year, until a short time before 1780 when

<sup>1</sup> Srinivasaraghavaiyengar, *Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of British Administration*—Madras, 1893, —Section II, p. 19.

the Presidency took over its management.<sup>1</sup> It had been so depopulated by the wars with Hyder that "hardly any other signs were left in many parts of the country of its having been inhabited by human beings than the bones of bodies that had been massacred or the naked walls of the houses, choultries and temples which had been burnt." The system of management exhibited throughout the area of the Jaghir "a scene of boundless exaction and rapacity, on the part of the Government and its officers; of evasion on that of the inhabitants; or of collusion between them and the public servants; while the revenue diminished every year with the cultivation."<sup>2</sup> The cultivator was entitled to a certain standard share of the crop; "but a considerable portion of it was extorted from him under the varied devices of *usual assessment*, *fixed assessment*, and *additional assessment*, *darbar-khirsch* and by private contributions levied by the revenue officers for their own use." The Committee of Circuit that was appointed by the order of the Court of Directors in 1775, to investigate the state of the Northern Circars, was instructed to extend its investigations to the Jaghir as well, on the ground that many considerations induced the Company to keep that territory in their own immediate possession and that they would no longer consent to the renting of it by the Nawab, unless he agreed to certain conditions. The Committee could not report as it was abolished soon after the commencement of its labours; it was revived in 1783; but then it was not required to report on the Jaghir. However, during the time that the territory was rented by the Nawab, a survey was made of it by Mr. Barnard which was completed in 1776 and was based on the statements of the *karnams* and the inhabitants. This survey was in many cases not detailed; it was undertaken with the view, "rather of forming some tolerable idea of the value of the country, than of ascertaining with precision affairs of revenue detail." When the Jaghir was assumed by the Company's Government, it was placed under the charge of the Committee of Assigned Revenue which let out the country in 1783 in fourteen large farms on leases of nine years at progressive rents. A resident official was appointed in the next year to see to the several stipulations of the *covls* being carried out. In 1788, shortly after the district was placed under the sole charge of a Superintendent, it was formed into two divisions, each being placed under a Collector. In the next year an additional Collector was appointed; and the

<sup>1</sup> The revenue of the Jaghir was assigned as a contribution towards the expenses of the wars undertaken in aid of the Nawab; its final acquisition was piece-meal and was finally confirmed in 1763 by Shah Alam.

<sup>2</sup> The Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company—Vol. ii, Madras Presidency—London, 1812. Ed. of 1886, pp. 36 *et seq.*

office of the Superintendent was abolished ; the renters of the farms had repeatedly failed in their payments under the nine-years' leases ; many of their estates had been sequestrated ; and some lessees were even put in confinement. The net receipts during this period had not, on an average, exceeded one-fourth of the sum at which they were valued in the grants of the Nawab. The Collectors appointed in 1788 leased out the country for three years in much smaller farms.

The settlements made in 1789 yielded a considerable increase in revenue for the years 1791-2, above that of the preceding year's settlement. In 1793 assistants were appointed to the Collectors ; and in the succeeding year the country was put under the management of the famous Mr. Lionel Place. Mr. Place's vigorous administration, which continued till 1798, busied itself with an investigation of the land-revenues, the discovery of abuses in connection with their collection and management, and the acquisition of information respecting the situation, the rights and the privileges of the ryots. He found the revenue accounts very irregularly kept up and, for the greater part, mere fabrications. The *karnams* who were the village officers of record, were mostly dependent upon the ryots, and abused their trust in a number of ways. He abolished altogether the office of *canungo* which had been already discontinued by the Nawab and instituted in its stead a department of record and account consisting of a *sheristadar* and *gumastahs* to assist him in the various divisions of his charge ; he strove to restore the office of *karnam* to its original efficiency. He did away with the office of *deshmukh*, but he revived the *natwaurs* who were the headmen of larger sub-divisions each including a circle of villages : and with the help of these persons he succeeded in obtaining a statistical knowledge of the Jaghir District, "far more accurate, and far more minute, than had ever been afforded with respect to any part of the Company's old possessions."

The cultivators appeared to have been of two descriptions ; viz., *mirasdars* and *pyacarrys* or *paracadys*. Each of these claimed for itself the largest share ; and the *māmool vāram* or customary division of the produce was reducible to no fixed rules, but " every year varied according to the interested purposes of one or the other." Dry grains and garden-produce had always been assessed at a money-rent as in other parts of the country. Besides their *mirasi* lands, these cultivators enjoyed " a certain portion of prescriptive registered lands, wholly exempt from any Government tax or rent." Also the *mirasdars* enjoyed certain *russooms* or *marahs* from the produce of other lands cultivated by the *pyacarrys*. Some of these latter had a sort of life-estate in the *mirasi* lands which they cultivated and were called " resident *pyacarrys*." These received 45

per cent of the produce ; while the non-resident *pyacarrys* were allowed five per cent more. The right of the *mirasdars* was considered by the Madras Board of Revenue to be a proprietary right ; while Government maintained that the actual property in the soil was vested in the State which alone had the power of making an absolute sale of the land, and that any sale by the *mirasdars* was defined to be "a gratuitous recompense for the alienation of arable lands"; while *mirasi* itself was defined to be "a preference of cultivation derived from hereditary residence, but subject to the right of the Government as the superior lord of the soil, in what way it chooses for the cultivation of its own lands."<sup>1</sup>

The cultivators were thrown a great deal into contact with the *dubashes* or Indian agents of the European officers and merchants, who bought up the lands for almost nothing, leaving the former owners as cultivators. "They found means to introduce their own *amildars* into the management of the country and fomented quarrels between the cultivators and the Company's renters. Then the quarrels would subside, because the *dubash's* interest was to keep things quiet and prevent inquiry . . . they set the inhabitants fighting among themselves—one man advanced pretensions for himself and precluded the rest—property having once been thrown into confusion, was easily evaded. In such a state of things the *dubash* was pampered by both parties. He lived on the people and only gave his favour in return."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mirasi* is a Perso-Arabic term which has gradually come into general use as indicating the remains of any kind of right of the landlord type, wherever found. The term *mirasi* is applied to any hereditary right to fees, perquisites or bits of land held as remuneration for service. It is inherited property or right and specially used in South India to signify lands held by absolute hereditary proprietorship under one of three contingencies ; (1) either as a joint co-parcenary tenure in the lands of a village, and either cultivated in common or allotted, annually or at some other stated period, among the proprietors ; (2) as one of several parcels or lots in which the lands of the village are divided ; or (3) as a whole estate, where all the lands of the village are the property of one proprietor. In North and South Arcot and in Chingleput the term was applied to certain hereditary privileges enjoyed by the holders of *mirasi* lands, consisting sometimes of a right to hold portions of their estates exempt from assessment and in most cases, the privilege of receiving portions of the general produce or money compensation from the other members of the community. It is applied to fees and perquisites of village servants, who are not possessed of any share of the *mirasi* lands and also to hereditary successions to various offices, privileges and emoluments. (See Ellis's *Mirasi Tenure* : Wilson's *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms of British India* (p. 342), and Baden-Powell's *The Land-Systems of British India*, Vol. iii, Book iv.)

In the *Mirasi* villages the grain produce was distributed in shares (*māmōōl vāram*) ; there were hereditary and permanent tenants or cultivators, and they were regarded as 'privileged and yet as inferiors, not co-sharers.' The casual tenants were called *parakudi* (outside tenants) or generally *paicāri* (corrupted into *poycarry*, *paicari* etc.) The *mirasdars* could sell and gift the lands, while the *kudās* could not.

<sup>2</sup> B. H. Baden-Powell.—*The Land-Systems of British India*, Vol. iii (1892), p. 13.

In the final report<sup>1</sup> that Mr. Place submitted, dated 6th June 1799, Mr. Place resiled from his former position of agreement with the view of Government and became convinced that the mirasdar had an undoubted hereditary property in the soil and that he derived this right "originally from the sovereign to whom he acknowledged obedience, and the rendering of a stated proportion of the produce, as the tenure by which he held it; that he sold, mortgaged, gave away and left his lands to posterity, which the *pyacarry* could not; that, until the term *meerassee* was employed by the Mahomedans to denote the lands of a *meerasadar*, they were described by a compound word in the Malabar language, *cāniātchy*, *cāny* signifying land and *ātchy* heritage."

Mr. Place introduced a settlement on the basis of village rents and of the produce; the parties who entered into the engagements were the principal holders of land in the village jointly. Those who possessed fractions of a share were to adjust their rights among themselves; while the Collector decided all complaints brought on this subject. "He could easily fix the value of all the lands together of one village; but he did not feel himself competent to assign to every small allotment, its portion, with sufficient exactness and regard to fertility of soil and other circumstances." The next two settlements of the Jaghir were also based on the principle of village rents; and annual settlements continued to be successfully made till the lands were permanently assessed in 1802-3.

Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton, who made a journey of observation of the economic conditions of the land, under the direction of Government, in the year 1800, tells us of fields growing a double crop with the help of tanks which were numerous and well-maintained along the high road to Mysore. He writes of the appearance of the country thus: "The roads are good; and many of the huts being built of mud, and neatly covered with tiles, have a better appearance than those in Bengal: . . . the inns or *choultries* which are common on the road, evince an attention to travellers not to be found in Bengal . . . Instead of preventing the crops from being cut down till the rent is paid, as is usual in Bengal, the custom here is, to collect the grain in stacks or heaps, after it has been thrashed out on the field. In order to guard against embezzlement, several pieces of clay stamped with a seal are then put on the surface of the heap; and to prevent injury from the weather, it is thatched. The grain continues in these heaps, till the cultivator is able to satisfy the renter, either by advancing money or by dividing the produce . . . (The

<sup>1</sup> Published as Appendix No. 16 to the Fifth Report, Vol. II (1866 ed.)—Extracts from Report of Mr. Place respecting the Land-Tenures in the Jaghir; dated 6th June, 1799.

cattle) are in better condition than the labouring cattle of Bengal, owing probably to the greater care that is taken of the rice-straw by the inhabitants of Madras.<sup>1</sup> The observer saw the care with which Mr. Place caused each village to be surrounded by a hedge of bamboos, with two small towers at each gate which would keep out small parties of plundering cavalry, while bamboo, which then sold threefold dearer than at Calcutta, would be obtainable in abundance. The soil was in most places very indifferent; and almost everywhere the country was overrun with low prickly bushes whereon some forest trees might have been planted with advantage. The palmyra and the date thrive everywhere without trouble; but the planting of them on a large scale was not at all profitable. The *tari* or fermented juice and the *jagory* or inspissated juice of the palmyra were more esteemed than those of the wild date. *Jagory* sold for 30 visses a pagoda, but no attempts were made to convert it into either a palatable spirituous liquor or sugar. One man could take care of 200 palmyra trees, from which he could annually extract twenty maunds of *jagory* worth six pagodas, besides a quantity of *tari* which was sold daily and gave an approximate annual return of about fifteen pagodas. The rent of each tree was about two *fanams* and for the number amounted to about eleven pagodas.

On the agricultural side, one *kani* (51,375 square feet) required the constant labour of four men to supply it with water for rice-cultivation, by the picotah-method of irrigation; the same number were able to water 3 *kanis* of garden-land which required a comparatively smaller supply; this method of picotah-cultivation was accompanied by a general reduction in the rent.

On the whole Dr. Buchanan found that the condition of the people was better than of those of Bengal; while the town of Conjeevaram was regularly built with wide and clean streets; but it had not yet recovered its old prosperity; and many of the lots of buildings in it were unoccupied; and very few of the houses were more than one storey high. The country to the west of Conjeevaram was almost a desert, and it continued so till Damerla, the last village in the Jaghir.

## (2)—NELLORE

The District of Nellore was acquired from the Nawab of the Carnatic by the treaty of 1801. It did not seem to have suffered much in comparison with the rest of the Carnatic in the wars

<sup>1</sup> *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*—in 3 volumes (1st edition 1807).—Chapter I, pp. 3-7.

of the eighteenth century ; and " being exempt from the presence of armies, was saved from the devastation and drain on the population, inseparable therefrom." Its proximity to the Presidency exposed it to many abuses and corrupting influences however. " The confusion and uncertainty of the revenue system ; the oppression of the renters, themselves the victims of the rapacity of the Nawabs, and compelled to recoup themselves by exactions from their people ; the fraud and venality which had infected all ranks ; the poverty of the cultivators who were nine-tenths of the community ; their ignorance and a pathetic indifference to their own improvement ; the stagnation of trade and manufacture, consequent on restrictive taxation and general insecurity ; the depredations of the Poligars and Kavalgars, the supposed guardians of public security ; the total want of a system of judicature ; all these combined to produce a state of things wretched in the extreme, and from which it would be vain to hope for sudden or rapid improvement. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The great mass of the people were small cultivators who were oppressively fleeced by the renters of the Nawab ; many of the head-inhabitants of the villages were themselves sub-renters and were additional instruments of extortion. A few of them had amassed some wealth which they hoarded. There were very few traders, and the few roads that existed were in a bad condition and infested by robbers and dacoits. The chief outlet of trade was by the sea from which grain, tobacco and some cloth were exported, while cattle were sent out in some quantity, chiefly to Hyderabad. The cloth trade was insignificant and declined perceptibly after 1800. The grain trade was principally with the southern districts, and was carried on by sea in small country craft. " The winds prevailing at the harvest season being contrary, the transport was precarious and the trade small." Land transport was mainly by means of pack-animals, chiefly bullocks. The cost of transporting one *putti* of grain was more than one star-pagoda for every eight miles, *i.e.*, about a third of the average price of that quantity prevailing in the district. In addition to this heavy charge of transport, there were the usual oppressive customs and tolls which were worsened by the general insecurity of the roads.

In the early years of British rule in the district, conditions of security which began to prevail made for some restoration of prosperity. But the incidence of land-rent pressed heavily on the cultivators, and was made oppressive in lean years. The ryots became more impoverished by the low prices of grain which ruled.

<sup>1</sup> *Manual of the Nellore District.*



Indigo cultivation was tolerably remunerative; but sugar-cane cultivation had almost entirely ceased 'owing to its inability to compete with jaggery imported from the Ceded Districts.' And garden-lands gradually ceased to be cultivated 'owing to the increased pressure of the assessment consequent on the fall in the prices of grain.' According to the report of the Collector made in 1818, regarding a village selected for the experimental introduction of the *ryotwari* assessment in the district, the proportion allowed to the cultivators of wet lands was nine in twenty or forty-five per cent on the basis of the valuation of grain at Rs. 20 per *candy*. The State demand on dry land and garden produce was estimated on similar principles. Thus about one-half of the estimated produce was demanded by the State as its revenue under the new system.<sup>1</sup>

### (3)—THE NORTHERN CIRCARS<sup>2</sup>

At first the Nizam's officials who were in charge of these Circars were continued; but in 1769 they were placed under the charge of provincial chiefs and councils into which the Company's commercial factories were then converted. The Chief and Council of the Masulipatam Factory were to be in charge of the three southern circars; and those of the Vizagapatam Factory were to rule the southern division of Chicacole circar; its northern portion was entrusted to the newly restored Chief and Council of Ganjam. This system of administration continued until 1794; though in 1775 a Committee of Circuit composed of five members of the Madras Council was appointed to inquire into the condition of the Circars, and was revived after a first abolition. This Committee of Circuit issued reports from time to time which were however very thin. Mr. James Grant, a senior merchant of Bengal, while residing at Hyderabad, had access to valuable public records and issued his famous Political Survey which threw much light on the revenue economy of the Circars under Muhammadan rule. This Survey was published as an appendix to the Fifth Report. It was originally transmitted by the Bengal Government to the Court of Directors and re-transmitted by the latter to Fort St. George.

From the report we know that the Circars were properly regarded as the 'granary of the Carnatic during the north-east

<sup>1</sup> Dutt—*Economic History of British India under Early British Rule* (5th ed.), pp. 154-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ganjam, Vizagapatam, Godavari and Guntur (acquired from the Nizam in 1766, as Chicacole, Rajahmundry, Ellore, and Mustafanagar and Murtizanagar Circars); Krishna acquired in 1759 (as Masulipatam Circar); Palnad acquired from the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1801.

monsoon, in like manner as Tanjore is reckoned on for the other season of periodical winds from the opposite point of the compass.' Fruits, roots and greens were scarce and reared with difficulty to the south and north of the Godavari; sugar and cotton were also too scantily produced for the consumption of all the people; but bay salt and excellent tobacco grown in the vicinity of Masulipatam, had generally exceeded both the home and foreign demand. The forests on the hill-slopes yielded a super-abundance of good teak, 'so generally thought superior in quality even to oak, for the ship-building and navigation of the Indian seas.' Cocoanut and palmyra and, in the northern portions, the toomecara, supplied the principal materials for constructing the native *doonies* (coasting-vessels of one or two masts, managed by Indian seamen, having a convex upper deck with the view of more effectually resisting the waves). The diamond mines of Guntoor and Kondapalli were reserved by treaty to the Nizam; but their output was not of any great consequence. Manufactured cotton was of two main varieties; the plain long-cloth which was so valued in foreign markets and served as the base-material of the fine printed calicoes and of the inimitable painted ones called palampores manufactured in the district of Masulipatam. Coarse plain cloths were also produced in abundance. 'The muslins of Chicacole, the beautiful woollen carpets of Ellore, and silks of Burrampore . . . wrought from raw materials imported from Bengal or China, are rather objects of curiosity and meriting encouragement, than considerable in quantity or benefit. Of this nature also is the art of painting or inlaying ivory and blackwood, in the cabinet work made at Vizagapatam; but the facility, convenience and cheapness, with which ships of war or of burthen not exceeding 500 tons, have been, and might in greater number be, constructed, in the ports of Coringa and Narasapore at the two principal mouths of the Godavari, are considerations of the utmost importance to a maritime state; nor should the extensive branch of ship-building at present in use, though with so much imperfections and improvidence, in supplying 50,000 tons for small craft in coasting trade, be forgotten in stating the more useful arts, which at once favour the proprietary and local interests of the country.'<sup>1</sup>

The trade of the Circars to Europe was confined almost entirely to the fine cotton cloth which, about this date, amounted at prime cost to 30 lakhs of rupees, of which rather less than a half found its way to England. The coasting trade, which was almost entirely

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the portions of the Political Survey, dealing with natural produce, and manufactures and useful arts, pp. 138-9 of the *Fifth Report*, Vol. II.

confined to Madras, consisted mainly of grain and coarse cloth; the former amounting annually to half a million bags and valued at about 25 lakhs of rupees), and the latter estimated at about 10 lakhs. Inland trade was mainly in salt, copper and coarse piece-goods. It left a balance of about 10 lakhs after deducting half that amount for returns of cotton and wheat received in barter from the Lambadies who were the main carriers of this trade.<sup>1</sup>

The rule of the great Nizam-ul-Mulk over the Circars produced a vigorous administration in the province of Chicacole which was governed for fifteen years by Anwar-ud-din Khan, who later became Nawab of the Carnatic, and who ascertained and realized the full revenue of the districts under his rule. Rajahmundry and the southern Circars were ruled equally firmly with ample delegated sway by Rustam Khan for the years 1732-39. Rustam Khan's name was long remembered by the people as that of a ruler 'worthy of imitation for necessary policy, considerate humanity, rigid and universal justice.' He put down the frauds and oppressions of the zamindars and appointed *amins* and supervisors in their place and compiled a *jumma kaumil* (original assessment). Under the short-lived rule of the French, the zamindars were dismissed from their official duties, but generally allowed to enjoy under French *sanads*, their *rassooms* and *saverums*<sup>2</sup> on conditional hereditary privileges amounting to from 8 to 12 per cent of the net revenue collected. Excepting in the Chicacole circar there were more fresh creations than extirpations of these. In 1757 was completed a survey or *hustabood*<sup>3</sup> (or detailed account of the gross collections of the whole country; the *jummabandi* or annual settlement was doubled in the Rajahmundry and Chicacole circars and brought somewhat nearer the *kham vasul* (gross as distinguished from the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Grant estimates the commercial benefits in the Circars in the gross at 75 lakhs of rupees annually, which 'in a flourishing period of seventeen years back, and most so under the late distractions in the Carnatic, have annually increased the hidden treasure or languid circulation of the parsimonious Indians, excepting an over-plus never exceeding 15 lakhs, saved from a very disproportionate revenue, to liquidate the yearly gratuity paid to the Nizam by treaty, or be remitted in specie to the Presidency of Fort St. George.'

<sup>2</sup> *Rassooms* (Russūm) denoted the fees or perquisites allowed to the zamindar by the Muhammadan government or by a commission generally of five per cent on the gross collections. This payment was sometimes designated as his *malikāna* (the due of the *malik* or proprietor). *Sāverum* (*Sāvaramu—Tel.*) denoted an allotment of land or of the Government revenue derivable from it assigned by the Muhammadan government to the zamindars or other revenue officers as their personal compensation. *Sāverum* is also taken to mean that portion of the zamindari which the zamindar retains in his own hands. (Wilson—*Glossary* pp. 440 and 472) and also Bengal Regulations of 1793 and 1822).

<sup>3</sup> *Lit. Hust-o-ood*—a comparative account showing the present and past produce of an estate; a detailed statement of any lands yielding revenue, containing an examination of the assets, made before the harvest and sometimes after the measurement of the lands.

net revenue in other provinces. The zamindars were now bound to maintain the public peace and to keep on foot a militia of 12,000 infantry. This survey was only the first step towards the establishment of a more adequate *jumma kaumil* or standard revenue which would have served as a basis for progressive income. The English conquest of the Circars in 1759 was not immediately followed by their annexation of all the territories which reverted to the government of the Nizam and were leased by him to a Mussalman officer; and it was only in 1766, that the Nizam agreed by treaty to place in possession of the Company the whole of the Northern Circars, with the exception of Murtizanagar or Guntur.

The English continued the lease of the Circars that had been given to the Nizam's officer, Hussain Ali Khan; and it was only in 1769 that, as already noted, the territories were placed under the direct management of the Company's servants. During the period of Hussain Ali Khan's lease, titles and *sanads* were lavishly bestowed on the zamindars for paying up their arrears of revenue; and many usurping land-holders thus got confirmations of their alleged ancient privileges. Thus the continual warfare that prevailed during the period prior to the transfer of power to the English, 'had emboldened and encouraged the zamindars to usurp almost independent power,' and 'their position nearly resembled that of tributary chiefs.' In the circar of Rajahmundry, chief among the hill zamindars were the Raja of Polavaram and the *Mansabdar* of Rampa; while the principal ones of the plains were the Rajas of Peddapuram, Pithapuram, Kota Ramachandrapuram and Mughalturru. The zamindars were mostly of three classes: the Velamas of Telugu origin, the Kachewars of the race of the ancient sovereigns of Orissa and the Oriyas found chiefly in the northern circar of Chicacole. Each zamindar maintained some semblance of state and kept a retinue of peons bearing matchlocks and pikes. Their military forces, like those of the *poligars* of the Tamil country, consisted of three kinds: (1) the common *peons* who were paid in money and whose constant attendance was expected; (2) the *mocassa* peons who were paid by grants of land and were subject to a low quit-rent; and (3) the *manovarti* (= pension, land granted for the subsistence of a pensioner) peons who consisted of tenants of a higher order and who were bound to bring their adherents into the field with them whenever required by the zamindar. The Muhammadan government always regarded the zamindars as accountable managers and collectors and not as lords and proprietors of the land. 'The money they paid to Government, instead of being in the nature of a tribute or mere acknowledgment of subjection or fealty, was no other than a *jumma* or revenue

annually calculated . . . As a check upon the conduct of the zamindars there were officers appointed by the State, to keep an account of the cultivation and produce, and whose duty it was to furnish the governor and *taujdar* of the country, at the proper season, with accounts and settlements of the past and present state of its produce, who thereupon formed the *jummaabandi* or revenue settlement of the year, which was variable in its amount and in general proportionate to the estimated value of the harvest. The duty of the zamindar, as declared in his *sanad* of appointment, was to superintend that portion of the country committed to his charge, to do justice to the ryots, to furnish them with the necessary advances for cultivation, and to collect the rent of government; and as a compensation for the discharge of this duty, he enjoyed, as did the zamindars of Bengal, certain allotments of land rent-free, termed *saverum*, which were conveniently dispersed through the district, so as to make his presence necessary everywhere in order to give the greater effect to his superintendence. He was also entitled to receive certain *russooms* or fees on the crops and other perquisites drawn from the *sayer* or customs and from the quit-rents of houses. These personal, rather official, lands and perquisites amounted altogether to about 10 per cent. on the collections he made in his district or zamindary . . .'

The term *zamindar*, signifying a possessor of land, was wrongly taken to mean the owner of a hereditary tenure of the soil. At first the Madras Government, in their General Letter, dated March 8, 1769, described the zamindaris as 'lands held by certain rajas or chiefs, as their hereditary estates, paying a certain tribute to Government, and being only subject to suit and service in a manner very similar to the ancient feudal tenures.' The Chief and Council of Masulipatam wrote in 1771 that 'the zamindaris were no other than feudal districts, for which the rajas who were proprietors of them paid a tribute to Government in proportion to their value; and, if called upon, ought to attend in time of war with a certain number of troops.'

Thus the English Government first imposed on the zamindars the character of tributary chiefs, the fallacy of which had to be shortly afterwards acknowledged. Their first practice was to allow the zamindars to appropriate the revenues of their charges for their own use, on condition of their paying the stipulated *jumma*. They collected the revenue either in kind or money, and generally by farming it out to persons on annual or longer leases; the contracts included generally one or more villages, and in a few cases larger portions and even entire estates. The cultivators were by custom entitled to one-half of the paddy produce depending on

the periodical rains and to two-thirds of the produce of dry-grain lands watered by artificial means. Particular castes were allowed a larger share. The estimate of the harvest was made by outside experts, with reference to the produce of former years; the cultivators were at liberty to have another survey made by people of their own choice; and if there was any material difference between the two, a third estimate was undertaken by the village officers. Then the share of Government was taken either in kind or in money. But before the division of the harvest was made, certain deductions were allowed from the gross produce.

In regard to plantations and garden-culture, the cultivators had to pay only from one-fourth to one-eighth of the entire yearly crop; this lighter assessment was in proportion to the expenses of their production and marketing. The rule with respect to the garden and orchard produce as well as small grain was to assess them in a fixed money-rent not liable to fluctuation.

Many modifications had to be made in practice of these theoretical bases of assessment. The renters under the zamindars practised many kinds of oppression and collected a portion of their money-rents even before harvest time. This practice forced the ryots to borrow from money-lenders at usurious rates of interest, sometimes amounting to 3, 4 or 5 per cent per month. The servants and followers of the renters were quartered upon the ryots; or they forcibly compelled the ryots to remove to less fertile villages and lands or to labour freely in the tilling of their own and their friends' lands. The *sayer* duties extended to grain, cattle, salt, and most other necessities of life passing in inland trade. They were collected by corrupt, partial and extortionate agents of the renters. The English administration did not at first mitigate the evils of the *sayer* collection; they aggravated these evils on the other hand by erecting *chaukies* or customs-stations in the vicinity of each one of their factories and by including other small and vexatious taxes known as *molurpha* which consisted of imposts on houses, or implements of agriculture, on looms, on merchants and artificers and on certain other professions and castes.

Besides the zamindari lands, some were under the direct management of Government, usually called *havelli* land. It originally consisted of the demesne land of the Circar and was composed of districts in the vicinity of each headquarters town, having been annexed to them for the supply of their garrisons and numerous establishments. Some of the *havelli* lands had been taken from the zamindari tracts; and large additions were subsequently made to them after the English occupation, on account of

the forfeiture of zamindari tracts for rebellion or other misconduct.

In these lands Government possessed the right to a certain portion of the crops after making the necessary deductions for the use of the temples and for other local objects. The Company at first rented the *havelli* lands to individuals known as *dubashes* who were stewards to the English Provincial Councils and Factories. The *sayer* duties in these areas were also farmed out either to *dubashes* or to others under separate leases. Government monopolised for themselves the sea and land customs collected at the different ports and the exclusive rights of manufacture and trade in salt, arrack, betel-nut and tobacco. These were also farmed and licensed out annually, with the general exception of import and export duties. The greatest evils both in the *havelli* and zamindari lands were the improper alienation of rights and the collection of *ressooms* and *perquisites*.

The village communities retained their old organization of the *patel*, the *karnam* who kept the registers and accounts of cultivation, the boundary man who preserved the limits of the village and gave evidence in cases of dispute, the *taliari* and the *totee* and the superintendent of tanks and water-courses. Rent-free lands known as *maniam* were given to these. 'These rents were paid by the heads of the village in money or kind; and the villagers were seldom troubled in the smooth course of their existence, except when the Zamindar's peons might make their appearance to demand more money . . .'<sup>1</sup> There were many misappropriations of land or the acquisition of it under fictitious tenures by Zamindars and by renters even in the *Havelli* lands. In many cases the zamindars had usurped the judicial powers that were formerly exercised by the *amaldars* and *taujars*. The duties of the police were generally performed by the revenue servants and the military peons of the zamindars and the renters' peons and servants. The towns had a distinct establishment of *kotwals* and peons; but these were merely local and not connected with the general police of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> This view is not fully correct, except with reference to the more settled coastal and deltaic tracts.—H. Morris, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Godavary District* (1878), p. 247.

(To be continued)