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THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT AND THE LANDED  
INTERESTS IN BENGAL, FROM 1793 TO 1819

b y

Muhammed Sirajul Islam


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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study, which consists of eight chapters, is upon the changes in the structure of the landed society of Bengal under the operation of the Permanent Settlement. We have changes which occurred in the powers and privileges of the landed interest, in the ownership of land which was then the basic foundation of the Bengali society, and changes in the methods of estate management and also in the lifestyle of the landed class.

The first, introductory, chapter deals with the scope of this work and of the sources upon which it is based. The second chapter deals with the zamindars' reactions to the various changes in their traditional powers and privileges as brought about by the system of the Permanent Settlement. The third chapter attempts to show how a dozen great families who controlled a little more than half of the landed property of Bengal in terms of the government revenue demand were affected under the operation of the Permanent Settlement. The fourth chapter is devoted to general transfer of land and the fifth chapter looks at the emergence of new landed families consequent upon the collapse of the old under the operation of the sale laws. The sixth chapter, then, examines whether or not any marked changes in the methods of estate management took place as a result of the entry of the new men of capital and enterprise into land.

The seventh chapter attempts to look at the life style of the zamindars with a view to finding whether or not they changed their mode of life in view of their changed positions under the regulations of the Permanent Settlement. Finally, the eighth chapter summarises the important findings of this study.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.S.B.	<u>Asiatic Society of Bengal Journal</u> , Calcutta.
B.P.P.	<u>Bengal: Past and Present</u> , Calcutta.
B.O.R.	Board of Revenue.
B.O.R.P.	Board of Revenue Proceedings.
B.R.C.	Bengal Revenue Consultations.
C.D.	Court of Directors.
C.O.W.	Court of Wards.
<b>C.O.W.P.</b>	<b>Court of Wards Proceedings.</b>
C.J.P.	Civil and Judicial Proceedings.
C.R.	<u>Calcutta Review</u> , Calcutta.
Ec.H.R.	<u>Economic History Review</u> , London.
E.H.R.	<u>English Historical Review</u> , London.
H.Misc.S.	Home Miscellaneous Series.
G.G.in C.	Governor General in Council.
I.H.C.P.	<u>Indian History Congress, Proceedings</u> , Allahabad.
I.J.E.	<u>Indian Journal of Economics</u> , Allahavad
I.O.R.	India Office Records.
M.R.	<u>Modern Review</u> , Allahabad.
P.R.	Personal Records.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The permanent zamindari settlement in Bengal was doubtless the greatest land-mark in the history of Bengal. This settlement created for the first time property in land and also a propertied class in the zamindars and some other landed interests who were hitherto considered to be merely hereditary agents of government for the collection of rents or revenues from the ryots. There were strong political and economic motives behind the Permanent Settlement. Politically, it was considered that the confirmation of the hereditary land collecting agents as the sole proprietors of land and perpetually fixed government demands on them would bind the landholders to the government which had granted, and which alone would maintain, so great a privilege.<sup>1</sup> Economically it was expected that the Permanent Settlement would encourage the investment of capital in land and, therefore, the growth of a middle class; that it would lead to more lenient and considerate treatment of the tenants by the landlords, and would thus promote general prosperity.

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<sup>1</sup>See, T. Law, A Sketch of some late arrangements and a view of the rising resources in Bengal, para. 18, p.63; E. Colebrook's Minute, 20 January 1808, paras. 37-9; Minto Papers, M338 (no pagination); G.W.Pedder, "The Historical Development of the different Settlements Systems of India", The Times, 7 April 1883. p.6, col. 4.

That, an increase of commercial and agricultural wealth would lead to the increased ability of the population to contribute to general taxations which would compensate the government's sacrifice of a prospective increase of stand land revenue.<sup>1</sup>

It is not however the intention of the present study to investigate whether or not any agrarian revolution, as anticipated by the authors of the Permanent Settlement, took place in the country. What is intended here is to explore the social implications of the system. To be more specific, this study sets out to trace the changes in the structure and constitution of the landed interests under the operation of the Permanent Settlement. The reason for so circumscribing the subject is the universal knowledge that no kind of agrarian revolution ever took place in Bengal consequent upon the system and in the absence of that much-talked of revolution the social significance of the system has seemed to have appeared now as more prominent.  
~~prominent~~ The elaborate executive and judicial systems that were constructed to make the system work introduced an

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<sup>1</sup>See, G.G. in C. to C.D. 12 April 1790, para. 3  
General Revenue Letter, E/4/38.

G.G. in C. to C.D. 19 September 1792, para. 46, General Revenue Letter, E/4/638, p. 792.

~~C.D. C.~~ to ~~C.C.~~ 6 March 1793, para. 17, General Revenue Letter E/4/52.



unprecedented social fluidity. In the context of that background, this study will investigate the changes in the structure, character and habits of the landed interests during the first twenty-five years of the operation of the Permanent Settlement.

The expression landed interests in the phraseology of the nineteenth century social historians contained a large variety of occupational groups such as the zamindars or landlords, chaudhuris or independent proprietors like zamindars but inferior to them in territorial possessions though not in rank and status, taluqdars or possessors of grants, patnidars or perpetual leaseholders, jotedars or great cultivators with special privileges, kutkindars or revenue farmers and lastly the ryots or ordinary cultivators. Each of the above interests, especially the taluqdars, patnidars and ryots, had a bewildering number of inner interests possessing various customary rights and liabilities in relation to their superior interests. Nobody has ever known all the tenorial varieties that existed in every district of Bengal. From the acquisition of the diwani to the abolition of the zamindari system many men and institutions had tried to ascertain the puzzling rights and liabilities of all grades of landed interests. But none had ever succeeded in giving us a fuller knowledge of the land

system of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The scope of this study however has been strictly, as has been stated earlier, confined to the social positions of the landed interests without becoming entangled with the controversy of land rights. Again, the topic has been further restricted only to those upper strata of the landed interests on whom proprietary rights were conferred by the system of the Permanent Settlement and, for this newly created proprietary class, the term zamindar has been used throughout in the text to denote only the embodiment of the system rather than to distinguish the zamindars from all other groups as regards their rights and liabilities. At first it was intended to make a general survey of all the landed interests. But subsequently it was discovered that two other works covering the same period and dealing with almost the same subject as this one were in progress, one at Oxford and the other at Cambridge universities. Mr. S. Ahmed from Oxford is still investigating the life of the peasantry and Mrs. R. Ray from Cambridge is enquiring into social changes in Bengal through

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<sup>1</sup>About the complicated land tenures and land revenue system J.W.Kaye wrote: "The land revenue of India is a very large subject. A man of more than ordinary intelligence may confess, without discredit, that after thirty years study he but imperfectly comprehends it, in all its bearings and relations. I know very few men who have attained to anything beyond this imperfect comprehension. It is a subject on which volumes might be written without exhausting it, and on which volumes, indeed, have been written, only to leave it as obscure as before." The Administration of the East India Company; A history of Indian Progress, p.162.

mutation of landed property. So in order to avoid as far as possible overlapping the area of work, this work has been contracted into the narrowest possible compass of proprietary class only.

The terminal dates for the core of this work and for most of the statistical data are 1793, the year when the Permanent Settlement was proclaimed, and 1819, the year when the patni tenure or system of subinfeudation was legalised by the government. In examining the attitudes of mind and behaviour patterns, however, the time range is extended where necessary back into the 1770s and on into the 1830s. If treated with some flexibility, the period from 1793 to 1819 forms a very satisfactory unit of time for historical purposes. In several respects the last decade of the eighteenth and the first two decades of the nineteenth centuries were historically significant as a period of innovation and change. The greatest landmark, to begin with, for the history of modern Bengal, was the Permanent Settlement which laid the foundation of the British administrative system in India. The operation of the Permanent Settlement put the whole society in a state of flux. The official ideology behind the Permanent Settlement was to bring about an agrarian revolution in the country by introducing a competitive land market which it was hoped would bring automatic changes in the structure and habits of the landed class for the

better.<sup>1</sup> This ideological pattern and the measures designed to freeze the traditional social structure introduced an environment in which families were moving up and down in the social and economic scale at a faster rate than at any time either before or after the Permanent Settlement. The year 1819 was another land-mark for the socio-economic history of Bengal. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the Raja of Burdwan originated a peculiar land tenure called the patni system. He perpetually let his zamindari to thousands of leaseholders called patni taluqdars at fixed rent. His footsteps were quickly followed by other landholders of Bengal. By 1819 the patni tenure became so complicated a system that in some places the zamindars were removed from the actual cultivators by several degrees of patnidars. The patnidars created dar-patnidars or patnidars of the second degree, and dar-patnidars again created se-patnidars or third degree patnidars and so on. In some places there were patnidars even of ninth or tenth degrees. At last the Government was compelled to pass a legislation called Patni Act in 1819, which confirmed all these mushrooming tenures as legal institutions. Hence so far as the fortunes of the landed interests are concerned the period from

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<sup>1</sup>See, R. Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, pp. 105-7.

1793 to 1819 constitutes an ideal unit of time.

It is odd that such a study should so long have remained unattempted, since for about two hundred years the zamindars ruled society by virtue of their absolute ownership of land and played a tremendously important role in the making of Bengal's social and economic structure as we find it today. This neglect can partly be explained by the character of research into Indian history in the past two generations which for this period had concerned itself mainly with the history of nationalism, community and communal relations, lives and times of the viceroys, governors and other celebrated personalities. Another reason for the relative neglect of a study of this nature is that materials upon which such a study could be based are simply not available. Unlike the English landlords who carefully preserved their estate accounts on the basis of which so many monographs and general books have been written so far, the Bengali zamindars had never cared to preserve their records after the expiration of their use. A few families who kept their accounts failed to protect them against the attacks of time and climate. Without such family records it is literally impossible to seek out the details of the activities, character and thoughts of the zamindars who were doubtless the principal characters of Bengal's social drama and without which



such a study must suffer from serious pitfalls, inasmuch as private characters and thoughts will have to be analysed on the basis of public records which are again scanty. Besides character studies, one has to face insuperable difficulties if he wants to make an attempt to study the economic position of the zamindars. A full understanding of their economic position and of changes that occurred<sup>n</sup> in that position demands accurate data about the gross and net incomes of each individual at various points of time. Armed with such information it would be possible to work out the total income of a particular group of zamindars, the mean income, and the distribution pattern, and to compare these three at ten or fifteen year intervals. But the path is obscured by the virtual absence of records.

The existing published works which directly or indirectly dealt with the system of the Permanent Settlement and its effects on the zamindars and the society as a whole may be grouped into three classes, such as official publications, general books written by the older writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries and, lastly, more recent works of modern writers. The most outstanding of many official publications were Francis Buchanan's A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Dinajpur, James Taylor's A Sketch of the Topography of Dacca, F.G. Glazier's Further Notes on the Rangpur Records, James

Westland's A Report on the District of Jessore, H.J.S.Cotton's Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, D.J.McNeile's Memorandum on the Revenue Administration in the Lower Provinces of Bengal and W.W.Hunter's (ed.) A Statistical Account of Bengal. Each of the above district reports had devoted at least one chapter to the system of the Permanent Settlement and its operation.

The works of the nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, which either partly or wholly dealt with the Permanent Settlement are a great many, but the number of books impartially written on the basis of the original sources is really very few. Among these few books, Baden Powell's Land Systems of British India in three volumes is undoubtedly the most comprehensive and authoritative. In the first volume, the author elaborately discussed the different revenue experiments including the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. But, as the main aim of his treatise was to describe the problems of revenue administration and analyse its gradual growth, his treatment of social problems that arose in consequence of revenue experiments was either sketchy or nil. H.H.Hollingbury's Zemindary Settlement of Bengal, in two volumes, was anonymously published in 1879. Hollingbury, an Indian Civil Servant, ostensibly wrote this book in order to influence authorities in India as well as in Britain to curb the zamindari powers and privileges. He put

forward his arguments against the Permanent Settlement with the help of endless quotations from the revenue and judicial records, parliamentary papers, pamphlets, newspapers, minutes of administrators carefully avoiding all observations in favour of the Permanent Settlement. If anybody wants to compile all the comments of the administrators and writers hostile to the Permanent Settlement, then Hollingbury's is the best reference. Justice C.D.Field's Landholding, and the relation of the Landlord and Tenant in various Countries, was another book which was based on the original sources, but again written with pure reformist zeal. He painstakingly analysed the historical relation between the zamindars and the ryots and then he proceeded to show how <sup>the</sup> their traditional relationship had changed since 1793 and how the ryots were ultimately turned into mere tenants at will. He took to the land systems of various other countries in Europe in order to persuade the government to bring about such changes in the land system as would be necessary to fit it with the land systems of other civilised countries. The introductory volume of W.W.Hunter's Bengal MS Records published in 1894, in four volumes, is by far the best book published in the nineteenth century so far as the interests of the present study are concerned. On the basis of the old collectorate records, he described how both the zamindars

and the ryots suffered when the Permanent Settlement was put into operation.

Among the early twentieth century publications only two are worth mentioning. These are F.D.Ascoli's Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report, 1812, and W.K.Firminger's (ed.) The Fifth Report, 1812, in three volumes. Both of these books were published in 1917. Ascoli superintended the survey operations in Eastern Bengal from 1910 to 1915. In course of his survey operations he came across a great many old local revenue records on the basis of which he delivered a series of lectures at the Dacca College, and subsequently these lectures were compiled and published by the Oxford University Press in 1917. Ascoli was the first historian to state that the zamindars of Bengal did not accept the Permanent Settlement in the form in which it was offered to them. They offered stiff resistance to the operation of the Permanent Settlement until their grievances were redressed.<sup>1</sup> He, of course, formed his judgment on the basis of Dacca records only. His path has been carefully followed in all other districts and his view has been confirmed in the chapter immediately following. Firminger's Fifth Report is bound to remain forever as a source book as well as a standard text book. Of the more recent works, the

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<sup>1</sup>F.D.Ascoli, Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report, 1812, pp. 74-78.

most important are N.K.Sinha's Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement, volume two, and R.Guha's Rule of Property for Bengal. The former was first published in 1962 and the latter in 1963. N.K.Sinha's book has devoted full three chapters to the Permanent Settlement and its effects. But the monograph which has rendered the greatest help to the present study is R. Guha's Rule of Property for Bengal. His elaborate treatment of the origin and development of the idea of the Permanent Settlement has made it possible for the present work to start right from the operation of the Permanent Settlement without resorting to an introductory chapter giving the background of the system. Within the compass of an article titled "Permanent Settlement in Operation: Bakarganj District, East Bengal", Tapan Raychaudhuri attempted to delineate the operation of the system in just one district.<sup>1</sup> But the source materials that he used in writing this article are surely not so strong in their originality as is his own commonsense and imagination. He based his arguments mainly on the gazetteer and settlement reports and on his own personal experience as a scion of a former zamindar family.

In writing this thesis it has become inevitable in the absence of zamindari records to depend on other sources such

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<sup>1</sup>See, R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, pp. 163-74.



as administrative evidence, the reports, letters, memoranda etc. These are all preserved in the India Office Library under the general title, 'Bengal Proceedings'. The sources which have been most lavishly used in this study are the Board of Revenue Proceedings, Bengal Revenue Consultations (Miscellaneous), Civil and Judicial Proceedings, Court of Ward Proceedings, General Revenue Correspondence, i.e. correspondence between the Governor General in Council and the Court of Directors, Home Miscellaneous Series. These have been supplemented by contemporary writings, parliamentary reports, newspaper reports, literature, pamphlets, and private papers.

What follows now is an attempt on the basis of the above records to explore the landholders' attitude towards the system of the Permanent Settlement and also to look into the impact of the system on the structure and constitution of the landed society.

Chapter Two

THE ZAMINDARS' REACTION TO THE  
POLICY OF THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

In spite of the great mass of writings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, one question has not yet been asked. That is, did the zamindars enthusiastically accept the Permanent Settlement in its original form as proclaimed by Cornwallis on 22 March 1793? Such a question has not been posed presumably because of the axiomatic assumption that, as the settlement had created a privileged class in the Zamindars, the latter, as obvious beneficiaries, could not but have welcomed the action of Cornwallis. This chapter, however, will now raise that question, and in answering, it will try to show that the detailed terms, though not the principles, of the Permanent Settlement utterly disappointed the Zamindars of Bengal, so that their initial reaction was to resist the smooth operation of the new system until their grievances were redressed.

The constitutional position of the Zamindars in 1793, an understanding of which is essential if we are to chart the course of the conflict between them and the Government, was defined in the Regulations I of 1793, VIII of 1793 and XVII of 1793.

In the original Regulations for the decennial settlement

of the public revenues of Bengal on the 18 September 1789, it was notified to the proprietors of land that the jama or revenue assessed upon the lands under the decennial regulations would be continued after the expiration of the ten years, and remain unalterable for ever, provided such continuance should meet with the confirmation of the Court of Directors.<sup>1</sup> The Court, however, approved of the scheme of the Permanent Settlement and empowered Marquis Cornwallis to "declare the jumma, which has been, or may be assessed upon their lands under the Regulations, above mentioned, fixed for ever."<sup>2</sup> The Governor General in Council accordingly proclaimed on 23 March 1793 that "at the expiration of the term of the settlement, no alteration<sup>3</sup> will be made in the assessment which they have respectively engaged to pay, but that they, and their heirs and lawful successors, will be allowed to hold their estates at such assessment for ever".<sup>3</sup> But in return for the benefits which the landholders would derive from the permanently fixed revenue demand, they were required to observe the following rules and restrictions:

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<sup>1</sup>Proclamation Article 1, Section 2, Regulation 1, 1793. See R. Clarke, The Regulations of the Government of Fort William, vol. I, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Proclamation Article 2, Section 3, Regulation 1, 1793. See R Clarke, loc.cit.

<sup>3</sup>Proclamation Article 3, Section 4, Regulation 1, 1793. See R. Clarke, vol. I, p.2.

That in future the landholders would have no right to claim for suspension or remission of revenues on account of drought, inundation or other natural calamity, but that in event of any landholder "failing in the punctual discharge of the public revenue..., a sale of the whole of the lands of the defaulter, or such portion of them as may be sufficient to make good the arrear, will positively and invariably take place".<sup>1</sup>

It was laid down that the Zamindars would have no legal right to "distrain or sell the lands, houses or other real property of their under farmers and ryots, or the talookdars paying revenue through them".<sup>2</sup>

The Zamindars were also prohibited from distraining ploughs, seed grains, implements of husbandry and the cattle actually trained to the plough.<sup>3</sup>

It was then enacted that the zamindars must withdraw the attachment of the defaulters' property if they preferred to contest the distrainers' demands in the courts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Proclamation Article VI, Sec. 7, Reg. I, 1793. See Clarke, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 3, Reg. VII, 1793. See Clarke, p.151.

<sup>3</sup>Sec. 4, Reg. XVII, 1793. See Clarke, p.151.

<sup>4</sup>Sec. 9, Reg. XVII, 1793. See Clarke, p.152.

Landholders were strictly prohibited from confining or inflicting corporal punishment on any defaulting tenant or dependent taluqdar to enforce the payment of arrears of their demands. "If any landholder or farmer shall offend against this prohibition, the person so punished or confined shall be at liberty either to prosecute the offender for assault or imprisonment in the criminal Court, or to institute a suit against him in the dewany adawlut of the zillah, which court shall award damages against such offender, according to the circumstances of the case, with costs of suits."<sup>1</sup>

It was prescribed that no proprietor would "impose any new abwab or mahtoot upon the ryots under any pretence whatever. Every exaction of this nature shall be punished by a penalty equal to three times the amount imposed".<sup>2</sup>

With a view to eliminating existing confusion and uncertainty in consequence of manifold impositions on the ryots the zamindars were enjoined to issue pattas in which they would have to specifically state the exact sum to be paid by the ryots.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sec. 28, Reg. XVII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.156.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 55, Reg. VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, The Regulations of the Bengal Government Respecting Zemindary and Lakharaj Property, p.27.

<sup>3</sup>Clause 1, Sec. 57, Reg. VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.27.

It was also made obligatory on the part of the zamindars to register the counterfoils of the forms of pattas in the district courts.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it was enacted that under the system of the Permanent Settlement, the zamindars would have to abdicate their traditional overlordship over the talugdars who, hitherto, paid their revenues to government through their mediation. Henceforth all independent talugdars and some other categories of talugdars who were entitled to independence according to justice were ordered to be separated from the jurisdiction of the zamindars.<sup>2\*</sup>

Thus, the Permanent Settlement gave the zamindars the benefit of a permanently fixed assessment of government demand, but in return took away many powers previously enjoyed by them. Whatever may have been the philosophy and policy behind the Permanent Settlement, the zamindars could scarcely reconcile themselves to the idea that, under the new system, they were to lose all their traditional powers and privileges, powers which were a source not only of additional means but also of their social status and

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<sup>1</sup>Sec. 58, Reg. VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.27.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 5, Reg. VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, pp. 16-17.

\*All these rules were enacted in September 1789 as the bases of the decennial settlement. These were re-enacted in 1793 as Regulations I, VIII and XVII. Hence the zamindars' reaction to these rules must be sought from the introduction of the decennial settlement in 1790, rather than from 1793.

authority yet, at the same time, the zamindars were firmly told that, in future, no clemency would be shown should they default in their revenue payments to government, whatever the cause, natural calamity included. Rather, they would find their lands "positively and invariably" brought to sale for such a default.

The zamindars reacted violently against such a constitution. The new fixed assessment and the absolute ownership of land conferred on them by the new constitution scarcely reconciled them to its passage. On the first point they could hardly place much trust on the promise that the government demand on them would remain fixed forever. Their past experience made them too sceptical to believe in such an assurance. As late as 1802, The Collector of Mymensing<sup>g</sup> reported that, "he had not met with any landholder whom he could persuade of the permanency of such settlement and he knew that Mr. Tufton when collector here laboured but in vain to convince them of it, ..." <sup>1</sup> And as for the second privilege, they did not remember when they had not enjoyed absolute ownership in practice, whatever the theory. What did vitally concern them was the likelihood that the new constitution would enable them to keep their estates permanently in their own families. This was what really mattered, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Mymensing<sup>g</sup> Collector to Lord Wellesley, 9 January 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 106, para. 10, pp. 147-57.

clause which threatened them with the automatic sale of their land in case of default was what just caught their eye.

Under the circumstances, their natural reaction was to resist the smooth operation of the new system so as to save themselves from ruin. Such resistance, of course, did not take the shape of anorganised movement on their part to overthrow British rule or even to compel the government to introduce an alternative system of their own choice. As small groups or as individuals their resistance took the form of petitions, obstructions, defiance of laws, collusion and frauds, all of which aimed at neutralising the effects of the restrictive regulations and at making the government revenue so insecure and uncertain as ultimately to force the government to accede to their demands. Their main demands were for remissions of government demand on them at times of natural calamities, reductions of assessment, discontinuation of the policy of separation of taluqas and of the patta rules and, above all, for the restoration of their traditional coercive powers over their tenants. How far did they succeed in achieving their goals? According to Holt Mackenzie, the holder of many high revenue and judicial posts during the period under survey, the zamindars had been "very successful in their resistance to all such measures", stated above.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holt Mackenzie's evidence, 18 April, 1832. P.P. S.C., H.C., 1831-2, vol. II, evidence p. 221, Q. No. 2632.



Remission Question

The Court of Director's despatch of 12 April 1786, which laid down the guiding principles of a durable and permanent system of revenue administration directed the Government to abandon the policy of arbitrary increases of revenue that resulted in a huge amount of balances and defalcations every year in the past with all their attending evils to the country and to the Company.<sup>1</sup> The Court advised, "It is highly desirable to establish a revenue system, that may not be subject to these great annual defalcations. We are sensible to the zeal of our servants in endeavouring at various times, since we have possessed the Dewanee to effect an augmentation of Land Revenue. At the same time it would be bad policy in us to swell that article beyond its just and reasonable bounds."<sup>2</sup> The letter emphasised that future assessments should be moderate and fixed and when it was fixed, the court said, "no plea should be left for abatements, and remissions, but we are also sensible that cases may occur, where a zamindar has actually fallen in arrears from some peculiar calamity of a local nature; and that it may then be advisable to grant him a temporary respite of a portion

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<sup>1</sup>C.D. to G. G. in C., 12 April 1786, ADD.MSS.12571, Wellesley Papers, paras. 23-24, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., para. 29, p.10.

of his fixed revenue, instead of compelling him to complete his engagement by money borrowed at a heavy interest."<sup>1</sup> But Cornwallis went further. For the sake of absolute certainty and security of public revenue he laid down, contrary to the Court's suggestion, that the zamindars would be bound to pay their stipulated amount of revenue punctually regardless of any natural or other calamity. The decennial engagement required the undertaking from the zamindars that they would "claim no remission from their Jumma, ... on account of drought, inundation, encroachments and depredations of rivers, death or flight of their ryots, ..." <sup>2</sup>

It was expected by the Government that the zamindars would derive so much benefit from the new system and their profits would be so enlarged that "the deficiencies of bad seasons would on the whole be more than counterbalanced by the fruits of favourable years."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the Government wanted to make it absolutely clear to the zamindars that henceforth, the Government would remain satisfied with the fixed revenue and would neither make any claim upon the future profits

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., para. 34, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Kabuleat or engagement of the Raja of Rajshahi, para. 4, enclosed with collector's letter 16. Aug. 1791, B.R.C., 2 Sept. 1791, No. 11, pp. P52/37.

<sup>3</sup> T. Law, Correspondence of the Honourable Court of Directors of the East India Company and of the Governor General in Council respecting the Permanent Settlement of Land revenue, p.16.

of the zamindars now would be ready to bear any losses incurred by them.

The zamindars tried to persuade the authorities that the idea of immediate improvement in the country's agrarian economy in consequence of the very fixation of the public revenue was illusory and that natural conditions would make such a rigid system unworkable. Then the zamindars of Chittagong jointly protested that the local peculiarities there were such that without occasional remissions or abatements, cultivation was impossible. They pointed out that the crops in Chittagong, which were mainly produced in the coastal areas, were frequently exposed to cyclonic storms and to destructive flooding with salt water on the one hand, and to the ravages of elephants from the hills, on the other.<sup>1</sup> Besides, they argued that unlike other districts, no extension of agriculture in Chittagong was possible without the payment of extra revenue. Because all waste lands, according to an injunction of Hastings' era, belonged to the estate of Joynaryan Ghoshal, a banian of Harry Verelst, from whom taluqdari p~~o~~ltas had to be secured before any such land could be brought under the plough.<sup>2</sup> Demanding remission on account of natural calamities, they concluded their

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<sup>1</sup>Combined Memorandum from the Zamindars of Chittagong, 29 April 1790. Quoted in H.J.S.Cotton, Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, p.69.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

memorandum thus: "If anything conducive to our future prosperity be written in the book of fate, our complaint will doubtless be attended to; if not, the dead are always at the disposal of the living."<sup>1</sup> The zamindars of the 24 Parganas, on the other hand, did not beg for justice like the Chittagong zamindars. Instead, they concertedly boycotted the decennial settlement because of the no-remission clause.<sup>2</sup> Such a policy was ruinous for them because the district of the 24 Parganas, though fertile, was periodically devastated by the furies of the Damudhar river. Their firm stand compelled the Board to recommend to the Council a relaxation of the rigid remission authorised to assure them that in the event of any serious calamity arising either from inundation, drought, or other cause which might render the assessment of their lands immoderate, the circumstances of their situation would be duly attended to by Government,<sup>3</sup> and this the Council approved.<sup>3</sup> But in spite of this assurance from the Council, the zamindars refused to engage unless the undertaking was withdrawn from the engagement form altogether. They said, "should we execute such

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Collector of the 24 Parganas to B.O.R., 17 Nov. 1791, B.R.C., 23 Nov. 1791, No. 72, P52/37.

<sup>3</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 18 Nov. 1791, para 2, B.R.C., 23 Nov. 1791, No. 71, P52/37.

deed it will involve us in the utmost difficulty, and ultimately must inevitably prove our ruin". They continued, "We are required to enter into engagements stating that without murmur or any plea on account of drought or inundation, whether from too much rain, or the banks of rivers being overflowed, desertion or death of ryots, etc., we shall bind ourselves to pay our compleat revenue; this we can by no means agree to."<sup>1</sup> The Collector requested sanction to punish those audacious zamindars for disobedience to the Council's orders.<sup>2</sup> But the Council, disapproving, preferred to offer assurances to the zamindars for the second time.<sup>3</sup> At last they agreed to engage, though the undertaking was still included in the bond. That their trust was well placed and that Council intended faithfully to adhere to its promise, even though the no-remission clause was theoretically renewed in the Proclamation of the Permanent Settlement, was proved by subsequent grants of remission at times of calamities, though the amount given by way of relief was usually below the actual losses. The Raja of Nadia, for example, claimed that he lost lakhs of rupees on account of a devastating drought in 1793, but the amount of

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<sup>1</sup>24-Pargana zamindars' petition, B.R.C., 16 March 1792, No. 26, P52/42.

<sup>2</sup>24-Pargana Collector to B.O.R., 29 Feb. 1792, B.R.C., 16 March '92, No. 26, P52/42.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 16 March 1792, No. 27, B.R.C., 16 March 1792, No. 27, P52/42.

suspension he got amounted to only Rs. 67954.<sup>1</sup> In order to raise the government relief to the level of actual losses, the zamindars often gave false returns. The Raja of Burdwan, for example, demanded a suspension of public revenue amounting to twelve thousand rupees on account of a drought in one of his Parganas in Bishnapur. He gave to the collector a list of ryots to whom he granted suspension of their rents. But on verification the collector found that many ryots in the Raja's suspension list had already paid their full rents. Fourteen persons admitted that the Raja's officers collected from them even excess rents.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Decennial Assessment

No detailed investigation into the resources of the zamindari estates was undertaken before fixing their decennial jama. The Court of Directors believed that under the various plans tried out since 1765, adequate information as to the resources of the country had been acquired: "much could not still remain unexplored".<sup>3</sup> They also held that further local scrutinies would be "open to numberless objections".<sup>4</sup> Not

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<sup>1</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O R., 2 Feb. 1793, B.R.C., 22 Feb. 1793, No. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 6 April 1792, B.R.C., 20 April '92, No. 25, para. 3.

<sup>3</sup>C.D. to G.G. in C., 12 April 1786, General Revenue Letter, para. 44, P14/630.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

wishing to undertake new local enquiries, the Court therefore suggested that the Bengal Government should strike out an average of the assessment from 1772 to 1786 and use this as the basis for the decennial settlement.<sup>1</sup> Cornwallis further simplified this formula by making the jama of the previous year the basis, subject to the departure from this information about resources, diminution of assets and other factors which, if ignored, may be a disadvantage either for the public revenue or for the zamindars.<sup>2</sup> To this mode of proceeding J. Shore, the most experienced revenue expert and the President of the Board of Revenue, however, objected. According to him the Government's knowledge respecting the real resources of the country was still grossly imperfect and because of that imperfect knowledge, the distribution of assessment between different estates in a district was sure to be unequal.<sup>3</sup> Faced with the prospect of further delay and uncertainty which Shore opened up, the Court of Directors plumped finally for the contrary views of Cornwallis whose two minutes of 18 September 1789 and 3 February 1790, about assessment and Permanent Settlement

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Bengal Special Orders, B.R.C., 23 Nov. 1791, No. 66, para. 1, P52/37.

<sup>3</sup>Shore and Cornwallis' views are summarised in the Court's letter to G.G. in C., 19 Sept. 1792, p. 769, E/4/638.

were commended by the Court "as two very valuable records, written with enlarged and just views, upon the soundest principles of policy, with perfect fairness, great acquaintance with the subject, and the most conclusive reasoning in favour of a permanent assessment."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the assessment of the preceding year, that is of 1789-90, was made the basis of the decennial settlement. In that year, the net jama of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, including sayer or internal custom duties, had amounted to twenty five crores and nine lakhs of rupees.<sup>2</sup> The decennial settlement, despite the deduction of sayer revenues, which had recently been abolished, was still made at twenty five crores and eight lakh of rupees.<sup>3</sup> But the sayer revenues, collected and paid by the zamindars, it should be noted, had amounted to some ten lakhs of rupees.<sup>4</sup> The revenue demand upon them was thus, in reality, raised by some nine lakhs of rupees above the basic level proposed by the Court.

The Government's deficit of nine lakhs of rupees in consequence of the abolition of the sayer duties, was made up by

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.775.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.710.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 709-710.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.711.



a new imposition called rasad. This was a progressive increase on the original decennial assessment which was to last for three years from the beginning of the decennial settlement. The amount of assessment in the last year of the payment of rasad was to be the revenue fixed for ever. For example, the Burdwan zamindari was originally settled at S.R.29,66207 in 1791.<sup>1</sup> The amount of rasad upon this sum was S.R.50,000 in the first year, S.R.100,000 in the second, and S.R.1,50,000 in the third year. Thus three lakhs of rupees were to be the basic decennial figure of S.R.29,66,207.<sup>2</sup> So the perpetual jama of the Burdwan zamindari stood at S.R.32,66,207 which meant about ten per cent increase upon the basic decennial jama of the zamindari. It may be noted here that the deduction that the Raja of Burdwan got on account of sayar abolished also amounted to three lakhs of rupees, that is equal to the amount of rasad. Sometimes rasad was far less than the sayar deduction. Raja of Nadia, for example, got a sayar deduction of thirty nine thousand rupees, but his total rasad was only ten thousand rupees.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, it far exceeded the sayar deduction. For example, the Raja of Rajshahi got the sayar

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<sup>1</sup>B.R.C., 24 June 1791, No. 1, P52/32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>B.R.C., 28 October 1791, No. 4, P52/36.

deduction amounting to seventy six thousand rupees, but his rasad amounted to two lakhs and twenty five thousand rupees.<sup>1</sup> Though there was considerable variation in the rate of rasad at individual level, the average revenue demand upon a district was mostly higher than that of the basic year, 1789-9). This will be manifest in the following four examples:<sup>2</sup>

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Jama in</u> <u>1789-90</u>	<u>Permanent</u> <u>Jama</u>
<i>Birbhum</i>	9,98,028	10,31,848
Dinajpur	16,14,499	16,57,268
Jessore	7,85,476	7,88,888
Murshidabad	14,26,210	14,40,106

Thus, as a result of the rasad policy, the decennial assessment became the ever highest demand, ever made before excluding sayar and this the Governor General in Council boastfully reported to the Court.<sup>3</sup> The Court of Directors showed no concern, but rather expressed their pleasure that the enhanced assessment would be sufficient "not only for all the exigencies of government but for the gradual extinction of our debts abroad

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<sup>1</sup>Shore's minute on the Rajshahi Raj, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 5.

<sup>2</sup>N.K.Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, vol. II, p.157.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 10 Aug. 1791, para. 16, E/4/50.

at the same time".<sup>1</sup> It sounds as if the assessment was fixed according to the needs of the Government rather than according to zamindars' ability to pay. As will be seen later the Government did succeed in securing its full pound of flesh in the years which followed the decennial settlement. The question is, however, what was the state of the body from which it was taken.

That question has two aspects, first, were the zamindars of 1793 capable as a whole of paying what in practice was the ever highest assessment, and secondly, how equitably had the assessment been distributed among the zamindars? The first question was rightly answered by N.K.Sinha who said, "In the year 1793 this was not a moderate Jumma. Government perhaps felt that it could not afford to be moderate in its demand as land-revenue was its principal financial resource, overassessment was not an incident. It became a principle."<sup>2</sup> All accounts suggest that the economic condition of the zamindars had been deteriorating fast, especially since the great famine of 1769-70.<sup>3</sup> Government's frantic search for higher and higher revenues from the grant of the diwani onwards, had allowed the country to be "drained by farmers, or by the Tahsildars, sezawals,

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in G.G. in C. to C.D., General Rev. Letter, 19 Sept. 1792, para. 17, E14/638.

<sup>2</sup>N.K.Sinha, p.157.

<sup>3</sup>See H. Misc. , vol. 206, pp. 197-207.

and ameens of Government, none of whom had any permanent interest in its prosperity; the zemindars were discontented; many of them deprived of their lands, overwhelmed by debts, or reduced to beggery, ..."<sup>1</sup> By the time of the Permanent Settlement, the landholders had become so indigent that in Colebrooke's words, "any calamity, any accident, even a delay in his recoveries, may involve a zemindar in difficulties from which no economy nor attention can retrieve him."<sup>2</sup>

The decennial assessment of 1790, which was made permanently fixed in 1793, was not only unbearably high in the context of the economic conditions of the zamindars at that time, but also highly unequal in its distribution. "In some cases the assessment on their property was very moderate, in others it was almost extortionate; in many cases engagements were entered into for lands that had no existence, or for lands that were included in other estates".<sup>3</sup> In the absence of any survey or registers, and owing to the confusion in, and subsequent abolition of the Kanungo's office, it was an impossibility for the Collector to examine in detail the returns filed by the myriads of small

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<sup>1</sup>C.D. to G.G. in C., General Revenue Letter, 12 April 1786, para. 22, p.339, E/4/630.

<sup>2</sup>W.H. Colebrook, Remarks on the Present State of Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal, p.90.

<sup>3</sup>F.D. Ascoli, Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report, p.73.

landholders. His main efforts were "directed towards maintaining the amounts of the assessment of the previous year without examining its distribution - an examination which was impossible in view of the enormous number of separations of taluks from the parent estates."<sup>1</sup>

In protest against the unequal distribution of jama hundreds of petty zamindars of Dacca deserted their estates and many more refused to engage.<sup>2</sup> The magnitude of the problem can be well gauged by a glance at the following table indicating the number of proprietors who refused to engage:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>F.D.Ascoli, p.73.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 25 April 1794, B.R.C., 25 April 1794, No. 10, para. 9, P53/15.

<sup>3</sup>Dacca Collector to B.O.R., 16 April 1795, B.O.R.P., 10 April 1795, No. 11, P72/42.

Table 1

STATEMENT OF PROPRIETORS WHO REFUSED TO ENGAGE IN DACCA

<u>Description of Pargana</u>	<u>No. of estates</u>	<u>Amount of sadar jama S.R.</u>
Pargana Chandradip	1	86,790
" Uttar Savajpur	3	2,247
" Ramnagar	8	16,430
" Mhydipur	11	3,631
Taluqa Sukurullah	3	552
" Krishna Chandra Roy	623	7,025
" Gandhar Chatterji	655	10,305
" Ramkrishna Chatterji	542	8,775
" Durga Das	268	5,001
" Chandra Kanta	65	2,599
" Madari Deo	428	5,482
" Srinarayan Sen	72	4,805
" Gopal Krishna	1,083	22,239
" Ramdhan	137	2,555
" Ramjiban	106	3,287
	<u>4,014</u>	<u>S.R.1,83,324</u>

The total number of estates in Dacca in 1793 stood at 14,500.<sup>1</sup> The blunt refusal to engage by roughly one third of the estates, paying about one fourth of the total revenue of the district amounted to a virtual rebellion against the revenue policy of the authorities. One important reason for such large scale boycott of the decennial settlement was the famine effects of 1788-9. The famine so impoverished the district that it took several generations to recover from its ravages. J. Taylor, a British surgeon, who lived in Dacca from 1787 to 1815 and who personally saw as an independent witness both its immediate and long-run effect on the district wrote that the famine was preceded by drought first and inundation next. "The loss of property occasioned by this famine, appears to have been very great. The zamindars were unable to pay their revenue, and subsequently, from the loss of ryots and cattle, their lands remained uncultivated for a considerable time. Several of the Pergunnahs were deprived of three-fourths of their industrious inhabitants, who died or emigrated, and the lands were in consequence soon overrun with jungle, infested with tigers and hogs."<sup>2</sup> Though some zamindars worsted by the

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<sup>1</sup>F.D.Ascoli, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement operations of Dacca, p.54.

<sup>2</sup>J. Taylor, A Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca, pp. 301-305.

famine got long-term remissions, the average zamindars received little remission after 1790.<sup>1</sup> Hence, while the zamindars were still labouring under the effect of the famine of 1788-9, their acceptance of the decennial offer under its rigid terms was taken to be ruinous for them. Under the circumstances, the government had two possible alternatives. It could either defer the conclusion of the decennial settlement for indefinite period or the unwilling proprietors could be pensioned off by bringing their estates under khas or official management till the expiry of the decennial period in 1800. The government preferred the latter. But the dispossessed proprietors tried their utmost to frustrate such arrangements. Their lathials or clubmen and pykes or armed guards, not only stirred the ryots to commotion, but even beat up the officers of government when they visited the villages to collect the revenues.<sup>2</sup> The government's loss of about four lakhs of rupees in course of four years of the khas management from 1790 indicates the success of their resistance to a great extent. Tippera, as a neighbouring district of Dacca, also suffered considerable losses in consequence of the famine of 1788-9 and there too numerous zamindars were

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<sup>1</sup>Dacca Collector to B.O.R., 31 July 1792, B.O.R.P., 16 January 1795, No. 41, P72/39.

<sup>2</sup>Dacca Collector to B.O.R., 17 Nov. 1796, B.O.R.P., 22 Nov. 1796, No. 26, :



dispossessed. By way of their passive resistance they applied their local influence to make the khas management a failure. The ryots were intimidated into not paying rents to government and into keeping their lands fallow.<sup>1</sup>

The Rangpur zamindars also objected to the decennial assessment policy in the strongest terms. They refused to engage if the assessment was not based on the actual current resources of their estate.<sup>2</sup> They alleged that the resources of the district had much depreciated in recent years, due to the famine of 1788.<sup>3</sup> They also refused to pay any rasad which, they alleged, was based on a quite imaginary prospect of growth in the produce of the country.<sup>4</sup> They succeeded in convincing the collector who strongly recommended that a proper investigation into the resources of the district should precede a settlement.<sup>5</sup> The Council agreeing to his suggestion ordered the cancellation of the previous settlement in favour of a new settlement to be based on the individual capacity of the zamindars.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tipperah Collector to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 15 June 1795, No. 16, P73/11; also see ibid., 23 June, 1795, No. 19, P73/11.

<sup>2</sup>Rangpur Collector to B.O.R., 9 June 1790, B.O R.P., 21 June 1790 (no number or pagination), P71/26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>B.O R. to Collector, 3 July 1790, B.O.R.P. 30 July 1790.

Raja Tej Chandra of Burdwan accepted the basic decennial assessment, but not the rasad amounting to three lakhs of rupees, which was imposed upon him. He himself visited Calcutta to convince the Board of his inability to pay the rasad.<sup>1</sup> The Board refused to comply with his plea and called upon him to accept the terms offered unconditionally. But the Raja, to the very face of the members of the Board, refused to engage if the rasad was not withdrawn.<sup>2</sup> His conduct was reported to Cornwallis, who angrily ordered his immediate expulsion from the capital and held him responsible for any deficiency that might occur due to the delay caused by him in making the settlement.<sup>3</sup> Though under this pressure, the Raja agreed to engage, he later adopted fraudulent means to obtain reductions. In order to show a deficiency on the assets of his estate he let lands to his underlings at a reduced jama with oral agreements that the balance of the actual jama should be paid privately to him without receipt.<sup>4</sup> By this method he created, so the Collector alleged, an artificial shortfall in his rent roll to the tune

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<sup>1</sup>B.R.C., 24 June 1791, No. 2, P52/32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>G.G in C. to B.O.R., B.R.C., 24 June 1791, No. 3, P52/32.

<sup>4</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 19 Aug. 1894, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1794, No. 15, P53/19.

of S.R.1,42,981 in three years.<sup>1</sup> Finally he deliberately withheld the biggest instalment of the month of Poose, that is the month for the tenth instalment of the revenue year, amounting to seven lakhs of rupees and transferred the zamindari to his mother.<sup>2</sup> This transfer was interpreted by the Collector as a tactical manoeuvre on the part of the Raja. "As far as the Raja's object can be inferred from his conduct in the late transaction", wrote Collector S. Davis, "it appears to have been to embezzle as much as he could of the rents, and leave Government to look to the Ranny for the balance which would happen in consequence; this would not subject the Ranny to any inconvenience; for, being by her sex, exempted from imprisonment or coercion of any kind, she would remain undisturbed till the end of the year while the Raja, no longer subject to restraint, would be at full liberty to try every means he might think conducive to the reduction of the assessment on the district, which appears to me to have been his aim ever since he entered into his decennial engagement."<sup>3</sup> But the Government, being determined not to be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Burdwan Collector to B.O.R. 19 Aug. 1794,  
B.R.C. 29 Aug. 1794, No. 15, P 53/19

<sup>2</sup> Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 28 January 1794, B.O.R.P.,  
21 January 1794, P72/26.

<sup>3</sup> Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 27 Feb. 1794, B.O.R.P., 14 March  
1794, No. 5, P72/28.

outwitted by such subterfuges, arrested the Raja and exiled him to Chandannagar till all the arrears had been recovered and all his frauds exposed under the khas management of his zamindari.<sup>1</sup> To prevent the other zamindars from adopting the fraudulent methods of Raja Tejchandra, a Regulation was enacted, that abolished the practice of confining the defaulting zamindars; instead, their property landed or other was to be promptly sold in public <sup>v</sup>action in order to recover the arrears from them.<sup>2</sup> It was also prescribed that "all proprietors of land withholding the public revenue shall be liable, as a fine, to the payment of interest on the amount of the arrears at the rate of twelve per cent per annum from the day on which it became due, to the date of its discharge."<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Nadia also claimed a reduction on account of an inequitable assessment, but under official pressure he agreed to engage.<sup>4</sup> Even so it was discovered later that he had succeeded in deceiving the Government by alienating 2,66,493

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O R., Aug. 1794, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1794, No. 15, P53/19.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 14 March 1794. See, West Bengal District Records, New Series, Murshidabad, Letters Received, 1789-1803. S.K.Bose (ed.), p.159.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D , 18 Aug. 1794, General Revenue Letter, para 8., E14/54.

<sup>4</sup>Petition of Raja Iswar Chandra of Nadia, B.R.C., 28 October 1791, No. 4, P52/36.

bighas of land, yielding an income of about one lakh of rupees a year.<sup>1</sup> Among the principal zamindars who fought for a reduction of the assessment upon them, the Raja of Bisana-<sup>h</sup>pur alone succeeded in securing any relief, though amounting only to S.R.26,205.<sup>2</sup>

Since appeals to Government against inequalities in the revenue assessment or against the burden of ~~rasad~~ met virtually with no success, the zamindars were drawn to take matters into their own hands. In some cases, doubtless, the outraged or despairing cries against the revenue demand were make-believe, part of an ingrained habit of bargaining. But in others the protests were justified, the burden was too heavy, and deceit or illegality was a necessary, indeed the only, defence available. Thus, a great many zamindars tried to save their patrimonies by nominally transferring their estates to their minor successors during whose minority their estates were not liable to be sold according to Regulations. About this method of their reaction, the Governor General in Council wrote to the court, "We had reason to believe from the instances which came before us that they were fictitious and intended to answer the temporary purposes of the proprietor, who after having

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<sup>1</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O R., 11 April 1817, B.R.C., 27 June 187  
No. 3.

<sup>2</sup>B.O R. to G.G. in C., 18 May 1795, B.R.C., 18 Sept. 1795,  
No. 11, P53/35.

greatly diminished the assets of his estate by mismanagement, was desirous of evading future responsibility. The institution of the Court of Wards was intended as a security to the property inherited by minors and other individuals who could not be considered competent to the management of their estates ..., but it was never intended to allow landholders to transfer their estates during their own lives to their minor sons or other disqualified heirs, such a permission would have enabled every individual who had rendered his estate unprofitable by his misconduct to throw the management of it on government, and consequently to compel them to submit to a loss of revenue adequate to the deficiency in the revenue assets of the land."<sup>1</sup> Such arguments against the zamindars who transferred their estates to their minor successors during their life time does not seem to be convincing. Because it is quite unlikely that those zamindars who had the ability to acquire their estates either before or since the British rule and steered clear of all difficulties ever since would become so unworthy all of a sudden that within a couple of years of the decennial settlement they made their estates deficient of assets and tried to pass the responsibility on to the Government by nominally transferring their estates to their minor successors,

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 1 Dec. 1796, para. 627, E/4/57.

notwithstanding the adverse social implications of such an abdication. When the authorities saw that an increasing number of estates incapable of paying the government revenue demand upon them were coming under the official management and thereby threatening the security of the public revenue, a Regulation was enacted, limiting the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards only to those disqualified landholders who would inherit the estates after the death of their guardian.<sup>1</sup> But the authorities found it impossible to check all the artifices that most of the zamindars were forced to adopt with a view to ameliorating their conditions. So, though the Regulations of the decennial settlement abolished all sayer duties, and granted zamindars a reduction in government demand in compensation, many zamindars took to collecting them again.<sup>2</sup> For many the collection of sayer was part of the custom of the country and of their authority and status, but to many it was also a necessity, the most effective way of meeting the additional burden of rasad. Unauthorised sayer collections and other tricks to be stated in subsequent chapters were cunning and fraud in the eyes of government, but to the zamindars a natural response to unfeeling high handedness.

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 1 Dec. 1796, para. 7, E/4/57.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 6 March 1793, General Revenue Letter, para. 24, E/4/52; also see, Merchants' petition to Council, 14 Aug. 1795, B.R.C., 28 August 1795, No. 1, P53/33.

Under the Mughal constitution, the revenue managing agencies were not always of the rank or extent implied by the title zamindar. There was another class of minor landholders of the same kind but of lesser importance, called Taluqdars, that is to say, holders of talukas, or dependencies. At the time of the decennial settlement, broadly there were two types of taluqdars, such as Huzuri taluqdars and Mufassal taluqdars. Huzuri taluqdars were those who held their right, by immemorial possession or grant from the zamindars or government and whose rights were duly recognised by the Mughal Government. In that case they were fully independent of the influence and control of any zamindar and they were termed as Huzuri taluqdars, because they paid their revenues directly to Huzur or government.<sup>1</sup> But the mufassal, also called Mazkuri, taluqdars, were those who did not have any such recognition from the Mughal Government and who customarily paid their fixed revenues through the mediation of a superior zamindar. Their rights and liabilities in relation to their superior zamindars were undefined and widely varied from one

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<sup>1</sup>See H. Baden-Powell, The Land Systems of British India, Vol. I, p. 525.



district to another.<sup>1</sup> So far as the Huzuri or independent taluqdars were concerned, the government found it simple to make the decennial settlement directly with them, for they were equal to zamindars in rights and rank, though not in the extent of territorial possessions. But what policy should the government adopt towards the mazkuri or dependent taluqdars? The problem before the government was whether to recognise them as vassals of zamindars or to separate them from zamindars' control and make settlement with them independently.

#### Separation of Taluqas

Thomas Law, who first earned his reputation as a Collector of Behar, then as an intellectual guide of Cornwallis though he sat on the Board of Revenue as a member, was of opinion that both Huzuri and mufassal taluqas enjoyed the same rights with two different names only.<sup>2\*</sup> He advocated that if the mufassal taluqas were not made independent by separating them from the control of their overlords, then "the principal zemindars will naturally endeavor to burthen the inferior ones with a view to lighten their own estates and ultimately to force the sale of the others

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. See H. Baden-Powell, The Land Systems of British India, vol. 1, p. 525.

<sup>2</sup> T. Law's Minute, 15 April 1790, H. Misc. S., vol. 384B (Part 2, p. 193).

\*For T. Law's influence on Cornwallis in the making of Permanent Settlement, see R. Guha, pp. 173-186.

to themselves..."<sup>1</sup> Like T. Law, Cornwallis also found no differences in rights between the zamindars and mufassal taluqdars excepting the fact that one was big and influential and another was small and insignificant.<sup>2</sup> He reinforced his argument about the proprietary rights of the taluqdars by stating that they acquired their taluqas by purchase or inheritance or gift or by other lawful means and that the ancestors of many of them were in possession of their taluqas long before the zamindari jurisdiction in which they were now included were formed.<sup>3</sup> He went on that it was the policy of the Mughal Government to collect rents from the taluqdars and small zamindars through the mediation of the large proprietors as being attended with less trouble and expense than would have been incurred by taking separate engagements.<sup>4</sup> Thus he concluded, "The rent therefore paid by the dependent Talookdars who are the proprietors of the soil is not the rent of the zemindar but the rent of government, which it is obvious we have a right to collect by the

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<sup>1</sup>T. Law's Minute, 15 April 1790, H.Misc.S., vol. 384B, part 2, pp. 193-4.

<sup>2</sup>Cornwallis Minute, 21 April 1790, H.Misc.S., vol. 384B, part 2, p.235.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.237.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.238.

hands of our own officers instead of receiving it as hitherto through the mediation of the zemindars should the former mode appear to us most conducive to the prosperity of the country."<sup>1</sup>

One month later, Cornwallis wrote another minute advocating the need for separation of the taluqas from the zamindari jurisdiction. He gave the following grounds for such separation:<sup>2</sup> Firstly he argued that to bring agricultural improvement to the country, the control of so much land by a few great families must be ended and more manageable economic units must be created. The hiving off of the taluqas currently under their jurisdiction was to be one means to that end. Secondly, Cornwallis argued that since the taluqdars had been made subordinate to the zamindars merely for administrative convenience, it was only simple justice to recognise now that in respect of inherent rights the taluqdars were as independent as the zamindars. Moreover, and this was his third point, if that independence was not established now, the zamindars would use the finality of the Permanent Settlement and the withdrawal of government from day to day involvement in revenue administration to override the customary rights of the taluqdars, to treat the taluqas as integral parts of their zamindaris and to impose increased

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Cornwallis minute 21 April 1790  
H. Misc. S. Vol. 384B, part 2, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Cornwallis' Minute on taluqas, 12 May 1790, B.R.C., 12 May 1790, No. 36, P52/10.

rents upon them. Lastly, though zamindars might treat taluqdars as part of their estates, Government by respecting taluqdari rights would find itself debarred from selling them when the superior zamindar was in default. The Council accordingly resolved "that all talookdars being actual proprietors of the lands comprising their talooks and who now pay their rents through the mediation of a zemindar be immediately separated from the jurisdiction and authority of such zemindars and that the rents of the latter be adjusted exclusive of the talooks so separated."<sup>1</sup> The following categories of taluqas were resolved to be separated:<sup>2</sup> (1) Taluqdars who had purchased their lands by private or public sale, or obtained them by gift from the zamindars. (2) Taluqdars whose taluqas had been formed before the zamindaris through which they now paid their revenue. (3) Taluqdars whose lands had never been placed under a zamindar, and (4) taluqdars who held their taluqas under a special grant from the government.

It is evident that being imbued by the idea of improvement Cornwallis wanted to bring a change both in the ownership and distribution of landed property in order to imbue the stagnant agrarian economy of the country with a new life and vigour.

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution, 12 May 1790, B.R.C., 12 May 1790, No. 37, P52/10.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution, 19 May 1790, B.R.C., 19 May 1790, No. 35, P52/12.

Separation of taluqas was chosen to be only one of the several weapons in his hands to bring about the intended change. The legal arguments that he brought into the defence of his measure had its strength and weakness. It was rightly argued that it was merely a matter of fiscal convenience that under the Mughals such categories of taluqdars had been lumped in with the zamindaris. The number of taluqas was so great and sadar jama individually due so small that direct revenue transaction would have been inconvenient both to the government and to the taluqdars. As an example, one could point to the district of Nadia, which contained some four hundred taluqdars, of which only eight paid more than one hundred rupees revenue, the remainder paying in some cases as little as eight annas.<sup>1</sup> The zamindar had been used, perhaps even required as a part of their duties, to collect the revenue from these myriad taluqdars, receiving a commission for so doing from the Mughal authorities. But lately, because of the decline of Mughal power and the confusion of early British rule, they had been able to apply their superior power either to annex taluqas outright, or to exact larger revenues from them, as though they were proprietors rather than revenue collectors. Cornwallis took as an example of this latter behaviour the treatment of Hyder Ali, a large

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<sup>1</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O.R., 19 June 1790, B.R.C., 9 July 1790, No. 2m P52/14.

talukdar at the hands of the Burdwan Raja. In 1785, the Raja had raised the original Mughal revenue demand of Rs. 24,000 to Rs. 27,000 and had imposed a further Rs. 1,000 as a salami or acknowledgement. Still not being satisfied the Raja had seized Hyder Ali's estate accounts papers in order to make a valuation of the taluqa outright in preparation for a further enhancement of the revenue demand.<sup>1</sup> But Cornwallis failed to mention that such an abuse of powers on the part of the zamindars was largely dictated by the British revenue policy prior to the decennial settlement. It is universally known that the zamindars were always forced before to pay more and more revenues, paying little regard to their resources. Under such pressing needs the zamindars, in turn, applied their superior power with equal high handedness to pass some of their burdens on to their taluqdars.

The zamindars had, indeed, no valid answer to Cornwallis' arguments that there were numerous taluqas which were formed long before their principals came into being. These were known as milkiat taluqas. Milkiat is from the Arabic word malik meaning sovereign or king. The milkiat taluqas were the remnants of the ancient ruling families of Bengal. These senior families

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<sup>1</sup>Cornwallis' Minute, 12 May 1790, B.R.C., 12 May 1790, No. 36, P52/10.

had every right in theory to become independent by separating themselves from the zamindars under whom they were placed subsequently for administrative convenience. But the theory of their independent status on the basis of their historical rights had been largely nullified by the actual practice of the British government in Bengal. Until the decennial settlement the taluqdars were never considered by the British as a separate class with proprietary rights. In every successive revenue experiment before the decennial settlement of the zamindars had received 10 p.c. of the sadar jama as malikana or proprietary allowance. The taluqdars received their due allowances from the zamindars. The zamindars were held responsible for all deficiencies even when these originated in the taluqas.<sup>1</sup> The zamindars were permitted to raise money to pay the public revenue by mortgaging taluqas.<sup>2</sup> Above all, many zamindaris were publicly sold in the past in order to recover revenue arrears, and along with them their dependent taluqas were sold as if these were the property of the zamindars.<sup>3</sup> The zamindars thus could legitimately argue that if under the Mughals they acted

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum from the zamindars of Mymensingh, B.R.C., 11 June 1790, No. 9, P.52/13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>T. Graham's (Member of the Board of Revenue) Minute, ~~and~~ Ibid., No. 13.

B.R.C. 11 June 1790, No. 13, P 52/13.

as mere intermediaries between the government and the taluqdars, the practice of the British government bestowed upon them the new rights to hold the taluqas as integral parts of their zamindaris. They could further argue possibly with greater force that if the Mughal constitution was not allowed to operate regarding their police, military and judicial powers and privileges as they hitherto enjoyed, then why should it be so faithfully observed so far as their relations with taluqdars were concerned? Was it because the British government was eager to use only that part of the Mughal constitution which suited the ideas and interests of the British best?

Cornwallis did however recognise that certain types of taluqas ought not to be separated. He maintained that the taluqdars who held their taluqas by pattas or letter of lease from the zamindars were merely pattadars or perpetual leaseholders, not taluqdars and they were not entitled to separation. In such circumstances, he argued, the zamindars did not intend to part with his lands.<sup>1</sup> It was thus laid down that there should be no separation of the following types of taluqdars:<sup>2</sup>

- a) Taluqas whose owners had stipulated in their engagement that they would pay their revenues

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<sup>1</sup>Cornwallis Minute, 21 April 1790, H.Misc.S., vol. 384B (part 2), pp. 251-2.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution, 12 May 1790, B.R.C., 19 May 1790, No. 35, P52/12.



through a zamindar;

- h) Taluqas which were held in perpetual leasehold from a zamindar;
- c) and lastly, junglebury taluqas, or taluqas which were created by clearing jungles granted on condition that junglelands were cleared.

This was far from sufficient, however, to satisfy the zamindars who strongly objected to the government's dealing separately with any category of taluqas over which during the last century they had acquired customary rights. Thus the zamindars of Mymensingh, who controlled about ten thousand separable taluqas protested, "The talookdars to whose forefathers our ancestors granted pottahs or sunnuds for the lands they hold, who have been always subject to and never independent of their zemindars are now at once, contrary to the <sup>est</sup>ablished and invariable custom observed by the former rulers of the empire and the English government till this moment, to be removed from under the wing of their natural parent, to shake off their control of their hereditary superiors, and to be set up as principals themselves. This has alarmed the minds of the people who break out in complaints of the injustice of government."<sup>1</sup> About their dissatisfaction, the Collector wrote that the publication of

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<sup>1</sup>Memorandum of the Mymensingh zamindars enclosed with Collector's letter to B.O.R., 26 May 1790, B.R.C., 11 June 1790, No. 9, P52/13.

the resolution of the Council for the separation of taluqas had "created universal dissatisfaction among the zamindars, who considered the orders as an infringement on those rights, and privileges which custom and ancient usage had established and which this Government by long recognition had confirmed."<sup>1</sup>

Raja Ramkrishna of Rajshahi appealed to the Council to revoke its resolution for separation of taluqas. He said that his ancestors and his mother Rani Bhavani raised money at different times by creating dependent taluqas and now if these taluqas were separated, then he would be unjustly deprived of about one fourth of his zamindari.<sup>2</sup> In fact the sadar jama of the taluqas within his zamindari amounted to S.R.371000, and all of them were separated.<sup>3</sup> But the drastic reaction came from Dacca, where the separation of taluqas drastically altered the position of almost all the principal zamindars, as indicated in the following table:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mymensingh Collector to B.O.R., 26 May 1790, B.R.C., 11 June 1790, No. 9, P52/13.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Ramkrishna's Petition, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1791, No. 36 (Petition one), P 52/36

<sup>3</sup>Rajshahi Commissioner to B.O.R. 26 May 1792, B.R.C., 15 June 1792, No. 19, P52/45; also Rajshahi Commissioner to B.O.R. 5 June 1793, B.R.C., 5 July 1793, No. 15, P53/4.

<sup>4</sup>Dacca Collector to B.O.R., 25 May 1790, B.O.R.P., 4 June 1790 (no number), P71/26.

Table 2

DACCA DISTRICT: STATEMENT OF SELECT PARGANASAND THEIR SEPARABLE TALUQAS

<u>Principal Parganas</u>	<u>No. of Taluqas</u>	<u>Total Jama</u>	<u>Jama of separable taluqas</u>	<u>Jama of zamindari lands</u>
		S.R.	S.R.	S.R.
Pargana Jalalpur	2148	87001	76001	11000
" Chandradip	400	90450	72725	17725
" Bikrampur	268	27652	25642	2010
" Rajnagar	400	293673	201118	92555
Tuveh Mysundi	501	18004	14004	4000
Pargana Isakabad	200	3700	2000	1700
Tuveh Hyderabad	200	1985	750	1235

Thus about four fifths of these seven parganas were owned by the taluqdars whose separations must have reduced the once considerable zamindars to insignificance. Same must have been the impact on all other parganas in view of the actual separation of 14,500 taluqas from the original 394 estates.<sup>1</sup> It was in great and understandable agony that the zamindar of Jalalpur, who had lost almost the whole of his once great zamindari, complained, "If it had been foreseen, that governing

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<sup>1</sup>F.D.Ascoli, Final Report on the survey and settlement operations in the District of Dacca, p.54.

power were to have separated the talookdars from the zamindaries, no one would have paid so much for the purchase of a zemindari nor would pottahs have been granted to talookdars by any one."<sup>1</sup> In the district of Tippera, 1262 taluqas were separated from the six major zamindaris.<sup>2</sup> In Jessore, 3444 taluqas were separated from 122 estates.<sup>3</sup> In other districts separation was not so drastic as it was in the above mentioned district. The number of estates in Chittagong at the time of the decennial settlement was 2135.<sup>4</sup> Their number rose to 3381 in 1801. This increase was said to have occurred partly by revenue sales and partly by separations.<sup>5</sup> From 1791 to 1797 only thirty four taluqas were separated in Dinajpur.<sup>6</sup>

#### Patta Rules

The unequitable distribution of the state revenue demand, coupled with sales for default, and the separation of taluqas both threatened the structure of the zamindaris from outside. A further measure, Regulation VIII of 1793, which prohibited

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<sup>1</sup>Petition of the zamindar of Jalalpur, B.R.C., 23 June 1790, No. 5, P52/14.

<sup>2</sup>J.F.Browne, Final Report on the Tipperah District, pp. 28-32.

<sup>3</sup>M.A.Momen, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement operations in the District of Jessore, p.96.

<sup>4</sup>H.J.S. Cotton, p.76.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 18 Oct. 1798, B.O.R.P., 16 Nov. 1798, No. 60, P73/39.

the levying of unauthorised abwabs or cesses and required the conclusion of written agreements with the ryots, setting out definite terms and conditions upon which they were to hold from the zamindars, threatened zamindaris from within. When the government tried to enforce the Regulation VIII, 1793, commonly known as pottah law, there was therefore further uproar from the zamindars.

Under the existing system, the zamindars' demands on their ryots were not governed by any fixed rule. The ryots never knew exactly how much they would have to pay to their masters, over and above the asal or original jama fixed by Todar Mal settlement. Above the asal jama they were made to pay numerous variable cesses called abwabs. There was a cess for almost everything: a cess for collection expenses, a cess for police duties, a cess for roads, new houses, hats or small shopping centre and bazars or commercial centre, a cess on all occasions that happened in the zamindari family, such as births, deaths, marriages, festivals, a pilgrimage to the Ganges, or holy cities such as <sup>aa</sup> Benares, Brindaban, Puri, etc.<sup>1</sup> All these cesses were added to the asal jama, the grand totals being as high as the ryot could bear without being ruined or drawn to desertion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, p.97.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

It must be noted here that the zamindars had no right to demand more than the asal jama or the jama that was originally fixed by Todar Mal in 1588. All demands over and above that asal jama were to be considered as abwabs or temporary cess<sup>e</sup>s. The zamindars obviously tried to keep pace with the increased prices and productivity and also with increased government demands on themselves by levying abwabs under different heads. But unlimited scope for levying abwabs tended to make the zamindars oppressive towards their ryots. It was to stop this kind of oppression for ever that Cornwallis wanted to subject the zamindars to some definite rules, the gist of which is as follows:

- 1) All proprietors must consolidate their demands upon the ryots into one single sum above which they were strictly prohibited from collecting any further abwabs.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) Every exaction above the consolidated jama should be punished in the diwani court.<sup>2</sup>
- 3) Every proprietor must issue a patta or deed of agreement to each ryot which would specify all the terms and conditions of the lease which might not be agreed for more than ten years. The potta must lay down the rent payable per bigha and the quantity and quality of the

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<sup>1</sup>Sec. 54, Regulation VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, pp. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 55, Regulation VIII, 1793, See R. Clarke, p. 27.

land.<sup>1</sup>

- 4) The counterfoils of the potta of which Government supplied a model, must be registered in the district courts.<sup>2</sup>
- 5) Pottas of Khudkhasht or resident ryots might not be cancelled.<sup>3</sup>
- 6) Landholders prosecuting claims for rent which had not been consolidated into one demand set out in the potta would be unsuited, with cost and damages.<sup>4</sup>

It was one thing for the Council to decree the use of regular pottas and the registration of their terms and quite another to secure obedience to it. The relationship between the zamindars and the ryots was governed by the unwritten laws of customs and usages of the country. Any constitutional innovation brought in to disturb their traditional relations was sure to create suspicion and doubt among them. Thus from the districts there came back a stream of reports from the collectors stating the objections raised and the difficulties encountered. In July 1793, the Collector of Chittagong reported

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<sup>1</sup>Secs. 56-57, Regulation VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.27.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 58, Regulation VIII, 1793, See R. Clarke, p.27.

<sup>3</sup>Sec. 60, Regulation VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.28.

<sup>4</sup>Sec. 61, Regulation VIII, 1793. See R. Clarke, p.28.

that he tried to enforce the rules, but he totally failed to do so because of the non-cooperation of the landholders.<sup>1</sup> He wrote that the zamindars pleaded inability to adhere to Council's orders for introducing pottas "alleging that the greater number of the zamindars, and talookdars in this province, from poverty and ignorance have never been accustomed to keep any accounts, ..."<sup>2</sup> The zamindars from Rangpur in a body petitioned that any innovation in the established customary rules governing their relationship with their ryots would alarm the latter and impel them to leave the district.<sup>3</sup> The Raja of Nadia expressed his inability to compel the ryots to accept pottas because they, according to the Raja, were all at one against the potta rules.<sup>4</sup> The ryots apprehended that the acceptance of pottas would kill their permanent occupancy rights. After the expiry of the lease the zamindars could either evict the ryots by refusing to renew the pottas, or the issue of their renewal might be used as a lever to enhance rents. The collector of Nadia thus wrote, "the ryots object that at the

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<sup>1</sup>Chittagong Collector to B.O.R., 20 July 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 14, P72/27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Rangpur Collector to B.O.R., 17 Aug. 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Raja Iswar Chandra of Nadia to Collector, enclosed with Collector's letter, 27 June 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 6, enclosure No. 5, para 3, P72/27.



expiration of the lease, either they or their heirs will be subject to pay a salamee or present to the landholder before a new pottah will be granted them or turned them out of their mehaul at hispleasure."<sup>1</sup> The Collector of Rajshahi himself tried his best to convince the ryots of the advantages of pattas but failed to do so. "In one instance," he wrote, "the parties being in attendance the subject was discussed before me, and the ryotts declared themselves ready to accept pottahs in the terms to which the zemindar declared he restricted his demands; but I understand that, on their return to the mofussal, they again refused the pottahs tendered."<sup>2</sup> The zamindars of Tipperah submitted that their ryots would desert if they were pressed to take pattas.

It is certain that the patta rules were disliked by both the zamindars and their ryots, who offered a combined opposition to their successful implementation. The zamindars opposed it for several reasons. Firstly, it was said that in the province of Bengal "near two-thirds of the lands was cultivated by under ryots, who had no connection at all

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<sup>1</sup>Nadfa Collector to B.O.R., 27 June 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 6, P72/27.

<sup>2</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 28 Oct. 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 20, para 7, P72/27.

with the proprietors or even farmers themselves."<sup>1</sup> The great majority of these under-royts were either landless labourers or paikast or non-resident temporary ryots. They cultivated lands mostly for one season. If the crops failed, they left for another place, and if they got favourable harvests, then they engaged themselves <sup>o</sup>fr the next seasonal crops.<sup>2</sup> They were least disposed to come to written agreements with a zamindar for a definite period of time with the obligation of paying a definite amount of rents. Any attempt to force them to bind themselves by written agreements with the proprietors would alarm them and drive them to desertion. Moreover, other than the most settled and populous areas, the cultivation in other zones was always variable due to the migratory nature of the cultivators. A particular village, if it could attract migratory cultivating labourers, could pay, for example, five hundred rupees in one year, but the very next year the revenue might fall far below the former mark or it might go further up with the departure or arrival of a considerable number of cultivating labourers. Hence it was impossible on the part of the zamindars to insist

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<sup>1</sup>Tipperah Collector to B.O.R., 27 June 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 33, P72/27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

upon them accepting patta. If he did so he was sure to lose most of his paikasht ryots. Secondly, the more important reason for zamindars' reluctance to distribute patta was their lack of confidence in the new system and in the promises of the authorities. They were required to register compulsorily all the counterfoils of the pattas in the district courts. From these papers, the Government was capable of knowing everything about the state of a zamindari. Such information the zamindars were not ready to supply. H.T.Forster, the Collector of Tipperah, rightly observed, "If I might be permitted to assign what I think is the real cause on the part of the landholders for not granting pottahs - I should not hesitate to say that it is want of confidence in the Regulations, or rather the permanency of the Decennial Settlement itself. They are, therefore, afraid of exposing the true state of their zamindaries lest an unfair advantage may hereafter be taken of them. The ~~permanency~~<sup>permanence</sup> of the orders, in all probability tends to rather strengthen their apprehensions of government having some private object in view than to inspire them with confidence in their good faith."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, as lease could be granted for a maximum of ten years only, the major

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<sup>1</sup>Tipperah Collector to B.O.R., 27 June 1793, B.O R.P. , 28 Feb. 1794, No. 33, P72/27.

zamindars found it difficult to find farmers and renters at advantageous terms. Few people were likely to come to invest their capital for short term lease. Moreover, under short term lease, the farmers were least inclined to invest their capital and improve the lands under their control and at the end of the lease they tended to take to rack-renting. The resources of the estates were thus gradually exhausted. The ryots refused to receive pattas because they could hardly believe, in the first place, that the zamindars would refrain from imposing any more abwabs after consolidating all of their demands into one single amount. Secondly, most of the principal ryots occupied more lands than they were authorised to hold.<sup>1</sup> Any measurement of their holdings in compliance with patta rules, would expose their secret gains and make them liable to pay more. Hence, they were ready to prefer "the risk of suffering exactions, than come under specific engagements and have their lands measured."<sup>2</sup>

Both the zamindars and the ryots were thus united against the introduction of a uniform and state supervised patta system. In the face of their combined opposition, the government seemed

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<sup>1</sup>See N.K. Sinha, vol. II, pp. 131-33.

<sup>2</sup>Tipperah Collector to B.O.R.P. 27 June 1793, B.O R.P. 28<sup>t</sup> Feb. 1794, No. 33, P72/27.

to have abandoned the idea of its rigid enforcement. From 1795 onwards, no discussion regarding the enforcement of the Patta Regulation had been recorded in the proceedings of the Board of Revenue. The resistance from the zamindars and the ryots was not the only force that made the Regulation a dead letter. Another important factor was the government's realisation that land itself was the ample security for the safety of the public revenue. After all, though the Patta Regulation was enacted professedly to protect the respective interests of the zamindars and the ryots, it was evident that the "evil against which the regulation was especially intended to provide was the permanent diminution of the resources of government, which would be the consequence of the landholders reserving a rent insufficient for the discharge of the public revenue. It was apprehended that landholders, if vested with an unlimited power of discretion of fixing the amount of rent and the term of the lease, would abuse that power, and would either grant imprudent leases at very reduced rents, for a perpetual or at least a long term with the view of obtaining an immediate supply of funds, or might grant such leases collusively for the purpose of creating

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<sup>1</sup>H.T.Colebrooke's Minute, 1 May 1812, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 7, P148/75.

beneficial estates for themselves under borrowed names, or for relations, favourites and dependents."<sup>1</sup> But according to Colebrooke, the judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalat, the economy of the country and its social relationships so changed from the beginning of the nineteenth century that "there was no longer any sufficient motive for holding the landholders and tenantry of the country in this sort of pupilage, prescribing to them the manner and form of their reciprocal engagements."<sup>2</sup> He suggested giving the zamindars the fullest liberty to regulate their relations with their tenants according to their best mutual interests.<sup>3</sup> His suggestion was entirely incorporated in the Regulation V of 1812. The Regulation laid down that the previous rules limiting the period of leases to ten years were "hereby rescinded, and proprietors of land were competent to grant leases for whatever period they may deem proper and at whatever rent."<sup>3</sup> Next, the zamindars were to be no longer required to observe the official prescribed forms of pattas.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H.T.Colebrooke's minute, 1 May 1812, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 7, P148/75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Sec. 2, Rev. V, 1812. See R. Clarke, Abstracts of Bengal Regulations, p.175.

<sup>4</sup>Sec. 3, Reg. V, 1812. See R. Clarke, p.175.

The Patta Regulation thus failed to break the centuries old mould of tradition and custom regulating the relations between the rulers and the ruled. The Fifth Report, however, commented that the Patta Regulation was a success.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Growth of Zamindari Powers

The passing of Regulation V of 1812 was evidence of the obstructive power of the zamindars, it was also evidence of a change in government's attitude towards traditional zamindari control of the ryots of Bengal. The original Patta Regulation had been intended to protect the cultivators from the demands of the zamindars, to interpose in the free play of market forces on behalf of the ryot. The regulation of 1812 announcing that proprietors of land were "competent to grant leases for whatever period they may deem proper and at whatever rent" abandoned any such role: the zamindars' hands were being strengthened rather than being restrained. This was no isolated incident: by 1812 the powers of the zamindars, deliberately circumscribed in 1790, had been allowed to grow again to something like its old stature. This was nowhere more evident than in the strengthening of the zamindars' powers to collect rent from the under-tenants.

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<sup>1</sup>P.P. Fifth Report, 1812, vol. 7, Report p.28.

At the time of the Permanent Settlement the Government and the zamindars were on a very different footing when it came to the collection of land revenue, indeed it could reasonably be said that they were not governed by the same principle of law. Government was exempt from the operation of the ordinary judicial process in regard to its collection of revenue from the zamindars. It possessed summary powers for the recovery of its arrears by selling the lands or other property of the defaulting zamindars, for after they fell in default only one month's advertisement was required before actual sale. But for the recovery of the same arrears from their undertenants, the zamindars had to go to courts and legally establish their claims there against their defaulters. The result was the pile-up of undecided revenue suits in the courts. The Burdwan Collector for example, reported in February 1795 that so many revenuesuits had been filed in the last nine months that if no more cause was undertaken and ten causes were decided every day all round the year, then "the period requisite for it to clear off its present load of business would be no less than between eight and nine years; ..." <sup>1</sup> That the courts in other districts also

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 27 Feb. 1795, para 4, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 29, P53/28.



were under similar pressure is evident from the Fifth Report which remarked: "In the Courts of Civil Judicature, the accumulation of causes undecided, had proceeded to such an extent, as almost to put a stop to the Courts of justice; or at least, to leave to a zemindar little prospect of the decisions of a suit, instituted to recover payment of his rent, before his own land, by the more expeditious mode of procedure, established against him by government, was liable to be brought to sale in liquidation of an outstanding balance." It was tragic that the government undertook no responsibility for the revenue suits though these were the outcome of the new constitution and were pending in the government's courts; whereas, government's own demands were realised by the summary process of sale of the defaulter's property.

The zamindars never ceased to protest against such double standard of justice until their grievances were redressed. The principal zamindars were obviously in the van of such protest movement, because it was they who stood for power and authority in the traditional structure of the society and it was they who faced the greatest challenge from the new system. It is remarkable that these traditional

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<sup>1</sup>P.P. The Fifth Report, 1812, vol. 7, Report p.55.

rulers applied themselves not to compel the government to renounce its despotic privilege and come under the rule of law, but to regain their own despotic powers over their inferiors, that they had lost under the new system. The Raja of Rajshahi thus argued that without the use of traditional methods of coercion it was impossible to recover rents from the defaulters. He intimated that in case of failure in payment of rents, the defaulters in the past were "confined and fettered; and if this Failed of obtaining the realization of the public revenue, corporal punishment was inflicted. No person received indulgence, but all persons, without distinction were confined, pressed, and beaten, and every means taken to collect the revenue from them, without favour to any one; and the houses and effects of these in balance were attached and held in sequestration, till the full discharge of the arrears due, when they were released again."<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent memorandum he reiterated that in the absence of all those summary powers he was going to be ruined at the hands of his farmers, renters and jokdars or powerful ryots.<sup>2</sup> The Raja of Birbhum complained that

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Ramkrishna to B.O.R., enclosed with Collector's letter, 21 June 1792, B.R.C., 20 July 1792, No. 15, P52/47.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Ramkrishna to B.O.R., enclosed with Collector's letter, 6 March 1793, B.R.C., 15 March 1793, No. 16, P53/1.

his officers were unable to distrain the property of the defaulters under the new Regulations and without effective distraining power, he said, it was impossible to collect rents from the defaulting tenants.<sup>1</sup> In consideration of all these representations the Board recommended the Council to give more powers to the zamindars at least to enable them to distrain the defaulters' property more effectively. Under the new Regulations, as stated earlier, the zamindars had no power to distrain any property if the zamindars' demands were contested by the defaulters in the courts. But the Board's recommendation was turned down by the Council which <sup>a</sup>believed that the existing regulations were sufficient to safeguard the interests of all the parties.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, doubtful whether the Council was right in its judgement so far as the interests of the principal zamindars were concerned. These zamindars, in view of the unmanageable size of their <sup>managed their estates</sup> estates, through numerous farmers and sub-farmers. Now, the question of these farmers was not considered as a separate group of landed interest when the regulations of the Permanent Settlement were formulated.<sup>3</sup> So the relations between the

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Zamankhan's petition to B.O R., enclosed with Collector's letter, 26 March 1793, B.R.C., 5 April 1793, No. 6, P53/1 .

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution upon B.O.R.'s letter dated 1 April 1793, B.R.C., 5 April 1793, No. 5, P53/1.

<sup>3</sup>See, the Proclamation of the Permanent Settlement, 22 March 1793, R. Clarke, Zamindari Regulations, p.9.

zamindars and their farmers were regulated by the same law as was applicable to ordinary ryots. Consequently, the large zamindars faced some practical difficulties in the collection of rents from which the smaller zamindars were comparatively free. For, while the smaller zamindars who personally managed their estates could easily make their ryots pay by persuasion, intimidation and force, the same could not be done to the farmers who, being proud of their social influence and wealth, never hesitated to challenge the zamindars in law courts if they exceeded the limits set by law. And as justice was almost denied by its indefinite delay, the *cunning* and ambitious farmers could cause their principals' lands to be sold by withholding their dues from payment.<sup>1</sup> The principal zamindars, therefore, were more resolute and vocal in their agitation against the new zamindari regulations than the small and petty landholders.

Thus in spite of the Council's refusal to extend the zamindari powers, the principal families put on constant pressure on the authorities to change their minds in their favour. The Raja of Burdwan, thus argued in January 1794: "It must have proceeded from the oversight, rather than from any just and avowed principle, that there should be established two methods

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<sup>1</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O.R., 21 July 1800, B.O.R.P., 25 July No. 43, P74/14.

of judicial process under the same government the one summary and efficient for the satisfaction of its own claims, the other tardy and uncertain in regard to the satisfaction of claims due to its subjects, more especially in a case like the present, where ability to discharge the one demand necessarily depends on the other demand being previously realised."<sup>1</sup> Collector S. Davis, the future author of the Bengal portion of the Fifth Report, fully supported the logic of the Raja's arguments.<sup>2</sup> The Raja of Nadia in March 1794 represented that the present regulations placed him in a fatal predicament since he was unable to collect his rents due to the contumacy of his renters and farmers.<sup>3</sup> Jiban Lal, the surbracaur or manager of the Raja of Bishnapur, reported in February 1795 that the Raja was going to be ruined in the hands of his farmers. They did not care to pay their dues punctually, since they knew that the Raja had no power to coerce them to pay and the court had no means to render justice by prompt decisions. Hence, he continued, they safely withheld the payment of their dues and moved freely with impunity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Raja of Burdwan wrote to Collector S. Davis. His arguments were inserted in the Collector's letter to B.O.R. dated 9 January 1794, B.O.R.P., 21 January 1794 (no number), P72/26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Raja of Nadia to B.O.R., 26 March 1794, B.O.R.P., 28 March 1794, No. 26, P72/28.

<sup>4</sup>Jiban Lal to Burdwan Collector, enclosed with Collector's letter to B.O.R., B.R.C., 27 Feb. 1795, No. 29, P53/28.

Reviewing the report of Jiban Lal, Collector S. Davis wrote: "Independent of the credit due to an intelligent person as the surbracaur appears to be, who can have no interest in misrepresenting the circumstances stated, I have reason to believe from my own experience in other parts of the district, and more especially from the part I am now in, that the inconvenience, delays and obstructions he complains of, in regard to Mofussil collections, do really exist; that the grievance is increasing, and that unless effectual means be taken to remove ordiminish it, embarrassments must ensue that will eventually involve the public interest in loss of revenue."<sup>1</sup>

S. Davis's conversion to the cause of the zamindars was a solid gain for them. As the collector of the most extensive district, Burdwan, and also as the commissioner of Bishnapur at the same time, he had much greater weight and influence on the formulation of government policy than any other district officer. The Board of Revenue took a serious view of his opinion that unless early measures were taken to remove zamindars' difficulties in the collection of rents from the farmers, it "will eventually involve the public

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., B.R.C., 27 Feb. 1795, No. 29, P53/28.

interest in loss of revenue". The Board thus wrote to the Council: "As the conclusions which the Collector W. Davis has endeavoured to establish appear to be the natural result of the circumstances stated in his letter, and as we have no reason to doubt the truth or accuracy of the facts adduced by him, we think it our duty to express our concurrence in the sentiments delivered by him, considered in their relation to the public revenue; but what appears to us to render the object of his address the more worthy of attention is, that judging from the representations which have at different times come under our consideration from most of the collectors, as well as the principal landholders, particularly in the Bengal Provinces, we are led to apprehend that the same inconvenience is pretty generally felt throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> The Board, however, did not suggest this time for granting more powers to the zamindars. Instead, they suggested opening more courts to expedite justice.<sup>2</sup> But the Council, though fully recognising the difficulties faced by the zamindars on account of delayed justice, was not prepared to solve the problem by expanding the judiciary as suggested by the Board.<sup>3</sup> Such expansion involved

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 17 March 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, para 2, No. 28, P53/28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., para 4.

<sup>3</sup>Board's Minute, 27 March 1795, paras. 27-32, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 30, P53/28.

considerable increase in the administrative expenditure leading to no corresponding increase in government revenue. In an attempt to remove the zamindars' difficulties in collecting rents as well as to keep the administrative expenditure at its present level, the Council decided to arm the zamindars with some more effective powers to enforce payment of revenue due to them from their farmers, renters, and dependent taluqdars, ryots etc.<sup>1</sup> The Regulation XXXV that was passed consequently in March 1795 laid down the following rules concerning zamindari powers:

- i) After the expiration of the fifth day of the due demand the proprietors or their deputed agents were empowered to distrain the property of the defaulters. But the actual sale of the distrained property was to be conducted by the local government officials.<sup>2</sup>
- ii) The proprietors could apply to the district judge for the defaulters' confinement if they failed to pay their outstanding dues within three days of the notice.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Preamble to Regulation XXXV of 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

<sup>2</sup> Section 5, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

<sup>3</sup> Secs. 10-11, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.



- iii) The proprietors and other rent receiving interests now having suits depending in courts for arrears were declared to be at liberty to withdraw such suits and to proceed against the person from whom they may claim the arrear, in the manner above mentioned.<sup>1</sup>
- iv) On making the summary investigation, the judge should decide on merits of each case whether or not the defaulter should be confined or should leave the proprietor to institute a regular suit in the adalut for the amount of his demand.<sup>2</sup>
- v) The confinement of the defaulter should not be considered to preclude the proprietor or farmer from distraining the personal property of the defaulter for the recovery of the arrears for which he might have been imprisoned or for any other arrear.<sup>3</sup>
- vi) Persons imprisoned would be at liberty to institute a regular suit against the person at whose instance he was imprisoned and if it was found that

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<sup>1</sup>Sec. 15, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

<sup>2</sup>Sec. 16, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

<sup>3</sup>Section 17, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

he was unjustly imprisoned heavy damages would be awarded to the proprietor.<sup>1</sup>

A close look at the above rules would reveal that the Regulation, though considerably increasing the zamindari powers, was least likely to please the zamindars. Now they could attach the defaulters' property. But for its actual sale they would have to depend on the government officers. For the confinement of the defaulters, they could only request the court. It was the judge who would decide whether or not the defaulter was to be confined. Even if he was confined, he could equally harass the zamindar by instituting a regular civil suit from inside the jail. But as will be seen, this regulation was only their initial success. The zamindars soon launched their second phase of their campaign to get still more powers. Though their constant pressure until now effected significant change in the minds of the authorities, the government still fondly clung to the idea of the Cornwallis era that the zamindars were oppressors and the general peasantry were oppressed. It gave evident satisfaction to the Governor General in Council that it was the zamindars and not the ryots who now raised complaints of oppression. He thus self-satisfiedly reported to the Court

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<sup>1</sup>Section 18, Regulation XXXV, 1795, B.R.C., 27 March 1795, No. 31, P53/28.

of Directors that "the very complaints of zemindars against their ryots evinces that the great body of the people employed in the cultivation of the lands, now experience ample protection from the laws and that they are no longer subject to the arbitrary exactions, by which their industry was formerly depressed. To afford them this protection, was one of the primary objects of the Regulations, the attainment of it being indispensable to the future security of the public revenue, and the prosperity of the country at large."<sup>1</sup>

But such optimistic idealism gradually receded as the difficulties or obstinacies of the zamindars were reflected in the figures for government's revenue collections. The security and certainty of the revenue had been one of the principal objectives of the Permanent Settlement and a full collection was vitally important in view of the chronic trade deficits and government's expensive involvement in the Deccan politics.<sup>2</sup> The accompanying table shows how uncertain the land revenue yield became, with large sums having to be recovered by sales of lands.

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 15 May 1795, para 3, E/4/54.

<sup>2</sup>See C.H.Philip, The East India Company, pp. 154-55; A. Tripathi, Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, p.17.

Table 3

A Statement of the Collection and  
Balances of Revenue, 1794-5 - 1798-9.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Amount of balances in round figures S.R.</u>	<u>Balances recovered by sales of lands S.R.</u>	<u>Sources</u>
1794-5	31,43,000	7,66,000	1
1795-6	28,69,000	2,35,000	2
1796-7	34,61,000	11,16,000	3
1797-8	38,80,000	21,12,000	4
1798-9	38,36,000	36,15,000	5
Total	171,89,000	78,44,000	

1. B.R.C. 22 April 1796, No. 59, P53/43.

2. ~~1797-8~~ B.R.C. II August 1797, No. 13, P53/52.

B.R.C.

3. 23 February 1798, No. 15, P53/55.

4. B.R.C. 29 August 1799, No. 5, P54/4.

5. B.R.C. 7 November 1799, No. 8, P54/6.

It is therefore certain that from 1794-5 to 1798-9 the average annual balances of revenue represented about 19 p.c. of the whole, about 9 p.c. of which were recovered by selling the lands of the proprietors, and the rest of the balances were partly recovered normally without resorting to sale of lands and partly written off as irrecoverable. It is not certain, however, how much revenue was struck off as irrecoverable every year. The Board, of course, reported, though giving no figure, that the annual loss of revenue on account of irrecoverable balances was quite substantial.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtless that, while unequal assessment, natural calamities, mismanagement, family disputes, judicial delays, etc. contributed to the huge annual balances of revenue, the situation was specially aggravated beyond endurance for the government by the zamindars' stubborn resistance to making the system unworkable. They could never accept a system that brandished the axe of sale over their heads, ready to descend and destroy them if the smallest arrear accrued, no matter from what cause. The families which were liable to be dispossessed if in arrear at a smart stroke of an auctioneer's hammer, took several generations, even centuries, to establish

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 26 July 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, para. 4, No. 3, P54/4.

their position in the society. Throughout that period they ruled the society as established members of the country's aristocracies. The scions of these families obviously thought it almost by instinct that they were born to rule. Hence when their lands were publicly sold for arrears, they were not only deprived of their means of livelihood, but also of their social leadership and supremacy. Thus it is quite natural that they, in order to preserve their traditional authority and power, would resist the operation of the new system.

It has been already stated how the zamindars tried at first to ventilate their grievances through petitions. Subsequently, when the Regulation XXXV of 1795, that was passed in consequence of their repeated petitions for more powers, failed to satisfy them, they moved out of their petitioners' position and took to other methods, including violence, in order to get their grievances redressed. The zamindars had confrontations with the authorities at two main stages from the dates of their default to actual transfer of their lands for such default. First, when the zamindars were asked to deliver the zamindari accounts for the allocation of jama to the lots under sale, and second, when their lands were actually transferred to new men.

To begin with, the first confrontation, the government,

in the absence of detailed records in the collectorate, was always dependent on the zamindari accounts for the allocation of jama to a particular portion of an estate to be sold for arrears. But the zamindars consistently refused to co-operate with the government by releasing their estate accounts though they were legally bound to do so. To cite a typical example, the Rani of Burdwan fell in a balance of about seven lakhs of rupees in 1794-5. In order to recover that balance by selling her lands, the Collector requisitioned the necessary zamindari papers. But the Rani's officers reported that all those papers wanted by the Collector were deposited at Amboa, the summer residence of the Rani. On application to Amboa, it was informed that all those papers had been sent to Burdwan again.<sup>1</sup> The Board then ordered that she must submit the papers requisitioned by the Collector within ten days failing which a daily fine of one thousand rupees was to be imposed on her.<sup>2</sup> But when the papers were not still coming forth, the Collector recalled sixty patwaris or village accountants to come with their accounts; but of them only two presented their papers, and the rest fled from

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 25 April 1794, B.R.C., 2 May 1794, No. 24, P53/16.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 5 May 1794, B.R.C., 23 May 1794, No. 5, P53/16.

their villages.<sup>1</sup> The Collector then himself visited Amboa to impress the Rani to deliver the papers without further delay. The Rani wanted further time to compile the necessary accounts. The time was given, but to the utter disappointment of the government, the papers delivered after so much pain were all unnecessary.<sup>2</sup> The Council then ordered the attachment of the whole of the zamindari and seizure of all the zamindari papers without being further deceived by the Rani.<sup>3</sup> Such strategem, which was practised by all categories of zamindars, big or small, in different forms, largely frustrated the authorities in their plans to recover the arrears by a prompt sale of the defaulters' lands.<sup>4</sup>

The government was faced with still greater difficulties when the lands of the defaulting zamindars were sold to recover the arrears from them. The auction purchasers found it

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 5 May 1794, B.R.C. 23 May 1794, No. 5, P53/16

<sup>2</sup> Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 13 May 1794, B.R.C., 30 May 1794, No. 20, P53/17.

<sup>3</sup> G.C. in C. to B.O.R., 6 June 1794, B.R.C., 6 June 1794, No. 3, P53/17.

<sup>4</sup> See, B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 11 April 1794, B.O.R.P., 11 April 1794, No. 30, P72/29. Board's resolution, 24 Nov. 1794, B.O.R.P., 1 Dec. 1797, No. 1, P73/26. Harington's Minute, 2 July 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P54/4. Buller's second and third minutes, 2 July 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P.54/4.



difficult, often impossible, to take possession of their auction lands from the former proprietors who applied their local influence to oust them as interlopers.<sup>1</sup> The established families, who obviously commanded sentimental attachment and respect from the large section of the society, let loose their die-hard supporters against the new men. In order to bring them to their knees, a series of manufactured civil and criminal cases was filed against them and the village chiefs were told not to pay their rents to them. As, for example, the zamindari of the Raja of Chandradip of Bakarganj, who claimed his origin from the moon and who paid about one lakh rupees as government revenue at the time of the Permanent Settlement, was sold for arrears to three Dacca merchants in 1798. But at the instance of the Raja, the principal ryots refused to express their loyalty to them and filed suit after suit against them alleging torture and unlawful demands. Heavily aggrieved they wrote to the Board, "It appears to us that what we intended as a purchase of lands has only been the purchase of disputes in the <sup>in</sup> Fojdari and the Dewany Adaluts, and Courts

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<sup>1</sup> See, Harington's Minute, 2 July 1798, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P54/4. R. Carstairs, Human Nature in Rural India, pp. 287-308. E.M. Whitcombe has also shown that the original proprietors of the <sup>North-West</sup> Upper Provinces prevented the auction purchasers from taking possession of their lands by force,

Agrarian conditions in the North-West Provinces and Oudh, 1860-1900 (Ph.D. Thesis). PP. 301-4.

of app<sup>6</sup>els; and not obtaining poss<sup>5</sup>ession, we are going to be ruined."1 Under these circumstances, many new zamindars who could neither afford continuous litigations nor could exert enough physical force to compel the tenants to switch over their loyalty from the old houses to themselves, either retired from land by transferring it to others or made compromise with the former proprietors.

The resistance of the zamindars and their supporters thus created great administrative problems for the government and made the public revenue as uncertain as before the decennial settlement. In 1798-9, the total jama of lands sold for arrears amounted to S.R. 3685400 or about 20 p.c. of the whole land revenue of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The government suffered both temporary and permanent losses from such transfer. When the sale price of an estate was less than the arrears, the government was compelled to forego the balances of the arrears since no more lands or other property of the former proprietor might be available for sale.<sup>3</sup> But when, by intrigues between proprietors and outside competitors or collectorate officers or

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<sup>1</sup>Petition of Paniatty and Dulal Sing to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 15 April 1799, No. 55, P74/10.

<sup>2</sup>B.R.C., 7 Nov. 1799, No. 8, P54/6.

<sup>3</sup>F.D. Ascoli, p.78; also Harington's first minute, 2 July 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P59/4.

officers or both, no bids were received for an estate at a sale for arrears of revenue, the estate was ordinarily resettled by government at a lower revenue, this caused a permanent diminution in the revenue. The permanent diminution in the revenue also occurred when a proprietor collusively overrated some portion of his estate and caused it to be sold through public sale. Since ultimately such overburdened lots had to be resettled at equitable jama.<sup>1</sup>

Confronted by these problems, the government had just two equitable realities if the sale laws were not to be annulled altogether. Either it could give up its own summary powers over the zamindars and go to the ordinary courts for the satisfaction of its claims as did the zamindars, or it could so expand the system of courts and make them so efficient that the zamindars could get prompt decisions of their revenue suits. The government, however, felt that it could afford neither of these two alternatives. The first method must make the public revenue rather more uncertain and insecure. But the government's costly involvement in the Deccan politics with a view to containing the Mysore king, Tipu Sultan, and also the chronic trade deficits, made it imperative on the

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<sup>1</sup>Harington's first minute, 2 July 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P54/4.

government to secure the land revenue, the mainstay of the Company's finance at any cost.<sup>1</sup> For the same financial reason the government could hardly afford to increase the administrative expenditure by expanding the judiciary significantly.

There was, of course, a third course which involved no extra cost to the government and which could satisfy both the parties, though at the cost of the rights of the third party, the ryots. That was to grant to the zamindars summary powers over their tenants equal in their efficiency to those which the government exercised against the zamindars. Under the circumstances, the authorities chose the third course and appointed J.H.Harington in 1799, the registrar of the Nizamat Adalat and also a member of the Board of Revenue at the same time, to find the means that could bring the current crisis to an end.

Harington was one of those few officers who advocated the strengthening of the hands of the zamindars as early as 1792. When Commissioner of Rajshahi in 1792, he had written to the Board that some real means, other than recourse to established courts of justice was "indispensably requisite

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<sup>1</sup>See, A. Tripathi, Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, p.17.

to enable the landholders and renters to realise their just dues from the ryots..."<sup>1</sup> He believed that it was the habit of the ryots not to pay rents unless forced to do so.<sup>2</sup> He argued: "In England it has been found necessary to allow landlords to distrain and sell under restrictions, the personal chattels of their tenants for the speedy recovery of arrears of rent; and perhaps a similar authority to the landholders and renters in this country may be the least objectionable power that can be entrusted to them..."<sup>3</sup> His conviction was further deepened by the subsequent developments, and in 1799, as he declared in his minute, he felt that it was his first duty on his taking seat on the Board to find on these lines a solution of the landed crisis and the consequent losses of the public revenue.<sup>4</sup> He maintained that laws, even if these had aimed at answering the most benevolent purposes required to be changed according to changing circumstances. He argued, "Such a

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<sup>1</sup>J.H.Harington, the Rajshahi Commissioner, to B.O.R., 23 June 1792, B.R.C., 20 July 1792, No. 15, P52/47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Harington's first minute, 2 July 1799, para. 1, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P54/4.

change has, I believe, already taken place with respect to the ryots and other undertenants, who instead of being the weaker party, as they were when the zamindars exercised almost arbitrary powers, are now (according to general opinion) become the stronger party, under the support of the courts of justice."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, he drew up a draft Regulation to restore power-equilibrium between the zamindars and other subordinate landed interests. Its contents so far as the powers of the zamindars were concerned can be summed up as follows:

That the proprietors, dependent taluqdars and farmers were to be empowered to arrest and detain their respective defaulters if they were suspected to be preparing to abscond.<sup>2</sup> When their cases were under judicial investigation, they would be at liberty to attach and sell their defaulters' property without waiting for judicial decisions.<sup>3</sup> The tenants with occupancy and other leaseholders could be evicted if they failed to clear off their past year's dues.<sup>4</sup> The proprietors

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Ibid., para. 4.~~ *Harington's first minute, 2 July 1799, para. 4. B.R.C. 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, P 54/4.*

<sup>2</sup> Clause 1, Section 15 of the draft Regulation, 1795, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1795, No. 4, P 54/4.

<sup>3</sup> Clause 6, Section 15 of the draft Regulation 1795, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1795, No. 4, P 54/4.

<sup>4</sup> Clause 7, Section 15 of the draft Regulation 1795, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1795, No. 4, P 54/4.

and other rent receiving interests could summon, even compel the attendance of their defaulting tenants at their offices.<sup>1</sup>

In reviewing this draft Regulation, Graham, the acting president of the Board of Revenue, commented that for the insecurity of the public revenue the zamindars' difficulties in collecting their rents might be one important factor, but their own contumacious conduct was definitely another. He, therefore, suggested that since security of the public revenue was the main object of this Regulation, "no measures can be adopted which shall prove more efficacious towards the accomplishment of that object than that of rendering defaulting proprietors of land liable to confinement as prescribed in Regulation XIX A.D.1793 since rescinded by Regulation XII, 1794."<sup>2</sup> Buller and Hatch, the other two members of the Board, supported Graham's suggestion for the confinement of the defaulting zamindars. Challenging Harington's conclusion that the present heavy balances were ascribable to the inability of the zamindars to recover their dues from their tenants, Buller remarked: "On this point therefore I

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<sup>1</sup>Clause 8, Section 15 of the draft Regulation 1795, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1795, No. 4, P.54/4.

<sup>2</sup>Graham's first minute on the Regulation, B.R.C., 29 Aug. '99, No. 5, P.54/4.

think it necessary to observe that although I certainly think the balances are in part ascribable to that cause I am still perfectly convinced that they do not in a less degree arise from contumacy and ill faith on the part of the landholders."<sup>1</sup> He cited the example of the Rani of Burdwan who, he maintained, allowed the whole of her vast zamindari to be sold but again bought in benami. In an earlier minute he concluded that without confining the zamindars Harington's Regulation could never "operate to deter a repetition of collusion, whilst these people were left in the enjoyment of the fruits of their fraud."<sup>2</sup> Hatch maintained that the zamindars always represented their difficulties in highly exaggerated forms and it would be a dangerous mistake to accept their viewpoints literally.<sup>3</sup>

But the Council was not ready to accept their recommendation to confine the zamindars in case of default. Such a measure was thought by the Council to be both "unnecessary and impolitic".<sup>4</sup> It was felt to be unnecessary because the

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<sup>1</sup>Buller's third minute, B.R.C., 29 Aug. '99, No. 5, P54/4.

<sup>2</sup>Buller's second minute, B.R.C., 29 Aug. '99, No. 5, P54/4.

<sup>3</sup>Hatch's second minute, B.R.C., 29 Aug. '99, No. 5, P54/4.

<sup>4</sup>Council's Resolution, 29 Aug. 1799, C.J.P., 29 Aug. '99, No. 1, P147/42.



zamindars were agitating for summary powers and once they were vested with those powers they would have no new ground to withhold the government demands upon them. Moreover, as men of rank and status, the zamindars were the natural leaders of the society. Their confinement, the authorities apprehended, would not only incite their followers to disturb the peace, but also lead to the arrest of the rising value of the landed property. For, many landholders in that case would fly from land in order to avoid the disgrace of imprisonment, and few outsiders would try to get entry into land for the same reason. The Council thus rejected the recommendation of Graham, Buller and Hatch for the confinement of the zamindars in balance and approved of the draft Regulation of Harington as it was presented and duly enacted as Regulation VII, 1799.<sup>1</sup>

The Regulation VII, 1799, popularly known as Huftam or Seventh, thus threw the idealism of Cornwallis overboard. This iron law made the ryots mere tenants-at-will. That was never the intention of Cornwallis who believed that it was only the zamindars who were in position to oppress the other landed interests. So he did not remain satisfied with the abolition

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Council's resolution 29 August 1799,  
e. J. P. 29 Aug. 1799, No. 1, P147/42.

of all the feudalistic powers and privileges. He also made it plain in his proclamation of the Permanent Settlement that if the present regulations proved insufficient to protect the interests of the ryots, then the government would always have the right to interfere in favour of the ryots. He proclaimed, "It being the duty of the ruling power to protect all classes of people, and more particularly those who from their situation are most helpless, the Governor General in Council will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such Regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependent talookdars, ryots, and other cultivators of the soil; and no zemindar, independent talookdar or other actual proprietor of land, shall be entitled on this account to make any objection to the discharge of the fixed assessment which they have agreed to pay."<sup>1</sup> It was indeed ironic that such principle of policy was applied quite reversely within six years of the proclamation of Cornwallis.

Did the ryots deserve such punitive treatment? As has been said earlier, the zamindars always complained of their inability to collect rents from the farmers, renters and

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<sup>1</sup>Proclamation Article VIII, Clause 1. See, R. Clarke, Bengal Zamindary Regulations, p.10.

jotedars who contumaciously withheld public revenue and of having no means of recovering arrears from them other than by dilatory judicial suits. But they rarely complained against the ryots. Harington himself remarked that "the powers given to the landholders and farmers by Regulation 17, 1793 and 35, 1795 to distrain the crop and other personal property of their under tenants are in general effectual and sufficient when the arrear is due from the immediate cultivators of the soil, or such under tenants as have the crop in their possession; but they are found altogether insufficient for the recovery of the arrears of the rent due from the other intermediate tenants between the proprietor and cultivator, who have no crop, and very little other personal property that can be attached."<sup>1</sup> But no consideration was paid to the ryot's known behaviour when he drafted the Regulation. The contumacious intermediaries and the docile and helpless ryots were treated alike when the zamindars and other rent receivers were vested with summary powers.

The operation of this iron-law subsequently proved to be so oppressive to the peasantry that the judicial department came forward to recommend the revenue authorities to modify

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<sup>1</sup>Harington's first minute, 26 July 1799, para 2, B.R.C. 29 August 1799, No. 5, P54/4.

this law on humanitarian grounds. As proofs of its oppressive operation, the Sadar Diwani Adalat forwarded, in early 1811, some representative reports from the district judges as to the ruinous effects of this law on the peasantry, to the Board of Revenue for consideration.<sup>1</sup> But ruinous though it was for the peasantry, this law guaranteed the greatest security of the public revenue and that unexampled punctuality was the argument of many revenue authorities against any alteration in the present regulations. But Dowdeswell, the Acting President of the Board who was probably the lone figure in the revenue department in favour of reform, argued that the attainment of the punctuality of revenue collections was "certainly a great and important object. It evidently is not however the only object. Until we can combine with it the security of the peasantry from illicit and burthensome exactions, until we can remove the ~~oppressions~~ <sup>oppressions</sup> which I know are entertained that the reyuts are not unfrequently driven by the oppressions of the zemindars and farmers and their local agents to the commission of the worst of crimes, dacoity, the purpose of our revenue laws must be deemed to have been very imperfectly accomplished."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Registrar, Sadar Diwani Adalat to B.O.R., 7 June 1811, B.O.R.P., 7 June 1811, No. 106, P76/56.

<sup>2</sup>G. Dowdeswell's Minute, 7 June 1811, No. 107, last para., P.76/56.

Being divided in their opinions over the question of reform, the members of the Board agreed to act on the basis of the views of the district collectors who were supposed to be most competent to comment on the operation of the Haftam law. Hence a circular letter was issued to all the collectors calling upon them to give their most impartial opinions on the Regulation 7. They were directed that their judgment was not to be "founded on the information obtainable from a few opulent individuals but from local and personal communication with the class of people, the peasantry for whose benefits the present enquiry has been undertaken."<sup>1</sup> All the collectors without exception reported that being protected by the Regulations, the zamindars, farmers and their agents were oppressing their helpless ryots most outrageously.<sup>2</sup> The Collector of Dinajpur, for example, reported, "I have only to add that the peasantry in this district complains loudly and grievously of the oppressions of the zemindars and their officers, in regard to surplus exactions, abwaubs, deductions and distrains - that I understand half of the complaints in the Fouzdaree are by ryotts against the zemindarree amla for

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<sup>1</sup>Board's circular letter to Collectors, 7 June 1811, B.O.R.P., 7 June 1811, No. 108, P76/56.

<sup>2</sup>Bengal district Collectors to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 31 Dec. 1811, Nos. 2-15, P.77/1.

false imprisonment and other duress in order to compel payments, or to obtain security or bonds from them, and that at present the people are precluded, by the poverty from prosecuting for their grievances with any prospect of success."<sup>1</sup>

Nadia collector gave a vivid description of such oppression from his direct experience. For a general understanding of the various types of oppressions his reported has been annexed as Appendix A in verbatim.

The revenue authorities were evidently disturbed by the reports of the collectors and judges, which put them in such a dilemma that they could neither ignore the peril of the peasantry under the operation of the existing rules, nor could they afford liberal reform that might threaten the security of the public revenue again. Under the circumstances, they followed the middle path. They thus observed that while the problem created by the Regulation 7 should be remedied, "great caution therefore must be observed not to relax too much on a sudden in favour of the ryotts, lest we should run into the other extreme, and afford to them, by an abuse of the protection which the law affords, the means of withholding payments of

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<sup>1</sup>Dinajpur Collectors to B.O.R., 10 July 1811, B.O.R.P., 31 Dec. 1811, No. 5, P77/1.

their just rents.<sup>1</sup> Accusing the judicial department which little bothered about financial problems, they said, "from the reports from the officers in the judicial department, which have been forward~~ed~~<sup>e</sup>d to us, it would appear that they had only considered the evils arising from the oppression on the part of the zamindars; without taking into consideration what may be expected on the other side of the question."<sup>2</sup> The collectors were not similarly accused because the majority of them, though vocal of zamindari oppression, expressed apprehension that the sudden withdrawal of the Act 7 might make the collections of land revenue unpunctual.<sup>3</sup> They suggested a little reform of the Act rather than its total annulment.

The Governor-General in Council accepted the recommendation of the Board for limited reform and enacted Regulation 5 of 1812. The Act laid down that the zamindars could no longer sell the defaulters' property without reference to the Court. Before they proceeded to distress the property of the defaulting tenants, they were required to "serve the tenants with a written demand for the amount of it accompanied with a

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 31 Dec. 1811, para 2, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 2, P148/75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., para 3.

<sup>3</sup>Bengal district Collectors to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 31 Dec. 1811, Nos. 2-15, P77/1.

Jumma Wasil Banki (demand, collections and balance), exhibiting the grounds on which the demand is so made."<sup>1</sup>

It was also laid down that "ploughs and other implements of husbandry, bullocks and other cattles employed in agriculture, together with tools of artisans, shall not be subject to distress and sale on account of arrears of rent."<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the zamindars were enjoined under heavy penalty to withdraw the distress if their demands were contested by their tenants in the courts.<sup>3</sup> The imposition of this restraint on the distressing power of the zamindars was, however, more than offset by the withdrawal of other restrictions on them in respect of the management of their soil. As has been described earlier, the same Act, that is Regulation V of 1812, empowered the zamindars to lease out their land for any unlimited period, instead of for only maximum ten years under the former rulers, that is, Regulation 14 of 1793. The Act also empowered them to regulate the rate of rent by any criterion of their own.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as the zamindars and other superior landed interests

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<sup>1</sup>Section 13, Regulation V, 1812, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 8, P 148/75.

<sup>2</sup>Section 14, Regulation V, 1812, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 8, P 148/75.

<sup>3</sup>Section 15, Regulation V, 1812, C.J.P., 1 May 1812, No. 8, P 148/75.

<sup>4</sup>Section 2, Regulation V, 1812, see p. 71



<sup>e</sup> were still vested with the summary powers of summoning, confining and evicting their defaulting tenants, the mere ban on their summary distraint of their defaulters' property was not likely to affect the paramount position of the zamindars to extort their ~~rights~~, if not the relatively stronger intermediaries.

The next phase of the growth of zamindari powers was concerned with their liberty to create permanent landed interests between themselves and the actual cultivators. This is the story of the origin and development of the famous patni system. Patni, a Bengali term, is defined by H.H. Wilson as a "tenure by which the occupant holds of a zamindar a portion of the zamindari in perpetuity, with the right of hereditary succession, and of letting or selling the whole or part as long as a stipulated amount of rent is paid to the zamindar, who retains the power of sale for arrears, and is entitled to a regulated fee or fine upon any transfer."<sup>1</sup> The system was first introduced by the Raja of Burdwan. He felt that under the regulations of the Permanent Settlement, it was not possible to save his zamindari from dismemberment by traditional methods of management. He realised that if he

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<sup>1</sup>H.H. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms..., p.410.

farmed out his zamindari, the farmers rack-rented and impoverished the ryots at the end of their lease, While, if he managed it himself his amlas or officers embezzled the rents and in collusion with the village chiefs, alienated lands fraudulently.<sup>1</sup> To get rid of these pernicious evils, the Raja divided his great zamindari into thousands of lots yielding an average jama of about two thousand rupees.<sup>2</sup> Each of these lots was called patni taluqa and its holder patnidar to whom he applied the same rules and regulations which Government applied to him. In other words, he made a second permanent settlement with his tens of thousands of patnidars at a perpetually fixed jama.

Such an unexpected move on the part of the Raja, though against the spirit and letter of the Permanent Settlement, not only saved the Raja from ruin, but also contributed to further enlargement of his already unmanagably large zamindari. Out of the massive capital that he acquired by selling patni taluqas, he purchased the whole of the Bishnapur zamindari, parts of the Nadia, Birbhum and Rajshahi zamindaris and many other lots in other districts.<sup>3</sup> But the Raja was soon out of

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<sup>1</sup> Prinsep's Report on the Patni tenure, 12 July 1819, para. 5, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 35, P149/66.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., No. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

luck when following his footsteps, his patnidar<sup>^</sup> started creating dar or second patnidar and dar-patnidar creating second or third patnidar and so on. The Raja himself described the situation in 1819 thus: "After sometime the patnidars, prompted by an avaricious desire to augment their own profits, granted sub-leases of their patni-mahals to dur-putni renters, these persons again adopting the same line of conduct, let out their Dur putnees to others, and so on, as far as three, four or five under-renters. Now when five people expect to derive distinct profits from the same mehals, it is perfectly needless to explain how distressed and miserable the situation of the ryots must be; many of the mehals in consequence become deserted and waste, and the amount of the collections has also necessarily decreased. Wherever the putneedar last in the series, falls into arrears and is unable to discharge his rents, the same must be the case with all the other renters, successively, inclusive of the original putneedar."<sup>1</sup>

Now, as<sup>i</sup> a result of ryots' distress, zamindars' ability to pay the government revenue on that of five or six other orders. If any one in the chain for one reason or other failed to pay, it affected all the other superior patnidars up to and

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<sup>1</sup>Raja of Burdwan to Sadar Diwani Adalat, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819: No. 30, P149/66.

including the zamindar himself. When the Government attempted to collect arrears of revenue, the Courts, lacking any express law to guide them, gave conflicting verdicts about where the rights and obligations of these new tenure holders lay.<sup>1</sup> Superior tenure holders found themselves in a similar plight, so that between 1817 and 1819 the Raja of Burdwan accumulated nineteen lakhs of rupees worth of unsettled claims upon his patnidars.<sup>2</sup> With his private resources exhausted and unable to secure prompt redress through the courts he fell into arrears in his turn, owing a balance of S.R. 3,72,101 to Government by 1818-19.<sup>3</sup> Government in turn then found itself in difficulties, for when the Raja's lands were advertised for sale, the whole body of patnidars who were to be affected by the sale vigorously petitioned for a halt to the process. They argued that they had invested their capital in buying these taluqas and that they were not responsible for the Raja's arrears. Under their concerted pressure the sale had ultimately to be put off.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime, the Raja's

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G.in C. 1 May 1819, B.R.C. 4 May 1819, No-8, p58/8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

balances to Government were now mounting. He said that he was unable to dispose of the defaulting patnidars' lands, because all those subordinate patnidars in the chain of tenure holders who had paid off their dues protested and prevented the purchasers from taking possession.<sup>1</sup> At last, in May 1819, the Government had been driven to a full review of the novel situation caused by the creation of Patni tenures. The Board of Revenue first considered possible legal remedies, for they held that all the patni tenures which had been created before Act 5, 1812 were illegal and could properly be declared null and void.<sup>2</sup> But as they reported any such action must seriously injure the public revenues, for the dar-patnidars threatened that any move to annul their tenures would plunge the district into confusion.<sup>3</sup> The Board was therefore driven to recommend the reform of dar-patni tenures rather than any attempt to declare them altogether annulled.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly the Council deputed H.T.Prinsep, the superintendent and remembrancer of legal affairs, to Burdwan, "for the special purpose of conducting a full and careful investigation into the nature, number, and circumstances of the various

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<sup>1</sup> Raja of Burdwan to Sadar Diwani Adalat, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 30, P149/66.

<sup>2</sup> B.O.R. to G.G. in C., B.R.C. 4 May 1819, No. 8, para. 10, P 58/8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

classes of the undertenants, in the Burdwan Zemindary."<sup>1</sup>  
 Prinsep went to Burdwan on 29 May 1819, and submitted his  
 report and draft Regulation on 12 July 1819. In his report  
 he observed that any move to alter the status quo would in-  
 evitably be resisted by the injured patnidars to the detri-  
 ment of the public revenues and law and order in the country.<sup>2</sup>  
 On the basis of his findings he drew up a draft Regulation  
 which was approved by the Council without alteration and  
 enacted as Regulation 8 of 1819. The following were the main  
 provisions of the Regulation.

First, all leases and engagements with under tenure  
 holders, for a term of years, or in perpetuity, granted by  
 zamindars were declared valid, even if they had been executed  
 before 1812 while the ten year limit was in force.<sup>3</sup> Second,  
 all patni tenures were heritable and transferable by sale,  
 gift or otherwise, at the discretion of the holder and he would  
 be treated in the Court as if he was the zamindar.<sup>4</sup> Third,  
 patnidars were at liberty to let out their land in any manner  
 they might deem most conducive to their interest.<sup>5</sup> Fourth,

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 13 May 1819, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819,  
 No. 31, P149/66.

<sup>2</sup>Prinsep's Report on the Patni Tenures, 12 July 1819,  
C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 35, P149/67.

<sup>3</sup>Sec. 2, Regulation 8, 1819. C.J.P. 8 Oct. 1819, No. 36, P149/67

<sup>4</sup>Clause 1, Sec. 3, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 36 , P 149/67.

<sup>5</sup>Clause 2, Sec. 3, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 36 , P 149/67.

in case of arrear occurring upon any tenure, it was liable to be brought to sale by public auction.<sup>1</sup> Fifth, the holders of all patni taluqas of third, fourth or any more degree were declared to have acquired all the rights and immunities attached to patni taluqa of the first degree.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, while under the former Regulations, viz., Regulations 35, 1795, 7 of 1799 and 5 of 1812, the zamindars got the feudalistic powers to distrain, arrest, confine and evict their defaulting tenants and to determine the rate of rent by any criterion of their own, the present patni Act empowered them to create their own prototype permanent landed interests themselves holding the position of paramount chiefs. This Act fully secured their collections of revenue from their patnidars, inasmuch as the defaulting patni tenures were made liable to be sold in public auction, in the same manner as the land of the defaulting zamindars was being sold.

Chapter ThreeTHE CRISIS OF THE TERRITORIAL ARISTOCRACIES

This chapter considers the territorial aristocracies in their worst days of crisis when the great families of Bengal, who had taken some hundred years or more to achieve their paramount position, suddenly found their estates dismembered within the first decade of the Permanent Settlement. These grands seigneurs, the Rajas of Burdwan, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Nadia, Birhhum, Bishnapur and Jessore, had controlled half the land resources of Bengal in 1793. They had earlier suffered great distress during the early British experiment in revenue assessment and collection. But until the 1790s their wealth, influence and style of living still distinguished them from the inferior ranks of the landed society and enabled them to support a great rajbari or the great palace of a Raja and to employ it as a centre of social influence. It is intended here to look at two aspects of the downfall of these magnates: firstly, to examine the British attitude towards these families who monopolized a great deal of economic power and, secondly, to examine their individual reactions to the pressures put upon them.



British attitude

The distribution of landed property, which was already the foundation of Bengal society and which acquired new social and economic value after the Permanent Settlement, was vertically unequal. The following was the distribution of landed property at the time of the Permanent Settlement.

Table 4

<u>The Zamindaris</u>	<u>Annual sadar jama to nearest 1,000.</u>	<u>Sources</u>
	S.R.	
1. Burdwan	3266	Burdwan Collector, 19 June, 1791, <u>B.R.C.</u> , No. 2, P52/32.
2. Rajshahi	2250	Rajshahi Collector, 16 Aug. 1791, <u>B.R.C.</u> , 2 Sept. 1791, No. 11, P52/35.
3. Dinajpur	1484	Dinajpur Collector, 23 July 1790, <u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 July '90, App. 1790, P7/134.
4. Nadia	854	Nadia Collector, 20 Oct. 1791, <u>B.R.C.</u> , 28 Oct. '91, No. 4, P52/36.
5. Birbhum	630	Birbhum Collector, 29 May '91, <u>B.R.C.</u> , 17 June '91, No. 16, P52/31.
6. Bishnapur	400	B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 9 Sept. 1791, <u>B.R.C.</u> , 7 Oct. '91, No. 25, P
7. Fusufpur	303	Jessore Collector, 13 Dec. 1790, <u>B.R.C.</u> , 18 March '91, No. 39, P52/27.
8. Lashkpur	189	Kalinath Chowdhury, <u>History of Rajshahi</u> , pp. 126-28.
9. Idrikpur	160	Rangpur Collector, 16 June 1790, <u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 9 July '90, P71/27.
10. Muhammdeshahi	150	B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 11 April 1792, No. 11, P52/43.

Table 4 (cont.)

<u>The Zamindaris</u>	Annual sadar jama to near- est 1,000 <u>S.R.</u>	<u>Sources</u>
11. Jahangirpur	123	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 20 January 1795, No. 22 A, P72/29.
The total jama of the above eleven zamindaris	98,09	
The total sadar revenue of the Bengal district in 1793	1,90,19	

Thus eleven old families controlled  $51\frac{1}{2}\%$  of the landed property of Bengal in terms of jama payable to government.

The remainder was owned by thousands of medium and small proprietors. It is, therefore, of special importance to establish the British attitude towards these great families.

It seems that from the very beginning of the British rule in Bengal these territorial potentates were commonly a target for attack. As early as 1772, Alexander Dow, one of the earliest British historians to write about India, preached to the authorities the need to impose a ceiling on the size of individual holdings by breaking up the estates of the great families.<sup>1</sup> Hastings and Barwell were likewise in favour of the split-up

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<sup>1</sup>See, R. Guha, A Rule of property for Bengal, p.38.

of these families both for political and financial reasons.<sup>1</sup> Philip Francis too desired the same thing but from a different motive. His rivals were motivated by political expediency, for "the proprietors of the very extensive zamindari... possess influence which they employ in opposition to Government, and in case of war they might even become formidable, as was the case in former times."<sup>2</sup> Francis, on the other hand, emphasized the economic importance of easily manageable smallholdings. "The Preserving the little Zemindariess intire would certainly be attended with many Conveniences," he wrote, "but this is not an Object of near so much Importance as dividing the great ones."<sup>3</sup> In 1786 Robert Kyd, the Military Secretary to Government, urged the authorities to destroy the landed monopoly for both political and economic considerations. He wrote that the power and authority of the great territorial houses must be circumscribed "so as to render their wealth and influence less dangerous to the government<sup>ing</sup> power, whether on any crisis of foreign invasion, default in the members of the administration itself, to the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Guha  
Ibid., p.107.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in ibid. The author did not mention whose statement was it, Barwell's or Hastings!

<sup>3</sup> Philip Francis to C.W.B.Rous, 22 June 1776. Quoted in R. Guha, p.107.

perversion of justice or peculation of the public revenue by the corrupt influence of the wealth now possessed by the landholders."<sup>1</sup>

The writings of all these officers and administrators who advocated the abolition of the monopoly of landed property must have influenced the Court of Directors to think along the same lines. They apprehended that at some appropriate time these great families might create a grave financial or political crisis, either by spontaneous risings or by playing into the hands of an invading force. They accordingly advised the Bengal Government to keep them under constant surveillance. "The history of every province in India," they argued, "shews that a confederacy of the zemindars is attended with dangerous effects. You must, therefore be always on your guard against any intrigues they might form, or any symptoms of disaffection towards this country."<sup>2</sup> Such apprehension was not, of course, without foundation. In 1757, the principal zamindars joined the British forces to overthrow Sirajuddowla, and again they joined hands with the Emperor Shah Alam when he marched down to Bengal in 1760 to

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<sup>1</sup>R. Kyd Papers, MSS. EUR. F95, pp. 114-5, para 2.

<sup>2</sup>C.D. to G.G. in C., General Revenue Letter, 12 April 1786, para. 43, p.351, E/4/630.

re-assert his authority there.<sup>1</sup>

With the arrival of Cornwallis, political considerations receded into the background, but the need to dismember the great estates on economic grounds was more keenly felt. Cornwallis's idea was to consolidate British rule in Bengal through a regenerated and revitalised zamindar class who would increase the wealth and prosperity of the country by various improving measures.<sup>2</sup> For such improvements he relied heavily on the small zamindars. He believed that the overgrown zamindars as a group were extravagant, incapable and lazy, whereas the smaller zamindars were mindful of improvement of their estates.<sup>3</sup> Hence he adopted three methods to expedite the subdivision of the larger zamindaris. Firstly, he abolished the customary rule of primogeniture among the great families. He felt that the new Regulation that abolished primogeniture would be "productive of the desired effect in due course of time, as it is to be presumed that many of the principal landholders from motives of affection to their children or with a view to conform to the dictates

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<sup>1</sup>See, A. Broome, History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army, vol. I, pp. 181, 192, 319-20; S.C.Hill, Bengal in 1756-57, vol. II, pp. 418-9. General Letter from Bengal, No. 9A, pp. 229-30 (I.O.R., Parliamentary Branch).

<sup>2</sup>For details see, R. Guha, pp. 167-173.

<sup>3</sup>See, Cornwallis to B.O.R., 3 Feb. 1790; W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report, vol. II, p.530.

of the law, would divide their property among their sons or heirs, or by making no will, leave it to devolve to them in the proportions which they may be respectively entitled to inherit."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Regulations were enacted to separate different categories of taluqas from their parent zamindari estates.<sup>2</sup> The separation of taluqas, he wrote, would "not only promote the improvement of the talooks but also operate to the prosperity of the country at large...; It would tend to subdivide the great zamindaries the evils arising from the extent of which had long been felt in various shapes..."<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, he enacted some laws, commonly known as Sunset Laws, which laid down for immediate and invariable sale of the revenue defaulter's lands. All these legal provisions were intended to secure to the zamindars "the fruits of industry and economy," he wrote, "and at the same time leave them to experience the consequence of idleness and extravagance; they must either render themselves capable of transacting their own business, or their necessities will oblige them to dispose of their lands to

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<sup>1</sup> G.G. in C. to C.D., 6 March 1793, para 8, General Revenue Letter, E/4/52/ pp. 292-3.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Chapter ~~One~~<sup>TWO</sup>, pp. 50-59.

<sup>3</sup> Cornwallis's Minute, 12 May 1790, B.R.C., 12 May 1790, No. 36, P52/12.

others, who will cultivate and improve them."<sup>1</sup>

Cornwallis's idea of improvement through smallholdings was no original concept of his own. In eighteenth century England and also in France the appearance of smallholdings was recognized as an essential condition of capitalistic enterprise in agriculture.<sup>2</sup> Above abstract theory, it was also common experience that agricultural improvement in eighteenth century England had been "the work of a number of pioneers and publicists, country gentlemen, owner occupier and large tenant farmers, rather than large landholders."<sup>3</sup>

Hence both abstract theory and practical experience warranted the elimination of the concentration of landed property in a few hands. Such a concentration was thought to be detrimental to the interests of the country as well as of the company. Because, if half the country, under the control of a few old proprietors who were by no means distinguished for their ability and enterprise, remained outside the orbit of progress then the whole object of the Permanent Settlement was bound to be defeated. That in turn would mean that, for the Government's financial sacrifice

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<sup>1</sup>Cornwallis to B.O.R., 3 Feb. 1790, Firminger (ed.), p.530.

<sup>2</sup>See, R. Guha, p.107.

<sup>3</sup>G.E.Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century, p.171.

in perpetually fixing land revenue demand upon the zamindars, no recompence by way of additional tax yield from increased economic activity could be expected. Stagnation in agricultural production must, therefore, be eradicated by breaking up these unwieldy great estates into economic units. In their dispatch of 19 September 1792 which contained the formal orders for the conclusion of the Permanent Settlement, the Court of Directors strongly recommended such a policy, observing that "Upon a system of permanent possession and still more of fixed taxation, the inconveniences of them might be expected to be more real and serious. Whenever therefore the claims of justice did not interfere it must be extremely desirable to promote subdivisions of the property in the soil..."<sup>1</sup>

It is thus abundantly clear that both the Home and the Supreme Governments were at one in wishing to level out the gross inequality in the distribution of land in Bengal. Hence Government's clear stand against the monopolistic zamindari families must be taken into account when we study the circumstances through which the great families were ruined within a decade, subsequent to the Permanent Settlement. The official policy to dismember the territorial magnates,

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<sup>1</sup>C.D. to G.G. in C., General Revenue Letter, 19 Sept. 1792, para 2, pp. 747-8, E/4/638.



whenever it was possible legally, does not, however, exonerate the zamindars from their own faults contributing to their fall. Under the new system, every proprietor was free to thrive by hard work, economy and able management or to perish through extravagance and mismanagement. Cornwallis's idea of improvement required them to throw off the garb of a reigning Raja and wear the badge of a ruling manager instead. The question, thus, was how readily would these Rajas move from ancestry to enterprise. The following pages will try to establish how they behaved under the operation of the new system and what their fortunes were.

#### The Rajshahi Raj

In 1788, in her old age, Rani Bhavani of Rajshahi transferred the zamindari to her adopted son Raja Ramkrishna,<sup>1</sup> then forty years old. In 1791, the decennial settlement was concluded with him at a jama of Rs. 22,50,200.<sup>2</sup> Ever since the decennial settlement, the Rajshahi zamindari, which was the second biggest in Bengal, had been suffering from three pernicious problems: overassessment, mismanagement and the intrigues of amla or officers. Under the operation

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<sup>1</sup>Rani Bhavani's Petition to G.G. in C., B.R.C., 20 Aug. 1788, p.881, P51/22.

<sup>2</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 16 Aug. 1791, B.R.C., 2 Sept. 1791, No. 11, P52/35.

Of these causes, the dismemberment of the zamindari started immediately after the raja's decennial engagement. Before the dawn of the next century, the entire zamindary had been transferred to fresh hands. The following table shows how slice after slice was sold until the last remnant of the zamindari came to an end in 1800. The first column of the table shows the jama of the different portions into which the zamindari was parcelled out and sold and the second column gives the sale price of every parcel indicating market price and its variation. The third column gives the sources. As lands were sold in numerous small lots, selected from many different parganas at random the names of the mahals or revenue divisions could not conveniently be inserted against the jama of lands sold. The names of mahals, however, can be spotted from sales reports as indicated in the third column.

Table 5

The sales of the Rajshahi Raj

<u>Sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount realised at sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of Information</u>
To nearest 100 S.R.	To nearest 100 S.R.		
1163	1060	4 June 1793	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 5 June 1793, no number, P72/17.
284	674	14 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 July 1793, no number, P72/18.
2594	2594	27 Apr. 1795	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 1 May 1795, Nos. 8, 9, 10, P.72/43.
143	190	29 June "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 June 1795, No. 12A, P.72/44.
104	100	1 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 4 Aug. 1795, No. 40, P.72/46.
1919	510	10 Sept. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Sept. 1795, No. 1, P72/46.
609	413	13 Oct. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 29 Dec., 1795, Nos. 44-46, P72/50.
102	172	31 Mar. 1796	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 1 April 1796, No. 10, P73/3.
289	452	27 June "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 28 June 1796, No. 2, P73/5.
97	145	27 May 1797	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 May 1797, No. 29, P73/19.
81	34	" " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 May, 1797, No. 33, p.73/19.
137	74	" " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 6 June 1797, No. 7, P.73/20.
738	1280	1 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 7 July, 1797, App. A, P.73/21.
231	350	24 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 28 July 1797, App. A., P73/21.
65	29	5 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Aug. 1797, App. A., P73/22
108	116	14 Sept. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 22 Sept., 1797, No. 17, P73/23.
80	72	15 Oct. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 3 Nov., 1797, App. A., P73/25.
54	26	4 Jan. 1798	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 16 Jan., 1798, No. 15A, P73/28.

Table 5 (cont.)

<u>Sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount realised at sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of Information</u>
To nearest 100 S.R.	To nearest 100 S.R.		
46	50	6 July 1798	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 16 July 1798, App. C., P73/34.
306	132	10 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 20 July 1798, App. A., P73/34.
248	95	23 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 7 Aug. 1798, App. C., P73/35.
47	75	29 Sept. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 Oct. 1798, App. B, P73/37.
400	251	12 Nov. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 Nov. 1798, No. 17, P73/39.
696	464	10 Feb. 1799	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 15 Feb. 1799, No. 27, P73/43.
815	260	25 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 12 March 1799, No. 53, P73/44.
221	99	12 Mar. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 April 1799, App. E, P73/45.
669	603	23 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 5 April 1799, No. 1, P73/45.
992	611	18 May "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 21 May 1799, App. A, P73/47.
630	304	10 June "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 25 June 1799, No. 82, P73/49.
270	241	20 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 Aug. 1799, App. A, P73/51.
67	23	" " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 Aug. 1799, App. A, P.73/51.
413	160	6 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 July 1799, No. 27, P73/50.
311	697		<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 Aug. 1799, App. A, P73/51.
112	72	28 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 10 Sept. 1799, No. 55, P73/52.
401	139	" " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 13 Sept. 1799, No. 37, P73/52.
254	230	19 Oct. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 5 Nov. 1799, No. 1, P74/1.
14	5	7 May 1800	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 13 May 1800, App. B, P74/23.

Total:  
1571,000      12,80,000

Table 5 (cont.)

The decennial jama of the zamindari		= S.R. 22,50,200
Deduct Jama of lands publicly sold	S.R. 15,71,000	
Jama of lands privately sold	2,73,900 <sup>1</sup>	
Jama of taluqas separated	3,71,000 <sup>2</sup>	
		<u>22,15,900</u>
The remaining jama of the estate		<u>34,000</u>

As the resources of the zamindari had never been investigated minutely, it is very difficult to state categorically whether or not the zamindari was rightly assessed. The original decennial assessment exclusive of all deductions on different accounts was S.R. 20,27,200.<sup>3</sup> To this sum was added a rasad of S.R. 2,25,000.<sup>4</sup> Hence the permanent assessment of the zamindari was fixed at S.R. 22,50,200. The average annual collection of the estate from 1778-9 to 1788-9 amounted to S.R. 21,24,400.<sup>5</sup> The gap between the known revenue yield and the assessment was further widened by the withdrawal without compensation of the customary allowance of batta on the payment in sicca currency. The Raja had derived an annual income of about one lakh of rupees on account of batta and there had never been any hint in the decennial agreement that it would be resumed without compensation subsequently.<sup>6</sup> Thus if to the gap between past

<sup>1</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 29 March 1795, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 4A, P53/29.

<sup>2</sup>Rajshahi Commissioner to B.O.R., 26 May 1792, B.R.C., 15 June 1792, No. 19, P52/45; Rajshahi Commissioner to B.O.R., 5 June, 1793, B.R.C., 5 July 1793, No. 15, P53/4.

<sup>3</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 15 March 1795, B.O.R.P., 15 Aug. '95, No. nil, P71/42.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 16 June 1789, B.O.R.P., 18 June 1789, no number.

<sup>6</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 24 March 1795, B.R.C., 10 April 1795, No. 7.

revenue yield and the 1791 assessment is added the loss of the batta allowance, the Raja may be seen to have been overburdened by the decennial settlement by about two lakhs of rupees a year.

Raja Ramkrishna at first refused to accept the settlement and persisted in throwing every obstacle and impediment in the way of the execution of the settlement. But ultimately he acceded to it with a note of protest. He wrote to the Council, "the assessment is augmented and the increase required to be made good in 3 years only. Although to realize so heavy a jumma in so limited a period seems impracticable yet to labour under the displeasure of government would be still more distressing."<sup>1</sup>

In these circumstances it was not surprising to find that Raja Ramkrishna lost two of his big parganas bearing jama of about one lakh and fifty thousand rupees within a year after his decennial engagement.<sup>2</sup> This, however, did not relieve him from further distress. Every year arrears were accumulating. In July 1795, his outstanding arrears amounted to S.R. 5,39,054.<sup>3</sup> Stating his difficulties, the Raja wrote to

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Ramkrishna to G.G. in C., 28 May 1790, quoted in N.K. Sinha, vol. 2, pp. 156-7.

<sup>2</sup>See first two sales in Table 5, p. 124

<sup>3</sup>Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 27 July 1795, B.R.C., 14 Aug. 1795, No. 4, P53/33.

the Council "From the heavy Jummah and involved revenue of my zemindary, I have several years granted Muzcoo~~tee~~ Talooks, and made conditional sales to raise money which has been paid to make good the deficiencies of revenue, and many valuable portions of my lands have been sold by public sale."<sup>1</sup> He then<sup>1</sup> appealed for the abatement of assessment on account of batta abolished and excessive rasad.<sup>2</sup>

The repeated representations of Raja Ramkrishna ventilating his difficulties in paying public revenue and his chronic arrears, led to a full scale discussion in the Council about the affairs of his zamindari. For guidance of the Council opinions were sought from the Collector and from the Board. The Collector, giving his report in favour of the Raja said that his zamindari was overrated by at least half the amount of rasad imposed on him. He wrote, "The increase rasad appears to have been calculated on resources expected from improved cultivation, but in half the zemindary, improvement could add nothing to the rents recoverable by the zemindar, for he could not demand an advanced rent from Talookdars whether dependent or independent."<sup>3</sup> Basing his

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<sup>1</sup> Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 14 Aug. 1795, enclosure no. 8, B.O.R.P., 18 Aug. 1795, no. 8, P72/46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Rajshahi Collector to B.O.R., 29 March 1795, para 4, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 4A, P53/29.

opinion on the zamindari records, he said that half of his zamindari was held by taluqdars from whom "the zemindar could not by their tenures, nor by the regulations for the Permanent Settlement [Regulation VIII, 1793, Sec. 51] demand an increase; and the portion of the zemindary the rent could not be advanced (on account of the expected improvement) amounting at least to S.R. 10,33,177; the increase of 2,50,000 rupees on the Sudur Jamma fell on the remainder of the zemindary, in the proportion of 4 annas in the rupee nearly."<sup>1</sup> Graham, the Acting President of the Board of Revenue supported the Collector's reasoning as "incontrovertible".<sup>2</sup> He said, "... the other members of the Board will concur in opinion with me, that an encrease of four annas in the rupee, or in other words of five and twenty per cent upon the actual produce of an extensive zemindary, is more than under any circumstances there could be any prospect of realizing in the short span of four years..."<sup>3</sup> "In short," he said, "it would appear to me that Government looked to a provision for the payment of the rissud from improvement throughout the whole or nearly the whole of the zemindar's estate, so that taking the Jumma of 1197 [1789-90] in round numbers at Rupees 21,78,000,

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<sup>1</sup>Graham's first minute on the Rajshahi zamindari, 10 April 1795, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 4A, P53/29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



and the russud rupees 2,50,000, the increase would be at the rate of about 11 percent, instead of which to revert to the observations contained in the collector's letter, it would appear that the operation of the russud in such of the mehauls as the zemindar could extend its effects to has been in the proportion of nearly twenty five per cent."<sup>1</sup> But his views were opposed by other members of the Board. Vanderheyden was of the view that "total want of capacity or energy in the zamindar" was the cause for his balances. He said, "after relinquishing the whole of the russud since the commencement of the settlement or 6,55,000 rupees and the whole of the claim for Batta as stated by himself, 2,86,618, there would be still a deficiency of assets since the conclusion of the Settlement of near 5 laaks of Rupees."<sup>2</sup> His opinion was supported by G. Hatch, the third member of the Board.<sup>3</sup> Buller, the fourth member, said, "I have no hesitation in declaring it as my opinion that the present defalcation arises not from there having been originally a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Vanderheyden's first minute, 17 April 1795, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 4A, P53/29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

deficiency of assets, but from the imbecility and entire mismanagement of the zemindar..."<sup>1</sup> The Governor General in Council accepted the views of the majority members of the Board. He said, "I do not see that the Government is bound to make allowances for the incapacity or mismanagement of the zemindar, both which I believe to exist in a very great degree. From all that I can learn of the character and conduct of the zamindar, I believe him to be very dissipated and inattentive to the duties of his situation and that the embarrassments under which he labours are principally imputable to his own misconduct."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Government was well aware of the fact that if any reductions on the original assessment were made, then the whole body of zamindars would be led to present claims. Under such circumstances, John Shore maintained "the permanency of the assessment would be shaken throughout the country".<sup>3</sup> Hence it was resolved that the Raja should not be granted any abatement of assessment and his arrears should be recovered by selling his lands.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Buller's Minute, 17 April 1791, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 4A, P53/29.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C.'s Minute, 17 April 1791, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 5, P53/29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>G.G. in C.'s resolution, 17 April 1795, B.R.C., 17 April 1795, No. 6, P53/29.

When repeated appeals for the reductions of assessment failed to produce any result and several of the parganas had already been sold for revenue arrears, the Raja adopted negative means in order to save the zamindari. As minor's property under the management of the Court of Wards was not liable to be sold for arrears, Raja Ramkrishna transferred the whole of the zamindari by a deed of gift to his fifteen year old son, Kumar Bishawnath in August 1795.<sup>1</sup> Under the management of the Court of Wards from 1202 to 1204 B.S., (that is, from 1795-6 to 1797-8), the zamindari ran up a gigantic debit balance of Rs. 9,61,300.<sup>2</sup> The details are as follows:

Table 6

Demands, Collections and Balances of the Rajshahi Zamindari.

(1202 - 1204 B.S.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Mahals</u>	<u>Years</u>	Jama	<u>Collections</u>	<u>Balances</u>
			demand		
			S.R.	S.R.	S.R.
Rajshahi	Bettoria	1202	6,83,887	4,88,590	1,95,297
		1203	6,43,508	4,38,805	2,04,703
		1204	5,83,295	4,24,304	1,58,991
Murshidabad	Neez Chack	1202	2,40,476	2,21,090	19,386
	la-	1203	2,25,507	1,97,099	28,608
	Rajshahi	1204	1,43,796	84,287	59,509

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 18 August 1795, No; 8, P72/46.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 10 August 1798, para. 20, B.R.C., 17 Aug. 1798, No. 17, P53/57.

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Mahals</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Jama</u>	<u>Collections</u>	<u>Balances</u>
			<u>demand</u> S.R.	S.R.	S.R.
Nadia	Shajeal	1202	1,11,951	1,03,346	8,605
		1203	1,29,236	1,03,305	26,030
		1204	1,29,236	1,07,346	21,880
Jessore	Bhusna	1202	3,28,986	2,82,736	46,249
		1203	2,84,118	1,70,312	1,13,805
		1204	2,84,118	2,05,934	78,183
Total, from 1202 to 1204			37,88,320	28,27,059	9,61,260

Source: B.R.C., 17 Aug. 1798, No. 18, P53/57.

The Government's failure to collect the substantial amount of its demands in spite of the use of all administrative machinery at its disposal makes it abundantly clear that the resources of the zamindari were unequal to assessment.

The last phase of the zamindari was most tragic. In April 1798, Raja Biwanath attained his majority. The Court of Wards proposed to hand over the zamindari to him, but he refused to accept the zamindari unless reductions in revenue demand were granted which took due account of the deficient assets of the zamindari.<sup>1</sup> But the Board, refusing to admit any overassessment, handed over the management of the zamindari without taking any engagement from him and made him responsible for all arrears henceforth.<sup>2</sup> For some time, the zamindari was

<sup>1</sup>B.R.C., 1 June 1798, No. 9, P53/56.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 26 June 1798, B.R.C., 13 July 1798, No. 10, P53/57.

left without any caretaker. At last the bewildered Raja took over the management at the end of 1798, but within one year under his management the last vestige of the zamindari was sold.<sup>1</sup> In consideration of his past rank and status and present indigence, the Government granted him a subsistence allowance of eight hundred rupees per month in 1805.<sup>2</sup>

It is thus abundantly clear that overassessment made the zamindari helpless. The Raja stood little chance of getting rid of continued debit balances and the consequent sale of his lands. But overassessment was certainly not the whole truth behind the dissolution of the zamindari. The Raja's own character was also a significant contributory factor. As a believer in the Vaishnabha cult which preached love for the Supreme Being instead of for the world, Raja Ramkrishna was always engrossed in spiritual meditation oblivious of zamindari affairs.<sup>3</sup> Whatever leisure time he managed to have after meditation and other religious duties, he tried to use in composing popular vaishnabha songs which earned him the title 'Raja-saint' of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Krish-Indra Roy, a contemporary

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<sup>1</sup>See, Table 2, p.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 15 May 1806, E/4/69.

<sup>3</sup>See, Kalinath Roy Chowdhury, A History of Rajshahi (Bengal Text), p.183, Vern. Tract 1885.

<sup>4</sup>See, Dinesh Chandra Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, p.721.

zamindar of Bolihar in Rajshahi, wrote about him in verse:

"Maharaja Ramkrishna always kept himself busy with religious duties without keeping any eye on his zamindari affairs. In consequence, he lost his zamindari in short time. Everybody knows it."<sup>1</sup>

His utter indifference towards the zamindari management made him absolutely dependent on his amla who gradually became so powerful that the Raja lost all control over them. In 1792, being desperate, he petitioned the Council to save him from his overmighty amla. The content of the petition would indicate how his officers, in league with Collectorate officials, misused their powers for the advancement of their own families. He wrote, "... by the intrigues of Chaund Takoor Collector's diwan and others I was unable to obtain admission in the zemindary concerns... Ram Kishore Roy dewan Raja's diwan having, thro the patronage of the said Takoor, obtained controul over the zemindarry, fixed certain profitable mohauls at an under valuation, and caused them to be given to his relations and dependents; fraudulently and artfully making himself the actual possessor. My mother was in constant anxiety to make him settle his accounts, but could not by reason of the protection, which he received from Chaund

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<sup>1</sup> See, Kalinath Roy Chowdhury, pp. 183-4.

Takoor. The said Dewan, in conjunction with Chaund Takoor, having given the appointments of Chuckladars, Aumeens, Naibs etc., in the sudder and mofussil, to their own brothers and relations, threw the affairs thereof into confusion; and taking deductions on the Jumma of their own talooks, they overassessed the other ryots, who on this account made constant complaints and clamours, ..."<sup>1</sup>

The Raja's statement gives a vivid picture of the management condition of the ramshackle zamindari. It also hints at a struggle for power in the Rajbari among the officers. It is quite unusual that the Raja, being so much detached from the actual management, should be so much in the know about the corruption of his officers. This suggests that he was being briefed by some other rival group of officers. It is significant that, in his petition, while he repeatedly mentioned the mischief done by Ramkishore diwan and his creatures, he was silent about his two deputy diwans, Kali Shankar Roy and Balram Roy, both of whom purchased the greater part of the Raja's zamindari and founded the families of Narail and Tarash respectively.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Ramkrishna's Petition to Council, B.R.C., 4 May 1792, No. 32, P52/44.

<sup>2</sup>For Kali Shankar's purchases see p. 396, for Balram Roy, see Kalinate Roy Chowdhury, pp. 39-40.

It is probable that Kali Shankar Roy had got hold of the Raja in 1792 and was trying to oust the rival group which was headed by Ramkishore. According to Kalinath Roy Chowdhury who wrote a reliable local history of Rajshahi in the vernacular, Kali Shankar succeeded in making himself the guide, philosopher and friend of the Raja.<sup>1</sup> This story sounds true, because Ramkishore's name is not found in records after that petition and when the zamindari went under the Court of Wards in 1795-6, the diwan of the zamindari is found to be Kali Shankar Roy, ~~and~~ not Ramkishore. Kali Shankar seemed to have exerted so much influence on the Raja that he became the farmer of Pargana Bhusna, in addition to being the diwan of the Raja.<sup>2</sup> In 1795-6, when the Estate went under the Court of Wards, Kali Shankar was dismissed by the Court for established fraud, embezzlement and defalcation.<sup>3</sup> But by then much of the damage to the zamindari had been done.

Raja Biswanath tried to save some parts of his zamindari through benami purchases. Thus he bought Pargana Naldi and Santore, which bore a combined jama of about one lakh of rupees, in the names of his peons; but ultimately these had to be disposed of to clear off debts.<sup>4</sup> Other benami purchases which he

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<sup>1</sup>Kalinath Roy Chowdhury, p.164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 31 May 1796, B.R.C., 18 June 1796, No. 49. P53/44

<sup>4</sup>J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, p.125.



managed to retain were Cheena Dhukria, Dhees Wagirpur, Phuttea and Arparah in Nadia district, the combined jama of which amounted to twenty thousand rupees.<sup>1</sup> All this came to light when the nominal purchasers, who were his own peons, refused to hand them over. Ultimately these were restored to him. He may have made other benami purchases, but in the absence of any other legal disputes, it is not possible to ascertain this. His grandmother, Rani Bhavani, purchased three parganas in her own name. These were Huda Hurer Para, Tarraf Dakhin Jowar and Huda Barnagar in Murshidabad district.<sup>2</sup> Their combined jama stood at Rs. 33,706. These benami purchases, together with the purchases of Rani Bhavani, saved this historic family from total extinction. In 1819, the sadar jama of the zamindari on all accounts amounted to Rs. 88,006.

### The Dinajpur Raj

The decennial settlement of the Dinajpur Raj, the third largest zamindari in Bengal, was concluded in July 1790, while Raja Rat<sup>d</sup>nanath was still a minor. Ramkanta Roy, his official guardian and manager of the zamindari, signed the engagement on his behalf. The assessment, based on the

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 24 July 1801, Nos. 16217, P74/33, also B.O.R.P., 2 September 1803, No. 37, P75/18.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R.P., 30 May 1797, No. 29, P73/17; B.O.R.P., 30 May 1797, No. 23, P73/17; B.O.R.P., 2 August 1799, App. A., P73/51.

average collections of the past ten years was fixed at S.R. 14,84,000.<sup>1</sup>

For the next seven years, while all the principal zamindaris of Bengal were collapsing under the ruthless operation of the sale laws, commonly known as "sunset-laws", the Dinajpur Raj alone stood unassailed. Not a single advertisement for the sale of any part of this zamindary appeared in the Gazette till the end of 1797. Then, however, when the crisis in the land market caused by the spate of sales was already coming fast to a close, most amazingly the Dinajpur Raj, with its unique record of stability, suddenly crashed. In the course of fifteen months from the date of the first sale announcement the whole of the zamindari had been sold for recovery of arrears. The following table will show that the Raja first tasted the bitterness of sale proceedings on 30 April 1798 and that by 29 July 1799 the last remnant of his lands had been devoured.

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<sup>1</sup>See, Table 4, p. 114.

Table 7

The Sales of the Dinajpur Raj

<u>Amounts of sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount raised by land sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of Information</u>
To nearest 100 S.R.	To nearest 100 S.R.		
1165	1193	5 May 1798	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 May 1798, App. B, P73/32.
1297	1171	8 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 15 May 1798, App. D, P73/32.
547	401	25 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 29 June 1798, App. C, P73/33.
242	201	6 June "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 15 June 1798, App. B, P73/33.
558	533	7 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 16 July 1798, App. A, P73/34.
427	152	20 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 20 July 1798, No. 1, P73/34.
566	180	28 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 7 Aug., 1798, No. 25, P73/35.
1864	1035	19 Mar. 1799	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 April '99, App. Q, P73/45.
503	84	20 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 5 April '99, App. C, P73/45.
529	429	10 Apr. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 10 May '99, App. F, P73/46.
57	14	18 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 17 May '99, App. E, P73/47.
66	22	29 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 14 May '99, App. A, P73/47.
1879	883	14 May "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 14 May '99, App. B, P73/47.
783	212	18 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 June '99, App. L, P73/49.
644	256	26 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 June '99, P73/49.
550	364	8 June "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 28 June '99, App. J, P73/49.
1075	734	6 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 July '99, App. F, P73/50.

Table 7 (cont.)

<u>Amounts of sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount raised by land sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of Information</u>
To nearest 100 S.R.	To nearest 100 S.R.		
436	435	9 July 1799	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 July '99, App. G, P73/50.
773	241	20 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 Aug. '99, App. A2, P73/51.
28	28	19 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 Aug. '99, No. 4, P73/51.
717	625	20 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 22 Aug. 1800, App. C, P74/23.
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14,70,600	9,19,800	5 May 1798 to 20 Aug. 1799	
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The decennial jama of the zamindari	=	S.R. 14,84,000
Deduct Jama of lands sold	=	<u>14,70,600</u>
Remains to the zamindari bearing an annual jama	=	<u>S.R. 13,400</u>

It will be obvious from the above table first that, while the rate at which sales proceeded was extraordinarily rapid, the amounts realised were also extraordinarily low. Even after the whole of the zamindari had been sold it was not possible to clear off just two seasons' arrears - the Raja was left still owing R. 90,400.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in the absence

<sup>1</sup>Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 11 Feb. 1800, B.O.R.P., 14 Feb. 1800, No. 17, P73/7; Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 8 March 1800, B.O.R.P., 18 March 1800, No. 35, P73/8.

of any other asset possessed by the Raja, the Board proceeded to order the sale of the buildings of the Rajbari or palace of the Raja.<sup>1</sup> But the Raja's palace was already under the court's attachment waiting to be disposed of in satisfaction of a decree passed in favour of the Calcutta moneylender, Banarashi Ghosh, against the Raja.<sup>2\*</sup> At last, the Raja's "ward-robe, many horses and elephants and thousands of cows and buffaloes, etc., goods and chattels, and household properties, were sold at public sale."<sup>3</sup> In the meantime, hundreds of his creditors sued him to recover their unpaid loans, but he had no money even to pay his officers.<sup>4</sup> The ruined Raja, did not long survive the shock of bankruptcy and died on 26 January 1800 at the age of twenty four years, "in such a state of poverty as to be kept a prisoner in his own house by his creditors who were bent upon seizing him and throwing him into the common jail."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Board's orders, B.O.R.P., 5 August 1800, No. 35, P74/14.

\*<sup>2</sup>Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 7 March 1800, B.O.R.P., 18 March, No.35, P73/8. There is not much known about Banarashi Ghosh. In 1794, the Raja of Burdwan complained to the council that he was unable to recover arrears amounting to seventy thousand ruppees from one of his Calcutta-based farmers, named Banarashi Ghosh. (See B.O.R.P., 21 January 1794, P72/26). If it was the same man, he must have changed his profession from revenue farming to money lending, or practised both.

<sup>3</sup>Raja's petition to G.G. in C., B.R.C., 6 Nov. 1800, No. 14, P54/14.

<sup>4</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 28 Nov. 1800, B.O.R.P., 9 Dec. 1800, no. 9, P74/20.

<sup>5</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 26 January 1801, B.O.R.P., 3 Feb. 1801, No.7, P74/25.

Such a precipitous fall of this historic family was certainly pathetic and revolutionary. Its most immediate cause was a severe drought in 1798, and the consequent debit balance of about eight lakhs of rupees, for the recovery of which the whole of the zamindari was sold. Describing the effects of the drought, the Collector reported that "the crops had been totally burnt up and destroyed", and added, "many ryotts have deserted and gone to other districts in consequence of their inability to pay up the balance due from them."<sup>1</sup> Because of the relative shortage of cultivators in relation to the land available in Dinajpur, the economic relationship between landlord and labour had always been in favour of the latter. Hence, the use of any force on the part of the Raja to oblige the ryots to pay at times of scarcity only led them to "quit their houses and run away".<sup>2</sup> In this dilemma Raja Radhanath could only petition the Board, asking that "whatever balance may occur in the present Bengal year, 1204 B.S., may be added to the revenues of the two ensuing years by russud."<sup>3</sup> But the Board

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 14 April 1798, B.O.R.P., 24 April 1798, No. 25, P73/31.

<sup>2</sup>The Raja's Petition to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 13 March 1798, No. 25, P73/30.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

never investigated the effects of the drought and no suspension of revenue was granted to the Raja.

Sannyasi and Fakir raids in the wake of the great drought further aggravated the difficulties of Raja Radhanath, who informed the government that most of his parganas had been depopulated, due to their "plundering the houses of the ryots and taking away the revenue from the Katcharis and also of murdering and wounding the inhabitants, burning their houses and carrying them to the hills."<sup>1</sup> The Collectors also gave the same opinion about the Fakir raiders, "who plunder the ryots of their property and by various means extort money from them."<sup>2</sup>

It is certain that the combined effects of the drought and Fakir raids very greatly dislocated the exchequer of the Raja. But it is inconceivable that these two factors alone could have ruined the zamindari root and branch in the course of fifteen months. A decade of stability in the management of the estate and of regular payments of the revenue demand should normally have made the Raja strong enough to withstand one or two natural calamities. In fact,

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<sup>1</sup>The Raja's petition to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 23 March 1799, No. 11, P73/44. For details of the Fakir and Sannyasi activities, see Jamini Mohan Ghosh, Sannyasi and Fakir Raiders in Bengal.

<sup>2</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 23 March 1799, B.O.R.P., 2 April 1799, No. 10, P73/45.

however, the stability and financial strength of Dinajpur were unreal: the Raja never personally enjoyed the fruits of that stability and strength and was never free to regulate his affairs independently. There is strong reason to believe that his officers, protected by the Collector, had misappropriated all the surplus profits of the zamindari and then ultimately plotted to divide the best part of the zamindari among themselves.

The origin of these developments goes back to a considerable past. Raja Boidhanath, the last vigorous zamindar of Dinajpur, died without a son in 1780. His wife, Rani Sarasati, adopted a three-year-old boy, Radhanath, who was declared by Warren Hastings on 31 July 1780 to be the successor to Raja Boidhanath. After that date the zamindari was managed by Janaki Ram, a brother of Rani Sarasati. In 1786, when G. Hatch came as the first Collector of the district, Janaki Ram fell into a heavy debit balance for which he was forced to abdicate. In a debt case, he was imprisoned in Calcutta where he died in 1790.

Ousting the Rani's brother, G. Hatch himself took over the management of the zamindari. He appointed Ramkanta Roy, a relation of Radhanath, as manager of the zamindari and also the guardian of the Raja. In order to ensure better administration of the vast zamindari, Hatch divided it into sixty-



four blocks, each under a Tahsildar or Collector, who collected from six to ten thousand rupees, receiving 5 p.c. commission on the actual collections.<sup>1</sup> All the sixty-four Tahsildars who were obviously the pivots of the zamindari's administration, were appointed by Hatch on the recommendation of Ramkanta Roy.<sup>2</sup> The Hatch arrangements worked successfully in the regular collection of rents and payments of public revenues. But in spite of the success of the system, Rani Sarasati could not accept it as salutary to her. Aggrieved by the harsh treatment meted out to her brother and various other reforms in which the old loyal servants were removed, the dowager rani constantly maintained a stubborn defiance towards the Government, Hatch and his favourite, Ramkanta Roy. At the time of the conclusion of the decennial settlement, she took away Radhanath from Ramkanta's guardianship and kept him in her own apartment as a hostage. She also took possession of the seal of the Raja. In spite of the repeated requests from the Government, she stubbornly refused to release the seal and her son until her grievances were redressed.<sup>3</sup> As a punishment ~~for~~ her open

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<sup>1</sup> F. V. Westmacott, p.218; 'The Territorial Aristocracies of Bengal: The Dinajpur Raj', The Calcutta Review, vol. 55, 1872, p.218.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Collector to B.O.R., 29 January 1790, B.O.R.P., 4 Feb. 1790 (no number), P71/21.

defiance of Government orders Rani Sarasati was exiled from Dinajpur to Govindpur.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for her discontent are aptly described by E.V. Westmacott: "The Ranee's feelings of hostility against the British rule are pardonable. Her husband for twenty years reigned almost as an independent prince, and after his death, her brother, Janokee Ram had maintained an equal state. Suddenly her brother was called upon to pay his revenue with a punctuality never known before, and on default was sent in custody to Calcutta, and she never saw him again. The collections of the estate were taken entirely out of the hands of the family, and even the expense of repairs of the Rajbaree, and the monthly wages of the servants, were defrayed by Government officers, without reference to her wishes. The herd of buffaloes belonging to the Rajbaree was sent to the uncultivated part of the district as a public nuisance, and many of the consecrated cattle were sold. The Ranee was not even allowed to take care of her adopted son, nine or ten years old, but he was made over for education to the manager, Ram Kanta Roy, for whom she had a strong personal aversion ... she was naturally in no temper to look on Mr. Hatch's reforms as

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 4 Feb. 1790, B.O.R.P., 4 Feb. 1790, (no number) P71/21.

beneficial or to acquiesce in the action of the Government."<sup>1</sup>

While she was in exile at Govindpur about seventy miles north of the Dinajpur town, Ramkanta Roy, at the instance of Hatch, removed all the old servants loyal to the Rani and in their place his own men were appointed.<sup>2</sup> In protest against such developments Rani Sarasati threatened self-immolation. She complained: "As Ramkanta is my enemy, also the enemy of the zemindary, and desires my life, and as he has now almost brought me to death-door, I am prepared to put an end to my own existence."<sup>3</sup>

Under this background of the relationship between Rani Sarasati and the government, Raja Radhanath took over the direct management of the zamindari in January, 1792. It was not expected that Radhanath would forgive Ramkanta Roy who so actively collaborated with Hatch in purging the old servants, resumption of rent-free lands and, on top of all, in the interment of his mother at Govindpur. But his relationship with Ramkanta Roy remained cordial on the surface until the departure of his patron, Hatch, in March 1793.\*

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<sup>1</sup>E.V. Westmacott, 'The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal: The Dinajgepoor Raj', The Calcutta Review, vol. 55, 1872, pp. 220-1.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 4 Feb. 1790, B.O.R.P., 4 Feb. 1790 (no number), P71/21.

<sup>3</sup>Rani to B.O.R., 26 January 1791, B.O.R.P., 26 January 1791, P71/35.

\*G. Hatch joined the Board of Revenue as its fourth member after his departure from Dinajpur.

Soon after his departure the Raja appointed two muharrirs or writers to minutely check all the accounts of <sup>the</sup> Roy and his men who were charged by him with large scale embezzlement.<sup>1</sup> ~~The~~ Roy must have realised the sure danger behind such a move on the part of the Raja. He convinced the new Collector, J. Eliot, that the appointment of the two muharrirs to investigate the accounts was the first step towards overthrowing the system which had hitherto ensured the punctual collection of the public revenues. Since the punctual collection of the revenues was the principal aim of the government's revenue policy, and the most important criterion for judging the efficiency of a Collector, Eliot was easily persuaded to think that the Hatch system which was a resounding success in the collection of rents from the inferior interests in the past must be defended against any alteration. While the author of the system himself sat on the Board as a member, Eliot did not have to take much pain to make the authorities believe that a return of the Rani's old officers through any change in the system must jeopardise the security of the public revenues. The Council thus gave the statutory sanction to the Hatch arrangements

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<sup>1</sup>Collectors' Proceedings, 17 Sept. 1793, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

by a declaration which ran: "You [The Board] immediately order the Collector to acquaint the Rajah that we prohibit him from altering in any respect the sudder and mofussul arrangements made by the late Collector, or removing or depriving of authority, any of the officers appointed by him for the management of the collections and the conduct of the business of the zemindarry who were in office at the time of his departure from Dinajpur."<sup>1</sup> Such blatant interference in the internal affairs of a zamindari was indeed unexampled. Like Radhanath, the Raja of Rajshahi was at first saddled with Collector Henckell's arrangements. But after the execution of the decennial settlement, the Raja refused to accept the officers not appointed by him. The Council then allowed the Raja to settle his zamindari "with whomsoever and in such manner as he may think proper under the general Regulations."<sup>2</sup>

The Council's orders made the Raja a helpless cypher in the hands of his amla who were now free to run the zamindari quite independently of the Raja. Their real master was Ramkanta Roy, the diwan, not Radhanath, the zamindar. Two months after this order, the Raja pathetically complained

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 27 September 1793, para 3, B.O.R.P., 1 Oct. 1793, P72/21.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., B.R.C., 20 April 1792, No. 16, P52/43.

to the Board: "Ramcaunt Roy , with his own amla<sup>1</sup> is sole manager of my zemindary at the sudder and in the mohussil... From the month of Cautick [seventh month in the Bengali calender] the Cutcherry was removed to the neighbourhood of Rajegunge, near the house of the said Roy; the Cutcherry and the whole concerns of the zemindarry are under his control, and I am entirely divested of all authority. Whatever papers the Roy sends to me for signature, I seal and sign."<sup>1</sup> In an earlier representation to the Board, he said that ever since Ramkanta Roy became manager through the patronage of Hatch, who was hostile to his family, he and his creatures were consuming all the surplus profits after the regular payment of the government revenues.<sup>2</sup> He reiterated: "Gentlemen, the amlah appointed by the late Collector are nominally my servants, but in fact, my mortal enemies. They are mohassil [spies] over me. The profits of my estate which have of late years been very considerable, have been consumed by Ramkanta Roy, his patron, and his dependents."<sup>3</sup> Against the blind partisan attitudes of the

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<sup>1</sup>Raja to Collector, 19 Nov. 1793, in Collectors Proceedings of 19 Nov. 1793 forwarded with his letter, 20 Nov. 1793, to B.O.R., B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Raja's petition to B.O.R., B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

Collector, J. Eliot, he wrote to the Board: "It is extraordinary that although by the oppressions of Ramkanta Roy I have been distressed beyond forbearance, and have repeatedly represented this to the Collector that he has not stated the same to your Board; but whatever Ramcaunt Roy declares, which he knows to be foul roguery, and to secrete his embezzlements and that of his amlah, with a view to prevent my having the management of my zemindary he will not permit any one of my well wishers to be about my person, excepting his own ill advisers." He continued, "I was in expectation that from the present Collector I would have got redress for my past and present grievances, on the contrary, the Collector patronizes those who are the enemies of my life and reputation."<sup>1</sup>

Collector Eliot defended himself against all these allegations by stating that the Raja was too young to understand business. He alleged that the Raja was led by some interested and ambitious persons who were leaving no stone unturned to get rid of Ramkanta Roy and his other exceptionally efficient and honest officers.<sup>2</sup> Giving a comparative picture of the performance of the past regime with that of Ramkanta and

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<sup>1</sup>The Raja to B.O.R., forwarded with Collector's letter, 10 Dec. 1793, enclosure number 9, para 6, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

<sup>2</sup>Collector J. Eliot to B.O.R., 10 Dec. 1793, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

his men, he wrote in December 1793: "The contrast to be formed between the men who call themselves the Raja's well wishers and faithful servants and the present men who now manage the zemindary under Ramkanta Roy, is conspicuous. The former from the balances that arose prior to Ramkanta Roy's management, and the manner in which the lands were given away to the loss of the government's revenue. The farm of the Ander Mehals shows the extraordinary and curious mode they adopted to bribe and secure the Ranny's favour and the creatures about her person, and the latter in having resumed these lands, and realised the revenues punctually for seven years past, besides erecting for the young Rajah an elegant palace for his habitation with other buildings."<sup>1</sup>

The Council's response to all these allegations and counter allegations was again unfavourable for the Raja. Without instituting any investigation into the Raja's charges, the Council rushed to support the policies of the successive two Collectors, viz., Hatch and Eliot, towards the Dinajpur Raj and charged Radhanath, though he never tasted the power of administering his estate himself, with gross misconduct, irresponsibility and incapacity.<sup>2</sup> All

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Collector J. Eliot to B.O.R., 10 Dec. 1793,  
B.R.C. 11 April 1794, No. 9, P 53/15.

<sup>2</sup> G.G. in C.'s Resolution, 11 April 1794, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 18, P53/15.



these disqualifications were being ascribed by the Council "Chiefly to the management of it having been committed to him at the early age of fifteen, agreeable to the Regulations then in force, ..." <sup>1</sup> In order to disqualify him, the Council extended the age of minority from the existing fifteenth to the nineteenth year from the date of birth. <sup>2</sup> As Radhanath was only seventeen years at that time he entered his second minority under the new rules. The Governor General in Council thus wrote to the Board, "We have determined, in consideration of the total incapacity which he has evinced for the management of his extensive zemindary, to place it under the care of the Court of Wards, subject to the rules prescribed respecting minors." <sup>3</sup>

It is possible that as the Raja was in his teens, he could be easily used as a figure-head by a disgruntled faction of the Rajbari to achieve their own ends. It is again possible, as has been alleged by the Raja, that the ruling Ramkanta clique efficiently managed the estate for their own best interests, rather than that of the Raja. In spite of the Raja's most strenuous opposition, the Ramkanta group continued to administer the zamindari without any attempt to destroy it. It would be unreasonable to think that they

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. G.G. in C's resolution, 11 April 1794, B.R.C. 11 April 1794, No. 18, P53/15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 11 April 1794, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 19, P53/15.

did so because of their disinterested love for the Raja who had nothing but hatred for them. It was possibly because they did not think it wise to kill the goose that lay the golden eggs. Through the preservation of the zamindari under their management, they could manage to gobble up the surplus profits after the payment of the public revenue, monopolise all the remunerative positions in the zamindari management among their families, and could exert their influence through their association with the officers of the Collectorate and courts, to procure patronage from them for their own dependents and relations. Whatever might have been the case it is certain that Radhanath did not derive any financial gain from the so-called stability so long as the Ramkanta clique remained in power.

In July 1795, Radhanath attained his nineteenth year and was duly reinvested with the management of the zamindari.<sup>1</sup> As a good gesture to the Raja Ramkanta Roy was removed shortly before the estate was handed over to him. But it is very doubtful whether Ramkanta's removal made him entirely free to manage his affairs with officers chosen by himself. The Council passed no new order annulling its previous order that prevented the Raja from changing any officer formerly appointed

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 July 1795, B.O.R.P., 7 Aug. 1795, No. 27, P72/46.

by Hatch. Moreover, Manik Chand who was appointed as the new diwan of the Raja in August 1795, was a nominee of the Collector, John Eliot. Manik served under Eliot when he was the Collector of Rangpur in 1792. When Eliot was transferred to Dinajpur he came with him and was made Eliot's personal diwan in 1793.<sup>1</sup> When Radhanath's zamindari was under the Court of Wards for the second time, Manik used to maintain the accounts on behalf of the Court and when thus acting as the Court's accountant, he was said to have given several false returns to the Court.<sup>2</sup> On the grounds of his corrupt practice Thomas Graham, the acting President of the Board, recommended his outright dismissal. Graham wrote: "I consider him Manik altogether unworthy of being further employed as a public officer, and accordingly propose that the Collector of Dinagepore be forthwith directed to dismiss him from his office of public dewan, and that on the same ground we recommend to the Governor General in Council, that Manikchand be proscribed from ever serving the Company in any capacity whatever in future."<sup>3</sup> But before any action

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 July, '95, B.O.R.P., 18 Aug. 1795, No. 25, P72/46.

<sup>2</sup>Board's Proceedings, B.O.R.P., 7 Aug. 1795, No. 30, P72/46.

<sup>3</sup>Board's Proceedings, Thomas Graham's Minute, B.O.R.P., 7 Aug. 1795, No. 30, P72/46.

was taken against Manik Chand by the authorities, his patron Eliot managed to obtain for him the post of the diwan from the Raja. He however explained his diwan's sudden departure for the Raja's service by stating that the Raja was entreating him for the expert services of Manik Chand and, hence, for the interests of the Raja, Manik was dispensed with and that was possible because his worthy grandson, Phool Chand, was readily available to become his own diwan.<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely believable that Radhanath would have entreated Eliot for his toady Manik Chand despite his knowledge that it was Eliot's blind backing that made Ramkanta so bold as to defy him so shockingly and that it was Eliot's hostile reports against him that influenced the authorities to dispossess him for one and a half years. In short, though Radhanath was invested with his zamindari after the expiry of his period of forced minority in July 1795, he was still encumbered by official pressure and tutelage. Excepting the withdrawal of Ramkanta who was replaced by another creature of the Collector, no other alteration took place in Hatch's arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 July, 1795, B.O.R.P., 18 Aug. 1795, No. 25, P72/46.

It should be noted that though Manik Chand was promoted through official influence, he could not become as powerful as his predecessor, Ramkanta Roy. By his efficient management Ramkanta ensured the government with the perfect punctuality of the payment of the revenues, and the government, in return, ensured his permanency by a declaration that he and his men could not be sacked by the Raja. But Manik was not entitled to enjoy such immunity. Again, while Ramkanta received official support from the Collector to the Council, Manik got support only from Eliot. But Eliot left Dinajpur in January 1795 to become the judge of Tipperah. The succeeding Collector, Cornelius Bird, never tried to meddle into the Raja's affairs. No wonder that his comparative weakness combined with the departure of Eliot, his only pillar of strength, drove him to make alliance with the remaining men of Ramkanta Roy, who felt equally insecure under the changing circumstances and also with the Collector's amla whose head, Phool Chand, was none other than his own grandson, in order to dismember the Zamindari and divide it among themselves, before he was cashiered by the Raja. The opportunity was provided by the drought of 1798. They exploited the situation by putting the estate into a state of recurring balance and consequent sale till the last lot of the zamindari was sold.

The collusion between the zamindari and Collectorate officers to dismember the Raja's estate was first revealed by Babu Ram, a vakil of the diwani adalat at Dinajpur. He wrote to the Board in July 1800 that the Collector's amla were actively involved in the scramble for the Raja's lands.<sup>1</sup> He added that Phool Chand, the Collector's diwan and Bhavani Prasad Taluqdar, who was the Collector's seristadar, purchased considerable amounts of Radhanath's lands in the names of their brothers, nephews and cousins.<sup>2</sup> Other prominent Collectorate officers who purchased Radhanath's lands, according to Babu Ram, were Wali Muhammad Nazir, Boydhanath Chowdhuri, Rashu Babu, Radakanta, Ganganarayan Senlandi, Farendaz.<sup>3</sup> Babu Ram was not appointed by the Raja to plead for him. His interest in exposing their collusive transactions was the possibility of great monetary reward if he could successfully unearth their collusions through the co-operation of the government.<sup>4</sup> Soon after Babu Ram's exposition, Raja Radhanath made representation to the Council

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<sup>1</sup>Babu Ram to B.O.R., 15 July 1800, B.O.R.P., 29 July 1800, Nos.2-3, P74/14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., also see, Babu Ram to G.G. in C., B.R.C., 9 June 1803, No. 2, P54/33.

<sup>4</sup>Babu Ram's petition to B.O.R., 1 Nov. 1804, B.R.C., 15 Nov. 1804, No. 26, P54/40.

that he had lost his great zamindari because of the treacherous conduct of his amla. He explained that, at the time of his reinvestment with the zamindari in 1795, he was circumstantially forced to accept Ramkanta's men as his officers and appoint Manik Chand as his diwan. But "these officers", he continued, "from wicked and treacherous views, were so negligent and inattentive in collecting the rents of the mofussil, and in paying the revenue to the Collector, that in the space of three years, being from the commencement of the Bengal year 1202 until the end of 1205 [~~1797-1800~~] they suffered balances to the amount of eight lakhs of rupees to accrue in the mofussil, and out of the amount of the collections they themselves appropriated nearly five lakhs leaving me four lacs of rupees in arrears to government; in consequence of this my zemindarry was sold at public sale, ..." <sup>1</sup> He added that they in concert with the Collectorate officers undervalued his zamindari which was all sold for a nominal price. He said, "At the time of sale, Phool Chund, dewan to the Collector, and grandson of the dewan of my zemindarry, by name Manick Chund above mentioned, and Wullee Muhummud, Nazir to the Collector and other officers belonging to the Collectorship, ... as also those of my

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<sup>1</sup> Raja Radhanath to Council, 10. Sept. 1800, B.R.C., 6 Nov. 1800, No. 14, P54/14.

zemindarry Manick Chund, etc. having fraudulently concerted and leagued with each other, contrived by means of their collusion to depreciate the value of several fertile and productive mehaults, which I thought would have sold for their intrinsic worth, and bought them in themselves. For instance, Phool Chund, Collector's dewan, has purchased lands to the amount of nearly one lac or rupees, and Wullee Muhamud Nazir to the amount of almost eighty thousand rupees under fictitious names; and in the same under hand manner other officers belonging to the Collectorship and the adawut<sup>1</sup> etc., have purchased the whole of the remainder of my zemindarry, by which I am deprived of my inheritance. Thus in consequence of their villainy and collusion, so extensive a zemindarry has been sold for the liquidation of four lacs of rupees due to government..."<sup>1</sup> The helpless Raja then narrated that his amla collected the mofussal rents for themselves and that they consistently refused to supply him with the zamindari accounts of collections, balances and disbursements.<sup>2</sup> He thus appealed to the Council to appoint a Commissioner to investigate his charges and render him justice.<sup>3</sup> The Council ordered on his petition

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Radhanath to Council, 10 Sept. 1800, B.R.C., 6 Nov. 1800, No. 14, P54/14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



that "a particular enquiry may be made into the circumstances represented therein, regarding the purchase of a part of the zamindar's estate by the public servants, in opposition to the Regulations."<sup>1</sup>

According to the instructions of the Council and the Board, Edward Webb, the acting Collector after the death of Bird in January 1800, made a preliminary investigation into the charges against the Collector's amla. Phool Chand, Bhavani Taluqdar (taluqdar was his surname), Wali Muhammed and many others were interrogated by the Collector. Phool Chand disclaimed any complicity in dismembering the Raja's estate. He, however, admitted that his grandfather, Manik Chand, lent money to Kirtichand, Sangum Lal and Mittun Lal to buy several lots of the Raja's land.<sup>2</sup> When asked to give their family relations, Phool Chand said that Kirtichand was his own younger brother, Sangum Lal was the son of Radha Krishna who was the son-in-law of Choni Lal who was the son of Manik Chand's eldest daughter.<sup>3</sup> He also confessed that all of them lived in their home district,

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<sup>1</sup>Council's Order, 6 Nov. 1800, B.R.C., 6 Nov. 1800, No. 14, P54/14.

<sup>2</sup>Collector's Proceedings on 8 Aug. 1800, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Patna, and their estates were managed by Manik Chand himself.<sup>1</sup> Webb then called Manik Chand for his deposition. Manik admitted that he was managing the estates himself and that he borrowed money from the merchants to buy those lands for his dependents.<sup>2</sup> When asked why he did not buy lands for his competent grandson, Phool Chand, Manik replied that it was needless because he had obtained the equally exalted post of a diwan for Phool Chand.<sup>3</sup> Webb then examined Guruprashad. He was the son of Bhavani Taluqdar and was holding the post of a serestadar in the Raja's katchari. He was told that he was only eleven years old in 1800 and asked wherefrom he got five thousand rupees to buy two big lots. Guruprashad replied that he served four years as a serestadar of the Raja at the time of Hatch and four years at the time of Eliot, drawing a salary of fifteen rupees per month.<sup>4</sup> He further said that besides his salary savings, he had also savings from the presents that he received from his colleagues and ryots at the time of his investiture of his

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. *Collector's proceedings on 8 Aug. 1800,*  
B.O.R.P. 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

<sup>2</sup> Collector's Proceedings on 11 Aug. 1800, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

<sup>3</sup> Collector's Proceedings, 9 Aug. 1800, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Brahmanical thread.<sup>1</sup> The Collector pursued, "You say, you received a salary for four years in Mr. Hatch's time. When Mr. Hatch left this station agreeably to your account you were only three years old, how then did you receive a salary for four years. Who was dewan at that time?" "Dewan Manik Chand had the management," replied Guruprashad.<sup>2</sup> The poor boy was not expected to know this from his cradle that at that time the diwan was Ramkanta Roy and Manik Chand was yet to come from Rangpur to Dinajpur. Webb checked the zamindari papers and found that Guruprashad was really appointed as a serestadar by Ramkanta Roy at a salary of fifteen rupees per month when he was only three years old.<sup>3</sup> Examining many other amla, Edward Webb reported to the Board: "I have not the smallest doubt in my own mind that many of the amlah have been guilty of the charge preferred against them by Babu Ram."<sup>4</sup> The acting Collector added that Babu Ram had ample evidence in his hands to prove that official power and influence were used by the Collector's amla in dismembering the Raja's estate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. *Collector's proceedings, 9 Aug. 1800, B.O.R.P. 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.*

<sup>2</sup> Collector's Proceedings, 16 Aug. 1800, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Acting Collector to B.O.R., 14 Oct. 1800, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 23, P74/19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The Board called for a full investigation in November 1800.<sup>1</sup> But before Webb started his proceedings against the accused persons, Cornelius Smith joined as the regular Collector in December 1800. In the same month Phool Chand resigned.<sup>2</sup> One month later, that is, in January, 1801, the Raja also died.<sup>3</sup> On top of all these changes came Smith's reluctance to prosecute his amla immediately after his arrival as the Collector of the district. He wrote to the Board that he was unable to undertake the investigation against his amla because he was not conversant with the Bengali language and he had no time at all in hand to spare for such big proceedings. He requested the Board either to drop the proceedings altogether or appoint an independent Commissioner exclusively for this purpose.<sup>4</sup> The Board, accepting neither of his suggestions, instructed him to carry out the investigation whenever he found suitable time after his regular official jobs.<sup>5</sup>

In short, such orders only put the problem into cold storage. Now only one man was trying to keep the issue alive. It was Babu Ram. Babu's interest was that if he could prove the collusive transactions of the Collector's amla, then

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<sup>1</sup>Board's orders, *ibid.* B.O.R.P. 4 NOV. 1800, NO. 23, P74/19.

<sup>2</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 4 Dec. 1800, B.O.R.P., 16 Dec. 1800, No. 15, P74/21.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 26 January 1801, B.O.R.P., 3 Feb. 1801, No. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Collector Smith to B.O.R., B.R.C., 29 January 1801, No. 13, P54/16.

<sup>5</sup>Board's Orders, B.R.C., 29 January 1801, No. 13, P54/16.

their estates were liable to be confiscated by government under Regulation 7 of 1799, in which case he must get a reward for the trouble he took for the government. Thus he was constantly pressing upon Smith to undertake the investigation. At one stage Smith became so annoyed with his importuning that he complained to the Board that Babu Ram was "perpetually harassing me to prosecute the inquiry, and never failed to state the hardship of his being obliged to attend while the enquiry was making no progress, ..." <sup>1</sup> The Collector further said that Babu Ram was a "wretch who, having been expelled for misconduct and incapacity from the respectable situation of pleader for government in the adawlut, has betaken himself to the infamous employment of an informer, and makes a trip every rainy season to the sudder in prosecution of his new calling. The true spring of his exertions is not the prospect of the three lacks and a half which, as he asserts, his success will bring into the public treasury, but of the ten per cent upon that sum with which, he flatters himself, his vile and dirty service is to be rewarded." <sup>2</sup> The Council reserved its comment upon the Collector's unusually rude comments about Babu Ram. <sup>3</sup> But

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 11 Oct. 1802, B.R.C., 29 January 1801, No. 13, P54/16.

<sup>2</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 11 Oct. 1802, para 4, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1802, No. 10, P54/28.

<sup>3</sup>Council's observation on above, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1802, No. 10, P54/28.

Babu Ram was determined to bring his case to an end. After about four years of his allegation against the illegal and collusive purchases of the Collector's amla he at last succeeded in forcing Smith to complete his investigation against one obscure man only, Radakanta. In July 1804, Smith reported that Radakanta, a clerk, fraudulently purchased two lots of the Raja's lands, namely Hejelgarry and Chinchra, at a nominal price of only 250 rupees.<sup>1</sup> After their forfeiture to government according to the Regulation 7 of 1799, these were resold at 12335 rupees.<sup>2</sup> The Collector then remarked that the Raja and Babu Ram were right in their complaints; that the zamindari was collusively sold at a nominal price was "completely corroborated by this recent sale which has yielded a sum of 12335 rupees whilst the same property at the illicit purchase only brought the small sum of 250 rupees - an amount but little exceeding one fiftieth part of the present sale, and a circumstance which incontrovertibly proves the loss sustained by the defaulter from the undue influence of the purchaser in breach of the Regulations."<sup>3</sup> On the same subject the Board wrote to the

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 July 1804, B.O.R.P., 7 Aug. 1804, No. 16, P75/29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Council that the result of the latest investigation "fully confirms the justness of the Collector's observations regarding the injury the late Raja of Dinagepore sustained from the combination among the former amlah of the Collector's office."<sup>1</sup> To do some justice to the late Raja, the Council ordered the Board to hand over the surplus proceeds of the sale to the family of the late Raja,<sup>2</sup> and Babu Ram, as a reward, received 10 p.c. of the sale proceeds.<sup>3</sup>

It is not known whether or not the investigation was further carried out. After 1804, no more information about it is found in records. It is possible that Babu Ram, who was the only moving force behind this issue was either dead or made neutral by sufficient presents or pressure from those against whom he was moving. The authorities were already less enthusiastic about this investigation. It is thus very possible that with the absence of constant reminders from Babu Ram, the government had shelved the investigation for good. But the limited evidence that we get from the preliminary investigation by Edward Webb, and the result of Smith's proceedings against Radakanta, cannot but lead us to believe that the Collector's amla joined hands with those

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 7 Aug. 1804, B.O.R.P., 7 Aug. 1804, No. 17, P75/29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 15 Nov. 1804, B.R.C., 15 Nov. 1804, No. 27m P54/40.

of the Raja with a view to dismembering his estate and dividing it among themselves through staged auction sales. In consequence, the great zamindari bearing a jama of about fifteen lakhs of rupees was sold for only a little over nine lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the zamindari was purchased by the three diwans, viz., Manik Chand, Pool Chand and Ramkanta Roy. Obviously, their wealth and connections prevented them from being tried for their breach of Regulations and trust. Manik Chand and his grandson Phool Chand purchased the best parts of the zamindari in the names of their dependents. Manik Chand also bought some lots in his own name. The total jama of his purchases so far as could be ascertained amounted to Rs. 1,36,634.<sup>1</sup> Ramkanta Roy, the ruler of the zamindari from 1786 to 1795, bought 23 lots in all.<sup>2</sup> It is not known how much their total public jama was. But it was reported by the Judge of Dinajpur in 1802 that Ramkanta Roy was the richest landholder in the district.<sup>3</sup> Referring to the fabulous riches of Ramkanta and Manik, the Collector wrote in 1801 that it was tragic that while the Raja was starving, his two diwans were "rich and fat and flourishing, and are proprietors of some of the

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<sup>1</sup>See, Table A, p. 397-98.

<sup>2</sup>See, Table p. 265.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 11 Oct. 1802, para 3, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1802, No. 10, P54/28.



finest parts of what was their poor lord's very fine estate."<sup>1</sup>

In reporting the ruin of the Dinajpur family to the Court of Directors, the Governor General in Council, however, gave quite a different picture. The Council wrote that the Dinajpur zamindari, which was so productive under the official management, had been "dissipated in a very few years by the idle and profligate extravagance of the zamindar."<sup>2</sup> There is no mention anywhere in the Board's proceedings about the Dinajpur Raj that Raja Radhanath was ever extravagant and lazy. Collector Eliot once reported against him in December 1793 that he was stupid, incapable of reading and writing and was never unwilling to sign blank papers.<sup>3</sup> However, in view of Eliot's part in the whole affair it may properly be suspected that this was a ~~biased~~ <sup>biased</sup> and misleading report. Only eight months earlier, at his first arrival in the district, he had given a very different picture of Radhanath. He had been so pleased with the Raja, and so

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 26 January 1801, B.O.R.P., 3 Feb. 1801, No. 7, P74/25.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., *7 Oct. 1802* P.P.S.C., H.C., 1831-2, vol. XI, p.132, App.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 10 Dec. 1793, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 9, P53/15.

confident of his ability in April 1793 that he had recommended: "I am induced to solicit your lordship to favor him with a khelut as an encouragement to his exerting himself in the management of his zemindary."<sup>1</sup> He added, "Indeed to me late transactions lead me to expect he will do well, and is inclined to his own interest, and the welfare of his country."<sup>2</sup> Still earlier in October 1790 Collector George Hatch reported that four well-qualified teachers were employed to teach him Persian and Bengali. "In both languages," he wrote to the Court of Wards, "he has made suitable progress for the time he has been under their tuition."<sup>3</sup> During his tutelage under the Court of Wards for the second time in 1794, the Board reported to the Council about his character and ability. "In justice to the young Rajah, we feel it incumbent upon us to declare, 1st, that during his minority, and since his coming of age, no serious charges against his moral character have ever come to our knowledge. 2ndly, that with respect to his capacity, if we were to judge from the Persian representations

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 April 1793, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 7, P53/15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to Court of Wards, 20 Oct. 1790, C.O.W.P., 4 January 1791, P89/56.

transmitted to us, we should pronounce it above the common standard."<sup>1</sup> In the face of all these reports to the credit of the Raja, the Council's charge of extravagance, <sup>incapacity</sup> and laziness against him was entirely unfounded and uncharitable. In fact, his struggle for power against the Ramkanta clique first, and his struggle for survival next left him little room for laziness and extravagance.

#### The last remains of the zamindari

As revealed from the sales table on page 141 the Dinajpur Raj was reduced from the third largest zamindari in Bengal at the time of the Permanent Settlement to a minor estate, assessed at only Rs. 13400 sadar jamma, the income of which could scarcely support the Raja's family. But the last remains of the estate after sale were in fact much bigger than that tiny figure would suggest. Raja Radhanath's wife, Rani Tripura Sunduri, sold all her jewellery and other personal properties and purchased some lots in her own name.<sup>2</sup> Rani Tripura Sunduri appointed his uncle Sadananda Singh to manage the estate on her behalf. Sadananda also became the legal guardian of her three-year-old adopted son Raja Govindanath. Through private negotiations

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 3 January 1794, B.R.C., 11 April 1794, No. 8, P53/15.

<sup>2</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 11 January 1800, B.O.R.P., 14 Feb. 1800, No. 18, P74/7.

Sadananda succeeded in recovering pargana Akbarabad from its auction-purchasers. The total jama of all these mahals amounted to Rs. 1,60,590 in 1808.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Nadia Raj

The rajas of Nadia stood fourth in territorial possessions at the time of the decennial settlements. The decennial assessment upon the zamindari was based on the net collections of 1195 B.S./1788-9 A.D., the sadar jama of the zamindari being fixed at S.R. 8,54,000. This was after full allowance had been made for the loss of separated taluqas and the abolition of zamindari collections under the headings of Fulbandi or embankments and bridges, and sayer. Ever since his engagement, Raja Iswar Chandra, who was only eighteen years old at the time of his accession in 1789 A.D., was struggling hard to pay his revenue punctually. He, however, succeeded in preserving the zamindari intact up to 1796. In early 1797, he at last submitted to various circumstances that had been working against him. Huge arrears were accumulating every year in discharge of which different parganas were successively put up for sale both publicly and

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Buchanan (Hamilton), A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Dinajpur, pp. 247-49.

privately. The greater portion of the zamindari had been sold before he died in 1803. At the time of his death the sadar jama of the zamindari had been reduced by the loss of lands to S.R. 2,35,600 inclusive of the lands privately sold but not separated officially.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the unlimited power vested in landholders by Regulation 7 of 1799 and of the general recovery of the zamindars as a class from 1800, his son and successor, Raja Girish Chandra, could not preserve the rest of the zamindari from ruin. The transfer of the zamindari mostly by private sale, continued until 1813 when the last portion of the estate was sold. The following table gives a picture of the process of transfer:

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 28 Feb. 1803, B.O.R.P., 4 March 1803, No. 15, P75/12.

Table 8

The sales of the Nadia Raj

<u>Amount of sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount raised by land sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of information</u>
S.R. to the nearest hundred	S.R. to the nearest hundred		
69 ,	152	2 Nov. 1796)	B.O.R.P., 11 Nov. 1796,
411	151	" " " )	No. 21, P73/10.
544	693	24 July 1797	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 1 Aug. 1797, No. 40, P73/22.
1262	672	29 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Aug. 1797, No. 1, P73/22.
322	801	10 Aug. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 18 Aug. 1797, No. 41, P73/22.
478	509	12 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 22 Aug. 1797, No. 36, P73/22.
632	459	19 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 29 Aug. 1797, No. 58, P73/22.
220	294	5 May 1798	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 15 May 1798, No. 27, P73/32.
97	74	19 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 29 May 1798, No. 1, P73/32.
359	192	6 Apr. "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 19 April '99, No. 7, P73/45
146	292	17 " "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 3 May, '99, No. 19, P73/46.
235	67	1 July "	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 16 July '99, No. 62, P73/50.

Table 8

<u>Amount of sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount raised by land sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of information<sup>^</sup></u>
S.R. to the nearest hundred	S.R. to the nearest hundred		
271	19	7 Sept. 1799	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 20 Sept. '99, No. 14, P73/52.
523	943	18 July 1801	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 31 July 1801, No. 48, P74/33.
578	6200	29 Dec. 1813	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 1 Feb. 1814, No. 28, P77/31.
<hr/>			
Total:			
6,14,700	11,31,800		

The decennial jama of the zamindari	=	Rs. 8,54,000
Deduct jama of lands publicly sold		Rs. 6,14,700
Deduct jama of lands privately sold		2,00,000 <sup>1</sup>
<hr/>		
Remains to the zamindari bearing an annual jama	=	39,300

How is this catastrophic though gradual destruction of the Nadia zamindari to be explained? The decennial assessment of the zamindari cannot be said to have been particularly disadvantageous for the Raja, though he strongly

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<sup>1</sup>Acting Secretary's Report, 25 January 1828, B.O.R.P., 28 January 1828, No. 90, P80/52.

represented that the resources of the estate were unequal to the burden imposed.<sup>1</sup> The net collections, not the total demand, of 1195 B.S./1788 A.D. were made the basis of the decennial settlement. Since these collections were definitely not made by the use of force, they must be assumed to have reflected the true capability of the estate. Moreover, to make the assessment more moderate, a deduction of Rs. 14,000 from the collections of 1195 was allowed to the Raja.<sup>2</sup> What is more, after the dissolution of the zamindari, the Raja himself confessed in 1817, possibly on religious consideration, that Raja Iswar Chandra had concealed 2,66,493 bighas of lands, capable of yielding about one lakh of rupees annually, from the decennial assessment.<sup>3</sup> The benefits derived from public concession and fraudulent concealment, must have made the jama very moderate. This was also testified to by the very high rate of sales of his lands - which were sold on an average at eighteen years of purchase at the usual rate of 10 p.c. on the sadar jama.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Raja's Petition to B.O.R., B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1791, No. 4, P52/36

<sup>2</sup> Collector's Settlement Report, 20 Oct. 1791, B.R.C., 29 Oct. 1 1791, No. 14, P52/36.

<sup>3</sup> B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 23 May 1817, B.R.C., 27 June 1817, No. 2 F P. 57/11, para 1.

<sup>4</sup> See, Table 8, p. 175



But though the zamindari was justly assessed, Raja Iswar Chandra was never free from the evils of frequent natural calamities. Immediately after the decennial settlement in 1791, the standing winter crops were scorched by a long drought. The drought also vitiated the prospects of the next rabi or post winter crops.<sup>1</sup> In recognition of the heavy losses of the Raja, the government gave him some relief by allowing him a revenue suspension for 50,000 rupees making the sum payable by small instalments spreading over a number of years.<sup>2</sup> Hardly had he recovered from the losses of the drought of 1791 when another drought visited his district in 1793. In consequence of these successive droughts many ryots particularly the paikasht or non-resident ryots ran away.<sup>3</sup> The government again granted a suspension for Rs. 67,954 rupees.<sup>4</sup> In spite of these suspensions, the Raja's outstanding arrears to government were increasing every year. In May 1794, his

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 20 Oct. 1791, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1791, No. 4, P52/36.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution, B.R.C., 5 April 1793, No. 4, P53/1.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 2 Feb. 1793, B.R.C., 22 Feb. 1793, No. 5, P52/55.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

accumulated arrears amounted to Rs. 1,90,092 for which he had been paying interest at the rate of 12 p.c. on the arrears.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, the unlucky Raja experienced another calamity in 1796. This time drought was closely followed by inundation. Great masses of ryots fled from the district.<sup>2</sup> But this time the Raja was deprived of the liberality of the government. In spite of the petitions from the Raja, and the ryots and the favourable recommendation from the Collector, no suspension was granted to him for the obvious reasons that the Raja was already in huge arrears to government and further suspension was liable to endanger the security of the public revenue. After one year's respite, the district was again devastated by successive inundations for three years from the monsoon of 1797. Raja Iswar Chandra pitiably expressed his helplessness and inability to pay the public revenue. On his petition for help the Collector recommended: "The Raja's representation that his country has suffered from inundation three years successively is perfectly correct, but as the one which happened last season was the severest remembered by the most aged people in the district ..."<sup>2</sup> The Board suspended only

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 30 Sept. 1796, B.O.R.P., 7 Oct. 1796, Nos. 28-29, P73/9.

<sup>2</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O.P., 21 July 1800, B.O.R.P., 25 July 1800, No. 43, P.74/14.

Rs. 3,500 on account of his losses from inundation for the last three years.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus evident that since his decennial engagement Raja Iswar Chandra Roy of Nadia had rarely been free from the destructions of natural calamities. Within ten years of the decennial settlement, his district was visited by either drought or inundation or both at least six times. The inevitable result was the evergrowing indebtedness of the Raja. The government's partial suspension of revenue demand at times of calamities never approached the real deficiencies caused by those disasters. The balances of the deficiencies were made up by borrowing money at high rates of interest. Thus consequent upon the drought of 1791, Raja Iswar Chandra borrowed Rs. 80,000 from Messrs. Joseph and Lewis Baretto, Rs. 25,000 from <sup>^</sup>Durga Charan Mukherji, Rs. 20,000 from Durpnarayan Babu, Rs. 15,000 from Gopal Das and Harikrishna Das, Rs. 10,000 from Jagadish Chowdhuri and Rs. 10,000 from Ramlochon Babu.<sup>2</sup> All these were bankers and money lenders from Calcutta. In addition to all these

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to Collector, 25 July 1800, B.O.R.P., 25 July 1800, No. 46, P74/14.

<sup>2</sup>See, Raja Iswar Chandra to B.O.R., 1 Dec. 1792, B.O.R.P., 21 Dec. 1792 (no number), P72/10; same to B.O.R., 2 March 1792, B.O.R.P., 5 March 1792 (no number), P71/50; same to B.O.R., 5 Feb. 1792, B.O.R.P., 14 Aug. 1792 (no number), P72/6.

debts, the Raja inherited a huge debt of about two and a half lakhs of rupees from his father, Raja Krishna Chandra.<sup>1</sup> He was also to pay Rs. 64,000 to his servants, who were retrenched due to his reduced circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore certain that the outstanding debt of the Raja when he engaged himself for the Permanent Settlement amounted to Rs. 4,54,000 precisely, exclusive of their cumulative interests. In other words, more than half of his estate was mortgaged to his creditors. The subsequent repeated calamities must have increased his burden of debt so much so that he, at last, succumbed to his circumstances in 1797. In his desperate efforts to save the family, he visited Calcutta and tried to influence all the possible purchasers of his zamindari not to come and bid for his hands at auctions.<sup>3</sup> But such effort was nothing but a drowning man's hope to survive by catching at a straw. From 1797 parganas after parganas were put up for sale to recover the arrears of public revenue. Many mahals were also sold privately by the Raja by way of paying

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<sup>1</sup>See, Raja Iswar Chandra to B.O.R., 20 Oct. 1791, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1791, No. 4, P52/36; Ramratan Tagore to B.O.R., 30 June 1790, B.R.C., 9 July 1790, No. 11, P52/14.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Iswar Chandra to B.O.R., 20 Oct. 1791, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1791, No. 4, P52/36.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 24 June 1797, B.O.R.P., 4 July 1797, No. 21, P73/21.

off his private debts.<sup>1</sup> The sale was temporarily stopped by his death in 1803. At the time of his death, his son and successor, Raja Girish Chandra Roy was only sixteen years old. Hence the zamindari was placed under the Court of Wards, till he attained his nineteenth year, during which time the estate, according to the Regulations, was not liable to be sold for arrears.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the death of Raja Iswar Chandra the government demand on the estate was reduced to S.R. 2,35,581 inclusive of the lands privately sold by the Raja but not yet separated from the parent estate.<sup>3</sup> Thus, when Girish Chandra took over the management of the zamindari from the Courts of Wards in 1805, his zamindari, excluding the private sales, paid a little more or less than two lakhs of rupees as government revenue. We are, however, in the dark as to the total liabilities that were passed over to him. But it is quite certain that the indebted condition of the zamindari further increased during his regime. Every year one or other pargana was sold privately in satisfaction of family debts.<sup>4</sup> At last it dwindled to a vanishing point

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 22 Dec. 1802, B.O.R.P., 28 Dec. 1802, No. 41, P.75/7, also see, Acting Secretary's Report, 25 January 1828, No. 90, P80/52.

<sup>2</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 29 June 1803, B.O.R.P., 5 July 1803, No. 72, P75/16.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 28 Feb. 1803, B.O.R.P., 4 March 1803, No.15, P75/12.

<sup>4</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 21 January 1814, B.R.C., 12 Feb. 1814, No. 2, P56/13.

in 1813 when Pargana Okra was sold to pay his creditors.<sup>1</sup>

After the total ruin of the zamindari, the mother and <sup>the</sup> wife of Raja Girish Chandra appealed to Lord Moira to return Pargana Okra to their family on the grounds that Raja Girish Chandra was misled by his chief officers. They complained that Raja Girish Chandra was an imbecile.<sup>2</sup>

His evil advisors such as Ramlochon Banarji and Tarini Banarji, according to them, encouraged him to maintain the life and style of his great ancestors by borrowed money.<sup>3</sup> The two Ranis submitted that they collusively caused the zamindari to be sold and bought it in themselves in the names of their relations at a low rate.<sup>4</sup>

Though fraud on the part of the zamindari amla was a common feature in our period, there is a good deal of doubt as to the validity of the main contention of the Ranis that the zamindari was sold due to the treachery of the Banerjis. No such allegation came from either the Raja or Collector or from any independent man like Babu Ram of Dinajpur. Besides, some contents of their petition suggest that the two Ranis were blissfully ignorant of the state of affairs of the zamindari. They wrote in the petition that, when Raja Girish Chandra came of age, the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. D.O.R. to G.G. in C. 21 January 1814, P

<sup>2</sup> B.R.C. 12 Feb. 1814, No. 2, 56/13.

<sup>3</sup> Raja's mother Bishawmoi and his wife Pitambari's Petition to Lord Moira, B.R.C., 15 June 1814, No. 25, P56/12.

<sup>4</sup> The two Ranis' Petition to Lord Moira, B.R.C. 15 January 1814, No. 25, P54/12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. B.O.R. to G.G.M.C. 21 January 1814  
A.R.C. 12 Feb. 1814, No. 2, P. 56/13.

<sup>2</sup> Raja's mother Bishanmai and his wife Pitambari's Petition to Lord Moira, A.R.C., 15 June 1814, No. 25, P. 56/12.

<sup>3</sup> The two Ranis' Petition to Lord Moira, B.R.C. 15 January 1814,

No. 25, P. 56/12.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

zamindari paid ten lakhs of rupees as revenue and that the pargana Okra, the last vestige of the estate, was sold at a low rate.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the pargana of Okra that bore a jama of Rs. 57,800 was sold for Rs. 6,20,000.<sup>2</sup> Such a high rate of sale was indeed unexampled in Bengal at that time. Their utter ignorance of the actual size of the zamindari in their own time and of the current market value of land suggest that the harem or female apartments of the family had been kept secluded from the affairs of the zamindari, and that they got information about the zamindari in the form of gossip. The two Ranis, themselves, disclosed that they were always assured by the Raja that the zamindari was increasing fast under his management. But they came to learn one morning to their dismay that the whole zamindari was sold. They thus wrote to Lord Moira: "Your excellency may form a faint idea of our consternation and dismay on being informed this day that from the highest pinnacle of happiness, affluence and prosperity we were in a moment reduced to misery and the extremity of actual indigence that the Raje had become extinct, that instead of it having increased that it had from neglect and attending evil minded

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. The two Ranis' petition to Lord Moira  
G.R.C. 15 January 1814, No. 25, P56/12.

<sup>2</sup> B.O.R.P., 1 Feb. 1814, No. 28, P77/31.



and interested advisors been allowed not only to accumulate debt but incur balance of revenue, for the liquidation of which it had been actually disposed of at public sale on the 16 poose last."<sup>1</sup>

The two Ranis were probably right in their allegation that Raja Girish Chandra attempted to uphold the glorious but expensive family tradition of the patronage of arts and literature. It is clear that his father Iswar Chandra was forced to sell lands because of his inherited debts and of new debts that were accumulated in consequence of repeated natural calamities. But no natural calamity visited Nadia during the regime of Girish Chandra. Given minimum attention to the zamindari management, the estate was very likely to bring him considerable surplus profits. But nothing happened. Every year he sold lands to pay off his private debts. It is strange that though immersed in debt, he built a new capital at a distance of two miles from the Rajbari, and made it "the seat of luxury resonant with music".<sup>2</sup> In imitation of his illustrious great grandfather Raja Krishnachandra Roy, he invited poets, singers, dancers and eulogists from all over Bengal and Hindustan to his new

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<sup>1</sup>The two Ranis' Petition to Lord Moira, B.R.C., 15 January 1814, No. 25, P56/12.

<sup>2</sup>Kissory Chand Mitra: "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal. The Nadia Raj", Calcutta Review, vol. 55, 1872, p.114.

palace, called Sriban. The famous early nineteenth century Bengali poet Krishnakanta Badhuri was his court poet.<sup>1</sup> Kartic Chandra Roy who was a diwan of the Nadia family in mid nineteenth century and was claimed to have written his Khitish-Bansaballi Charita or Story of the Nadia Family on the basis of family records wrote that Raja Girish Chandra was so luxurious and pompous in his living that he never abandoned his royal life style even after he lost the whole of his zamindari. Once he visited Calcutta in 1817 to express some of his grievances to the Board. He took with him a great number of followers consisting of armed guards, teachers, pundits, family members, etc. To raise the cost, pargana Modarsa near Calcutta had to be sold.<sup>2</sup>

The two Ranis' petition to Lord Moira for the restoration of pargana Okra on the ground of collusive sale was sent to the Board of Revenue for their review. The Board, reviewing the whole affair of the zamindari, wrote to the Council that pargana Okra was not sold in liquidation of the arrears of public demand as observed by the Ranis. The pargana was sold in satisfaction of court decrees against

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<sup>1</sup>Life of Krishna Chandra <sup>2</sup>Badhuri, pp. 1-2, Vern. Tract. 1461.

<sup>2</sup>Kartic Chandra Roy, Khitish-Bansaballi Charita (Bengal text), Vern. Tract 1885, p.175.

the Raja's creditors.<sup>1</sup> The Board observed that "the dissolution of the zemindarri was unavoidable, as it is notorious that it is so involved in debt that nothing short of sale could answer the demands against it."<sup>2</sup>

### The Birbhum Raj

Among the greater Bengal zamindaris only one, the Birbhum Raj, was held by a Muslim family, and unlike all others excepting the Bishnapure Raj, it was practically an independent principality up to 1760. In 1760, Raja Asad-uz-Zaman Khan of Birbhum was defeated and subdued by the combined troops of the Nawab and of the Company Bahadur.<sup>3</sup> Since then the Birbhum Raj was treated on the footing of all other zamindars of Bengal. Raja Asad-uz-Zaman Khan died in September 1788 after a long rule of forty-five years.<sup>4</sup> He was succeeded by his minor son, Raja Muhammad Zaman Khan. During his minority the zamindari was managed by diwan Lal

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 21 January 1814, para. 2, B.R.C., 12 Feb. 1814, No. 2, P56/13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., para. 4.

<sup>3</sup>A. Broome, History of the rise and progress of the Bengal Army, vol. 1, pp. 319-20.

<sup>4</sup>~~Collector's Report, 24 Sept. 1788.~~

Rammath. In January 1790 Raja Raman Khan attained his sixteenth year and was invested with the management of the zamindari.<sup>1</sup> In May 1791, the decennial settlement was concluded with him. The jama of the zamindari after all deductions on account of sayer resumed and taluqas separated, was fixed at S.R. 6,30,628.<sup>2</sup>

From the very beginning of the decennial settlement Raja Muhammad Zaman Khan found difficulty in paying the revenues punctually. In anticipation of future solvency, he at first tried to pay his outstanding balances of public revenue by mortgaged loans. But that solvency never came. Hence, sales of his historic estates began where the possibility of making further loans ended. In December 1795, he had the first experience of transfer. Since then the process of disintegration continued till the last pargana was sold in liquidation of the arrears of public revenue in December 1800. The following table would illustrate the rapid dismemberment of his zamindari.

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C.'s Resolution, 13 January 1790, B.R.C., 13 January 1790, No. 4, P51/55.

<sup>2</sup>Collector's Settlement Report to B.O.R., 29 May 1791, B.R.C., 17 June 1791, No. 16, P52/26.

Table 9

The Sales of the Birbhum Raj

<u>Amount of sadar jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Amount raised by land sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of information</u>
S.R. to the nearest hundred	S.R. to the nearest hundred		
8	17	16 Dec. 1795	B.O.R.P., 29 Dec. 1795, No. 41, P72/50
291	851	1 Jan. 1796	" 12 Feb. 1796, No. 33, P73/1
1349	1253	3 Apr. '97	" 14 April 1797, No. 3, P73/18
342	292	13 " "	" 21 April 1797, No. 13, P73/18.
166	92	17 June "	" 27 June 1797, No. 37, P73/20.
718	1138	27 Apr. '98	" 27 April 1798, App. C, P73/31.
411	281	1 May "	" 18 May 1798, App. C, P73/32
133	103	1 " "	" 18 May 1798, App. B, P73/32
132	42	2 June "	" 19 June 1798, App. B, P73/33.
211	132	7 " "	" 31 July 1798, App. D, P73/34
66	52	3 Sept. "	" 21 Sept. 1798, App. B, P73/36
17	19	1 July '99	" 30 July 1799, App. A, P73/50.
4	3	19 Oct. "	" 1 Nov. 1799, No. 60, P74/2.
3	2	7 Dec. "	" 15 Aug. 1800, App. B, P74/23.
298	151	20 & 30 Dec. 1800	" 31 March 1801, App. A, P74/41
<hr/>			
Total:			
4,14,900	4,42,800		
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The decennial jama of the zamindari was S.R.6,30,638.

The amount of jama of lands publicly sold as illustrated above amounted to S.R. 4,14,900. The remaining portion of the property of Zaman Khan, must have been sold privately by him, since we know from the Collector's report that by November 1801, Raja Muhammad Zaman Khan was entirely divested of his estate.<sup>1</sup> The Collector noted that the Raja<sup>y</sup> possessed only one pargana, namely Deogarh, the government jama of which was only S.R. 15,172.<sup>2</sup>

Several factors were responsible for the ruin of the Birbhum Raj. The most important factor was the treachery of the zamindari amla. Before we speak of the treachery of the amla it is <sup>m</sup>imperative to say something about the Raja's own ability to control them. Firstly, the Raja took over the management of the zamindari in 1790, when he was still a minor. As his date of birth was never recorded, the Collector accepted the statement of his legal guardian diwan Ramnath as to his age.<sup>3</sup> But the Raja himself disclosed later in 1795 that the diwan made a false statement about his age just to get rid of the authority of the Court of Wards.<sup>4</sup> As a teenager he had not only the disadvantage

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 24 Nov. 1801, B.O.R.P., 15 Dec. 1801, No. 23, P74/39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to G.G. in C., 9 Oct. 1795, B.R.C., 9 Oct. 1795, No. 21, P53/36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

of the lack of administrative experience but also had the problem of lack of education. He did not even know how to read and write.<sup>1</sup> His handicap accrued from his youth and illiteracy was further augmented by his inclination for women rather than for zamindari management. Besides nine wives, he had numerous concubines and slave girls in his harem. Once Commissioner Ernst advised him to improve his character for the sake of his own family interests. The Raja felt so disgraced at this suggestion that he complained to the Council: "Mr. Ernst unjustly accuses me of living in a dissolute manner, and thus asperses my character to the people, by making enquiries respecting my women, which is in every country deplorable."<sup>2</sup> He added, "if my zamindari is sold agreeably to the Regulations to liquidate the balance due to government it is of no consequence, but I cannot bear that I and my family should be involved in disgrace which has never happened to us from the time of the Kings of Hindustan to that of the Company."<sup>3</sup>

The cumulative effect of all this made the Raja utterly ignorant and incapable of handling the intricate zamindari

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to G.G. in C., 9 Oct. 1795, B.R.C., 9 Oct. 1795, No. 21, P53/36.

<sup>2</sup>Raj Zaman Khan to G.G. in C., 11 Dec. 1795, B.R.C., 11 Dec. 1795, No. 13, P53/37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

accounts and of administration. In consequence, the greedy zamindari officers got the upper hand. They abused their power by alienating the best lands in their own names or in the names of their dependents and at lower rates of rent.<sup>1</sup> Ernst, the Commissioner of Birbhum, informed the Board in August 1795 that the amla of the Raja made him their virtual prisoner in their hands and the Raja was sadly unaware of the treacherous activities of his amla.<sup>2</sup> Two months later in October the Collector wrote on the same subject. The Collector explained that the ignorance and incapacity of the Raja: "prepared the road and inlets for greater and more seriously destructive misfortunes; needy rapacious domesticks, no where scarce and never remote on such occasions, of course, found a ready mart for their intrigues in his courts and supported ny his ignorance, together with a boyish reluctance to business or to any enquiry into his own affairs public or private. They found no impediment in involving him and his estate in an almost irretrievable ruin."<sup>3</sup> The Collector maintained that according to the hast-o-bud or accounts of total income of the zamindari, the Raja was

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<sup>1</sup>T.H.Ernst's Report to B.O.R., 23 Aug. 1795, B.O.R.P., 9 Oct. 1795, No. 34, P72/48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Collector's Report on the zamindari of Birbhum, 9 Oct. 1795, B.R.C., 9 Oct. 1795, No. 21, P53/36.



supposed to yield upwards of a lakh and twenty thousand rupees above government demands on him.<sup>1</sup> But, according to Collector Fitzroy, the Raja never received more than sixty thousand rupees a year, the rest of the surplus revenues being embezzled by Lala Ramnath and other managers.<sup>2</sup>

Collector Fitzroy also believed that the daily slaughtering of cows in the Raja's palace was hated by his officers, who were mostly Hindus. He argued that to bring such a blasphemous activity to an end, they worked to destroy the very existence of the zamindari.<sup>3</sup> He was probably ignorant of the fact that the amla were equally ready to ruin even the greatest patrons of Hindu religion, men such as the rajas of Rajshahi and Dinajpur. Fitzroy's view as to the participation of the Raja's amla in the dismemberment of the zamindari was however confirmed by his successor Cowell. Cowell reported in 1802 that the people who purchased the zamindari of Birbhum were mostly the Raja's own officers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>~~Ibid.~~ Collector to B.O.R. 9 October 1795,  
B.R.C. 9 October 1795, No. 21, P53/36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 9 Oct. 1795, B.R.C., 9 Oct. 1795,  
No. 21, P53/36.

<sup>4</sup>Collector to the Secretary, Revenue Department, 10 April  
1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 79, para. 26, P147/57.

It is intriguing that whereas, in Dinajpur, the Raja always complained against the corrupt practices of his over-mighty officers, here in Birbhum, the Collector, not the Raja, was complaining and exposing the treacherous activities of the Raja's officers. Only once it is found that the Raja dismissed on <sup>e</sup>Shamcharan Chatterji, one of his diwans, for misconduct.<sup>1</sup> One strong reason for such silence on the part of the Raja might be that unlike Raja Radhanath of Dinajpur, he was absolutely free to manage his own affairs. He had thus no grievance to raise against his officers to the government, since all of his officers were appointed by himself and no court faction was backed by the Collector as it happened in Dinajpur. The Collector, on the other hand, had to explain every month the reasons for extensive balances in his district. Hence it is not unusual that he would have reported as to the internal troubles of the Raja.

It leaves little doubt that the unscrupulous amla of the Raja took advantage of his ignorance and embezzled funds to his ruin. But it should also be noted that the Birbhum family was already on the brink of financial ruin at the time of the decennial settlement. When Collector Keating supervised the zamindari during the minority of the Raja from 1788 to 1793 he perceived that the total income from the estate "was by no means adequate to the support of his

family, more especially when compared to the state in which they had been used to live..."<sup>1</sup> Three months after his accession, Raja Zaman Khan made it known to the government that he had to support about four hundred of his family members from the income of his estate and that his income was insufficient for him to live according to his rank and status.<sup>2</sup>

The poverty of the Raja was further increased by the effects of natural calamities subsequent to the decennial settlement. The drought of 1791 that visited throughout Bengal was particularly devastating in Birbhum. The drought entirely destroyed the major autumn and winter crops.<sup>3</sup> The Collector reported that the Raja was too poor to make up the deficits of revenue caused by the late drought.<sup>4</sup> The government granted him a suspension of S.R. 40,000 though his total balances due to government amounted to about one lakh rupees.<sup>5</sup> To avoid starvation and oppression of rent collectors,

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 1 January 1792, B.R.C., 25 January 1792, No. 18, P52/40.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Zaman Khan to G.G. in C., 28 April 1790, B.O.R.P., 3 May 1790, P71/24.

<sup>3</sup>Raja's Petition to B.O.R., 17 Dec. 1791, B.R.C., 13 January 1792, No. 36, P52/40.

<sup>4</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 3 Jan. 1792, B.R.C., 13 January 1792, No. 36, P52/40.

<sup>5</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 6 April 1792, B.R.C., 20 April 1792, No. 25, P52/43.

tens of thousands of cultivators fled from the district and on that account the Raja lost an income of some thirty thousand rupees annually.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the drought two of his parganas, namely Mahmudabad and Bulputta, were heavily damaged by a visit of wild elephants from the highlands. In consequence, the Raja incurred a further loss of about twelve thousand rupees annually.<sup>2</sup> Thus on account of these two calamities alone he was deprived of revenues to the amount of forty four thousand rupees annually. He did not get any remission of revenue demand on account of these permanent losses. He tried to make up the deficits by borrowing money from the moneylenders.<sup>3</sup> But the preservation of the zamindari by borrowing money from the moneylenders could not last long. In January 1795, his accumulated balances to government amounted to two lakhs of rupees in liquidation of which the Council ordered the attachment of the whole of his zamindari for sale.<sup>4</sup> Once

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<sup>1</sup>Raja to B.O.R., 10 July 1791, B.R.C., 25 January 1792, No. 18, P52/40.

<sup>2</sup>Raja to B.O.R., 6 Aug. 1791, B.R.C., 17 Feb. 1792, No. 4, P 52/41.

<sup>3</sup>Raja's Petition to B.O.R., 10 July 1791, B.R.C., 25 January 1792, No. 18, P52/40.

<sup>4</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 20 January 1795, B.R.C., 13 Feb. 1795, N. . 3, P53/28.

the sale started it did not stop until the whole zamindari was lost to the Raja in 1801.

It has already been stated that by 1801 Raja Zaman Khan was left with only one pargana, the sadar jama of which was only S.R. 15,172. Government intelligence revealed that the impoverished condition of the Raja forced him to plan a general insurrection to turn out all the auction-purchasers by a reign of terror.<sup>1</sup> The magistrate feared that, as the ruling family for centuries, the Raja and his large cousinhood might be successful in exciting the people against the British. The magistrate thus recommended the immediate expulsion of the Raja and his family from Birbhum as a remedy for the problem.<sup>2</sup> But the Board thought the exile of the Raja was likely to further complicate the situation. The Board ordered the Raja to be given a hereditary pension of Rs. 500 per month instead of expelling him from his birthplace.<sup>3</sup> One month after this order Raja Zaman Khan died.<sup>4</sup> His son Dilwar Khan succeeded him to hold the empty title of Raja.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 15 Dec. 1801, B.O.R.P., 15 Dec. 1801, No. 24, P74/39.

<sup>2</sup>Magistrate to the B.O.R., 24 Nov. 1801, B.O.R.P., 15 Dec. 1801, No. 23, P74/39.

<sup>3</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 15 Dec. 1801, B.O.R.P., 15 Dec. 1801, No. 24, P74/39.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., also see, G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 20 Aug. 1802, B.R.C., 20 Aug. 1802, No. 33, P54/26.

<sup>5</sup>C.O.W.P., 29 June 1810, No. 7A, P114/29.

The Bishnapur Raj

Of all the great zamindaris, the Bishnapur Raj was the most ancient, for it had existed as an independent principality even before the Muslim period began. At the time of the decennial settlement, however, the Bishnapur family was already entering the last phase of a decay which had started long before the commencement of British rule. In the very first year of his decennial engagement, fixed in 1790 at four lakhs of rupees, Raja Choyton Singh's financial position showed itself desperate.<sup>1</sup> Within ten months he lost half of his zamindari,<sup>2</sup> and though the other half survived artificially that too was lost in 1806 when the government purchased the whole zamindari.<sup>3</sup> The family was then pensioned off on a monthly allowance of Rs. 1,160.<sup>4</sup>

Three main causes ruined this oldest zaminari. These were family disputes over the succession, overassessment and mismanagement.

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 7 Oct. 1791, B.R.C., 7 Oct. 1791, No. 25, P52/36.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 1 Aug. 1791, B.R.C., 26 Aug. 1791, No. 5, P52/34.

<sup>3</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 12 Aug. 1806, B.R.C., 21 Aug. 1806, No. 5, P54/56,

<sup>4</sup>Magistrate to B.O.R., 4 Feb. 1807, B.R.C., 12 Feb. 1807, No. 10, P54/61.

Choyton Singh and Damudhar Singh, two brothers, had been engaged in legal battle for the possession of the zamindari since 1773. Choyton Singh, as the elder son of his father, claimed the whole of the zamindari according to the customary law of primogeniture, but his brother, Damudhar Singh, demanded half the estate according to the Hindu law of succession. The marathon legal battle that was fought at different levels from the Revenue Council to the Supreme Court at last ended in 1795 when the Sadar Diwani Adalat adjudged Choyton Singh to be the sole proprietor of the zamindari.<sup>1</sup> But the irony of the case was that he had meanwhile spent so much in litigation for the full share of the property and had become so impoverished in the process that long before he got the decree for the whole of it, half the zamindari had been sold for revenue arrears.

Moreover, no sooner was the legal battle with his brother over than a war of succession began among his eleven grown up sons. The Sadar Diwani Adalat decided the case in favour of primogeniture on the ground that the customary law of primogeniture was the prevailing law when Choyton Singh succeeded to the zamindari in 1772. But such a decision was considered by his ten younger sons as a direct threat to their inheritance of the zamindari according to Hindu law

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., B.R.C., 6 Feb. 1795, No. 33, P53/27.

of succession, in spite of the fact that the Cornwallis Constitution had abolished the customary law of primogeniture. At the age of seventy, Choyton Singh lacked the strength to administer the zamindari himself nor could he nominate any of his sons to act for him, for that might have been interpreted by his other sons as nomination for the godis or throne as well. In the midst of chaos and confusion in the zamindari administration, all Choyton Singh's eleven sons claimed different parts of the estate and occupied what they claimed to be their respective shares.<sup>1</sup> The result was the prevalence of confusion everywhere. The ryots did not know to whom to pay their rents and the amla did not know to whom to render their allegiance. The helpless Raja appealed to the Council: "This zamindarry has been in my family during a period of no less than eleven hundred and three years, ... I myself am now an old man seventy years of age and cannot pay that attention to the management of my affairs which is requisite, my children too, are at variance with each other... Under all these circumstances I petition and hope that Government will grant me some fixed allowance, as a support to me and to my family -

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<sup>1</sup>Collector to B.O.R. 15 May 1797, B.R.C., 2 June 1797, No. 2, P53/51.



and I shall ever pray for their prosperity and welfare."<sup>1</sup>

On the petition of the Raja, Collector Ireland remarked that due to the infirmity of the Raja and the constant fight among his sons and grand sons, the zamindari affairs were ~~sa~~idly neglected and consequently the deficiency of assets was growing fast. Illustrating this point, the Collector said that recently the Raja's lands bearing a jama of S.R. 40,668 were sold for S.R. 17,650 only.<sup>2</sup> He continued that for the sake of the security of the public revenue the zamindari should be managed by the government for some time.<sup>2</sup> Concurring in the Collector's views, the Board also recommended that in view of the Raja's old age and infirmity and the bloody disputes among his sons, the government should take over the management of the zamindari for some years, which would ~~h~~ save the government from permanent loss of revenue as well as the oldest family from inevitably ruin.<sup>3</sup> But the Board's suggestion was not accepted by the Governor General in Council on the ground that such benevolence would encourage other landholders whose

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<sup>1</sup> Raja's Petition to G.G. in C., enclosed with the Collector's letter, 15 May 1794, B.R.C., 2 June 1797, No. 2 P53/51.

<sup>2</sup> Collector to B.O.R., 15 May 1797, B.R.C., 2 June 1797, No. 2, P53/51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

estates were equally mismanaged to come and seek protection from the authorities.<sup>1</sup> The Council rather issued orders to attach the whole of the zamindari preparatory to sale for the balance of 1796-7, which amounted to S.R. 25,000.<sup>2</sup>

In Nov. 1798, the Collector reported that the sons of the Raja were fighting pitched battles for the possession of the zamindari that <sup>←</sup>sill remained in skeleton form.<sup>3</sup> He said that the estate had lost all capacity to pay the public revenue and recommended the immediate attachment of the whole estate now bearing jama of S.R. 58,129 only. Otherwise, he added, "the whole property I conceive will be inadequate to liquidate the accumulated arrears already due from him /Choyton Singh/."<sup>4</sup> The Council thus ordered the immediate attachment of the entire estate and that it be sold for the recovery of arrears.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 2 June 1797, B.R.C., 2 June 1797, No. 17, P53/51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 5 Nov. 1798, B.R.C., 16 Nov. 1798, No. 10, P53/58.

<sup>4</sup>Collector to B.O.R., 15 Dec. 1798, B.O.R.P., 28 Dec. 1798, No. 50, P73/40.

<sup>5</sup>G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 25 Nov. 1802, B.R.C., 25 Nov. 1802, No. 36, P54/28.

The long-drawn law suits and the violent behaviour of the Raja's sons were the most obvious causes of the downfall of the Bishnapur Roy. But besides these dramatic events there were other reasons, scarcely less important, for its ultimate collapse. Bishnapur was involved in the two great natural calamities which afflicted Bengal, the great famine of 1770 and the drought of 1791, and these seriously depleted the assets of the zamindari. Such depreciation of assets was not taken into consideration when the decennial settlement was concluded in 1791. Raja Choyton Singh frequently expressed his grievances that his zamindari was unequal to public assessment. That his claims were not without foundation was proved when, in 1791, his lands, assessed to a jama of S.R. 2,14,147, were sold for arrears, and fetched only S.R. 39,300.<sup>1</sup> This unbelievably low purchase price persuaded the government to investigate the resources of the estate. It was found that the zamindari had without doubt been seriously overassessed and on this account an abatement of jama to the amount of S.R. 26,205 was granted to the Raja.<sup>2</sup> But such a small reduction, an adjustment of only six per cent, did not put the assessment

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 12 Aug. 1791, B.R.C., 26 Aug. 1791, No. 5, P.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 18 Aug. 1795, B.R.C., 18 Sept. 1795, No. 11, P53/35.

right. All the subsequent purchasers of Bishnapur~~h~~ lands claimed further reductions on account of the failure of their lots to yield revenues capable of answering the government revenue demands. Faced with claims for reduction from almost all the purchasers of the Raja's lands, the government refunded all the purchase money and took over the entire former zamindari under its own management.<sup>1</sup> Under government management it was found that the assets of the zamindari were inadequate to answer the government demands even after the abatement was granted in 1795.<sup>2</sup>

It has already been said in the beginning that, after the total dissolution of the zamindari in 1806, the government granted the family a monthly subsistence allowance of 1160 rupees in 1807. But the militant members of the family were not satisfied with this meagre grant. They claimed their natural right to rule instead of leading pensioners' lives. In 1808, they openly took up arms against the government in order to regain their lost territory. After some regular pitched battles they were subdued and arrested by government forces.<sup>3</sup> They were, at last, all removed from

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 12 Aug. 1806, B.R.C., 21 Aug. 1806, No. 5, P54/56.

<sup>2</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 3 Oct. 1806, B.R.C., 9 Oct. 1806, No. 7, P54/57.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 15 Sept. 1808, para 2, General Judicial Letter, E/4/73.

Bishnapur and provided with a residence at Chinsura.<sup>1</sup>

In the above analysis of the causes and circumstances for the fall of the great territorial families of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Nadia, Birbhum and Bishnapur, we find that natural calamities, intrigues of zamindari amla, overassessment, extravagance and incapacity of the proprietors played the most important roles. But the most common and dominant factors were natural calamities and intrigues of zamindari ama.<sup>2</sup>

It is commonplace to mention that the famine of 1770 and the government's quest for higher and higher revenue through different revenue experiments ruined the zamindar class economically, if not territorially. Under such fallen conditions of the zamindars, their share of revenue, which was only one-tenth of the sadar jamma, was, indeed, too small to leave them with any surplus above their expenditure to compensate risk.<sup>2</sup> Nor could they depend on the government for help at times of calamity. Government's firm policy was not to "attend to any pleas for remissions or suspensions excepting in particular cases in which justice

<sup>1</sup> G.G. in C. to C.D. 15 Sept. 1808, General Judicial ~~Examination~~ Letter, para. 22, E/4/73.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>T</sup> F. H. Colebrooke, Remarks on the Present State of the Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal, pp. 62-3.

and policy may require a departure from the rule."<sup>1</sup> It has already been explained in the beginning of this chapter that it was the policy of the British to destroy the monopoly ownership of land as far as was possible within the bounds of law. Hence it was no wonder that the great territorial families received far less indulgence from the state on account of natural calamities than they deserved. Hence they were compelled to borrow money in order to pay the public revenue at high interest. Once in debt, this inevitably threw them into a vicious circle from which they could hardly escape unhurt. Balances forced them to borrow and borrowing, in turn, produced further deficits and balances again, until their whole patrimonies were sold in liquidation of public revenue and debt. As the money lenders dictated the terms they persuaded the borrowing zamindaries to make them their farmers and renters on terms highly disadvantageous and ruinous for the borrowers. To quote Collector Maxwell who reported from Jessore in 1823, "... the greedy money lenders, who taking advantage of their distressed situation, have in every instance clogged their estates with leases and mortgages until the family had not the means of extricating themselves. Every fresh demand

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 8 Aug. 1794, para. 11, General Revenue Letter, E/4/54.

for money, however small the sum, was sure to be followed either with a demand for the decreased rent or a fresh mortgage or lease of certain villages and even estates on most ruinous terms and at inadequate rents."<sup>1</sup>

But the people who took the greatest advantage of the indebted condition of the zamindars were their own amla who always thrived through the difficulties of their masters. They were not slow to understand that under the operation of the sale laws, they could easily turn themselves into zamindars by turning out their old masters, if they could somehow force them to fall into arrears and debts. Such opportunity was provided by natural calamities when they could most successfully embezzle mufassal collections on the pretext of the ryots' inability to pay their rents. It is interesting to find that similar forces were at work in Guntur district in Madras. Robert Eric Frykenberg has found that many great families in Guntur were ruined because of the treacherous conduct of their diwans at times of natural calamity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jessore Collector to C.O.W., 10 Aug. 1823, para 3, C.O.W.P., 15 April 1823, No. 23, P79/37. The Collector was narrating how the zamindars in the Jessore district were being exploited by the moneylenders.

<sup>2</sup>R.E.Frykenberg, Gunter District 1788-1848, A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India, p.45.

The Surviving Families

The great corrosive factors of natural calamities and intrigues of amla did not vitiate the vitality of the Burdwan Raj and that explains why, in spite of its being the largest zamindari in Bengal, it did not collapse along with others. Of course, the family had a faint fall. Almost the whole of the zamindari was allowed to be sold in public auctions for arrears. But virtually all these lands were promptly bought back by Rani Bishnakumari benami in the names of her Gomosthas or officers. The following table will show how almost the whole of the zamindary was nominally sold for revenue arrears from 1794 to 1799:



Table 10The Sales of the Burdwan Raj

<u>Sadar jama of lands held</u>	<u>Amount realised by sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of information</u>
S.R. to nearest hundred	S.R. to nearest hundred		
3421	3921	23 & 30 Oct. 1794	<u>B.R.C.</u> , 14 Nov. 1794, No.16, P53/22
1486	2211	22 Dec.1794	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 23 Dec. 1794, No.8A,P72/37
390	651	2 Feb.1795	" 3 Feb.1795, No.35,P72/40
160	370	1 June "	" 2 June 1795, No.13,P72/44
281	560	17 Sept."	" 18 Sept.1795, No.12,P82/47
4943	5420	17 & 19 April '97	" 28 April 1797, No.33,P73/18
755	1814	13 May "	" 23 May 1797, No. 3A. P73/19
749	749	23 " "	" 4 July 19797, No.11,P73/21
849	658	1 " 1798	" 18 May 1798, No.36, P73/32
6443	4867	For 1204 BtS.	" 11 Sept. 1798, No.4, P73/36
1209	1403	9 May '98	" 9 May 1798, No.1, P73/32
627	570	23 Apr. "	" 4 May 1798, No.8A,P73/32
281	266	12 Nov. "	" 23 Nov. 1798, No.6,P73/39
550	287	20 Dec. "	" 28 Dec. 1798, No.71,P73/40.
1560	291	12 Jan. '99	" 8 Feb. 1799, No.1,P73/43
782	365	30 Jan. "	" 8 Feb. 1799, No.6,P73/43
2025	2025	4,5 & 6 April "	" 16 April 1799, No. 4,P73/45.

Table 10 (cont.)

<u>Sadar jama of lands held</u>	<u>Amount realised by sales</u>	<u>Dates of sales</u>	<u>Sources of information</u>
S.R. to nearest hundred	S.R. to nearest hundred		
2983	3956	27 & 29 Apr. '99	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 17 May 1799, No. 1, P73/47
739	79	18 May "	" 11 June, 1799, App.R, P73/49

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Total:

30,23,300    30,46,300

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Jama of decennial settlement	≠ S.R.	32,66,200
Deduct jama of lands nominally sold	=	<u>30,23,300</u>
Therefore, the remaining jama	≠	<u>2,42,900</u>

It is thus obvious from the above sales table that almost the whole of the zamindari was in appearance lost. But, in fact, very little actually passed out of the family's hands. In 1800, the Burdwan Raj paid S.R. 26,41,514 revenue under different names.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the real loss of lands was inconsiderable compared with the losses of other families. One

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 12 May 1800, B.O.R.P., 16 May 1800, No. 8, P74/11.

One most important reason for the loss of those lands bearing a jama of about five lakhs of rupees was a serious dispute between Rani Bishnakumari, the zamindar, and her son, Raja Tej Chandra. In 1794, Raja Tej Chandra transferred the whole zamindari to his mother by a deed of sale. But later he again demanded the zamindari from his mother, Rani Bishnakumari. But she refused to hand over the zamindari to Tej Chandra because he was, according to the Rani, under the influence of some evil and self-interested people.<sup>1</sup> Soon serious disputes arose between the mother and the son over the management of the zamindari. One group of amla expressed their loyalty to Raja Tej Chandra who was alleged to have instigated the farmers not to pay rents to the Rani.<sup>2</sup> This pernicious family dispute was followed by a devastating drought which destroyed the autumn crops entirely. Thus, like all other big families, the Burdwan Raj was also heading towards a catastrophic end. But the process of disintegration was soon stopped by the triumph of Tej Chandra's group in consequence of Rani Bishnakumari's death in November 1798.

Raja Tej Chandra made Ram Babu his principal diwan. Ram Babu followed an unusual method to advance his family interests. Unlike other diwans of his time he did not try to build his

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<sup>1</sup>Rani Bishnakumari's Petition to B.O.R., 1 Jan. 1796, B.O.R.P., 12 January 1796, No. 18, P72/52.

own family on the ruins of that of his master. Instead, he married his sister and daughter to Raja Tej Chandra and his son, Mahtab, was pushed into the family to succeed him as his adopted son.<sup>1</sup> As a veteran administrator, Ram Babu applied himself with all his might and main to the preservation of the zamindari, to which his own son was going to succeed after Tej Chandra's death. Under his able management the zamindari of Burdwan not only recovered from the previous setbacks but also gained extensive territories in other districts.<sup>2</sup> In 1819 the zamindari paid thirty lakhs of rupees as government revenue.<sup>3</sup>

Among the other surviving families, the Jahangirpur family of Dinajpur appeared neither in the sellers' nor purchasers' reports. As for the Lashkarpur family of Rajshahi, commonly known as the Potia Raj, that almost doubled its holding within ten years of the Permanent Settlement. As a family it was much older than the Natore Raj. Bhavindranarayan Chowdhuri, besides the preservation of his ancient patrimony, purchased two big parganas, namely Parganas Pokeria and Hussainpur,

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<sup>1</sup> B.N. ~~Randhawa~~ <sup>Sanarji</sup> (ed.), Sambad-Patre Sekaler Katha, vol. I, p.471.

<sup>2</sup> Prinsep's Report, 12 July 1819, C.J.P., 8 Oct. 1819, No. 37, P149/67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

from the Natore Raj. The sadar jama of these two parganas alone amounted to S.R. 1,16,279.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of our period, in 1793, it has been seen that the principal families controlled a little more than half of the landed property of Bengal. What their territorial status was in 1819, the following table shows:

Table 11

Distribution of Landed Property among the great landed families

<u>Names of families</u>	<u>The sadar jama of their lands in 1793</u>	<u>The sadar jama of their lands in 1819</u>	<u>Necessary notes</u>
	S.R. to nearest thousand '000	S.R. to nearest thousand '000	
Burdwan Raj	3266	3000	
Rajshahi "	2250	88	
Dinajpur "	1484	161	
Nadia "	854	39	
Birbhum "	630	15	Monthly pension from Government, Rs. 500
Bishnapur "	400	none	- do - Rs. 1160
Eusufpur "	303	none	- do- Rs. 100 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Board's Proceedings and Resolution, B.O.R.P., 5 June 1793 (no number), P72/17.

<sup>2</sup>Council's orders on Jessore Collector's Letter of 8 Sept. 1802, B.R.C., 23 Sept. 1802, No. 26, P54/27.

Table 11 (cont.)

<u>Names of families</u>	The sadar jama of their lands <u>in 1793</u>	The sadar jama of their lands <u>in 1819</u>	<u>Necessary notes</u>
	S.R. to nearest thousand  '000	S.R. to nearest thousand  '000	
Laskarpur Estate	189	305	
Idrikpur "	160	none	Extinct <sup>1</sup>
Muhammedshah "	150	19 <sup>2</sup>	
Jehangirpur "	123	123	
	<hr/> 98,09,000	<hr/> 37,50,000	
Percentage of the total revenue of Bengal paid by these zamindaris	<hr/> 51 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>1</sub> %	<hr/> 19%	

Thus, the comparative territorial status of the principal zamindars between the two terminal dates shows that they lost about 33% of their land control during the crisis. But it must be noticed that out of 19% of the control that they

<sup>1</sup>E.G. Glazier, Further Notes on Rangpur Records, vol. I, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>C.O.W.P., 12 Feb. 1822, No. 4, P74/13.

still retained, about 18<sup>0</sup>/<sub>100</sub> belonged to three surviving families, Burdwan, Lashkarpur and Jahangirpur. All the other families were virtually extinct compared to their former wealth, rank and influence.

Chapter FourTHE TRANSFER OF LANDED PROPERTY

The creation of property in land by Cornwallis's Constitution, easy transferability of landed rights and above all the statutory order to recover arrears of public revenue by selling the defaulters' lands, obviously tended to increase the mutation of landed property. But what was its velocity? In the preceding chapter, it has been found that most of the dismemberment of the great territorial estates which took place occurred within the first decade of the operation of the Permanent Settlement. Their sudden dissolution leads one to inquire into the fate of the lesser zamindars not belonging to the club of the great raja families. Another problem which is germane to the mutation of land and which is material to our better understanding of the changing conditions of the country is the value at which land was bought and sold on the market. Hence this chapter will in the main attempt to do two things: firstly, to determine the transfer of landed rights within the period under survey and to ascertain its distribution between different groups of zamindars in order to see whether or not the lesser landlord class had experienced the same vicissitude of fortune as that of the rajas; secondly, to look at the



trends in the value of landed property under the operation of the land market.

Hitherto our knowledge of the changes in the ownership of landed property under the operation of the Permanent Settlement has been essentially conjectural and speculative. Though there is almost invariably reference to great upheavals in the structure and constitution of the landed society in standard text books of British Indian history and also in the more serious monograph literature dealing with the social and economic developments of Bengal during the Company's period, no writer has hitherto gone much beyond the information supplied by the Fifth Report of 1812 which, for the first time pointed to drastic changes in the ownership of Bengal's landed property. After specific mention of the fall of some great families, the Fifth Report gave the figures of the total sales of lands in Bengal, Behar and Orissa for 1796-7 and 1797-8. According to that report, lands that comprehended a sadar jama of S.R. 14,18,756 were sold in 1796-7 and, in the following year, a still larger area paying S.R. 22,74,074.<sup>1</sup> Ever since the publication of this Parliamentary Report, the sales figures for these two

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<sup>1</sup>B.P., S.C., H.C., The Fifth Report, 1812, vol. 7, Report p.56.

years have been universally quoted, as for example by Baden-Powell and Hunter - and writers have then added their own inference about transfers, formed on the basis of the figures for the above two years.<sup>1</sup> Thus supposing the sales of 1796-7 and 1797-8 to have indicated the probable trends of transfers in succeeding years, George Campbell concluded that within the half century after 1793 "excepting one or two great Rajahs, the proprietary rights in Bengal have been sold over and over again, and are now in no way derived from any old hereditary source."<sup>2</sup> Quoting the sales figures of the Fifth Report, McNeillie said, "Within the ten years that followed the Permanent Settlement, a complete revolution took place in the constitution and ownership of estates, which formed the subject of that settlement."<sup>3</sup> According to J.C.Sinha, within the twenty-five years subsequent to the decennial settlement, "probably one third or one half of the landed property in Bengal may have been transferred by public sale on account

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Baden-Powell, The Land Systems of British India, vol.I, p.440.

*W.W.Hunter*  
W.W.Hunter, Bengal MSS Records, vol. I, p.101.

<sup>2</sup>G. Campbell, Modern India, A Sketch of the System of Civil Government, p.313.

<sup>3</sup>D.J.McNeillie, Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal, p.9.

of the arrears of revenue."<sup>1</sup>

All such statements, though confidently made, were based essentially on inference. But the doubts inherent in such conjectural statements might obviously be removed if the actual transfer of land under the operation of the new system could be systematically ascertained over a definite length of time. Such an unbroken time series would help us to understand better both the extent and the social significance of such transfers. Such a quantification can and will be attempted.

Before proceeding to an assessment and analysis of land sales, some explanation of the tools used in such quantification is required. To get an intimate knowledge of the operation of the newly created land market, which was supposed to reflect the state of the economy of the country, the Government in Calcutta was required by the Court of Directors to send an annual account of all sales of landed property. The Governor General in Council accordingly promised that the Indian Government would "in future furnish The Court with an annual statement of the lands ordered to be put up to sale for the discharge of arrears of revenue,

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<sup>1</sup>J.C.Sinha, The Economic Annals of Bengal, p.272. W.W.Hunter also made the same remark which was borrowed by J.C.Sinha in verbatim though without acknowledgement. See, W.W.Hunter, Bengal MS Records, p.101.

distinguishing the lands that might be actually sold from those, the sale of which might be countermanded."<sup>1</sup> This annual statement of sales, which after 1794-5 was sent to the Court yearly contained six columns. These columns set out the amount of balance due from the defaulters, the jama of the lands ordered to be sold, the jama of lands actually sold, the jama of lands the sale of which was revoked upon payment of arrears or otherwise, the amount realised by sale of lands and lastly the year of purchase. Details of sales for all the districts of Bengal under these headings were inserted in the annual statements of transfers. It is thus possible to figure out both the total transfers and their district-wise distributions. It is also possible to estimate the sale value at which all those land transfers took place.

But all these seemingly bright prospects of a more accurate understanding are marred by two serious limitations in the records. Firstly, the annual account of sales does not include private transfers. The Collectors reported only those transfers which occurred by way of recovery of revenue arrears from defaulting zamindars. Hence, we are entirely ignorant of the volume of private transfers, which were

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 27 October 1793, P.P., S.C., H.C., 1831-2, vol. XI, App. No. 26, p.128.

allowed under the regulations. Secondly, all the transfers that occurred on account of revenue arrears were not genuine sales. For various reasons to be explained subsequently, the zamindars frequently caused their lands to be sold at public auction, but they then bought them back again benami, that is, covertly or anonymously, either under false names or in the names of their relations and servants. The Board of Revenue rightly observed that due to the practice of benami purchase on the part of the original proprietors, "it is impossible to form any accurate judgement of the quantity of land which has been actually transferred..."<sup>1</sup>

Due to these two formidable shortcomings, all our conclusions based on purely quantitative material on transfers are bound to be incomplete and tentative in nature. They can at best indicate the probable trends rather than the complete truth about transfers.

#### Gross Transfers.\*

The total volume of advertisements of lands for sales on account of arrears of public revenue and of actual sales from 1794 to 1819 has been set out in Appendix B. The appendix shows that between 1794 and 1819 lands which bore a

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 22 Oct. 1799, para 2, B.R.C., 7 Nov. 1799, No. 7, P54/6.

\*Unlike in Europe, lands in Bengal at that time were bought and sold in terms of public revenue on them. Hence all calculations about transfers have been made on the basis of public revenue on lands rather than on their areas.

jama of S.R. 10,70,25,500 or 563<sup>o</sup>/<sub>o</sub> of the annual revenue of Bengal were advertised for sale, but that only lands paying S.R. 1,30,14,800 or 68<sup>o</sup>/<sub>o</sub> of the total annual revenue were actually sold.<sup>1</sup> It further shows that 95<sup>o</sup>/<sub>o</sub> of the total sales occurred <sup>y</sup><sub>z</sub> within the first ten years of the Permanent Settlement.<sup>2</sup> Absurdly enough the appendix also shows that though the volume of true sales after 1805 was absolutely nominal compared to the total land revenue of the country, the number of advertisements threatening sale did not fall. Rather it further increased. As a result the disparity between advertisements and actual sales became so bewilderingly wide that between 1805 and 1819 less than one per cent of all advertised sales ever took place.<sup>3</sup>

We should perhaps begin by examining why this gap between the advertisement and the actual sales existed at all. At first it was believed by the authorities that the zamindars intentionally withheld the public revenue till the last moment possible before auction proceeding and used the unpaid public revenue for their private purposes at least for a minimum of one month between the date of advertisement

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

and the sale.<sup>1</sup> This allegation was probably largely justified. As the advertisement had to be published at least one month before the actual sale and the order for sale could be countermanded at any time upon the payment of arrears, defaulters could withhold their revenues and utilise them for private purposes till the final date of sale. The temptation to do this must have been particularly strong among those who had been forced to borrow from the money lenders at high rates of interest, for the later their revenue payments, the less the interest they had to pay, the minimum saving being one month's interest. In order to discourage such practices, a fine of one per cent per month on outstanding arrears was imposed from August 1794 onwards.<sup>2</sup> But this measure did not improve the situation. The rate of advertisement continued to be as high as before.<sup>3</sup> Thinking that the one per cent monthly interest was perhaps too low compared with the rates of interest charged upon private loans, a further one per cent monthly fine was imposed on the arrears.<sup>4</sup> But these regressive fines proved

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 18 Aug. 1794, para 8, General Revenue Letter, E/4/54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See, Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup>Sec. 2, Regulation I, 1801.

to be of no effect in curbing the rise in the number of advertisements. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the figure went up still further and since the number of actual sales had drastically declined, it lost all its significance as an index of the real operation of the land market.

The Court of Directors asked the Government of Bengal to explain the reasons for the great gulf between advertised and actual sales of land. The Government's explanation was that "in the Lower Provinces, almost all measures of coercion have been superseded by the process of advertisement for public sale, and the number of estates advertised for payment would always be very great."<sup>1</sup> But the real reasons for the lack of correlation between advertisements and sales, went far beyond the simple explanation given by the Council.

The zamindars' habit of waiting until the latest possible date to pay their revenues and the Regulation I of 1801 and the Board's resolution of 13 April 1802 relating to the recovery of revenues from the zamindars tended to create an artificial flow of advertisement. In Regulation I of 1801, which was intended to achieve greater punctuality

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., General Revenue Letter, 1 Aug. 1822, P.P. S.C., H.C., 1831-2, vol. XI, App. No. 46.



of the payment of the public revenue, provided for the advertisement of the land of defaulters immediately they fell into arrears, without the original one month's grace of which so much advantage had hitherto been taken.<sup>1</sup>

The same Regulation also laid down that if information enabling only such part of the estate as would cover the arrears to be put up for sale were not received, then the whole would be included in the advertisement.<sup>2</sup> A resolution of the Board of revenue passed in the following year ensured that the value of land annually advertised for sale would mount still further. The measure was designed to prevent the undue fragmentation of estates and it therefore laid down that any estate of which the annual jama was less than five hundred rupees must be put up for sale, on default, as a single block.<sup>3</sup> It also prescribed that where the sale of a part of an estate to clear arrears would reduce the truncated estate to below the five hundred mark, then once again the whole estate must be put up for sale.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Section 3, Regulation I, 1801. See R. Clarke, The Regulations of the Government of Fort William in Bengal, vol. I, p.557.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Sec. 2, pp. 555-6.

<sup>3</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 13 April 1802, B.R.C., 22 April 1802, No. 5, P54/24.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The purpose of the resolution was duly served but only by further inflating the figures of land advertised for sale.

The total effect of these measures was to transform the advertisement into a sort of final demand note and one often ostensibly involving far larger areas than were required to answer the default. It often happened that the annual jama of the lands advertised for sale in a district far exceeded that district's local annual government jama.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, in 1819, when it was quite clear that the scheme of advertisement bore scarcely any relation to actual sales, the authorities decided to discontinue the practice of advertisement in the gazette altogether, except for major genuine sales to be held at the Presidency.<sup>2</sup>

Having discussed why earlier historians were led into errors and misconceptions about the effect of the Permanent Settlement upon property in land by the inflated figures of lands advertised for sale in default of public revenue, and having outlined the reasons for the inflation of those figures, it is necessary now to grapple with the question, how much land did genuinely change hands?

The Bengal Government's own figures for land sales are, as has been seen, startlingly small over the total period

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<sup>1</sup>See, the upper lines of figures in Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>G.F. in C. to B.O.R., B.R.C., 2 July 1819, No. 29, P58/11.

compared with those for lands advertised for sale. But are the sale figures - indicating that land with a total jama of S.R. 130,48,000 or 68 per cent of the whole provincial jama was sold during the course of our twenty-five years period - themselves to be relied upon? The answer is no, for, as already indicated, many lands were sold which were in fact bought back by their original owners, in benami transactions.

But why should zamindars have found it worthwhile to go through the elaborate process of auction sale and benami repurchase? There are two main answers - one administrative, one economic. Firstly, by Regulation 44 of 1793 all previous leases and encumbrances attached to a lot sold at public auction were thereby cancelled. So, the best and, indeed, the only legal way to procure the cancellation of disadvantageous agreements with under-tenants was to cause the land to be publicly sold, and to buy it again in benami.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it was possible, by benami transactions, largely to defraud the government of its revenue dues. This was done, by cunning landholders, by transferring their lands to nominal proprietors, men of straw, who would then designedly

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 23 Sept. 1798, P.R., S.C., H.C., 1831-2, vol. XI, App. 31, p.131.

fall into arrears for the purpose of having the estate put up to auction. The true zamindar would then either secure the estate directly or perhaps benami through yet another agent at a very low price, any would-be competitor at the auction being intimidated by the zamindar's local influence. The zamindar thus secured his estate at a cheap rate while, "throwing upon government the remaining balance as the former proprietor possessed no further property nor was he to be found."<sup>1</sup>

Some benami transactions also happened because zamindars whose lands were going to be genuinely sold wished to take precautionary measures to guard themselves against collusion among the bidders or the collectorate officers, or even among their own amla. Trusted agents of the zamindar were sent to the auction centre to make false bids and so boost the price of the lands under sale. If the calls of the genuine bidders were too far below the expected price, then the real sale was postponed by the zamindar's buying in the lands benami, in expectation of a higher sale price next time.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to detect the benami purchases among the total gross transfers. Only a few cases which were specially investigated by the Collectors can confidently be

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 12 June 1799, enclosure with Harington's Minute, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1899, No. 5, P54/4.

<sup>2</sup>Rajshahi Collector's investigation into a benami case, B.O.R.P., 24 July 1801, No. 17, P74/23.

determined. The biggest benami purchaser was the Raja of Burdwan who, in the earliest years of the period, transferred almost the whole of his zamindari to his lawyers and officers through public sales, and then repurchased the land from them in his own name, both through public and private transfers.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the entire sadar revenue of this zamindari, that is Rs. 32,66,000, may reasonably be deducted from the gross total transfers.\* Another prominent benami purchaser in Burdwan was Rogonath Singh, the zamindar of Pargana Chotteah. His zamindari, paying Rs. 60,000 in government revenue, was proved to have been collusively sold over and over again in order to defraud the public revenue.<sup>2</sup> The computed jama of the lands subject to his benami transactions amounted, according to the Collector to one lakh of rupees.<sup>3</sup>

The combined purchases of the wife and mother of the Raja of Dinajpur, which must be considered to be benami, amounted to a sadar jama of S.R. 79,000.<sup>4</sup> The Raja of

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<sup>1</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 12 May 1800, B.O.R.P., 16 May 1800, No. 8, P74/11.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 12 June 1799, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, Enclosure with Harington's minute, P54/4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Buchanan, pp. 248-9.

\*Though the deductible jama should be about sixty lakhs of rupees in view of the double sale of the zamindari, only the original sadar jama has been considered as deductible under the heading benami, as there is little information about the nature of the second sale of the zamindari.

Rajshahi and his grandmother Rani Bhavani were also officially recorded as having purchased property bearing a sadar jama of S.R. 54,000.<sup>1</sup> Thus the total transfers which can be definitely traced as benami are as follows:

<u>Proprietors</u>	<u>Sadar jama</u> S.R.
Raja of Burdwan	32,66,000
Rognath Singh	1,00,000
Raja of Dinajpur	79,000
Raja of Rajshahi	<u>54,000</u>
Total	<u>34,99,000</u>

Besides the above cases there were further considerable benami transfers, though no precise figures are available about them. In the 24 Parganas, lands bearing a total jama of S.R. 2,31,000 were sold between 1794 and 1802.<sup>2</sup> But the Collector of the district reported in 1802 that very few genuine sales had taken place in that district.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See, text, pp. ~~106 and 27~~. 137-38.

<sup>2</sup>See, Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup>24-Parganas Collector to Wellesley, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, para. 26, No. 109, P147/57.

Similarly lands bearing a total jama of eight lakhs of rupees were sold in Dacca between 1794 and 1802;<sup>1</sup> but again the Collector reported in 1802 that a significant portion of these transfers had been purchased by the original proprietors.<sup>2</sup> The Collector of Murshidabad was likewise of opinion that in his district the genuine transfers from the original zamindars were much less than the gross sales.<sup>3</sup> In Rangpur and Sylhet, the Collectors reported that a significant portion of the gross sales was purchased by the original zamindars.<sup>4</sup> Such was believed to be the case in Tipperah and Mymensingh also.<sup>5</sup> All these reports were made by the Collectors in response to Wellesley's request that they should let him know what type of persons had bought the auction-lands. In the absence of definite figures about these nominal transfers reported by the Collectors,

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>Dacca Collector to Wellesley, 8 June 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, para. 26, No. 97, P147/57.

<sup>3</sup>Murshidabad Collector to Wellesley, 8 Feb. 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 104, P147/57.

<sup>4</sup>Rangpur Collector to Wellesley, 6 Jan. 1802, C.J.P., 8 July, 1802, No. 113, P147/57; Sylhet Collector to Wellesley, 12 Dec. 1801, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 177, P147/57.

<sup>5</sup>Tipperah Collector to Wellesley, 20 April 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 106, P147/57; Mymensingh to Wellesley, 9 January 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 121, P147/57.

a deduction of fifteen per cent from the total transfers from 1794 up to 1802 in those districts, may be taken as the most conservative estimate of benami transfers. If fifteen per cent be accepted, the amount of benami transfers up to 1802 would be S.R. 3,00,000, since the gross transfers in those districts for that period amounted to S.R. 19,97,200.<sup>1</sup> To this sum must be added the already quoted official account of benami purchasers by four major landholders amounting to S.R. 34,99,000, together with a further sum for the other districts of Bengal, viz. Birbhum, Chittagong, Jessore, Nadia and Purnia, not yet carried. It is true that there is no statement but the absence of any estimate almost certainly does not mean that none took place in those districts. It might be on a lesser scale, but the practice certainly did exist. Assuming the low percentage of benami transactions, which may not be true, eight per cent may be the safest figure for our purpose. If so, the total benami transactions in these five districts up to 1801, would be S.R. 2,06,000, since the total transfers in those districts up to 1801 amounted to S.R. 25,73,000.\*<sup>2</sup>

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\*The Regulation 7 of 1799 that came in to operation in late 1800 strictly prohibited benami transaction with the heavy punishment of forfeiture of the benami property. Hence sales up to 1801 have been included in our calculation.

<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Thus, the grand total of benami transfers for the Province would then be a minimum of S.R. 40,00,000.

If attention is concentrated upon land which changed hands, rather than upon the number of persons who at one point or another bought or sold land, then the government sales figures contain at least one more definable source of confusion. This is because the figures do not separately take note of land which was sold more than once. Yet it is quite clear that over the period of years here considered, while some property would remain within the same original family, other properties would be sold to a series of new owners. It is known, indeed, that many outside purchasers at auction sales very soon either withdrew from land ownership or sold acquisitions in one area in order to buy again elsewhere. Though there is little direct evidence of the new proprietor's motives in selling up, there is a strong presumption that secondary transfers were mostly occasioned by the resistance and hostility of the dispossessed zamindars and their loyal tenants to the newcomers, who in some cases were previously unacquainted with the problems of zamindari management.

As all small-scale sales were reported under the common head of 'sundry proprietors' without the names and addresses

of the sellers and buyers being given, it is impossible to prepare a detailed list of all secondary transfers. Only seventeen important cases of secondary transfers have been so far traced. The value of the original purchases and subsequent retransfers have been listed in the following table:

Table 12

Select Statement of Persons who Purchased Lands and Sold them again.

<u>SL. No.</u>	<u>Names of Purchasers</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Situation of lands purchased</u>	<u>Jama of lands purchased</u>	<u>Jama of lands subsequently sold</u>
				S.R.	S.R.
1	Abhoy Charan Dutt	Calcutta	Nadia	1,30,790	38,677
2	Balram Bose	Jessore	Jessore	55,629	42,415
3	Bhavindra Narayan	Rajshahi	Mymensing	1,16,279	40,407
4	Bhoyrab Chand	24- Parganas	Dinajpur	3,257	3,257
5	Bhoyrob Chand Adit	Burdwan	"	28,873	23,029
6	Durpnarayan Roy	Calcutta	Nadia	35,919	35,919
7	Gourkrishna Sharma	Rajshahi	Rajshahi	10,452	10,452
8	Gourmohan Roy	Nadia	Nadia	8,250	8,250
9	Kirtinarayan Roy	Calcutta	"	17,171	25,858
10	Krishna Chandra	Patna	Dinajpur	17,513	12,787
11	Madhushudhan	Nadia	Nadia	8,072	16,420
12	Natto Singh	Burdwan	Burdwan	94,233	90,000
13	Nittananda Sen	Calcutta	Rajshahi	31,847	15,278

Table 12 (cont.)

SL. No.	<u>Names of Purchasers</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Situation of lands purchased</u>	Jama of lands purchased S.R.	Jama of lands subsequently sold S.R.
14	Ramkrishna Chowdhury	Rajshahi	Rajshahi	13,685	13,685
15	Rammohon Chowdhury	"	"	30,604	30,604
16	Ramnarayan Sarkar	"	Jessore	69,603	19,198
17	Shambhu Chandra and Krishna Chandra Chatterji	Calcutta	Birbhum	67,691	60,843
Total				7,39,868	4,87,077

Sources: See Appendix C according to serial number.

We are now in a position to make an estimate of the total real turnover of land in the generation following the Permanent Settlement. The total gross sales were of land upon which the jama amounted to S.R. 1,30,14,800 or 68.42 per cent of the total jama of Bengal. If from this is deducted S.R. 34,99,000, the known figure of benami purchases by the four big families, and a notional further fifteen per cent of all sales in seven districts, and eight per cent in five other districts, which would amount to S.R. 3,00,000 and S.R. 2,06,000 respectively, together with the S.R. 4,87,079 for known retransfers - seventeen

cases in all, then we are left with known true sales of not more than S.R. 86,03,000, that is to say, 45 per cent of the annual value of the land revenues of Bengal.

Our argument can, however, be carried further, so as to enable us to see how the loss of landed property was shared between the greater and lesser proprietors. The figures are as follows. In 1793 the total revenue demand upon the lands of Bengal was S.R. 1,90,19,600. Of that, lands paying S.R. 98,09,000 were held by eleven great families, holding 51.5 per cent of the total, while lands paying S.R. 92,10,000 were held by all the other smaller families, or 48.5 per cent of the total between them.

We have shown that in the next twenty five years, if we deduct and discount benami purchases and retransfers, lands paying S.R. 86,03,000 were actually sold. But in Chapter ~~The~~ <sup>Three</sup> it has been seen that the ten great families alone lost lands valued at S.R. 61,75,000 or 61 per cent of their original holdings between 1793 and 1819.<sup>1</sup> It follows that the loss sustained by sale among the lesser zamindars in the same period must have been S.R. 24,28,000 or 26 per cent. of their original holdings. The losses of the great families were

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter ~~The~~ <sup>Three 212-3</sup> ~~pp 7~~ ; (note that the new acquisition by the Lashkarpur family has not been included in our present calculation).

thus vastly greater than those of the lesser proprietors both absolutely and proportionately.

The comparative stability of the lesser zamindars was probably due to their relative freedom from certain difficulties that operated to the ruin of their social superiors. The vast extent of the big estates compelled their proprietors to place their blind trust on their local managers who never paused to misuse that trust. But the small proprietors themselves managed their own affairs without depending on an elaborate bureaucracy, and consequently they were free from the intrigues of the amla. Because they maintained direct relationship with their tenants they could easily collect their rents more punctually by using their influence than could the big zamindars who were removed from their ryots by various degrees of intermediary farmers and sub-farmers. Besides their relative managerial advantage over the big zamindars, the small zamindars could depend on the government's help more confidently in case of calamity than could the principal zamindars under similar circumstances. It has been already explained in Chapter Two that it was government policy to break up the over grown estates into economically manageable units. Hence, it is not unreasonable to assume that as the most favoured group, the small zamindars derive various advantages from the administration.

It is not to be supposed that all the genuine transfers within our period, that is to say 45 per cent of the landed property of Bengal, were occupied by the new comers. Rather, a large percentage of them doubtlessly remained within the established landed class. Due to the scarcity of statistical data it is not possible to prove this assertion quantitatively. But if the impressionistic statements from the district Collectors are to be relied on, we should be persuaded to think that probably not less than one third of all the genuine transfers were purchased by the members of the established landed class. In September 1801, the Governor General in Council issued a circular letter to all the district Collectors, requiring them to answer some interrogatories reflecting the success and failure of the system of the Permanent Settlement. One interrogatory was "What descriptions of persons are in general the purchasers of lands disposed of by public sale in your district?" Their replies may be condensed into the following tabular description:

Table 13

The Collectors' descriptions of the professions of  
the purchasers of auction-lands disposed of from

1794 to 1801

<u>Bengal Districts</u>	Description of the profession of the most ex- <u>tensive purchasers</u>	Description of the profession of the next most extensive <u>purchasers</u>	<u>Sources of information</u>
Birbhum	Zamindari Amla	Merchants	10 April 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> , 8 July 1802, No. 79, Interrogatory, No. 26, P147/57.
Burdwan	Merchants	Officers	29 Oct. 1801, <u>C.J.P.</u> , 8 July 1802, No. 83, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Chittagong	Zamindars	-	17 March 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 96, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Dacca	Zamindars	Merchants	8 June 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 97, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Dinajpur	Moneylenders	Zamindari Amla	12 Dec. 1801, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 99, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Jessore	Merchants	Zamindars	31 Dec. 1801, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 101, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Murshidabad	Zamindars	Merchants	8 Feb. 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 104, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Mymensingh	Zamindars	-	9 January 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 106, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57.

Table 13

<u>Bengal Districts</u>	Description of the profession of the most extensive purchasers	Description of the profession of the next most extensive purchasers	<u>Sources of information</u>
Nadia	Merchants	Zamindars	16 Jan. 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 108, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
24-Parganas	Zamindars	-	1 May 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 109, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Rajshahi	Officers	-	22 Dec. 1801, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 112, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Rangpur	Zamindars	Officers	6 January 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 113, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Sylhet	Zamindars	-	12 December 1801, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 177, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57
Tipperah	Zamindars	Officers	20 April 1802, <u>C.J.P.</u> 8 July 1802, No. 121, Interrogatory No. 26, P147/57.

It is thus made evident by Collectors' reports that ~~the~~ the established zamindar class was the most predominant group among the purchasers of auction lands. The zamindars were being followed by traders and government officers. Raja Rammohan Roy who had seen all the early scenes of the drama of the Permanent Settlement with his own eyes and who, as a landholder himself, must have known the changing fortunes of his peers



more than any European Collector, also stated the same view in his evidence before a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1832. He was asked: "What class of persons become the principal purchasers of lands." Raja Rammohan Roy replied: "Frequently other landlords become purchasers, and sometimes the proprietors themselves in the name of a trusty agent. Sometimes persons engaged in trade, and sometimes the native revenue officers in the name of other confidential friends."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore almost certain that in spite of great upheavals in the traditional structure of Bengal landed society under the operation of the Permanent Settlement, the old landed interest remained the most predominant force at least until the end of our period, though their supremacy was under serious threat from the new men. How far and how long they were able to maintain their domination during the subsequent period is, indeed, worth further investigation.

A look at Appendix B will show that ninety-five per cent of the total transfers took place during the first ten years of the Permanent Settlement and only five per cent in the next fifteen years. The greatest single factor for this spectacular recovery, from the opening years of the nineteenth century onwards, according to the Governor General in Council,

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<sup>1</sup>Raja Rammohan Roy: "Exposition of the Practical Operation of Judicial and Revenue system of India," Tract 545, p.67.

was Regulation Seven of 1799, which restored to the zamindars all the coercive powers over their tenants. The Governor General Wellesley reported to the Court that this Act facilitated the collections of rent so much that it made large scale transfers on account of the zamindars' inability to collect rents from their under tenants, a story of the past.<sup>1</sup> This is surely an overexaggerated claim. Nowhere has it been found that any zamindari collapsed because of its inability to collect rents from its undertenants. It is clear to us now that the crisis of the land market in the wake of the Permanent Settlement was essentially the crisis of the territorial aristocracies who collapsed, as has been stated before, not because of their inability to collect rents from their undertenants, but because of their being notoriously handicapped by poverty, natural calamities, intrigues of amla, incapacity, overassessment in some cases and government's indifference towards their sufferings. By 1801, the dissolution of these monopolistic families was complete. So, for obvious reasons, the rate of transfer fell drastically after this. Of course, Act Seven of 1799, by making all benami transfers liable to forfeiture to state, helped minimise all artificial sales that hitherto inflated our transfer figures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 31 January 1802, General Revenue Letter, E/4/62.

The two great factors for the comparative stability of the land market since 1802 were the growth of population and the economic recovery from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1789, the district collectors returned the population of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa at 23,94,8000.<sup>1</sup> In 1802, the average of the population returned by the Collectors and judges stood at 25,49,2000.<sup>2</sup> In 1822, it rose, according to a police report, to 37,50,3000.<sup>3</sup> Thus there was a growth of about fourteen million people from 1789 to 1822. In view of the crude method of calculating population in those days, it will be illogical to suppose that the above figures were one hundred per cent right. They might be either more or less. But it is established that there was a considerable growth of population ever since the decennial settlement. Its direct impact on the economy of the country was the rapid expansion of agriculture leading to proportionate increase in the profit margin of the zamindars.<sup>4</sup> Besides the growth of population, there was another factor that immensely helped

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<sup>1</sup> R. Montgomery Martin, History of the Possession of the Honourable East India Company, vol. I, pp. 250-1.

<sup>2</sup> P.R., vol. I, No. 82, p.379.

<sup>3</sup> P.P., 1831, vol. 5, App. 42, p.762.

<sup>4</sup> See, Dowdeswell's Minute, 16 Oct. 1811, B.O.R.P., 16 Oct. 1811, No. 22, P76/160. (Dowdeswell was then the President of the Board of Revenue). Councillor Colebrooke's minute, 20 June 1808, para. 27, Minto Papers, M338.

the uninterrupted extension of agriculture. It was the absence of any major natural calamity in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The second major factor was the growth of trade and commerce from the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to Tripathi, the import and export trade/s in the Bengal Presidency increased by about 250 per cent from 1795 to 1812.<sup>1</sup> The opening of free trade further bolstered up the overall productivity and economic activity of the country. These will be indicated by the ever increasing trends in the import and export sectors.<sup>2</sup>

Table 14

Imports and Exports through Calcutta port

	<u>since 1813</u>	
<u>Years</u>	<u>Imports</u>	<u>Exports</u>
1813-4	S.R. '00000 212,	S.R. '00000 539,
1814-5	261,	561,
1815-6	344,	666,
1816-7	584,	699,
1817-8	685,	781,
1819-9	762,	709,

<sup>1</sup>A. Tripathi, p.253.

<sup>2</sup>P.P. 1831, vol. 5, Evidence p.2.

Such expansion of agriculture, trade and commerce upon the fixed government demand upon the zamindars must have made them much better off than before when they groaned under the crushing pressure of the ~~economic depression of the~~ economic depression of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, which was caused by famine, a decline in population and industries, the drainage of specie and uncertainties and indecisions in the revenue administration.

#### The Value of Landed Property

The creation of property in land and of a competitive land market, and the growth of population, trade and commerce, must all have had their impact on the value of land. It was fervently believed by Cornwallis that under the new system, "landed property would acquire a value hitherto unknown in Hindostan, and the large capitals possessed by many of the natives in Calcutta, which were now employed in usury or monopolising salt and other necessaries of life, would be appropriated to the more useful purposes of purchasing and improving lands."<sup>1</sup>

The authorities were so infused with such optimism that they set their hopes on seeing a flow of capital into

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 12 April 1790, para 3, General Revenue Letter, E/4/48, pp. 839-40.

land and its consequent improvement immediately after the Permanent Settlement. For example, when some parts of the Burdwan zamindari were sold for arrears in 1794 at a high price, the Governor General in Council wrote to the Court, "The price at which these lands have been sold merits your notice, as affording the most satisfactory proof of the improving state of the country, and that the capitals of the moneied men are flowing fast into that channel in which they will be most beneficially employed for the country, the extension and improvement of agriculture."<sup>1</sup> Ironically, it was discovered later that those lands had been actually purchased by the Raja himself in benami.<sup>2</sup>

In order to avoid such delusions and to ascertain rightly the changes in the value of landed property, it would be desirable to use the detailed rent-rolls of the estates to ascertain the productivity of land under sale and the market prices of agricultural produce and to establish the opportunity cost of investment. However, in the absence of data about nearly all these variables, the economic historian cannot proceed very far. He is, in fact, only rescued from near total ignorance about changes in the value

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C. ., 29 Dec. 1794, para 13, General Revenue Letter, E/4/54.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 20 April 1795, B.R.C., 8 May 1795, No. 25, P53/30.

of land by the Accountant General's practice of inserting in his annual statement of sales a column headed 'Years of Purchase'. By years of purchase was meant the number of years required by the purchaser to recover the capital he had invested in land out of the normal returns from land, estimated at ten per cent of the sadar jama. The greater the number of years of purchase, therefore, the greater the current value of land under sale, and vice-versa. The years of purchase column relating to all transfers within our period have been tabulated in Appendix D, and the averages have been charted in the following graph.

The graph shows that the years of purchase, in other words, the market value of land, was decreasing from 1795-6 to the closing year of the eighteenth century. Conversely, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the value line was steadily rising, though with occasional variations.

The downward trend in the value of land in the early years may be attributed to a glut in the land market consequent upon the sudden and simultaneous fall of the great families. The scarce supply of land in consequence of the establishment of stability on the land market and economic recovery from the beginning of the nineteenth century may be again, the cause of the rising trend of the value of land. But it is not always easy to explain the behaviour of the

CHART-1

GRAPH INDICATING THE CHANGE IN THE VALUE OF LANDED PROPERTY

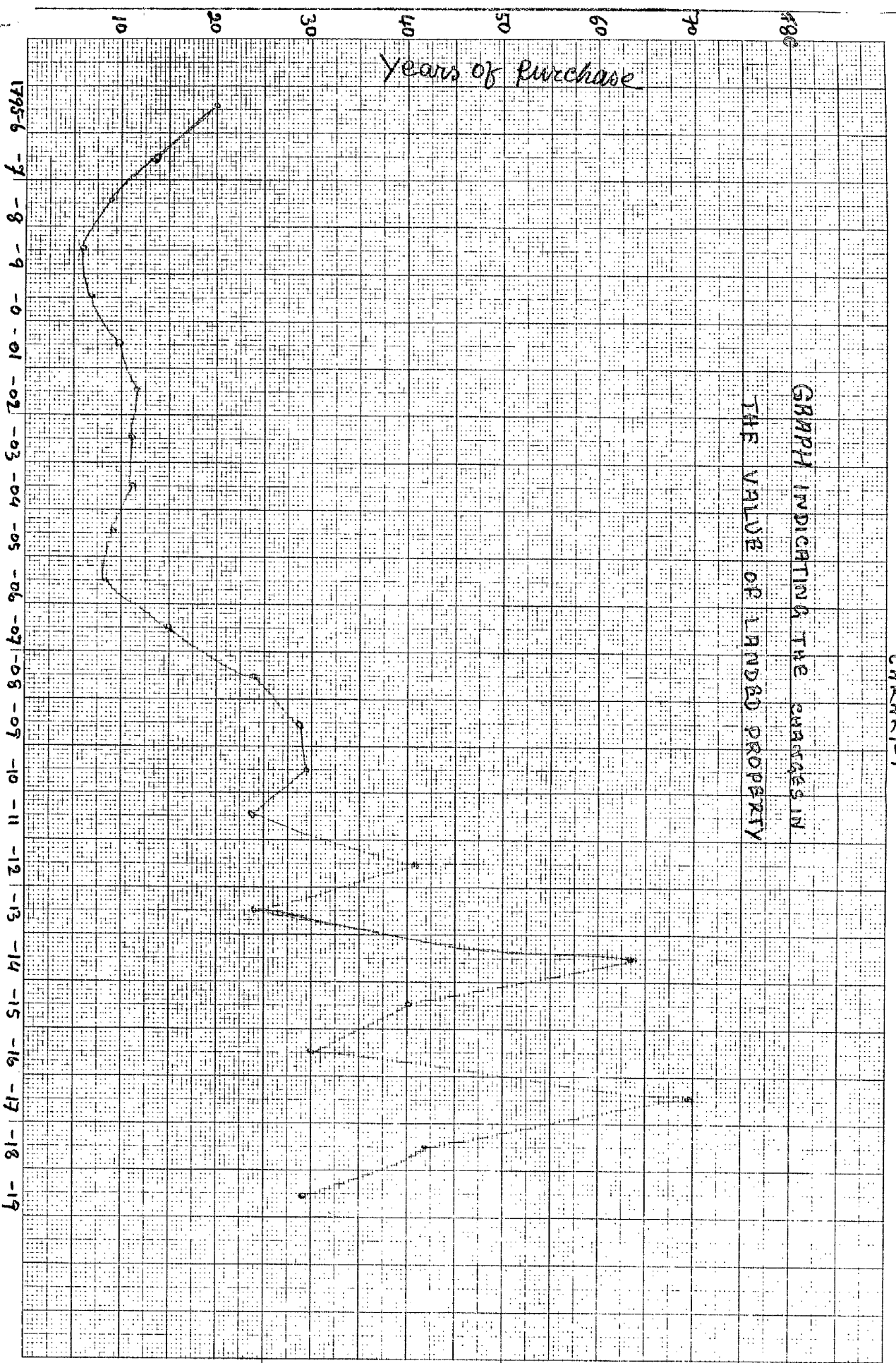


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land value figures as we find them in Appendix D, by normal economic principles of demand and supply, productivity and marketability. The obvious difficulty is in explaining the very wide fluctuations over short periods of time from about 1812 onwards, for these fluctuations are evident in the figures for individual districts as for the province as a whole. Thus the figures for the district of Murshidabad swing widely from 12 years purchase in 1814-15 to 144 years in 1815-16 and back to one year in 1816-17 - and other districts show similar abnormalities.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is also perplexing that land in such unhealthy jungle tracts, remote from the principal cities of the province, as Rangpur and Chittagong, should consistently have the higher average value expressed in years of purchase.<sup>2</sup> It is equally odd that land in Burdwan, which was called the 'garden of Bengal' and which was near to both Calcutta and Murshidabad, should have had one of the lowest average values.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

By 1814, these anomalies had attracted the attention of the Court of Directors. The Court felt that the years of purchase figure was not reflecting the true state of the value of land. To secure a more intimate knowledge of land values, the Court therefore asked for information about the level of rents which was undoubtedly the principal determinant of the value of lands under sale. The Court wrote, "To enable us to judge of the value of landed property in the Lower Provinces, it is desirable that the next statement you transmit of a similar kind should be accompanied with an estimate of the rent payable to the zamindar from the lands exposed to sale."<sup>1</sup>

But it was not easy to gather information as to rents which, under the Regulations, were a purely private matter between the zamindars and their tenants. The zamindars jealously guarded their interests and tried to suppress all information leading to the discovery of the real worth of their estates. So the Governor General in Council replied: "We apprehend that considerable difficulty would be experienced in any attempt to form an accurate estimate of the rent payable to the zemindars from estates exposed to public sale for arrears of revenue."<sup>2</sup> The Council further

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<sup>1</sup>C.D.G.G. in C., 28 Oct. 1814, P.P., 1831-2, vol. XI, App. No. 39, p.135.

<sup>2</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 7 Oct. 1815, P.P., 1831-2, vol. XI, App. No. 41, p.136.

continued, "The abolition of the office of canongoe, and the want of village records in which confidence could be reposed, combined with the habitual jealousy of the proprietors, would render any scrutiny of that nature generally fruitless, and it would seldom, we apprehend, be practicable to procure that accurate information, and those detailed accounts on which alone such an estimate could be formed."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the government's lack of interest in tracing the factors for violent variation in the value of land has made its analysis inexplicably difficult for us. It may be noted, however, that from 1810 onwards, the amount of land entering the market was very small, though the amount of advertisement was so large. It therefore becomes a small statistical sample we are dealing with, and normally, the smaller the sample the more probable that the reading will be eccentric, dependent on local, accidental circumstances.

Again, the anomalous contrast of land value between different districts, say, for example, between Burdwan and Rangpur, was largely due to variation in the decennial assessment. The decennial settlement took into consideration

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Index~~ G.G. in C. to C.D., 7 October 1815,  
P.P. 1831-32, vol. XI, Appendix 41, p. 136.

for assessment only those lands which were actually under the plough. The vast waste land attached to an estate, though recognised as the sole property of the zamindar, was entirely excluded from the assessment, as it was considered that these unassessed wastelands would tempt capitalists and landholders for capital investment and expansion of agriculture.<sup>1</sup> It is well known that while the Burdwan district was almost fully under cultivation, most of the district of Rangpur was lying waste. Hence it was no wonder that the principal purchasers for the Rangpur lands were the great capitalists like Raja Luknath Nandi and Raja Devi Singh of Murshidabad, Gopimohon Tagore of Calcutta and Danishmand Nittananda of Birbhum.<sup>2</sup> They must have realised that while the proceeds of lands already under cultivation were enough to pay the government revenue, the immense profits accruable from the wastelands, if brought under cultivation and if the new cash crops like tobacco and potato, sugar-canes, etc. were introduced, would entirely belong to them. The strong competition among the capitalists for the Rangpur lands thus boosted up the market value. On the other hand, almost all transfers of lands

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 6 March 1793, para 13, General Revenue Letter, E/4/52.

<sup>2</sup>Rangpur Judge to Judicial Department, 13 April 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 69, para. 26, P147/56.

in Burdwan, as has been stated in Chapter Two, were fake and the rate of sale was also nominal for obvious reasons. There were other general causes for the variation of market prices of land. Of them, the most important was unequal assessment at the time of the decennial settlement. The government unreservedly admitted in 1807 that while some districts were lowly assessed, some others were over-rated.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the overrated districts had more sales, but attracted a lesser number of investors. The result was a low or nominal rate of sale. Just opposite was the case with the lowly assessed districts.<sup>2</sup> Other important causes were economic changes for better or worse, subsequent to the decennial settlement.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of a great many puzzling eccentricities in the behaviour of the market value of land at district level, as we find in Appendix D, there is no ground to disregard entirely the upward trend in land values indicated by the average figures of the Appendix. Mentioning the ever rising trend in values, the Bangadut, a Bengali journal owned by

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 7 Feb. 1807, para. 21, General Revenue Letter, E/4/71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Dwarkanath Tagore, commented that, ever since the recovery from the initial set-back in consequence of the great depression on the land market, land had been gaining greater and greater value and that land which had sold at only fifteen rupees before 1800 A.D. was selling in the 1820s at three hundred rupees.<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of the Court of Directors such a phenomenal increase was beyond expectation and the Court doubted whether or not such increase was backed by a proportionate increase of resources in the country. The Court was at one with the Governor General in Council that the Province was blessed with a growth of population and consequent growth of agriculture that led to increased profits of the landholders. But at the same time the Court stated its feeling: "of the increased value of estates, the increase of cultivation is not the only possible cause. The sacrifice of all the rights of the ryots may possibly be another; and the increased confidence in the stability of the Permanent Settlement may be a third..."<sup>2</sup> The Court's observation was logical in the sense that the summary powers vested in the zamindars by the Regulation Seven of 1799 greatly enhanced their power to squeeze their

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<sup>1</sup> Bangadut, 13 June 1829, *B.N. Banerjee* (ed.), vol. I, p. 398.

<sup>2</sup> C.D. to G.G. in C., 21 March 1821, P.P., 1831-2, vol. XI, p. 138, App. 45, para. 47, p. 138.

tenants. Socially, these feudal powers crowned them with more prestige and status which might be considered by many as additional reasons for investing in land.

Chapter FiveTHE EMERGENCE OF NEW LANDED FAMILIES

In an earlier chapter it was found that within twenty five years of the operation of the Permanent Settlement about 45 per cent of the landed property of Bengal in terms of the public jama changed hands. These great transfers are indicative of a tremendous upheaval in the land market and a degree of social and economic mobility among the landowning classes never known before. The fall of the traditional landed families has already been generally dealt with in the two preceding chapters. In this chapter an attempt will be made to describe and examine the upward mobility of the principal new families who forced their way to the top of the society by buying up the lands of the old zamindars. Before we proceed to the actual description it is important here to discuss the limitation and scope of such an attempt. The collectors' sales reports give the names and addresses of the purchasers of lands. These reports also contained the names of the former proprietors, the names of mahals under sale, sadar jama on them and the amount of purchase. The only important information lacking in the report is the purchaser's profession or occupation. However, from the sales reports which were unfailingly recorded in the Board of Revenue proceedings, it is possible to make a complete list of



the purchasers and also of the sellers of lands, including the amount of lands they lost and gained. The working out of such lists is normally supposed to reveal the rise and fall of individual families and, ultimately, the social mobility and change in Bengal. But unfortunately the wide prevalence of benami practice among the purchasers has made this invaluable source of information as to land transfer greatly, if not wholly, unreliable for us. It is evident that the zamindari and public officers, for reasons of secrecy, universally purchased lands in the names of their dependents and also under assumed names.<sup>1</sup> For the same reasons, the government suppliers, trade agents and others who happened to hold positions of public trust rarely bought zamindaris in their own names. Moreover, many resorted to benami transactions without any clear motive. As a result, it has become almost impossible to determine accurately the amount of lands purchased by them. Only when an estate went under the supervision of the Court of Wards in consequence of the death of a proprietor who left behind a minor successor, can we know the exact extent of a new estate. But, within the period under survey, few new families were supervised by the

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<sup>1</sup>See, Dinajpur Collector's proceedings on benami purchases of lands, B.O.R.P., 4 Nov. 1800, No. 24, P74/19.

Court of Wards. Another difficulty is the want of information as to the purchaser's profession, family details and achievements. Excepting some successful families there is practically no information for numerous others beyond their names in the sales reports. Even their names are often misleading as many of the purchasers came from different families yet bore the same names and caste appellations.

In spite of these serious limitations it is not however entirely impossible to trace the origin and achievements of those families who happened to purchase extensive landed property in different parts of Bengal. In an earlier chapter we have seen that the zamindari and government employees constituted the biggest professional group among the newcomers. The Kandi family of Murshidabad that emerged as the greatest landholders among the new men, indeed, made their first fortune by serving under government. Kissory Chand Mitra, a famous mid-nineteenth century Bengali writer, stated on the basis of the Kandi family papers that the total public jama of lands that the family purchased in different parts of Bengal and Upper Provinces stood at S.R. 4,75,413.<sup>1</sup>

The Kandi family, though comparatively new as land owners,

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 1.

was one of the principal families among the ex-Mughal officialdom. Radhagovinda Sinha, an ancestor of this family, was one of the diwans of Alivardi Khan and also of his successor, Sirajuddoulah.<sup>1</sup> He was also one of the top revenue administrators in the team of ~~Reza~~<sup>2</sup> Khan.<sup>2</sup> But more celebrated was his younger brother, Ganga Govinda Sinha, who was the principal favourite of Hastings.<sup>3</sup> The successive key posts held by Ganga Govinda Sinha were that of the amin of Birbhum, diwan of the Committee of Calcutta, Guardian of the minor raja of Dinajpur.<sup>4</sup> His son, Pran Krishna Sinha, who was the real territorial founder of the family, was made a diwan of the Committee of Calcutta by Hastings.<sup>5</sup> Thus both father and son held the highest offices and exercised immense influence by virtue of their position. In fact, for the zamindars of Bengal, he was the second Hastings. Ramchandra Sen, a staunch enemy of Ganga Govinda Sinha, wrote, "The long reign of Hastings and extraordinary countenance given by him to Ganga

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<sup>1</sup>J. Westland, p.190.

<sup>2</sup>Kissory Chand Mitter<sup>KA</sup>, "Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal: Kandi Family", The Calcutta Review, vol. 158, 1874, pp. 95-97.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., also see, P.J.Marshall, Impeachment of Warren Hastings, p.153.

<sup>4</sup>Kissory Chand Mitter<sup>KA</sup>, pp. 95-97.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Govind Singh has fixed this mischievous and corrupt subject in such complete authority that even the orders of the Company without his approbation and consent are not carried into execution."<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the family ebbed after Hastings' departure from India and, with the exclusion of the natives from high posts, they were entirely eliminated later from the high offices. But the vast wealth accumulated by them during the early British rule soon found its easy way into land after the Permanent Settlement. Pran Krishna Sinha started buying landed property wherever it was found, with the great fortune that he himself made and that he inherited from his uncle and adopted father Radha Gavinda Sinha and his father Ganga Govinda Sinha. Pran Krishna's son and successor, Krishna Chandra Sinha, further increased the zamindari by new purchases. It is not however possible to give a detailed picture of the gradual growth of the zamindari, because most of the purchases were made in fictitious names. But it is almost certain that after 1808 there was little territorial expansion of the Kandi estate. In that year Krishna Chandra Sinha suddenly renounced the world and retired to Brindaban and lived there as a rigid ascetic till

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<sup>1</sup>Ramchandra Sen to John Macpherson, Letter No. 594, B.R.C., 9 Sept. 1786 (no pagination and consultation number), P51/1.

his death in 1820.<sup>1</sup>

The Banarji family of Telinipara in the Hughli district were zamindari officers before they promoted themselves to the rank of zamindar after the Permanent Settlement. Baidanath Banarji and his younger brother Ramlochan Banarji were the founders. In the 1780s Baiddanath migrated from Mankundu, a village in Burdwan, and settled at Telinipara as an officer of the raja of Burdwan.<sup>2</sup> He had three sons, namely Abhoycharan, Kasinath and Ramdhan. His brother was the principal diwan of the raja of Nadia. After the dissolution of the Nadia Raj it was complained by the wife of the raja of Nadia that Ramlochan Banarji was instrumental in the dismemberment of the Nadia zamindari. She complained that Ramlochan conspired against the zamindari so as to bestow favours on his nephews Abhoycharan and his brothers and to deprive her husband of his great zamindari.<sup>3</sup> There is no other allegation or evidence in the records as to Ramlochan's participation in the spoils of his master's lands. But it is quite legitimate to think, in view of the collusive conduct of the

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<sup>1</sup>CO.W.P., 9 May 1820, No. 17, PIII/53; also see, B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 28 March 1820, B.R.C., 25 April 1820, Nos. 8-10, P58/33.

<sup>2</sup>Loke Nath Ghose, The Modern History of the Indian Chiefs, Rajas, Zamindars, etc., part 11, p.301.

<sup>3</sup>Rani's petition to Lord Moira, B.R.C., 15 January 1814, No.25.

zamindari officers as we have seen earlier in different great zamindaris, that Abhoycharan and his brothers received great gifts from their father and uncle. They laid out a huge capital of about seven lakhs of rupees in buying eleven parganas in the districts of Burdwan and Nadia, bearing a total government <sup>Jama</sup> of S.R. 1,73,888.<sup>1</sup> All these lands were bought in the names of Abhoycharan, Kasinath and Ramdhan Banarjis. Baiddanath and Ramlochan Banarjis remained entirely out of the picture.

Kalishankar Roy, the founder of the Narail family of Jessore was a diwan of the Natore Raj of Rajshahi. When he began his career as a lathial or clubman in the 1770s, he held only a few hundred bighas of lands near Narail and, when he died in 1834, his zamindari paid several lakhs of rupees as revenue to the government.<sup>2</sup> But, as his zamindari had never come under the stewardship of the Court of Wards, nor had he made any will for his successors which could have revealed all his extensive benami purchases, the exact limits of his acquisitions could not be ascertained. Westland surmised that Kalishankar purchased more than 100 estates in different districts in different names.<sup>3</sup> If each of the constituents of

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix F, Table 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Samachar Darpan", 14 February 1835, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), Sambad Patre Shekaler Katha, vol. II, p.451; also see, J. Westland, pp. 7, 201-6.

<sup>3</sup>J. Westland, pp. 201-6.

his zamindari paid on average, say, three thousand rupees as government revenue, then his estate was supposed to yield at least three lakhs of rupees as public revenue.

But the total public jama of his zamindari as far as could be ascertained from the records of the Board of Revenue amounted only to S.R. 1,68,673 and the capital that he laid out to buy all these lots amounted to S.R. 66,783 only.<sup>1</sup> That means that his total investment represented only about 39 per cent of the sadar jama of lands that he purchased. Such a low rate for his purchases partly explains the fraudulent and collusive nature of his acquisitions. All of his newly acquired lands formerly belonged to the raja of Rajshahi whose diwan he was till 1796. Westland described Kalishankar as "extremely intelligent, energetic, selfish, mean and unscrupulous."<sup>2</sup>

"The process by which he acquired his wealth," said Westland, "was this, that he abused his position of diwan to transfer part of his masters wealth into his own pockets. It was during his management that the Nattore Rajah's estates began to default and to be sold up for arrears of revenue."<sup>3</sup> When the

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 3.

<sup>2</sup>J. Westland, pp. 201-6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., B.R.G.

zamindari went under the supervisinn of the Court of Wards in 1796, the Court tried to recover some of Kalishankar's illegal gains. But Kalishankar successfully concealed himself from the eye of the authority till the zamindari was transferred to the raja when the minor raja came of age in 1798.<sup>1</sup> In his old age Kalishankar Roy became extremely religious. He liberally contributed to numerous educational religious and humanitarian institutions.<sup>2</sup> Latterly he became so pious that he left Narail and settled at Kasi where he purchased some estates and donated them to alms houses and temples.<sup>3</sup> He also repaired the crumbling public houses and temples which were formerly built by Rani Bhavani in Banares.<sup>4</sup>

Balram Bose and Ramnarayan Sarkar were two other senior officers of the Raja of Rajshahi who made large territorial acquisitions.<sup>5</sup> The jama of the lands that Balram Bose purchased purely in his own name amounted to S.R. 77,300,<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>B.R.C., 5 July 1798, No. 25, P53/56.

<sup>2</sup>Brajendra Nath Banarji, (ed.), vol. I, p.24, vol. II, p.137.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vol. II, 451-2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vol. I, p.310.

<sup>5</sup>Kalinath Chowdhury, A short history of Rajshahi (Bengali text), pp. 39-40.

<sup>6</sup>See sales reports, B.O.R.P.; 20 July 1797, App. F; 17 April 1798, App. D, P73/31; 8 June 1798 App. E, P73/33; 3 Aug. 1798,



that of Ramnarayan Sarkar amounted to S.R. 92,400.<sup>1</sup> Total ignorance, of course, prevails as regards their benami purchases.

One of the most important families to come from the background of zamindari service was the Manik family of Dinajpur. Originally from Patna, Manik Chand settled in Ranpur<sup>s</sup> and worked as an assistant to John Eliot when he was the collector there in 1791.<sup>2</sup> On his transfer to Dinajpur as Collector in 1793, Eliot took his favourite Manik Chand together with all his family members<sup>z</sup> with him.<sup>3</sup> Manik was made his own diwan and his grandson, Phool Chand, was made his deputy diwan.<sup>4</sup> Later, Eliot appointed Manik Chand as the diwan of the raja of Dinajpur and Phool Chand was made his own diwan. Thus through Eliot's patronage Manik Chand and his grandson occupied the highest posts in the district open to thenatives. We have already seen in an earlier chapter how Manik Chand and his grandson abused their official power and influence in order to dismember the Dinajpur Raj and buy it

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App. D, P73/35; 11 June 1799, No. 184, P73/49; 30 July 1799, App. U, P73/50; 12 Aug. 1800, No. 29, P74/15.

<sup>1</sup>See Sales reports, B.O.R.P.: 15 Feb. 1799, No. 27, P73/43; 21 May 1799, App. A, 173/47.

<sup>2</sup>Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 30 July 1795, No. 25, P72/46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

for themselves in staged auctions. So far as it could be ascertained Manik Chand bought twenty one lots in the names of his dependents, the total sadar jama of all these lots being S.R. 1,36,334.<sup>1</sup> His capital investment in buying these lots amounted to S.R. 67,965.<sup>2</sup>

Manik Chand was, of course, not the only officer who purchased zamindari lands on a large scale in Dinajpur. In our account of the Dinajpur Raj we have seen that diwan Ramkanta Roy had managed the zamindari as an absolute ruler for as long as eight years and had purchased many parganas in the names of his dependents. In 1802, the Judge of Dinajpur reported that Ramkanta Roy was the richest landholder in the district of Dinajpur.<sup>3</sup> But as all of his acquisitions were in benami we do not have any definite knowledge as to the real extent of his newly acquired estate. Collector Smith however believed that Ramkanta purchased as many as twenty three big lots, in fictitious names.<sup>4</sup> Among the Collectorate officers who bought extensive landed property in Dinajpur the

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The Dinajpur Judge to the Chief Secretary, 16 January 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 51, P147/56.

<sup>4</sup>The Dinajpur Collector to B.O.R., 11 Oct. 1802, para. 3, B.R.C., 28 Oct. 1802, No. 10, P54/28.

most notable were Wali Muhammed, Baiddanath Chowdhury, Radakanta, Rashu Babu, Ganganarayan Sen and Ferendez.<sup>1</sup> But in the absence of any official investigation into their benami transactions it is impossible to ascertain the extent of lands that each of those officers had purchased.

The family of Krishnacharan Dutt and his nephew Abhoycharan Dutt of Calcutta achieved their first distinction as government officers. Both of them were diwans to the collectors of Dacca and the 24-Parganas respectively at the time of the Permanent Settlement. Krishnacharan's brother Anandamoi also held the position of a diwan to the collector of Rajshahi. By exerting official influence they seemed to have amassed immense wealth which they used in buying extensive landed property and in setting up a banking business in Calcutta and Banares.<sup>2</sup> But very little is known about the real size of their zamindaris. Only the eleven lots which were purchased by Abhoycharan Dutt in Nadia are definitely known to us. Their total sadar jama was only S.R. 58,479.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baburam's Petition to G.G. in C., B.R.C., 9 June 1803, No. 2, P.54/33.

<sup>2</sup>B.S.Cohn, "Structural Change in the Indian Rural Society, 1596-1885" in R.E.Frykenburg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p.81.

<sup>3</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 5.

Nothing is known about the purchases of the senior branch of the family, that is, Krishnacharan and his brother.

It seems that after two generations the descendents of Krishnacharan Dutt and Abhoycharan Dutt promoted themselves from Dutt to Mitter. One anonymous member of the family published a family history in 1869. He claimed that Krishna charan Mitter and Abhoycharan Mitter were uncle and nephew. Krishnacharan got the diwanship of Dacca through the patronage of Edward Colebrooke and Henry Colebrooke.<sup>1</sup> Krishnacharan recommended his nephew Abhoycharan to Edward Colebrooke who made him the diwan of the 24-Parganas.<sup>2</sup> Krishnacharan's brother Anandamoi was later pushed to the diwanship of Rajshahi.<sup>3</sup> It is thus obvious that family chroniclers' Mitters and Dutts as we find in the sales reports are the same family. With great prosperity and higher social standing the Dutts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries moved to Mitter caste in the late nineteenth century.

Who were the great new families coming from the professions of merchants and banians? The families of the elder

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<sup>1</sup>An account of the late Govindram Mitter and of his descendents in Calcutta and Banares, by a member of the family, p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

banians like Nabakrishna Deb, Gocul Ghoshal, Ramchandra Roy, Naku Dhar, Joykrishna Sinha, Kashinath Babu and others were content with acquiring urban properties and whatever property they had made outside Calcutta and Murshidabad was acquired before the Permanent Settlement. After that they did not make any such significant additions to their possessions as would qualify them to be discussed along with the emergent families after the Permanent Settlement. Moreover, by the 1790s they were already considered to be the established members of the aristocracies. Among the elder banians only the family of Kantu Babu of Kassimbazar bought considerable landed property after the Permanent Settlement.

Kantu Babu was a muhrer in the Company's Kassimbazar factory before Plassey.<sup>1</sup> In that capacity he came to know Warren Hastings, at that time the commercial resident at Kassimbazar. After Plassey he became Hastings' banian. Kantu Babu's relations with Hastings was, indeed, more than that of mere banian. He was instrumental in many of Hastings' questionable means of income and in return for his numerous services, Hastings bestowed on him many profitable farms and salt contracts including some jagirs in the districts of

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<sup>1</sup>Gokulnath Dhar, "Krishnakanta Nandi", B.P.P., Jan.-June, 1924, vol. 27, serial 53-54, p.182.

Rangpur, Gazipur and Azimgarh.<sup>1</sup> In search of establishing a ranking family, Kantu Babu procured from Hastings in the end, the 'raja' title for his son Loknath Nandi.<sup>2</sup> In connection with a family dispute over the shares of the zamindari raja, Harinath submitted the following deposition before the Supreme Court in 1892 about the career of his grandfather, Kantu Babu.

"Radhakissen Nandy, your orator's great grand father, held a small piece of land in Sreepore. He had two or three mud and straw huts in which his family resided. In one of these straw huts he kept a retail moody grocery shop in which he sold paper kites, rice, ghee, salt and other things of small value. His earnings were very small. He had five sons - Krishnakanta, Joyram, Krishnacharan, Nursing and Gorachand. Krishnakanta - 'Cantoo' in his father's life time - obtained employment as a mohrar in the factory at Cossimbazar under Watts. His wages were small. But from his earnings he maintained his father and brothers in comfort. Radhakissen Nandy died in 1757. His sradh was performed in a very poor manner. When restitution claims were made after Plassey, Cantoo Baboo had no claims to make though the Cossimbazar factory had been taken by Siraj. But his services to his British superiors before and after Plassey were appreciated. He succeeded in securing the friendship and patronage of Sykes and held various appointments and situations of great trust and importance. He was dewan and banian to Sykes and Warren Hastings. Because of his importance under Watts, Sykes and Hastings, his good offices were sought by zamindars and talukdars. In return he got presents and grants of land in his own name as also in the name of his son Lokenath. He also carried on trade. ... He succeeded in getting 158 mouzas and mahals in pargana Coolberia and others in Mahamudshahi.

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<sup>1</sup>See, P.J.Marshall, pp. 106, 137, 144-5, 153, 155..

<sup>2</sup>Gokulnath Dhar, p.183.

They were all formed into a new pargana called Cantoanagar."<sup>1</sup>

Kantu Babu's estate, now known as Kantunagar, was confined only to pargana Bahraband in Rangpur and some petty jagirs in Bhagalpur. But his son and successor Lokenath Nandi turned it into a vast zamindari after the Permanent Settlement by purchasing new lands in almost all the districts from Dacca to Bhagalpur. But most of his purchases were in benami. The whole of his zamindari however came to light when the zamindari came under the control of the Court of Wards in consequence of his death in 1808, when he left behind his minor son, Raja Harinath Nandi. The details of the parganas were not given by the Court of Wards. Instead, the Court supplied the total jama as was paid from each district where kantunagar was situated. The total government jama of his zamindari in 1808 was returned at S.R. 2,42,905.<sup>2</sup>

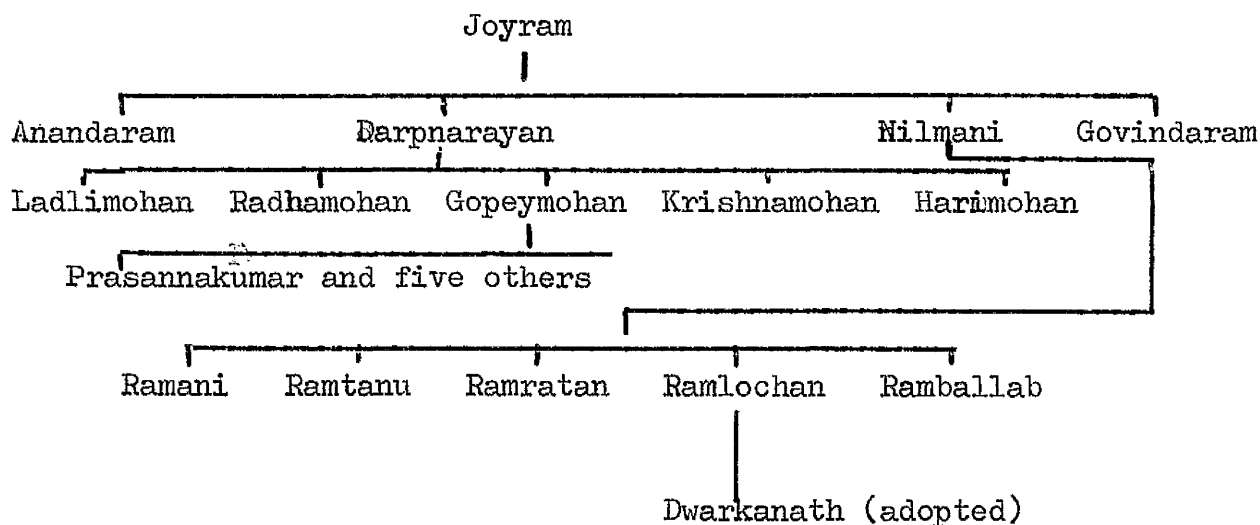
The next most important new landed family coming from the occupation of a banian were the Tagores of Calcutta. The Tagores trace their descent from Bhattanarayan, the chief of the five Brahmins who, at the invitation of king Aditya, came from Kanauj in 1072 A.D in order to give religious leadership in Bengal. Joyram Tagore, who claimed to be one of the descendants of Bhattanarayan, worked as an amin in the settlement

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in N.K.Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, 1793-1848, vol. III, pp. 93-4.

<sup>2</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 6.

of the 24-parganas when it came under the East India Company.<sup>1</sup> The brief geneological table of the Tagores for two generations from Joyram is as follows:<sup>2</sup>



The descendents of Darpanarayan Tagore formed the senior branch and that of Nilmani Tagore formed the junior branch of the Tagore family. The other two sons of Joyram died early and without heirs. All of these members of the family purchased extensive lands all over Bengal. By the 1830s, the size of the combined Tagore estates became so big that Dwarkanath Tagore once boasted that the Tagore family was a household word in Bengal in view of their authority in almost all the districts of Bengal as landholders.<sup>3</sup> He said that nearly one fifteenth of the total land revenue of Bengal was paid by the Tagores alone.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Loke Nath Ghose, p.162.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.221.

<sup>3</sup> West Bengal State Archives, Criminal Department, 15 Dec. 1840,



But before the decennial settlement the Tagores had virtually no position among the landowning class. Darnarayan Tagore, the pioneer of the family, at first served the French at Chandannagar and later became a banian to Edward Wheeler who succeeded Colonel Manson as member of the Supreme Council.<sup>1</sup> The wealth that he acquired in the course of his service and business was invested in purchasing a large pargana in Rangpur from the Natore Raj in 1790. The total jama of that pargana amounted to S.R. 60,000. But the real lustre on the family was shed by the subsequent purchases of his son, Gopeymohan Tagore who happened to be the first celebrated member of the great Tagore family. He purchased lands mainly from the rajas of Rajshahi, Nadia and Jessore. The total jama of his estates, excluding his father's acquisitions, amounted to S.R. 86,405 and his capital investment in buying those lands amounted to S.R. 1,11,600.<sup>2</sup> It is not known how much land he purchased in the names of his servants and relations. When

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Nos. 1-3. With acknowledgement to Dr. B. B. Kling who kindly supplied this information.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>J. Westland, p.186; also see, Pramathanath Mallik, "Notable Bengalis in 1806", B.P.P., vol. 30, July-December, 1925, p.199.

<sup>2</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 7.

he died in 1818, it was reported by the Samachar Darpan that his landed estates and other properties bore a value of about eighty lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup> In a supreme court affidavit his immovable property was estimated at twenty lakhs of rupees and other personal property was valued at forty lakhs of rupees.<sup>2</sup> It may be noted that all other brothers and cousins of Gopeymohan Tagore bought large landed property though on a much lesser scale than him. All these estates purchased by sons of Darnarayan Tagore and Nilmani Tagore were further enlarged by their grandsons, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Dwarkanath Tagore, both of whom were large scale purchasers of lands in the 1820s and 1830s.

The Pal Chowdhuries of Ranaghat were salt agents in Calcutta before they embarked upon purchasing zamindaris. Krishnachandra Pal and Shambhuchandra Pal, the founding members of the family, were brothers. Beyond this, nothing is known about their family position. Tradition says that they were ordinary betel leaf vendors at the early stage of their lives. Whatever might have been their position, it is certain that in the 1790s the Pals of Ranaghat were important members

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.216.

<sup>2</sup>Ahalya Devi vs Chunder Coomar Tagore, 1820, quoted in N.K.Sinha, vol. III, p.91.

of the moneyed society of Calcutta. These brothers jointly bought twenty one lots in their own names. Most of these lands formerly belonged to the rajas of Jessore and Nadia. All these lots bore a total government jama of S.R. 1,32,714 and the total capital investment was 1,82,100.<sup>1</sup> One peculiarity about the Pals is that they did not give up business after purchasing zamindaris. Rather they further expanded their business to money-lending, stock speculation, grain, sugar, ghee, cloth, indigo and to various other commodities.<sup>2</sup>

The banian who emerged as one of the largest landholders in Bengal after the Permanent Settlement but who has been entirely unnoticed so far by any modern writer was Roy Danishmand Nittananda of Murshidabad. Little is known about the life and family background of the Roy. It appears, from a civil honours list drawn up in 1872, that the Roy's father, Jagadindra Banwari, was a general of the Mughal army. Emperor Shah Alam conferred on Jagadindra the title Maharajah-Azimetullah-Amirul-Mulk Jagadindra-Danishmand-Nittananda-Sepadhar Jang Bahadur.<sup>3</sup> Hence all his descendants were known as Danishmand Nittananda. Thus the Roy always used his family

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<sup>1</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 8.

<sup>2</sup>See, N.K.Sinha, vol. III, p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Temple Papers, MSS.EUR.F.86/158.

title in all transactions though his real name was Banwari Lal. But Francis Buchanan gave a quite different account of his family background. He reported that Danishmand Nittananda was a weaver in his early life and subsequently became the Company's commercial agent.<sup>1</sup> In the capacity of the Company's banian he made a great fortune and in order to improve his social status he purchased the Danishmand Nittananda title from the Nawab of Murshidabad. Buchanan's account is more reliable because he gave this report after visiting Nittananda's estate in Rangpur and after having a personal interview with the Roy himself.<sup>2</sup>

Danishmand Nittananda purchased most of his lands from the rajas of Birbhum, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Idrikpur.<sup>3</sup> The annual sadar jama of his lands as far as can be ascertained from the sales reports amounted to S.R. 1,20,613 and the total capital investment was S.R. 1,97,259.<sup>4</sup> It is evident that Danishmand Nittananda purchased a much larger amount of

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Buchanan (Hamilton) Papers, vol. I, Book I, pp. 35-6, MSS.EUR.D.74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>See, Appendix F, Table 9.

landed property than appears in the sales reports. It is gathered from a report of the judge of Rangpur that he had bought great landed estates in his home district Murshidabad.<sup>1</sup> But no part of his estate situated in Murshidabad could be traced.<sup>2</sup> He must have acquired his Murshidabad lands in benami. In Rangpur, lands yielding sadar jama of S.R. 23,358 were purchased by him in his own name. Under assumed names he purchased much more. In 1815, his Rangpur lands were paying a total sadar jama of S.R. 69,742.<sup>3</sup> It will not be thus inappropriate to assume that he had similar large scale benami lands in other districts.

It is well known that the system of the Permanent Settlement opened the flood-gate of litigations leading to booming business for the lawyers. But in spite of the soaring incomes in the legal professions we find very few men from that profession purchasing considerable landed property. The most outstanding among these few was Nilmani Haldar of Noapara in Hughli. He bought seven large lots in his home district yielding a sadar jama of about one lakh of rupees.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Judge Sisson's report from Rangpur, 2 April 1815, quoted in E.G. Glazier, App. A, p. XXXIII.

<sup>2</sup> See, Appendix F, Table 9.

<sup>3</sup> Judge Sisson's Report from Rangpur, 2 April 1815. Quoted in E.G. Glazier, App. A, p. XXXIII.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix F, Table 10.

The circumstances leading to the rise of Nilmani Halda<sup>r</sup> to prosperity and power are obscure to us. Though his son, Nilratna Haldar was a prolific writer, owner of a printing press, and an editor of the weekly, Bangadut, he did not care to write anything about his own family.<sup>1</sup> It is however gathered from the sales reports and the judicial proceedings that Nilmani Haldar came from the village Noapara in the Hughli district and that he was a practising lawyer in the sadar diwani adalat.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the principal newcomers, Dwarkanath Babu of Singhur, Hughli, district seemed to be the next to the Kandi family in territorial acquisitions and he was again the most obscure one before he embarked upon buying zamindari lands in early 1799. Within a few years after 1799 Dwarkanath surpassed most other wealthy banians, merchants and officers in the acquisition of landed rights. In 1807, he was considered to be one of the richest men of Bengal. By then, his vast zamindari paid a sadar revenue of S.R. 4,74,852.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, pp.381, 456.

<sup>2</sup>For address, see B.O.R.P., 10 May 1799, Appendix E, P73/47, and for profession, see Panchananda Mitter's case, B.O.R.P., 3 Sept. 1799, No. 74, P73/52.

<sup>3</sup>See, Appendix F, Table II.

In the absence of reliable information about his life nothing definite can be said as to the sources of his great income. According to Pramatha Nath Barma, who wrote a small history of the family of Dwarkanath, his father Gopinath Sahi migrated from the Panjab in search of a livelihood and worked as a domestic servant of the Mallik family of Singhur.<sup>1</sup> Dwarkanath lost his father when he was still a boy.<sup>2</sup> But being blessed by a great saint Dwarkanath was said to have made an unimaginable fortune within a short time.<sup>3</sup> Pramatha Nath said that he made best use of his god-sent money by buying zamindaris and setting up some indigo factories.<sup>4</sup> The writer however also mentioned a popular tradition that he owed his fortune to his early career as a dacoit.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that, as he was under the shelter of the Malliks, he might have acquired his initial fortune through their favour and subsequently augmented it by dint of his own energy and drive. The possibility of his being a dacoit cannot also be entirely ruled out. Under the late

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<sup>1</sup>Pramatha Nath Barma, The life of Dwarkanath Babu of Singhur (Bengali Text), p.2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 10, 15.

eighteenth century conditions in Bengal, dacoity was a wide-spread practice and it was frequently carried out under the protection of zamindars themselves. Whatever might have been the secret of his success, it is certain that though Dwarkanath Babu had no ancestry to boast of, he made his way to the top of the new landed aristocracy without being, like most others, a banian, or a merchant or a zamindari officer.

Besides these above mentioned large emerging families there were many others whose newly acquired zamindaris were presumably equally extensive. But because their acquisitive process was almost entirely in benami we are in the dark about the details of their property. For instance, Raja Devi Singh of Murshidabad, who was a famous revenue farmer before the Permanent Settlement, had subsequently acquired "zamindaris, taluqs, and other landed estates, kothees, company's paper and other securities valued at 1 crore of rupees".<sup>1</sup> Hence, as landholder he must have been paying lakhs of rupees as government revenue. But the government jama of his zamindari in his own name amounted to only S.R. 17,898.<sup>2</sup> The will of Joykrishna Singh of Calcutta, whose father Santiram Singh was a government officer before the Permanent Settlement,

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<sup>1</sup>N.K.Sinha, vol. III, p.91.



reveals that "he left behind him Rs. 20,04,915 -- houses, lands and garden in Calcutta valued at Rs. 7,40,430 and the rest zamindari."<sup>1</sup> But in records his zamindari was worth only a few thousand rupees. Thakoor Das Gossain of Serampur in Nadia is said to have accumulated a fabulous fortune by trading with the Danes at Serampur and he laid out his entire capital in buying vast zamindaris in Nadia, Jessore, Purnia, Hughli, Burdwan and Midnapur.<sup>2</sup> But the wonder is that his name did not appear in the sales reports at all. In our account of the Dinajpur Raj we have seen that diwan Ramkanta Roy managed the zamindari as absolute rulers for as long as eight years and he purchased the greater portion of the Dinajpur zamindari in the names of his dependents. So, in 1802, he was returned by the Judge to be the largest landholder in Dinajpur though in his own name he had no property at all.<sup>3</sup>

Thus it is abundantly clear that unless and until the property of these great anonymous proprietors can be discovered it is impossible to deduce any conclusion from the known figures of about a dozen great new families especially when it is evident that each one of them possessed much more land than

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<sup>1</sup>N.K.Sinha, vol. III, p.91.

<sup>2</sup>J. Westland, p.189.

<sup>3</sup>The Dinajpur Judge to the Chief Secretary, 16 Jan. 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 51, P147/56.

their figures indicate. To cite only one typical example here, one Krishnakanta Sen from the Rajshahi district purchased a zamindari in Jessore bearing a jama of S.R. 27,649 and he had no other estate in his own name on record. But, when he became mentally deranged in 1800 and the zamindari went under the supervision of the Court of Wards, it was found that his real zamindari bore a sadar jama of S.R. 57,425.<sup>1</sup> So half his property was hitherto hidden from our view.

We have previously seen that the total genuine transfer of land in the course of twenty five years stood at about eighty six lakhs of rupees or 45 per cent of the landed property of Bengal in terms of jama. According to the statements of the district collectors as mentioned earlier, a large percentage of these transfers was circulated among the established landed class. Gallaway estimated in 1830 that about one half or two thirds of the lands transferred within ten years from 1796 were purchased by the traditional neighbouring zamindars.<sup>2</sup> So, if we exclude the purchases of the old proprietors from our calculation for the purpose of ascertaining the size of the completely new comers into land, and if we again take the purchases of the numerous benami proprietors

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<sup>1</sup>The Petition of Kajal Mani and Tara Mani Dasi, two wives of Krishnakanta Sen, to B.O.R., B.O.R.P., 7 Feb. 1800, No. 32, P74/7.

<sup>2</sup>A. Gallaway, Observations on the law and Constitution and Present Government of India, p.180.

like Raja Devi Singh, Ramkanta Ray, etc., into consideration, then it is not unreasonable to conclude that about two-thirds of the lands transferred to new hands were purchased by not more than thirty families only.

Even a cursory look at the formation of these principal new families as quantified in the Appendix F will make it crystal clear that the constituents of almost all of them were situated in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan, Dinajpur, Jessore, Murshidabad, Nadia and Rangpur and most of their founders also came from these districts. No large new family did emerge from the eastern districts of Bengal such as Chittagong, Dacca, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Tipperah. It is for the obvious reasons that these districts which were characterised by small holdings showed remarkable stability compared with other districts which were mainly owned by a few raja families whose fall facilitated the rise of the new territorial houses. Above the consideration of the relative stability of the small estates was the transfer of lands in these districts in very tiny lots which hardly attracted large capital investors. Most of these lands were circulated among the neighbouring established zamindars. Hence it can be forcibly argued that the structural changes under the operation of the Permanent Settlement were not even in all parts of Bengal. There were phenomenal changes in the

traditional structure in those districts which were formerly owned by the great rajas, whereas the old Mughal landed structure remained more or less intact in the eastern parts of Bengal especially in the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, Tipperah, Chittagong and Sylhet.

ZAMINDARI MANAGEMENT

It has been observed in previous chapters that deceit and collusion on the part of the zamindars' amla and to some extent incapacity on the part of the zamindars played a very significant part in the crisis of the landed society of Bengal. It is, therefore, appropriate here to enquire whether or not their methods of estate management bred some of those problems. An examination of zamindari management is also essential for two other important reasons. Firstly, the authors of the Permanent Settlement hoped that revolutionary changes in the character and habits of the zamindars would follow from the stimulus given by the new system. The absolute proprietary rights that were conferred on them, coupled with the perpetually fixed government demand, were expected to stimulate the zamindars to exert themselves for the improvement of their estates. Secondly, it was anticipated that the strict execution of the sale laws and the operation of the newly created land market would create conditions in which the lands of "the ignorant, extravagant, or indigent would fall to the able, prudent, or wealthy, who would improve the lands and add to the stock of labour." Thus, in the words of Cornwallis, the Permanent

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<sup>1</sup>T. Law, A Sketch of some late arrangements and a view of the Rising Resources in Bengal, p.56.

Settlement would "excite a spirit of industry and economy, and be the means of bringing into cultivation the very great proportion of desolate land which is to be found in almost every district throughout the Provinces ... the proprietors of the soil will be enabled from the profits arising from their estates to keep the embankments and reservoirs in proper repair, and thereby avert those calamities to a great degree; and instead of being necessitated to oppress their tenants whilst labouring under any temporary distress in order to answer the demands of Government upon themselves, they will have it in their power to afford them relief."<sup>1</sup>

All these aspirations might indeed be expected to be achieved through a superior management which involved industry and enterprise, economy and efficiency, investment, and innovation. And such superior management, so Cornwallis expected, must be the natural concomitant of the Permanent Settlement. An examination of the different aspects of zamindari management will show how far the zamindars responded to Cornwallis's idea of improvement. It has been persuasively argued that methods of estate management, as an independent science of local revenue administration, had been developed throughout the Mughal period, and even before that, and long tradition had

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<sup>1</sup>G.G. in C. to C.D., 12 April 1790, para. 3, General Revenue Letter, E/4/48, pp. 338-9.

acquired such structural stability that the Mughal method of estate management remained almost unaffected by the British rule.<sup>1</sup> Keeping this structural stability in view, all changes therefore must be sought in the roles personally played by the zamindars themselves, either as capitalistic entrepreneurs or as sybaritic owners living on their unearned incomes, often as absentees. Even then, a short description of the traditional methods of management is imperative, because of the considerable institutional influence on the character and habits of the managers.

Every zamindari, excepting the very small ones, used to maintain two sets of establishments, that is to say, a sadar kachahri or central office and a group of mufassal kachahris or local offices in the different territorial units of the zamindari. The sadar kachahri was headed by a sadar naib, also known as diwan in some places. He was the final working link between the zamindar and the rest of the amla. His position in the zamindari serestah or establishment was so important that much of the success or failure of an estate, even of the most vigilant and enterprising owner, depended on his sagacity, integrity and leadership. As head of the whole establishment, he superintended the work of all the officers at the sadar and

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<sup>1</sup>Tapan Roychaudhuri, "Permanent Settlement in Operation: Bakarganj District East Bengal", in P.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p.171, also F.D.Ascoli Survey and Settlement Operations in Dacca, p.162.

myfassal kachahris and was personally responsible to the zamindar for all the affairs of the estate. He organised his secretariat into the following main five divisions in order to facilitate his work:<sup>1</sup>

- i) Sumar Daftar - This department kept the accounts of all income and expenditure of the sadar office. It maintained the detailed accounts of every mahal, its total rents, the rents payable at every kist, the actual collections made and the balances due. The chief officer of this department was called a sumarnavis or karkun.
- ii) Jama Daftar - This division estimated the area of every mahal, determined the varieties and qualities of its lands and rates of rent to be paid by every ryot. The jamanavis, the chief officer who was also known as serestadar, maintained the jama wasit baki or the record of the demand collection and balance of each mahal.
- iii) Khajanchi Daftar - This office received all the collections of the zamindari and the khajanchi, the chief of this division, disbursed money according to the written orders of the naib or diwan.

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<sup>1</sup>See, Haridash Gongopadhye: Zamindari Accounts, pp. 25-26. He wrote this book in 1860 for the use of those who wanted to join the zamindars' service, and he said in the introduction of the book that he wrote the book on the basis of his experience as a zamindari officer himself.



- iv) Amin Daftar - This department conducted the survey and measurement of the zamindari. The amin, the head, determined and kept records of the extent and quality of lands under every ryot. The rate of rent was determined by the jamanavis on the basis of his reports.
- v) Munshi Daftar - This office maintained correspondence between the sadar and mufassal kachahris. The munshi, its head, made notes of all correspondence and forwarded them to the naib for necessary orders and again issued letters according to the orders of the naib.

Many wealthy zamindars also maintained a mukhtar daftar which dealt with legal affairs and kept some vakils at the district headquarters and in Calcutta. The smaller zamindars sometimes jointly appointed a vakil. The principal zamindars also maintained a mohafizkhana, or record-room, where all records were deposited after they ceased to be in current use. The sadar establishments of the following three zamindaris representing large, medium and small estates will indicate that they differed only in their sizes, but very little in their functional aspects. Functionally, all estates had more or less similar division of work, such as sumar or diwan's daftar, jama daftar, khajanch daftar, amin daftar, munshi daftar, etc.

Sample 1

The sadar establishments of the Burdwan Raj in 1787,  
sadar jama 34 lakhs of rupees

<u>Name of department</u>	<u>No. of officers</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Monthly salaries</u> R.
1. Diwan's daftar	1	Diwan	1000
	1	Karkun or accountant	500
	1	Naib diwan	300
	1	Naib karkun	50
	1	Serestadar or record keeper	45
	20	Muharrirs or writers	412
2. Khajarichi daftar	1	Khajarichi or cashier	250
	1	Karkun	30
	7	Muharrirs	100
	5	Poddars or money examiners	40
3. Jamakharcha daftar	4	Miharrirs	40
4. Jamabundi daftar	1	Darogha or superintendant	16
	3	Muharrirs	24
5. Amin daftar	1	Darogha	125
	1	Naib	15
	5	Muharrirs	35
6. Munshi daftar	9	Bengali language Munshis or correspondents	135
	4	Persian language munshi	125
7. Bazizamin daftar	1	Darogha	75

Sample 1 (cont.)

<u>Name of department</u>	<u>No. of officers</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Monthly salaries</u> R.
7. Bazizamin daftar (cont.)	5	Muharrirs	36
	1	Munshi	20
8. Vakil daftar	6	Vakils at Calcutta	475
	1	Vakil at Burdwan	20
	10	Vakils for small causes at lower courts	250
	1	Muharrir	20
	1	Poddar	15
	9. Baxy daftar	1	Baxi or paymaster
7		Naibs	230
12		Naib baxis	97
1		Poddar	3
Total monthly expenditure			Rs. 4647

Source: Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 10 May 1787, B.O.R.P.,  
18 May 1787, P70/28.

Sample 2

The sadar establishment of Bullna Estate in Noakhali in 1795

sadar jama Rs. 30,000

<u>Names of departments</u>	<u>No. of officers</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Monthly salaries</u> Rs.
1. Sumar daftar	1	Naib	120
	1	Serestadar	30
	4	Muharrirs	60
2. Khajanchi daftar	1	Khajanchi	25
	1	Muharrir	15
3. Munshi daftar	1	Munshi	15
4. Jamakharcha daftar	1	Muharrir	15
	1	Poddar	16
Total expenditure			Rs. 296

Source: B.O.R.P., 5 June 1795, No. 28, P72/44.

Sample 3

The sadar establishment of Kismat Pargana Chunakuti in Murshidabad

in 1794, sadar jama Rs. 4954

<u>Names of departments</u>	<u>No. of officers</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Monthly salaries</u> Rs.
1. Sumar daftar	1	Naib	25
2. Khajanchi daftar	1		8
3. Jama daftar	1	Sumarnavis or accountant	5

Sample 3 (cont.)

<u>Names of departments</u>	<u>No. of officers</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Monthly salaries</u>
4. Mukhtar daftar	1	Vakil at Murshidabad	Rs. 15
	1	Vakil at sadar diwani adalat	6
Total expenditure			Rs. 59

Source: C.W.P., 14 Feb. 1794, No. 2, P89/25.

These three representative sadar establishments make it clear that the officers who stood out as the most important and common were a diwan, a khajanchi and a munshi. If the zamindari was small these three officers shared all work between themselves with the necessary number of muharrirs, even without them, if the estate was too small to afford them. Conversely, the number of officers and division of work between them increased or decreased according to the size of the estate.

Mufassal Establishments

Excepting for those small zamindaris which could be managed from a single centre, all considerable estates were divided into a number of units for the convenience of revenue collection and the regulation of local affairs. The whole zamindari was broadly divided into parganas which were again subdivided into tarafs, each of which in turn comprehended a number

of villages. In each unit, at all three levels, a kachahri was set up to manage the revenue collection.<sup>1</sup>

The village organisation under every taraf consisted of the village mandal, a patwari and karmachari. The mandal or headman, sometimes known as muqaddam, was the most influential ryot of a village and held his office at the goodwill of the inhabitants of the village. His duty and situation led him to act as a mediator between the ryots and the local collector of the revenue, assisting them in collecting and selling their crops when rent was paid in kind, and in raising money to pay their rents and to settle little disputes that arose in the neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> The patwari kept the accounts and the karmachari collected the rents, and managed the general business of the village.<sup>3</sup> In the small villages, the functions of both officers were combined in the patwari. The Permanent Settlement rules made the zamindars legally bound to keep one patwari in every village, who was required, when called upon to furnish necessary village papers to the government.<sup>4</sup> A Halshana was

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<sup>1</sup> Amini Commission Report, 1778, H.Misc.S., vol. 206, p.355. In some places taraf merely designated the lands or estate belonging to an individual which was named after him, as, Taraf Joynarayan Ghoshal. See, H.H.Wilson's Glossary, p.511.

<sup>2</sup> Amini Commission Report, 1778, H.Misc.S., vol. 206, p.355.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.356.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. also see, Section 62, Regulation 8, 1793; R. Clarke, The Regulations of the Government of Fort William in Bengal, vol. 1, pp. 75-76.

also employed in every local kachahri. He was responsible for measuring and marking out the ground in the possession of every ryot and also for distributing wastelands to new tenants, and where the rents were paid in kind, he gathered that proportion of the crop which was due to the zamindar.<sup>1</sup> All these three officers, the patwaris, karmacharis and halshanas, were permanent officers and were seldom charged by their employers, because of their expert knowledge of rural accounts and rural affairs.<sup>2</sup> Even when the zamindari was farmed out, the farmers had to collect their rents and control local affairs through these permanent zamindari officers who thus served, at least in theory, as a check on the farmers' rack-renting.<sup>3</sup> These officers kept a number of kutwals or messengers who were a sort of zamindari postmen stationed in fixed places to relay messages from one station to another.<sup>4</sup> In order to protect the treasure on its way to sadar kachahri and also to threaten the refractory ryots, two kinds of armed guards were kept, one called barkumduz or matchlock-men, commanded by a dafadar, and jamadars, the other called                      who were commanded by mridhar and sardars.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amini Commission Report, 1778, H.Misc.S., vol. 206, p.356.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.357.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Buchanan, A Geographical Statistical and Historical description of Dinajpur, p.251.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Over the headman, patwari, measurer and collector in charge of the village kachahris of the taraf was placed a gomosthas, then came the edmandar, shiqdar, or peshkar, as he was called in some districts, who was responsible for a whole pargana. All directions from the naib at the sadar kachahri came to the pargana head - and indeed - the edmandar or shiqdar was really as great a man in the mufassal as the naib was at headquarters.<sup>1</sup>

The considerable body of zamindari officials including their attending myrmidons amounting to several thousand on a major estate had a variety of functions - organizing, supervising, accounting, collecting, guarding and coercing. The whole structure, however, was held together by ligaments and sinews of paper. Before we look into their ultimate effect on the fate of the zamindars, it is essential to describe in brief the most complicated aspect of the zamindari management, that is, the methods of accounting at different levels from the village to the sadar kachahri.

#### The Zamindari Accounts

The main object of the zamindari accounts may be set out under four heads: the ascertainment of the quantity and quality

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<sup>1</sup>Amini Commission Report, 1778, H. Misc. S., vol. 206, p.357.



of the lands, the apportionment of the jama or revenue demand, the recording of the revenue received and lastly, the discovery of the balances or arrears due. The fullness and accuracy of the information recorded under these four heads determined whether an estate was capable of being properly and successfully managed.

The work of ascertaining the quantity and quality of the land - its suitability for dry or irrigated crops, and its comparative <sup>n</sup>futility within those categories - was done in the field by the halshana and his survey team, equipped with their measuring ropes or staffs.<sup>1</sup> What they found was recorded in a document called the chita, in which was set down an account of all the lands of a village, divided into dag or portions according to the order of time in which they were measured. It listed the quality of land in each dag, description of its boundaries, the different crops with which it was sown, and the names of the occupying ryots. Whenever a measurement took place, which was generally in the course of ten or fifteen years, such an account was drawn up.<sup>2</sup> But as one ryot might hold lands in several different dags, the holding of each ryot was not separately distinguished in this account. That information

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.364.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

appeared in another account, called an Ekwal, which brought together in one place the measurements of all the scattered holdings, grouped under the names of their individual holders.<sup>1</sup>

The Chita and Ekwal accounts provided the basis for revenue assessment. From these two accounts the jama daftar could find out how much land there was under different categories. Accordingly, the jama daftar prepared a jamabandi account which specified first, the name of the ryot, second, the quality of land which he held, third, the crops cultivated on that land, fourth, the rate attracted by crops and the area under them and, lastly, the total amount of rent payable by each ryot.<sup>2</sup> As the rate of rent was determined by the quality of lands and nature of crops produced on them, there could be no flat or single rate of rent for the whole zamindari. Because the quality of land and the nature of crops varied from pargana to pargana, so the rate of rent also varied from pargana to pargana. But once a rate was fixed for a pargana, it remained fixed till a new jamabundi was prepared after a survey. As that new survey did not take place frequently, the original jamabundi was subject to changes. Thus, if one ryot relinquished a portion of his land and another took it, or if a dag lay waste, in either case an alteration in the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid

Amini Commission Report, I778, H. Misc. S. vol. 206, p. 364

2. Ibid

original jamabundi would have to be made by the halshana.<sup>1</sup>

From the jamabundi papers a hal-hakikat account was formed at the beginning of the year. This specified the asal jama of each ryot, the various other taxes on his holding, the increase or decrease in the rent in consequence of changes in the quality of lands or in the nature of crops.<sup>2</sup> This account, therefore, contained the settlement of the revenues to be collected from the ryots in the current year.

Once the rent to be demanded during the course of the year had been determined it then became necessary to work out the kists or instalment by which it should be paid. The document in which this was set out was called a kistbundi. The entire jama payable by the tenants was divided into twelve kists. All kists were not, however, of equal size. The Aghun and Poush kists, that is, the eighth and ninth instalments, were the heaviest, because the principal crops were harvested in those two months. The kistbundi of the Birbhum Raj, for instance, will demonstrate how the zamindars distributed their demands on the ryots over the twelve months.

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<sup>1</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Amini Commission Report, 1778,  
Ibid., p. 365. H. Misc. S. vol. 206, p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 365-6.

The mufassal and sadar kistbundis of Raja Zamar Khan  
of Birbhum in 1793

<u>Revenue months</u>	<u>Demand upon the ryots by the Raja</u>	<u>Demand by government upon the Raja</u>
	S.R.s	S.R.s
Baisakh	2,717	nil
Jaistha	65,847	40,000
Ashar	4,222	17,000
Shrabhan	6,306	12,879
Bhadra	8,122	7,381
Assim	13,975	12,303
Kartik	87,678	77,000
Aghun	2,39,441	1,80,000
Poush	2,39,441	2,00,000
Mag	10,550	27,778
Falgun	6,508	27,778
Chaitra	34,358	27,778
<hr/> Total Rs.	<hr/> 7,18,828	<hr/> 6,29,897

Source: B.R.C., 19 July 1793, No. 10.

It will be seen that Kartik, Aghun and Poush, the principal harvest times of the year, when the Aman rice crop was gathered had the heaviest kists. Jaistha as the second

biggest harvest time when ~~was~~ rice crop was gathered also saw heavy kists collected both by the zamindars and by Government. The collections of all these kists and any balances were entered by the Patwari in what was called the Towji account.<sup>1</sup> This account exhibited the kist due, the amount paid by the ryot. The balance if any remained was added to the kist of the succeeding month.

A further series of accounts was prepared to complete the assembling of information about the revenues collected and the arrears and balances owing. The first of these was the akheri-hisab-kharoha which was an adjustment of the individual ryot's account prepared at the end of the year. This set out the jama, the receipts and the balances for the year. It also recorded any arzis or pleas for abatement of rent, which being allowed and deducted, established the sum of the undisputed balance.<sup>2</sup>

The akheri-hisab-kharcha was prepared by the Halshana and Patwari. On the basis of this account the pargana gomostha made an akheri jama wasil baki which was an aggregate of the

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<sup>1</sup>Amini Commission Report, 1778, H.Misc.S., 206, p.367.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.368.

above mentioned individual account and which contained a statement of the revenues of the whole village distinguished into jama, receipts and balances.<sup>1</sup> First, it stated, the jama of the preceding year, the increase or decrease in the demand which had since taken place, the undisputed balance outstanding advanced for takavi, all of which added together constituted the jama for the current year.<sup>2</sup> The same account also analysed the above amounts under their various heads - balances, takavi advances and any reduction granted upon petition.<sup>3</sup>

The accounts and papers hitherto considered were analytical in form and offered the basic structural material required by the zamindari management. There were, of course, other papers to be found - the working papers of the officials, such as the Shomar, which was a day ledger recording daily receipts of whatever kind they might be as they came in. The jumble of receipts, presents, repayment of advances, collections according to kistbundi - in the Shomar, was later regularly arranged under the different heads in a siah account which also contained an analysed statement of expenses under all heads.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 368-9. Amini Commission Report, 1778,  
H. Misc. S. vol. 206, pp. 368-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 369.

From these two daily accounts was in turn constructed the comprehensive monthly treasury account known as the Puttani jama kharcha, with the month's receipts and expenditure tabulated under their appropriate heads.<sup>1</sup> Finally from the monthly statistics was formed the annual treasury account called the terji jama kharcha.<sup>2</sup>

All these foregoing accounts were kept up by the village patwaris and karmacharis. The gomostha of the pargana or taraf compared and ascertained annually the amounts collected from each individual ryot. He also set down all the revenue paid in by the karmacharis. The gomostha then checked and made allowance for the necessary expenses of the karmachari. Finally, he ascertained the sum due from them and the arrears due from the ryots. This adjustment was called the Akheri-Nikash or last counting.<sup>3</sup> Abstracts of all these accounts were maintained by the pargana officers and transmitted to the sadar kachahri of the zamindar. In one enormously long sheet of paper, the Akheri Nikash exhibited the rents, the payments, and the balances of the whole zamindari.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Amini Commission Report, 1778,  
H. Misc. S. vol. 206, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

With Akheri Nikash the year's accounts reached their final stage. The annual cycle was then ready to start again with the preparation by the zamindar of the Doul Bandubast at the commencement of the new revenue year. This contained the rent rolls of the zamindari and was formed by adding together the rent due from each dependent taluqdar, the sum each farmer had agreed to pay for his farm and the estimated revenue of the zamindari which was to be collected by the immediate field officers.<sup>1</sup>

The above description of the management, especially its accounting system, at all its different levels from top to bottom, indicates the highly complicated but thoroughly methodical arrangement of zamindari management and organisation. "In short," said the Collector of Dacca in 1800, "nothing can be more methodical than the mode in which the business of the collections is carried out by the proprietors."<sup>2</sup> But mere method is meaningless if it cannot be easily fathomed by the outsiders and if it cannot work as a safety-valve against the abuse of powers and misappropriation of funds by the officers. As for the first point, the principles of the zamindari management were made so complex and complicated, particularly the

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<sup>1</sup> ~~For~~ Amini Commission Report, 1778, H. Misc. S. vol. 206, p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> Dacca Collector to B.O.R., 17 March 1800, quoted in F.D. Ascoli, Survey and Settlement Operations in Dacca, p. 162.



accounting branch, that it was almost impossible for any outsider to comprehend them. George Blake, an indigo planter in Purnia, spoke about his failure to understand zamindari management for his own use, in spite of his serious attempt to do so. For nineteen years, he said, he had been a resident in Purnia and had throughout observed the methods of zamindari management, but still he could not well comprehend them. Zamindari management, he declared, was "so complicated that it would require the sole occupation of a life employed in the business to master its intricate details in all its branches."<sup>1</sup>

A similar frank confession was made by the historian and journalist, J.W.Kaye.<sup>2</sup> One reason for the continued complexities of the methods of the zamindari management and the bewildering difficulties faced by outsiders attempting to understand them, may be found in the hereditary character of the zamindari officers.<sup>3</sup> Their exclusive knowledge in their respective branch in the hierarchical bureaucracy of the zamindari daftars, handed down from father to son, made them both indispensable to the zamindars and a mystery to outsiders. It was correspondingly

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<sup>1</sup>G.A.Blake to B.O.R., B.O.R.P. (Lower Province), 16 Oct. 1827, No. 36, P80/45.

<sup>2</sup>See, J.W.Kaye, The Administration of the East India Company; A history of Indian Progress, p.162.

<sup>3</sup>For the hereditary character of the officials, see, P.J.Marshall, "Indian officials under the East India Company in Eighteenth century Bengal", B.P.P., vol. No. 158, part 11, July-Dec. 1965, p.102. B.O.R. to G.G.in C., 8 Sept. 1786, B.R.C., 9 September 1786, P51/1. and Nadia Collector to B.O.R., 29 April 1817, B.R.C., 27 June 1817, No.4.

difficult for the zamindars to introduce new men into the services so as to secure change and improvement.

But for the zamindars the greatest harm came from the village officers, such as <sup>a</sup>mōndōls, <sup>a</sup>patwaris, karmacharis and halshanas. The zamindars and their sadar officers were absolutely dependent on them for the most vital primary accounts, like chita and jamabundi. Such dependence on them obviously imposed some limitations even upon the most enterprising zamindars. Their indispensability and permanent residence in their constituencies gave them the opportunity, while their low pay impelled them into collusion with the revenue farmers and influential ryots, and also with the superior officers at the pargana and sadar kachahris, against the zamindars.<sup>1</sup> The Burdwan Collector wrote in 1788 that these village officers were freely alienating zamindari lands with impunity, because the zamindars had no effective means to detect their malpractices.<sup>2</sup> They placated the influential ryots by allowing them to occupy the superior lands at the rate of rent for inferior lands.<sup>3</sup> In 1827, G.A.Blake reported from Purnia that,

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<sup>1</sup>F.D.Ascoli, p.162.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 5 July 1788, B.R.C., 20 Aug. 1788. P 51/22.

<sup>3</sup>E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Burdwan, part II, p.28.

through fraud and collusion with the local officers, the village leaders obtained all the best lands at the lowest rates of rent and again re-let them to the poorer classes of ryots from whom they exacted the highest rates in money or took a moiety of the produce.<sup>1</sup> In this way there was a concentration of authority and lands in the hands of a powerful section of the rural population thus forming a jotedar class which over the course of years became too powerful and too well organised to be dislodged by the zamindars. The zamindars, especially the new men, often tried either to resume the unauthorised lands held by the jotedars or to increase their rents. But such attempts were mostly foiled by their violent resistance.<sup>2</sup>

It was not only the village officials, however, who abused their positions of authority to the loss of the zamindars and poorer ryots alike. In fact, they often carried out their treacherous trade with the full cognizance of the superior amla who had regular shares in their spoils.<sup>3</sup> The sadar amla had other lucrative opportunities to enrich themselves at the expense of their masters. In collusion with the revenue farmers they alienated lands by various subtle means, so the judge and

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<sup>1</sup>G.A.Blake (an indigo planter) to B.O.R., 5 August 1827, B.O.R.P., 16 Oct. 1827, No. 37, Query No. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Petition of the Zamindars of Dinajpur, B.R.C., 29 Aug. 1799, No. 5, enclosure no. 6, P54/4.

<sup>3</sup>Judge and Magistrate of Burdwan to G.G. in C., 9 March 1802, P.P., The Fifth Report, 1812, P544, App.10. *vol. 7.*

magistrate of Burdwan declared, beyond the comprehension of any other man not directly in the business.<sup>1</sup> In short, the whole structure of the zamindari management and organisation was such that no amount of ability, and vigilance on the part of the proprietors was sufficient to prevent their officers from indulging in malpractices completely. These officers were so powerful in their positions that it was never impossible to dismember an estate if they wished to do so.

But the management picture of the very small estates was not so dismal. Unlike the considerable estates, the small families could not afford to maintain elaborate amla. How then were the small zamindars, such as were found especially in Sylhet, Chittagong, Tipperah, Dacca, Mymensingh and Jessore districts, managed? The policy of separation of taluqas from the jurisdiction of the great zamindars and the operation of the sale laws combined with private partitions and sales in the post permanent settlement period led to the emergence of a myriad of small estates in almost all the districts, though districts like Sylhet and Chittagong were already noted for their tiny estates. In 1798, for example, total jama of Sylhet district was a little less than three lakhs of rupees, but the number of proprietors stood at 26,683.<sup>2</sup> In Chittagong, in 1790, the

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<sup>1</sup> ~~xxxx~~ Ibid. P.P. The Fifth Report, 1812, vol. 7, App. 10, p. 544.

<sup>2</sup> Sylhet Collector to B.O.R., 30 Sept. 1798, B.O.R.P., 16 Nov. 1798, No. 78. P 73/39.

number of estates stood at 2,135, but by 1801, it had risen to 3,381.<sup>1</sup> In Jessore, there were 122 estates in 1793 but, by 1809, their number had risen to 3,444.<sup>2</sup> In Dacca, the number of estates rose from 394 in 1790 to 14,500 in 1795, due to separation of taluqas.<sup>3</sup> It may be noted that there was a considerable increase in the number of estates in all other districts of Bengal though the process proceeded with much less intensity. The creation of all these small estates obviously reduced the size of their parent estates and all these had their cumulative effects on their management.

Those of the small zamindars who were comparatively rich managed their estates themselves with the help of a number of officers and pikes.<sup>4</sup> But a great many of them could not afford any establishment at all. Their poverty and illiteracy prevented them from keeping up any formal establishment while their intimate contact with their tenants made it unnecessary. "Many of the landholders," the Rangpur Collector reported, could "neither read nor write, and only kept their accounts by notching a stick or tying knots in a string."<sup>5</sup> A great many of

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<sup>1</sup>H.J.S.Cotton, Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, p.76.

<sup>2</sup>M.A.Momen, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the district of Jessore, p.96.

<sup>3</sup>F.D.Ascoli, p.54.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Buchanan, p.252.

<sup>5</sup>Rangpur Collector to B.O.R., 17 Aug. 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 3, para. 3, P72/27.

the proprietors in Chittagong also never kept any accounts for their estates. Memory was their only guide.<sup>1</sup> In Dacca, the majority of the small zamindars, according to Ascoli, never kept any record or rent-roll.<sup>2</sup> Such methods of management must have been almost universal among all those proprietors who were nothing but respectable peasants paying their revenues direct to Government. "Of the aggregate number of landholders paying revenue immediately to Government in this zillah, more than three quarters, or upwards of 1600 persons, are proprietors of from merely one to two connies to less than three doons of lands, bearing an assessment of from one to fifty rupees per annum," wrote the Chittagong Collector.<sup>3</sup> In Tipperah, out of two thousand proprietors, 1,288 paid less than one thousand rupees as government revenue.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, for these peasant proprietors, it was not absolutely necessary to maintain records. Their amla, if they had any at all, were also their domestic servants responsible for cattle and cultivation. Hence, the small proprietors were comparatively free from the ruinous effects of the intrigues and embezzlements of the

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<sup>1</sup>Chittagong Collector to B.O.R., 20 July 1793, B.O.R.P., 28 Feb. 1794, No. 14, P72/27.

<sup>2</sup>F.D.Ascoli, p.162.

<sup>3</sup>Chittagong Collector to B.O.R., 2 Aug. 1797, quoted in H.J.S. Cotton, P.75. One conny or kani of land is equal to about one third of an acre.

<sup>4</sup>J.F.Browne, General Report on the Tipperah District, pp. 30-1.

rapacious amla as almost invariably existed among the considerable families.

### Costs and Profits

While we have discussed so far the general patterns of the zamindari managements, it is important here to say something about the costs and profits of such management. In other words, what was the average percentage of profit that the zamindars derived from land control?

In the absence of zamindari records relating to their rent-rolls and costs of collection, it is impossible to determine the average percentage of profit that accrued from land control. However, from other supplementary sources some idea, inaccurate though it must be, can be formed about their income and expenditure.

The costs of zamindari establishments employed in revenue collection were met in three ways: by the payment of regular salaries, by the grant of commissions and by the assignment of rent free lands. Most of the senior officers at the sadar who were the most subject to change, were paid monthly salaries, while almost all the mufassal officers were paid either by commission or in rent-free lands. Such assignments were known in the revenue records as chakaran lands, that is, the lands granted to zamindari servants in lieu of money wages. The chakaran lands of the Dinajpur Raj, for example, will indicate

the types of servants who enjoyed rent free lands instead of salaries.

Table 16

Chakaran lands for the Amla of the Dinajpur Raj, 1803

<u>Types of servants</u>	<u>Lands in bighas</u>
House servants of the Rajbari	22,878
Servants attending to the house of the family deity	14,073
Peons	11,925
Dak Paikes	1,070
Horsemen	6,006
Officers (for their houses)	916
Chaukidars	261
Thatchers	557
Bearers	9,747
Barbers	369
Washermen	108
Drummers	67
A honey furnisher	12
Tailors	226
Market servants	191
Poddar	93
Matchmakers	64
Slaves	1,152
Khidmatgar or personal attendants	211



Table (cont.)

<u>Types of servants</u>	<u>Lands in bighas</u>
Boatmen	211
Nakibs or heralds	75
Kulis	558
Grooms	23
Idolmakers	15
Carpenters	75
Bricklayers	25
Woodcutters	113
Flowermen	11
Mango attendants	71
Mistri	101
Paiks	<u>77,993</u>
Grant total	<u>1,61,483</u>

Source: B.R.C., 9 June 1803, No. 2, P54/33.

It is obvious that only the servants like the peons, paiks, chaukidars, bearers, poddar, boatmen and kulis were either directly or indirectly connected with actual zamindari management and all the others were pure domestic servants in various capacities. It will be noticed that the village officers, such as the mondols, patwaris, karmacharis and halshanas have not appeared in the chakaran list. Customarily,

all of them received a percentage of commission on the rental collected.<sup>1</sup> The rate of commission varied from district to district. In Dinajpur, the mandals<sup>a</sup> received one per cent commission on the rental and the commissions of the patwari and other officers varied from four to six per cent.<sup>2</sup> The custom of granting commissions for village officers probably grew out of the necessity for punctuality in the collections. As the acknowledged profit of these officers depended on the amount of the collections, it was supposed that they would exert themselves to secure maximum collections so as to obtain the maximum commission possible. Besides their usual remuneration all the zamindari officers, whether paid in terms of money wage or assignment of land, increased their usual income by receiving tahuri or unauthorised excess collections from the farmers and tenants.<sup>3</sup>

How much did the zamindars normally derive as net profit from their estates after meeting all their costs? The decennial settlement was intended to allow the zamindars only one eleventh of the net proceeds of their estates. In 1802, the collectors were required to answer this question:

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Buchanan, p.252.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., also see, F.D.Ascoli, p.162.

"Do the proprietors of estates in general derive a profit exceeding the ten per cent on the Jumma - the profit estimated to be left to them on the conclusion of the Decennial Settlement?"

The Burdwan Collector replied that the Raja of Burdwan derived not more than five per cent on the rental and other zamindars in the district even less than that.<sup>1</sup> The Rajshahi Collector's opinion was that some proprietors received more and some less than ten per cent.<sup>2</sup> All others reported that the proprietors derived far more than ten per cent. Thus, the profit of the proprietors of Chittagong, it was stated, ranged from sixteen to twenty per cent on the rental,<sup>3</sup> of Jessore upwards of twenty per cent,<sup>4</sup> of Mymensingh from twenty to fifty per cent and in some cases more than one hundred per cent.<sup>5</sup> The Collector of the 24-Parganas even went so far as to say that "some proprietors do not on average pay more than one rupee in a thousand of their gross collections."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 83, Q.8, P147/57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., No. 112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., No. 96.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., No. 101.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., No.106.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Nos. 83,104.

Others reported that the zamindars never admitted their true incomes.<sup>1</sup> With the increase in population, commercial activity and in agricultural prices, the profit margin must have increased during the later period. But, as the actual profit was always influenced by the original assessment, the quality of management and the productivity of the land, the percentage of profit always varied from one estate to another. The following three select examples will provide a clearer idea about the variation of profit.

Table 17

1. Estimate of the expenses and profits for 1809 of the eight lots of the Dinajpur Raj which were purchased by Rani Tripura Sundari and Rani Sarasati.

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Sadar jama Rs. 79,000. Gross rental Rs. 1,10,000.

Outgoings

The eight lots required the following establishments:

	<u>Land grants in bighas</u>	<u>Annual salaries in rupees</u>
1 Diwan		1,200
8 Tahsildars or collectors		2,400
40 Muharrirs or writers		3,800

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Ibid., Nos. 97, 104~~ C. J. P. 8 July 1802, Nos. 97, 104, Q. 8, PI 47/57.

Table (cont.)

	<u>Land grants in bighas</u>	<u>Annual salaries in rupees</u>
24 Sardars or officers of the old militia	1,200	
16 Mridhas of the same militia	480	
200 Paiks	4,000	
8 Dafadars		384
24 Barkanduz		864
16 Daftaries or keepers of papers	192	
200 Kutwals or messengers	<u>2,000</u>	
	7,872	<u>8,688</u>
7,872 bighas of land at ten annas per bigha		4,924
<hr/>		
Total costs of establishment		13,612
Commission, at four per cent, to the ijaradars		4,400
Government revenue demand		<u>79,000</u>
Total outgoings		97,012
Total receipts		<u>1,14,924</u>
Net income		<u>17,912</u>
The profit here is about fifteen and a half per cent on the gross rental. The expense of collection is about sixteen per cent		

Source: Francis Buchanan, pp. 247-8.

Table 18

2. Estimate of the expenses and profits for 1809 of the estate of Wadid Chowhuri, a merchant, who did not reside on his estate in Dinajpur.

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Sadar jama Rs. 4,500.	Gross rental	Rs. 6,300
<u>Outgoings</u>	<u>Land grants in bighas</u>	<u>Annual salaries in rupees</u>
1 Tahsildar		120
1 Jamanavis or accountant		84
1 Muharrir		36
1 Poddar		24
2 Barkanduz		51
1 Sardar or chief paik	20	
10 Paiks	120	
7 Kutwals	<u>56</u>	
	196	<u>315</u>
196 bighas at 10 annas per bigha		112
<hr/>		
Total costs of establishment		427
Ijaradar's commission at 4 per cent		252
Government's revenue demand		<u>4,500</u>
Total outgoings		5,179
Total receipts		<u>6,300</u>
Net income		<u>1,120</u>

Here the profit was about eighteen per cent on the gross rental and the expense of collection was ten per cent

Table 19

3. Estimate of the expenses and profits for 1828 of the estate of Mir Karimuddin in Hughli

Sadar jama	Rs. 17,781.	Gross rental	Rs. 45,212
Receipts			Rs. 45,212
<u>Outgoings</u>			
	Rs.		
Collection charges	2,724	)	
		)	
Taxes	188	)	
		)	21,470
Upkeep of a mosque	777	)	
		)	
Government demand	17,781	)	
		)	
Net income			Rs. <u>23,742</u>

Here the profit was fifty two per cent on the rental and the cost of collection was only six per cent

Source: George Toynbee, A Sketch of the Administration of Hughli District from 1795 to 1845, p.63.

Collectors' reports and the above select cases suggest that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the zamindars' profits certainly exceeded the limit of ten per cent intended to be left by the decennial settlement. There cannot be any doubt that the tempo of their rising incomes from their estates continued all throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century. By the 1820s, according to A.D.Campbell, the zamindars became indisputably an affluent class. He said in his evidence before the Parliamentary Select Committee: "Most

of the ancient aristocratic zemindars are in easy circumstances, and some of them are wealthy men. I have, as a member of the Board of Revenue, acting in the capacity of Court of Wards for minor zemindars, known of surplus funds in some zemindaries to the extent of four or five lacs of rupees. Similar accumulations occur in zemindaries contested in our courts; and generally all persons of that description expend a great deal of money in celebrating marriages or festivals, and in keeping up the usual establishments of the family, such as elephants, horses and alms houses."<sup>1</sup> The negligible transfer of landed property due to arrears from the beginning of the nineteenth century is another added testimony to the affluent condition of the zamindars. It may then be asked what were the reasons for their prosperity? Was it due to a general increase in rents or due to actual improvement in agricultural techniques or the prosperity of the country as a whole?

To take up the rent question first, all the evidence leads us to believe that as Raja Rammohan Roy put it, "under the Permanent Settlement since 1793, the landholders have adopted every measure to raise the rents, by means of the power put into their hands."<sup>2</sup> The rules of the Permanent

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<sup>1</sup>A.D.Campbell's evidence, 14 April 1832, P.P., 1831-2, vol. XI, Evidence, p.198, Q. 2386.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Rammohan Roy's evidence, P.P. 1831, vol. 5, ".7, p.716, Appendix No. 39.



Settlement made the regulation of rent entirely a private subject to be mutually settled between the zamindars and other parties. It was only required that "rents to be paid by the ryots, by whatever rule or custom they may be regulated, should be specifically stated in the Pottah."<sup>1</sup> For the Khudkast or long resident ryot it was vaguely provided that their rents should be regulated by the pargana nirk or rate.<sup>2</sup> But the notion of pargana rates utterly failed to give any legal protection to them because the courts found themselves confused by the bewildering variation of nirk from one pargana to another, even from one village to the next. The nirkbandi of Pargana Pullua in Burdwan district will indicate how widely the rate varied from one village to another, even within the same pargana.

Table 20

Nirkbandi of Taraf Pullua, Burdwan, 1799

Types of lands	Pullua village one		Fulbari village two		Padapukaria village three	
	Rate per bigha		Rate per bigha		Rate per bigha	
	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas
Paddyland/Aus	0	12	1	0	1	0
" /Aman	0	2	1	0	0	15
House plots	1	4	1	4	1	2
Garden	1	14	1	8	---	
Cotton	0	15	0	14	0	14

<sup>1</sup>Regulation 8 of 1793, Sec. 57, Clause 1. R. Clarke, The regulations of the government of Fort William in Bengal, vol. I, p.75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Clause 2.

Table (cont.)

Types of lands	Pullua village one		Fulbari village two		Padapukaria village three	
	Rate per bigha		Rate per bigha		Rate per bigha	
	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas
Long pepper	3	2	3	0	--	
Bamboo	1	4	1	4	--	
Tobacco	1	10	1	10	1	8
Indigo	1	2	1	6	1	2
Chilly	1	6	0	12	0	8
Danga/udbasto	0	14	0	12	--	
Waste/cultivable	0	6	0	6	0	7

Source: B.O.R.P. 24 May 1799, App. G, P73/47.

The claims of the khudkast ryots to perpetual rates and the zamindars' attempts to fix new rates at the expiry of every lease, which never exceeded ten years in duration, led to conflicting verdicts in the courts. At last this customary right to nirk was invalidated by Act 5 of 1812 which empowered the zamindars to grant "lease for whatever period they may deem proper and at whatever rent".<sup>1</sup> Thereafter the zamindars pushed up their rents though their claims could rarely be met by increased wealth in the hands of the tenants.<sup>2</sup> Continuous

<sup>1</sup> Regulation 5 of 1812, Section 2, see R. Clarke, Digest, or, consolidated arrangement of the regulations and acts of the Bengal government from 1793 to 1854, p.175.

<sup>2</sup> T. Fortescue's evidence, 3 April 1832, P.P., vol. XII, Q.484, p.49. Fortescue held various high judicial posts from 1789 to 1830.

increases in their rent led to peasant disturbances in some parts of Bengal, as in Rangpur, where there were constant breaches of the peace. The Commissioner reported from that district in 1825 that the rise in the rents since the decennial settlement had been considerable.<sup>1</sup> The peasants of pargana Sherpur in Mymensingh openly revolted against their oppressive landlords in 1825. The judicial investigation found inhuman exactions which had led to their actual rebellion. The Commission gave the following table of rents for five select villages, showing the enormous increase in the rents since the Permanent Settlement.

Table 21

Rents in five select villages in

Sharpur Pargana

<u>Villages</u>	<u>Rent in</u> <u>1793</u> Rs.	<u>Rent fixed</u> <u>in 1826</u> Rs.	<u>Ijaradar's</u> <u>demands on</u> <u>the ryots</u> Rs.
1. Ghosh Gaon	652	1,300	2,650
2. Gonai	134	400	-
3. Bangaon Dubah	11	72	200
4. Borak	40	150	301
5. Telikhali	-	40	160

Source: B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 19 Nov. 1827, B.O.R.P., 19 Nov. 1827, No. 32, para. 3, P80/47.

<sup>1</sup>Rangpur Commissioner to B.O.R., 8 Aug. 1826, B.O.R.P., 18 May 1827, No. 75, P80/39.

A similar kind of rack-renting was reported from other districts. Considering all these, the Board of Revenue at last recommended the Council to enact such regulations as would ascertain and clearly define the rights of the respective parties. Otherwise, the Board apprehended, "the landholders will continue to encrease their rents whenever a convenient opportunity may present itself for doing so,..."<sup>1</sup>

#### Zamindars' role in the improvement of agriculture

It would be a serious mistake, however, to suppose that the zamindars' prosperity rested only on the arbitrary increase of their rent rolls. It is beyond question that there was also a considerable expansion of agriculture from the Permanent Settlement onward. All the district collectors were unanimously in their opinions that from 1790 to 1801 there had been a remarkable extension of agriculture in their respective districts.<sup>2</sup> In 1811, Dowdeswell, the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, said that vast tracts of land were brought under cultivation since the Permanent Settlement.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of agriculture inevitably led to an increase in the profits of the

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G. in C., 19 Nov. 1827, para. 3, B.O.R.P., 19 Nov. 1827, No. 32, P80/47.

<sup>2</sup>Collectors to the Chief Secretary, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, Nos. 79, 83, 96-7, 101, 106, 108, 111-12, 210, P147/57.

<sup>3</sup>Dowdeswell's minute, 16 Oct. 1811, B.O.R.P., 16 Oct. 1811, No. 22, P76/160..

zamindars. But opinions differed as to who had been responsible for such expansion. One school believed that the Permanent Settlement was itself responsible for the boost to agricultural production. Colebrooke, the champion of this school, believed that the incentive given by the fixed government and by government's recognition of the zamindars' proprietary rights over the waste land surrounding their estates was responsible for the reviving prosperity of the Province. He wrote: "The happy result of the Permanent Settlement was now witnessed in Bengal. The reviving prosperity of the country, its increasing wealth, and rapid improvement are unquestionably due to the Permanent Settlement the principle of which was so wise that even the serious errors which were committed in filling up the outline of the plan, could not ultimately disappoint its views."<sup>1</sup> But Colebrooke's opinion was seriously challenged by other groups, especially the utilitarians. They admitted without reserve that cultivation had expanded phenomenally since 1793. But for all such progress, according to them, it was the ryots, not the zamindars, who were actually responsible. In his evidence, James Mill said: "I have no idea that the zemindary system is favourable to the accumulation of capital in the hands of the ryots, and there is express evidence of the

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<sup>1</sup>Councillor Colebrooke's Minute, 20 June 1808, para. 27.  
Minute Papers: M 338 (Scottish National Library).

fact, that it is the ryots and not the zemindars who have extended the cultivation."<sup>1</sup> Mill further continued: "I am not aware of any instance of encouragements having been given by the zemindars, and I have a distinct recollection of statements, more than one, by the collectors in those districts, that the progress of cultivation is owing entirely to the ryots, and not to the zemindars."<sup>2</sup> The role of the ryot in the agricultural expansion was further emphasised by Henry Newnham of Bengal Civil Service, who declared: "Many persons advocate the zemindari cause by alleging outlay of capital, but it is seldom more than a mere current loan, repayable at a very high interest, or, which is worse, the repayment in commodity at a very much lower price than the market price; but as for any permanent outlay of capital in digging wells and making tanks, I fear that there are very few instances of the zemindars laying out capital in that way; the great improvements in the country take place from the junction of the ryots in different labours, at least I have seen then making bunds across rivers, sinking wells, making water courses from tanks or collections of water, and undertaking many important works of that kind."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Mill's evidence, P.P. 1831, vol. 5, p.314, Q.3348-49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Q.3355.

<sup>3</sup>H.Newnham's evidence, 7 May 1832, P.P. 1831-2, vol. XI, ".2737, Evidence, p.233.

Newnham was probably right in his belief that the zamindars paid little attention to laying out capital in the development of the agricultural infra-structure. Instead, they gave small takavi loans towards the reclamation of wasteland, repayable with interest either in cash or in kind. In 1802, the Collectors were required to inform the Council whether or not the zamindars had turned themselves into improving landlords after the Permanent Settlement. The interrogatory was: "Do the proprietors of land in general attend to the permanent improvement of their estates by the making of embankments, digging of tanks and establishing such other works as are calculated to increase the produce of land?" The Collectors without any exception replied that they did not find any trace of such works undertaken by the zamindars.<sup>1</sup> It can be strongly presumed that as the cultivation at that time was almost entirely extensive in character, reclamation of waste land was more remunerative than investment in improving measures. Moreover, the zamindars must have held that the considerable capital that was required by such measures could be more wisely used in buying new lands that enlarged their patrimonies and consolidated their social hegemony. Besides, there were other lucrative opportunities, such

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<sup>1</sup> Bengal district Collectors to Chief Secretary, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, Nos. 79, 83, 96-7, 101, 106m 108, 111-12, Q.10, Pt47/57.

as the purchase of government bonds, the financing of agency houses, or money lending, which attracted them. The Raja of Burdwan thus bought hundreds of lots in several other to enlarge his estate.<sup>1</sup> He also bought government securities worth several lakhs of rupees.<sup>2</sup> That other wealthy zamindars too bought public bonds is made clear by the Council's advice to the Board of Revenue in 1819, not to liquidate the bonds of the Raja of Burdwan to make good his huge arrears, because such action would shake the confidence of other landholders who had purchased bonds.<sup>3</sup> Another very important cause for the lack of zamindars' participation in developmental activities was their large scale absenteeism.

#### Absenteeism

The most noticeable feature of the zamindari management after the Permanent Settlement was the increasing tendency of the landholders not to reside on their estates. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a great many rich landholders retired to the cities.<sup>4</sup> With greater prosperity from the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> Prinsep's Report, C.J.P., 8 October 1819, No. 38, P149/67.

<sup>2</sup> Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 27 May 1819, B.O.R.P., 1 June 1819, No. 12, P78/35.

<sup>3</sup> G.G. in C. to B.O.R., 15 June 1819, Nos. 40, 40A, P78/35.

<sup>4</sup> Judges of Burdwan, Dacca, Jessore and Rangpur to Judicial Secretary, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, Q.26, Nos. 26, 45, P147/55, 53, 69, P147/56.



the nineteenth century, the city-ward march increased its momentum. By the 1820s, according to Holt Mackenzie, the Secretary to the territorial department at that time, a majority of the rich zamindars had taken up their residence in the cities. Thus "the Bengal Baboos", wrote Sutherland, "and persons of that description, who now appear to be the principal zamindars, are as much foreigners in their habits and pursuits to the cultivating classes as we are. They live in cities and towns far away from their zamindarees, and know less of the people than either our judges or collectors who live amongst them."<sup>1</sup>

It does not seem that this new social development grew merely out of the zamindars' urge for greater comforts and luxuries, as the popular belief goes. It seems that absenteeism was the direct product of the competitive land market that was introduced under the aegis of the Government. Every aspirant bought auction land whenever it was to be found and thus built up a patch-work zamindari with estates unconnected and distant from each other. The Kassimbazar family thus purchased some hundreds of estates all over the country.<sup>2</sup> The Kandi zamindari was scattered from Agra in the west to Noakhali

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<sup>1</sup>J. Sutherland, Sketches of the Relation Subsisting between the British Government and the different native States, p.14.

<sup>2</sup>See, Kassimbazar Family, p.400.

in the east.<sup>1</sup> The state of all other considerable new families was very similar. Under these circumstances, the proprietors had no alternative but to choose a convenient city-base wherefrom they could well operate their remote control system.

Frequent local resistance to the auction-purchasèrs whose possession was often disputed was another important factor. The dispossessed zamindars in combination with the chief ryots applied all their local influence to beat off the nilamdar or lotdar as they were called in ridicule. Their fierce resistance took the form of endless civil and criminal suits, of physical violence, of non-co-operation, and of social excommunication.<sup>2</sup> Being put into such predicaments, the new purchaser was often forced either to sell his right or make terms with the old proprietor installing him as the perpetual leaseholder - in either case he was then likely to leave again for the city. A great many old proprietors, again, made themselves functionally absentees in the sense that they, though physically present on their estates, abstained from any personal supervision of their zamindaris. From the disgust and annoyance they received from all public and private

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<sup>1</sup>See, Kandi Family, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup>R. Carstairs, Human Nature in Rural Bengal, pp. 287-308, also see, B.O.R.P., 15 April 1799, No. 55, P74/10.

importunities under the new system, they found "it more safe and convenient to let their estates, to relieve themselves and thus leave the onus of these impositions or duties to be executed and undertaken by their representatives, the mustageers."<sup>1</sup> In the words of Buchanan, these resident landlords "never pass the threshold of their doars, except to assist at some religious ceremony, and are either sunk in a miserable superstition, a prey to religious mendicants, and other idle persons, or are totally abandoned to dissipation, and some are addicted to both vices."<sup>2</sup>

In short, the Permanent Settlement, as expected by its authors, did not turn the zamindars of Bengal into landed entrepreneurs. The zamindars faithfully preserved and practised the Mughal pattern of management. Their traditional dependence on their underlings rather increased with the increase of absenteeism. If they formed an affluent class at the end of our period, it was positively not because of their capitalistic enterprise and capital investment but because of the increased population, increased rent, increased prices of agricultural produce and increased value of landed property.

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<sup>1</sup>G.A.Blake to B.O.R., 5 Aug. 1827, B.O.R.P., 16 Oct. 1827, No. 37, Query No. 5, P80/45.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Buchanan, p.251.

Chapter SevenTHE LIFE OF THE ZAMINDARS

Any rigorous quantitative analysis of the life style of the zamindars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Bengal is insuperably difficult on account of the insufficiency of records. The paucity or absence of data makes it impossible to classify the zamindars into different social groups on the basis of their origin, income, caste and profession, and then to look at their social behaviour, tastes and attitude towards life individually and collectively. The life of the great zamindars certainly differed from that of the medium or small men with modest income. Again, it was also to be expected that the mode of life of an established old family should differ in many respects from that of an upstart one. But whatever the differences among themselves in regard to their origins and incomes and consequent attitudes towards life, it is true that for the contemporaries they formed a reasonably homogenous group quite distinct from the rest of the society. They were the solid core of the society, mainstay of its religious and cultural activities and backbone of the local committees that managed social affairs. In this chapter special emphasis will be laid on

those aspects of the zamindars' way of life which contributed in some way or other to their rise or fall in the scale of the society.

A zamindar's attitude to money, when he was once accepted by the established society, was generally extravagant especially when an occasion called for display. At birth, marriage, or shradh and above all at a Puja, the Durga Puja most of all, it was aristocratic not to count the cost.<sup>1</sup> A man of rank must behave like a man of rank and the acid test was expenditure. His every activity involving expenditure was to be marked by a publicity which served to emphasise and enhance the standing of his family.

The chief annual occasion of display was the Durga Puja when the keenest competition was exhibited to see, "who shall have the most splendid illuminations, the choicest singers, the richest viands, the most distinguished guests, and the greatest fame for liberality."<sup>2</sup> The great Rajas and Babus "had not the moral courage to think of abating one item of extravagance, or running the hazard of being eclipsed in

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<sup>1</sup> See, N.K.Sinha, vol. III, pp. 95-101. On the basis of the Supreme Court records, he has given some case examples as to the religious extravagance of the zamindars.

<sup>2</sup> Friend of India, Editoria, 24 Sept. 1835, vol. I, p.305, col. 1.

one particular, in the approaching contest: for such it truly is."<sup>1</sup> The widest gateway to social reputation was to entertain the senior civil, judicial and military officers who were invited far in advance lest they had the misfortune of having no European to adorn their houses at all.<sup>2</sup> The most splendid feature of the celebration of the Durga puja was the natch or dances performed by the professional girls. Most of these natch girls were Muslims and came from Hindustan. The most celebrated Muslim natch girls whose performance was frequently displayed to the Europeans were Niki, Ashroom, Ninnat, Faiz Baksh, Begam Jan, Hingul, Nani, Supajan and Baiji Bhai.<sup>3</sup> The Banaras branch of the famous Dutt family of Calcutta performed Durga Puja in Banaras in such a gorgeous style that they appointed dozens of top ranking dancing girls for a whole fortnight and entertained the stream of visitors by their non-stop performance.<sup>4</sup> Even a man like Raja Rammohan Roy did not lag

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Ind~~ Friend of India, Editorial, 24 September 1835, vol. I, p. 305, col. I.

<sup>2</sup> Calcutta Courier, ~~6 Oct. 1832, p. 2.~~, also, 10 Oct. 1832, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, pp. 465-66, and Calcutta Courier, 6 Oct. 1832.

<sup>4</sup> Mitter Family at Banaras, Tract 369 (I.O.L.), p. 21.

behind with regard to the pomp of life. Fanny Parkes narrated an expensive party given by him. As she recorded in her diary: "1823, May. - The other evening we went to a party given by Ram Mohun Roy, a rich Bengallee baboo; the grounds, which are extensive, were well illuminated, and excellent fireworks displayed. In various rooms of the house nach girls were dancing and singing... The style of singing was curious; at times the tunes proceeded finely from their noses; some of the airs were very pretty; one of the women was Nickee, the Catalani of the East."<sup>1</sup> The Asiatic Journal reported in August 1816 that most of the landed families in Calcutta maintained dancing girls for entertainment.<sup>2</sup>

The maintenance of expensive dancing girls in the households of zamindars whose rise to power and consequence was a recent phenomenon, was a direct imitation of the darbar courts of the established landed aristocracy.<sup>3</sup> Most of the zamindars of rank and status held regular darbar. The audience was composed of important visitors, estate officers, local gentry, priests, poets, pundits, etc. all of whom customarily

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<sup>1</sup>Fanny Parkes, Wanderings of a Pilgrim, vol. I, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup>See, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.466.

<sup>3</sup>See, Dinesh Chandra Sen, Glimpses of Bengal Life, pp. 38, 45.

offered some presents as a mark of their respect and loyalty to their masters. Dance and music constituted an important part of that darbar life. The following extract from a description of the darbar of the Raja of Nadia in the late eighteenth century by the Raja's court poet Bharat Chandra would give an idea of the court etiquette of the old aristocracy: "The sepoy (soldiers) stood in rows in the audience hall with clasped hands, with shields on their breasts and swords hanging from their belts. The gharials or officers-in-charge of royal clocks stood on either side. Chapdars, or office peons, stood in a line with golden staffs in their hands. In a prominent place stood the arajbegi, the officer who received applications and submitted them to the king. The Bhats, or the court minstrels, sang His Majesty's praises, the Masahibs, or the court parasites, were all there. The latter watched the mood of their royal patron. There were the Munshis, the Baxis, the physicians, the Kazis or the magistrates, the Kanungas or the surveyors and others whom the king allowed access to his court. The musicians with the Rarab, the Tammura, the Vina, the Mridanga and other instruments had a place reserved for them."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Translated by and quoted in, Dinesh Chandra Sen, pp. 45-46.



In many darbars there were also male dancers who performed along with their female partners.<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere in the dancing hall was always rigidly formal. Any loud laughter, talk or display of junilation was considered as serious violation of the darbar etiquette. So grave an atmosphere at the time of music and dance was a strange phenomenon for the invited European guests. An anonymous English poet wrote about the scene in the dancing hall in the following words:<sup>2</sup>

"A native grandee thinks of songs and dancing  
 But as amusement to be heard and seen;  
 He'd be be-boormuttet who came in prancing,  
 And roaring out a Persian stave, I ween.  
 Grave looks and solemn carriage is the screen,  
 To many a merry thought and droll conception,  
 Intrigues, collusions, heart burning and spleen,  
 That play within - they an unguarded step shun,  
 And all without is merely flummery and deception."

Religion provided the great occasions for extravagance and the prestige of a family in the eyes of the society increased or decreased according to the amount of money spent upon religious

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<sup>1</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O.R., 29 April 1817, B.R.C., 27 June 1817, No.4.

<sup>2</sup>Bengal Harkuru, 2 Aug. 1822, "India", Stanza 19.

ceremony. According to N.K.Sinha, "Gangagobind Singh spent 15 lakhs on the occasion of his mother's śradh. Nobkissen spent 9 lakhs on a similar occasion."<sup>1</sup> Maharaja Nabakrishna wrote in his will: "I direct and order that my son Raja Rajkissen shall erect or cause a pagoda to be erected and built in Sootanoty or near to the house I now inhabit and that he shall lay out and spend on the erecting or building the same a sum of 50,000 rupees. My son Raja Rajkissen and his heirs shall constantly furnish and supply to my four thakoors (idols) - Salgram, Gopeenath, Gobinda and Madangopal and the Thakuranis of the said Gopeenath, Gobinda and Madangopal - all the expenses, money and property for keeping the usual and accustomed pooja (worship) in the same manner in which they were kept in my life time."<sup>2</sup>

Mohini Mohan Tagore similarly wrote in his will: "You will perform the services of my paternal idol according to my share. 30,000 rupees are set apart with the interest of which you will perform that service. You will cause the Bhagbat to be read once for me for Rs. 500/-, Mahabharat Rs. 1500/- Ramayan Rs. 500/-. Establish the worship of 12 Shivas and

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<sup>1</sup> N.K.Sinha, vol. III, p.98.

<sup>2</sup> Maharaja Seebkisto Bahadur vs. Kisto Chunder Ghosh, April 1835, quoted in N.K.Sinha, p.97.

images of Thakur and Thakurani Rs. 30,000/-. After the images are installed, make an endowment of Rs. 30,000 to feed persons, lay out Rs. 3,000/- for digging a tank."<sup>1</sup>

The contemporary newspapers and periodicals widely reported how the wealthy aristocrats were rivying with each other in reckless spending in the name of religion. The shradh of the wife of Raja Gopimohan Deb of Sobha Bazar was so gorgeously performed that tens of thousands of poor people and Brahmins received cash presents from the Raja and such was the rush when money was distributed that fourteen men were trampled to death and a great many others were injured in spite of the fact that magistrates and the Raja's officers had taken special precaution to avoid such incidents.<sup>2</sup> The Serampur based Samachar Darpan elaborately reported these Hindu shradhs including the massive amount of money spent. In the shradh of Gopimohan Tagore about three lakhs of rupees were spent.<sup>3</sup> More than two lakhs of people attended his shradh and they were accommodated in a hundred and six houses

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<sup>1</sup>Connylol Tagore and another vs. Ladleymohan Tagore and another, 1828, quoted in N.K.Sinha, vol. III, pp. 97-98.

<sup>2</sup>The Bengali Hurkaru and Chronicle, 29 January 1835, p.3, col. 3.

<sup>3</sup>The Samachar Darpan, 24 Oct. 1818; see Brajendar Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.294.

till their final departure with presents for all.<sup>1</sup>

Pilgrimage to holy places was another wide outlet for expenditure. No zamindar of any social standing could avoid widespread criticism if he failed to visit the holy shrines at least once every two or three years. It was such a common practice that many zamindars purposely left their homes in order to avoid payment of revenue.<sup>2</sup> When they moved out for genuine pilgrimage it was customary to take the entire household with them. For instance, the Kandi Zamindar of Murshidabad when he proceeded to Gaya and Kasi in July 1822 was accompanied by some seven or eight hundred family members, relations, private tutors, priests, pundits, friends, estate officers and Baisnava singers, accommodated in twenty eight luxury boats.<sup>3</sup>

To build temples, ghats, tanks, alms-houses, and to live in Banares or in other holy places during one's old age, were other features of the religious behaviour of the zamindars. In the following words, N.K.Sinha has rightly described

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<sup>1</sup> ~~Index~~ The Samachar Darpan, 24 October 1818;

See, B.N. Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> B.O.R. to G.G. in C., <sup>1</sup> II April 1794, B.O.R.P. II April 1794,

Nos. 30, 34, P72/29.

<sup>3</sup> Samachar Darpan, 6 July 1822, quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p. 265.

though in a philosophic way, the minds of the wealthy Hindus, especially of the banians of that time. "Almost all banians could be regarded as upstarts but so overwhelming was the Hindu religious tradition that every one felt a natural yearning, as he grew in years, to earmark or to spend a very considerable portion of his accumulated wealth on religion and charity. The overwhelming Hindu tradition was that all great accumulations were for subsequent distribution. The greedy astute banian, as he grew in years, was no longer the economic man. There was now a mellow serenity about him. Enterprise, calculations, vanity, greed, ambition, parsimony were suddenly replaced by a religious urge."<sup>1</sup> To cite some typical examples may not be out of place here. Krishna Chandra Sinha, grandson of the famous Ganga Govinda Sinha, made a large fortune by his astute business deals with the Europeans and built up a large but scattered zamindari stretching from Noakhali in the East to Agra in the West.<sup>2</sup> But gradually he began to lose interest in mundane affairs. In the end he forsook the zamindari that he had built up so strenuously and turned into a Baishnabha Bhikkari or begger residing permanently in Brindaban till his death in 1820.<sup>3</sup> Kalisankar

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<sup>1</sup>N.K.Sinha, vol. III, pp.95-6.

<sup>2</sup> See text p. 394.

<sup>3</sup>Krishna Chandra's will, B.R.C., 25 April 1820, Nos. 8-10, P58/33.

Roy, the founder of the Narail family of Jessore started his career as a lathial or club-man.<sup>1</sup> It has been said earlier that his intrigue and defalcation were partly responsible for the break-up of the Rajshahi Raj. But when he grew old he became so devout that he repaired all the decaying temples formerly built by Rani Bhavani of Rajshahi.<sup>2</sup> About his piety in his old age the Chandrika reported:

"We have heard that Kalisankar Roy lived a long life of eighty eight years. His first seventy three years were spent in accumulation of immense wealth which is manifested in his acquisition of a vast zamindari. At the end of his life he entirely retired from worldly life and settled in Banares where he died in 1835 after fifteen years of constant prayer and distribution of alms."<sup>3</sup> Joynarayan Ghoshal, as a merchant and banian, acquired great landed property in Chittagong, Bakarganj and Banares. But with the approach of old age he lost all interest in worldly affairs and putting his son Krishna Chandra Ghoshal in charge of his zamindari,

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<sup>1</sup>James Westland, p.78.

<sup>2</sup>Samachar Darpan, 10 April 1824, quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.310.

<sup>3</sup>Chandrika, 14 February 1835, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. II, pp. 451-2.

he retired to Banares.<sup>1</sup> He wrote in an introduction to one of his books: "The prime of my life was spent in worldly affairs. Sickness began at the end of my middle age. After fifty, decline of my body and health started. Then fear of death penetrated into my mind. I was thinking how to achieve salvation. For sometime I moved from temple to temple in Banares in search of God. At last I got the scent of Krishna. I developed love for Him and now I see nothing but Krishna."

Such other worldly attitudes after achieving success were to be found among most of the new families. It is difficult to say whether they adopted such an attitude in imitation of the old established families, most of whom were immersed in religious bigotry. About the habits of the old established landed families Francis Buchanan wrote: "A great part of them never pass the threshold of their doors, except to assist at some religious ceremony, and are either sunk in a miserable superstition, a prey to religious mendicants, and other idle persons, or are totally abandoned to dissipation; and some are addicted to both vices."<sup>2</sup> The name of the Rani Bhavani of Rajshahi became a household word in

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<sup>1</sup>Translated from an extract of "Karunanidhan Bilash" quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.433.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Buchanan, p.251.

Bengal for her munificent activities. Her son Raja Ram Krishna was likewise known as the Raja Saint of Bengal for his whole hearted devotion to religious causes.<sup>1</sup> He was a devotee of the Sakti cult and composed spiritual songs. The following extract from one of his songs would indicate his attitude towards life. He sang:

"If only my mind can reach realisation,  
 you may do with me whatever you will; no  
 matter if you place me on a band of sand.  
 Only recite the name of the divine Mother  
 in my ears. This body of mine is so difficult  
 to control; it yields to passion. O Bhola,  
 my guide, bring me my rosary; I shall throw  
 it into the Ganges, no more formality."<sup>2</sup>

The mother and wife of Raja Girish Chandra Roy of Nadia narrated that the Raja had "devoted himself since he came of age to the most austere performance of his religious rites and being a Brahmin of the highest degree his chief time has been spent in religious stuti without respect to worldly affairs..."<sup>3</sup> Raja Banikanta Roy of Jessore was so much under the influence of the religious mendicants that he granted taluqas to them without considering his own fate as a result

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<sup>1</sup>Dinesh Chandra Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, p.721.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 721-2.

<sup>3</sup>B.R.C., 15 January 1814, No. 25. p56/12.



of alienating much of his lands.<sup>1</sup>

Births and marriages were marked in the aristocratic circles by a publicity which served to emphasize and enhance the standing of the family. The usual practice, when a successor was born, was to entertain the neighbouring members of the aristocracy, distribute food and money among the Brahmins and poor and to arrange a performance by the dancing girls.<sup>2</sup> But the greatest publicity through extravagant expenditure was reserved for the occasion of a marriage. The marriage of Raja Harinath Roy of Kassimbazar, for example, was continuously celebrated for fifteen days, during the course of which more than two lakhs of rupees were spent.<sup>3</sup> From the principal tenantry of the zamindari to the Governor General and the Nawab of Murshidabad, all were invited to attend the ceremony on various days fixed for each category of invitees.<sup>4</sup> Hundreds and thousands of people thronged to look at the adjuncts of the ceremony, such as horse and elephant shows,

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<sup>1</sup>See B.O.R.P., 19 Nov. 1827, No. 8, P80/47.

<sup>2</sup>See, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, pp. 217, 221.

<sup>3</sup>Samachar Darpan, 27 March 1819; see, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, pp. 267-8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

band parties, two and a half miles long fence of fireworks, dances and songs, drama, comics and caricatures.<sup>1</sup> After describing all the scenes the Samachar Darpan commented, "It would not have been a wonder if Raja Harinath had spent much more, because one must not forget that he is the grandson of Kantu Babu."<sup>2</sup>

The Durga Puja, births, marriages and deaths were thus the principal occasions when the zamindars vied with each other in spending money and tried to make people marvel at their wealth and bounties.

It was considered both unsafe and unaristocratic to keep the family mansions unguarded or to move out alone. Rajshing, an old zamindar of Pargana Susand in Mymensing paying government revenue of about thirty thousand rupees, kept one hundred matchlockmen and numerous other armed guards and when he moved out he was attended by his officers and friends in palanquin or on horseback and was guarded by about twenty five matchlockmen.<sup>3</sup> Bhabindranarayan Chowdhury, an

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<sup>1</sup> Samachar Darpan, 27 March 1819; see, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.268.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.269. For more instances of similar kind, see Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, pp. 266-275.

<sup>3</sup> Dacca Provincial Court of Circuit, 9 June 1801, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 26, Interrogatory 26, P147/55.

old zamindar with a  $5\frac{1}{2}$  annas share of Pargana Lashkarpur in Rajshahi kept more than one hundred men armed with swords, shields and matchlocks.<sup>1</sup> The greatest part of them were employed in guarding his family mansions and about fifteen of them attended him abroad.<sup>2</sup>

The aristocratic custom of keeping armed guards was quickly borrowed by the new aspirants to social status. Shambhuchandra Pal and Krishnachandra Pal, the two founding brothers of the Ranaghat family of Nadia, as has been stated before, were men of humble birth. But when they became wealthy zamindars they adopted the stately mode of life of an established aristocratic. Each of the brothers maintained about fifty armed guards, about half of whom attended upon them when they came out of their mansions.<sup>3</sup> The palace of Rajendra Mitter, another new zamindar from Calcutta, was encircled by a regular set of sentinels, with muskets and fixed bayonets. Besides, he maintained a big set of drummers and pipers to play at particular intervals every day in royal style.<sup>4</sup> He always

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<sup>1</sup>Rajshahi Judge to Judicial Department, 10 April 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 65, Interrogatory 26, P147/56.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Nadia Judge to Judicial Department, 16 June 1802, C.J.P. 8 July 1802, No. 61, Interrogatory 26, P147/56.

<sup>4</sup>An account of Mitter family, p.20, Tract 369.

moved out in a silver tanjam (a sort of palanquin resembling a buggy, with poles borne on the shoulders of bearers) accompanied by numerous bodyguards armed with gold and silver sticks, swords and spears.<sup>1</sup>

There is no statistical data indicating the expense towards the maintenance of armed guards. The Raja of Nadia granted them rent-free lands called chakeran-lands.<sup>2</sup> The other zamindars probably followed the same principle of payment. But their visits abroad seemed to entail great expense. On such occasions they were invariably accompanied by a crowd of family members, officers, friends and flatterers whose maintenance involved a huge expenditure. The Raja of Nadia, for example, paid a visit to the Governor General in 1814 when he had practically no zamindar to boast of. But so many friends, family members and other armed guards accompanied him to uphold his rank and status that he had to sell pargana Modarsa, one of his last remaining estates, in order to raise the cost of his travel.<sup>1</sup>

A zamindar's family was wide in extent, embracing several generations and degrees of cousinhood. The inner family lived

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. An account of Mitter family, p.20, Tract 369.

<sup>2</sup>Nadia Collector to B.O.R., 29 April 1817, B.R.C., 27 June 1817, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Kartik Chandra Roy, Khitish Banshaballi Charita (The Story

on the incomes of the estate and the estate was expected to succour the distant members of the family. In 1799, Graham, a member of the Board of Revenue, was in favour of abolishing the practice of selling defaulting zamindars' estates on the humanitarian ground that every landed family had numerous dependents who at once turned into beggars with the sale of their patron's property.<sup>1</sup> The religious and social obligation to support their kith and kin, including the families of their slaves, imposed a great burden on the exchequer of a zamindar. The Raja of Birbhum had about four hundred family members on the roll of his regular monthly allowances.<sup>2</sup> However, very few zamindars employed their own relations in the zamindari services as farmers, renters, collectors or clerical officers. Europeans like G.A.Blake, who was an indigo planter in Purnia for about twenty years from 1788 believed that such exclusion of relations from

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of the Nadia Raj), p.172, Tract Ben. 1855. In the introduction of the book, the author says that he and his ancestors were the top officers of the Raja of Nadia.

<sup>1</sup>B.R.C., Graham's Minute, 29 August 1799, No. 5, P54/4.

<sup>2</sup>Raja Zaman Khan's Petition to B.O.R., 28 April 1790, see B.O.R.P., 3 May 1790 (no number and pagination). P 71/24.  
~~Raja Zaman Khan's Petition to B.O.R., 28 April 1790,~~  
 see B.O.R.P., 3 May 1790 (no number and pagination). P 71/24.

the offices of the zamindari emanated from "the native jealousy against immediate relatives."<sup>1</sup> But while the element of jealousy may have been present in many cases, the most important factor was probably the family pride. It was considered a family disgrace in the context of the Bengali society of those days for a zamindar's relations to have to work for him in the zamindari sheresta along with others of humble birth. That strong feelings of kinship predominated in their attitude towards their relations is manifested in their common habit of buying lands benami in the names of their relations and also in their habit of granting lands collusively to their relatives at a reduced rate of rent.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of employing the junior members in their own sherestah, the zamindars tried to provide them in Government services or in any European business firm by using their influence. The official posts appeared valuable in their eyes, from the dignity and standing which they gave in society, and from the opening which they afforded for indirect gains. "A good situation in the judicial, revenue, or commercial

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<sup>1</sup>G.A.Blake to B.O.R., 5 Aug. 1827, B.O.R.P., 16 Oct. 1827, No. 37, P80/45.

<sup>2</sup>Burdwan Collector to B.O.R., 16 January 1802, B.R.C., 11 Feb. 1802, Nos. 13-14, P54/23.

line is moreover considered as a provision for a whole family; since a native who may have obtained one always pushes his own relatives into every employment within his reach."<sup>1</sup> To give a typical example, Krishnachandra Mitter, was appointed diwanto the Collector of Dacca in 1790 through the patronage of Edward Colebrooke.<sup>2</sup> He then influenced his superior officer to appoint his nephew Abhoycharan Mitter as the diwan to the Collector of the 24-Parganas.<sup>3</sup> He also pushed his brother Ananda Mitter into the post of diwan in the Rajshahi collectorate.<sup>4</sup> Abhoycharan then in his turn pushed his cousins, Shambhu Chandra Mitter, to the post of a deputy in Mynpuri.<sup>5</sup> Besides government and other services, the junior members of the zamindar families also took up law and other professions, or entered into the old professions

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<sup>1</sup>Friend of India, 19 Nov. 1835, p.369, vol. I, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup>An Account of Mitter Family, p.11, Tract 369.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.18.

of the families before their entry into land. This flow from landed circles into business and other services and professions was one factor in preventing those families from being fully isolated from the rest of the society.

While religious ceremonial and the pleasures of society life occupied most of the zamindars, some devoted their lives to the cultivation of literature and music. The greatest figure among the writer-zamindars was Radhakanta Deb of Calcutta. His range of activities as a writer and as a patron of education among the Bengalis had been best expressed in one of his letters to Government in 1833. He wrote about himself in the third person: 'Babu Radhakanta Deb, who is a Director of the Hindoo College, Member of the Calcutta School Book Society, Native Secretary of the Calcutta School Society, Vice-President of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, Corresponding Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and was a member of the late Saugor Island Society, has compiled, translated, and corrected several publications for the School Book Society. In 1821, he published a Bengali Spelling Book after Lindley Murray's plan, and also an Abridgement thereof in 1827. He translated a Collection of Fables Nitikatha from English into Bengali and revised the Bengali



translation of an Early Introduction to Astronomy... He has for many years been engaged in the compilation of a Sanskrit dictionary, entitled Sabda-Kalpa-Druma in imitation of the Encyclopaedia Britanica, of which three volumes have since been issued from the Press, containing nearly 3000 quarto pages, and it will take some years more to complete the work."<sup>1</sup> His uncle Raja Rajkrishna, son of Raja Babakrishna and Raja Rajkrishna's son Raja Kalikrishna also earned considerable reputations as writers.<sup>2</sup> His brother Gopi Mohon Deb was elected as one of the original directors of the Hindu College for his liberal contribution to the College at the time of its foundation.<sup>3</sup> Like the Debs, the Tagores were also given to intensive literary cultivation and to the patronage of education. Gopi Mohon Tagore, the actual founder of the Tagore family, gave the biggest subscription at the time of the foundation of the Hindu College and he was honoured by his fellow founders of the College who made him the hereditary Governor of the College.<sup>4</sup> Kali Mirza whose songs and hymns are still

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<sup>1</sup>Radhakanta Deb to W.H.Macnaghten, Secretary to Government, 9 Nov. 1833, Public Consultation, 25 Nov. 1833, No. 59, quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji, vol. I, pp. 445-6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.474.

<sup>3</sup>The Calcutta Annual Directory, Bengal Register for 1817, p.118.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

known in Bengal, Kakhi Kanta, the famous comic lyric poet, Radha Goala, the greatest wrestler of that time and great many other talented people from different professions lived and flourished on his bounties.<sup>1</sup> Joynarayan Ghoshal, the zamindar of Sandwip, a big island near Noakhali, was the author of about a dozen books, written on religion, music, philosophy and language.<sup>2</sup> In Banaras he "spent 80,000 Rs. to build a College for the instruction of the poor, and 50,000 to defray its expenses, ..." <sup>3</sup> The greatest patron of learning was Prankrishna Biswas, zamindar of Khardah, of Calcutta district. His father, Ramhari Biswas was a diwan to the salt agent of Noakhali.<sup>4</sup> Prankrishna inherited the vast zamindari that was newly built by his father in 1805.<sup>5</sup> He appointed many scholars to write books about religion, medicine, language and music and got them printed and distributed among scholars and students entirely at his own cost.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Loke Nath Ghose, part 2, p.164.

<sup>2</sup>See Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.433.

<sup>3</sup>Sambad Kumudi, 5 Feb. 1822, quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji vol. I, pp. 434-5.

<sup>4</sup>See Brajendra Nath Banarji, vol. I, p.480.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. He did not appear in the list of the great new families because of the benami nature of his purchases.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 73, 75, 480-1.

For the education of the sons of the aristocrats of Bengal there were no public schools as in England. Instead they obtained their education mainly from private tutors who taught them Persian, Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic and English.<sup>1</sup> But such an education from private tutors liberated few of them from a life of mere ceremonial and display. Citing a typical example an anonymous writer wrote in the Samachar Darpan that the scions of the aristocratic families could make hardly any progress in education because of the flattering servants who surrounded them day and night and also because of the insecure service of the tutors who had to pamper their pupils in order to retain their jobs.<sup>2</sup> In a satire called 'Babu Bilasi' or 'The Babu's Luxury' published in 1823, Babu Pramatha Nath Sarma attacked the aristocratic class as an ignorant lot incapable of supervising the education of their own children. The tale of a representative aristocrat was told by him with sparkling humour. The following is an extract from the book, describing the selection of a tutor:

"After a long search made for a Persian teacher for the young boys, Dhar, the officer of the Babu, at last succeeded in

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<sup>1</sup>Dacca Provincial Court of Circuit, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 23, Inter. 14, P147/55.

<sup>2</sup>Samachar Darpan, 24 Feb. 1821, Brajendra Nath Banarji, vol. I, pp. 108-12.

securing one from Jessore. The Babu said, 'Listen to me, Munshi, you are to teach my boys Persian. You will put up in the outer apartments of my house. When my boys have occasion to go abroad, you should accompany them in their carriage. You will have free board and lodging besides a pay of Rs. 3 a month.' The Munshi of Jessore heard this and departed without saying anything. Then many more Munshis were called in from Natore, Faridpur, Sylhet, Dacca, Comilla, Backerganj and other places. For full two months this coming and going went on, but no selection could be made. The Babu was not pleased with their pronunciation and dismissed them all on that ground. Finally a sweet tongued Munshi from the Chittagong side was appointed. He produced a certificate, showing that he had worked as a boatman. We have already indicated the extent of the knowledge of the Babu possessed in languages. He glanced at the certificate that was written in English and affecting a full knowledge of its contents said 'Yes this certificate says that you worked for a long time as tutor of Persian, the reason why your services were dispensed with have also been stated in this certificate.' Then he looked at the teacher and asked, 'How long did you serve under this European gentleman?' The Munshi said, 'Why that is also written in the certificate. You may kindly read it

again and see.' The Babu said, 'Yes, it is alright, it is written here. Under whom did you serve?' The boatman replied, 'Sir, I served under the Balabar Company.' The Babu was very much pleased to learn that he had been a servant in the office of a European company. The boatman was thus appointed to teach the boys Persian on the pay and conditions stated above."<sup>1</sup>

The very title of the book indicates that the writer was merciless in scorning the efforts of the newcomers to adapt themselves to aristocratic culture. But the established aristocrats were reluctant to recognise them as their equals. Their court poets and writers always ridiculed the strivings of the upstarts for recognition and expressed the greatest disappointment at the breakdown of the social structure in consequence of the entry of new men from diverse social backgrounds. Krishkanta Bhaduri, the early nineteenth century court poet of the Raja of Nadia wrote in a poem: "This country has no future at all, because the whole social structure has become so upset now that to-day the sudras recite the vedas and the Brahmins listen to them. The thirty six major castes

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Dinesh Chandra Sen, Glimpses of Bengal Life, pp. 278-279.

are now amalgamated into one. Its proof is 'Huku' or hubble-bubble Implying that now the people of different castes smoke the same huku which was not the custom before<sup>1</sup>.  
 The most glaring example of the destruction of the country, for Krishna Kanta, was that his patron Raja Girish Chandra "who was the top of the princes before was now being looted and robbed by other forces".<sup>2</sup>

But if the old zamindars were proud of their ancestry, so were the new zamindars of their wealth, ability, enterprise and above all their closer association with the Government officials. They squarely attacked the older aristocracy for their false pride, ignorance, dissipation and profligacy. Ramlochon Ghosh, a new zamindar of Dacca and formerly a diwan of Hastings wrote in a signed article that "The old zamindars were victims of their uncontrolled passions and lead their lives like animals". He continued, "one can see very few old zamindars of wealth and substance who follow a civilised mode of life".<sup>3</sup> He was advocating that the Government should take over all of their rent-free lands, the sources of their lazy

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<sup>1</sup>Life of poet Rashshagar, p.44. Vern. Tract 2013 (I.O.L.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ramlochon Ghosh to Bangabhasha-Prakashika, 31 Dec. 1836. Quoted in Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. II, p.404.

life, in order to activise them towards education and enlightenment.<sup>1</sup>

One most important aspect of a zamindar's life was his building activities. In his Kalikata-Kamalaloy, which was published in 1823, Bhavani Charan Banarji observed that it was socially and religiously unbecoming on the part of a wealthy aristocrat not to leave behind him some lasting memorials such as roads, tanks, ghats, temples, schools, alms houses, inns etc.<sup>2</sup> They also liberally contributed to government sponsored public works. One main aim behind all these charities, however, was to coming into the good books of the government so as to get some title of rank which would fulfil the highest ambition of a native.<sup>3</sup> Raja Bodynath's letter to government provides a typical example of the varied nature of a zamindar's contribution to public works. The Raja wrote that his family deserved the highest appreciation from the authorities, because his family contributed lakhs of rupees to public works. He claimed that from 1790 to 1826 his family built numerous roads, ghats, tanks, alms houses and hospitals.<sup>4</sup> In 1835, the Board of Revenue made

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<sup>1</sup> ~~xxx~~ Ibid. Ramlochon Ghosh to Babgabhasha-Prakashika, 31 December 1836, See, B.N. Banarji (ed.), p404.

<sup>2</sup> Bhavani Charan Banarji, Kalikata-Kamalaloy, pp.10-11. He was one of the greatest writers of early nineteenth century Bengal. Most of his works including Kalikata-Kamalaloy were social satires. His other satirical writings were Babu-Bilash, Bibi-Bilash and Duti-Bilash. In all these books he described the life-style of the new rich.

<sup>3</sup> Calcutta Courier, 10 July 1833, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Political Department Proceedings, 7 March 1845, No. 108. See

a list of the public works recently done by the zamindars of Bengal. The report gave the following account of remarkable works:<sup>1</sup>

1. 4 iron bridges
2. 86 brick bridges
3. 70 roads, some were about thirty miles long
4. 412 tanks
5. 113 reservoirs
6. 107 ghats
7. 15 inns along the high roads.

All these charitable activities obviously followed after the building of their own mansions and offices befitting their ranks and wealth. A zamindar's house, it was considered, must be big enough to accommodate all the dependents of the zamindar, his principal officers, all his household servants from the meanest slaves to the purahits or priests and pundits. There must also be houses for storage of grain and for cattle,

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Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. I, p.417. Raha Bodynath was the son of Raja Shukhmoy, the founder of the Posta Raj family in Calcutta. Shukhmoy's father Naku Dhar, was an interpreter of the Company before and for some time after the battle of Plassey.

<sup>1</sup>Judicial and Revenue Department, 5 March 1835. See, Brajendra Nath Banarji (ed.), vol. II, pp. 311-12.



horses and elephants. Other essential parts of a zamindar's house were schools, playgrounds, orchards, tanks and temples. But the most fashionable thing was to possess a garden house far from the family mansions for receptions, sport, and holiday stay. The following account of the garden house of Hari-mohon Tagore, for example, in the suburb of Calcutta, was given by Bishop Heber: "The house is surrounded by an extensive garden laid out in formal parterres of roses, intersected by straight walks, with some fine trees, and a chain of tanks, fountains and summer houses not ill adapted to a climate where air, water, and sweet smells are almost the only natural objects which can be realised during the greater part of the year. The whole is little less Italian than the facade of his house, ... He himself received us at the head of a whole tribe of relations and descendants on a handsome flight of steps, in a splendid shawl, by way of mantle with a large rosary of coral set in gold leaning on an ebony crutch with gold head."<sup>1</sup>

Though the landed families essentially revolved round their men-folk, there were many gifted ladies who ventured

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in "Hury Mohun Tagore - A Sketch", The Oriental Miscellany, Dec. 1880, p.453.

into the men's world and established their reputation by their own right. The name of Rani Bhavani of Nattore whose active role as a ruler ended before our period is still a household word in Bengal. The most celebrated ladies in our period were Rani Bishnukumari of Burdwan, Rani Tripura Sundari of Dinajpur, Rani Kattani of Kandi, Mannujan Begam of Hughli and the two Ranis of Raja Loknath of Kassimbazar. It has already been said how Rani Bishnukumari saved the vast zamindari of Burdwan from disintegration and how Rani Tripura Sundari of Dinajpur saved considerable portions of her husband's zamindari by selling her jewellery and by her subsequent able management after the death of her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Rani Kattani, the wife of Krishnachandra Sinha, the builder of the Kandi family most successfully ruled her husband's great but exceedingly scattered zamindari for twelve years when her husband renounced the world and turned into an ascetic in 1808.<sup>1</sup> But the most capable lady zamindar was Monnujan of Hughli. She was one of the leading aristocrats of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> She was the only issue of her father, Agha

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~~See Chapter 2, p.~~

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R. to G.G.C., 28 March 1820, B.R.C., 25 April 1820, Nos. 8, 10, P58/33.

<sup>2</sup>Hughli Judge to Judicial Secretary, 3 May 1802, C.J.P., 8 July 1802, No. 52, para. 26, P147/56.

Mutahar, who died before the decennial settlement.<sup>1</sup> The Permanent Settlement was concluded with Monnujan and she managed her zamindari, called Syedpur, so efficiently that her estate emerged completely unhurt from the landed crisis of the 1790s.<sup>2</sup>

According to Mrittunjoy Biddalankar, a Supreme Court Pundit in the 1820s and formerly a lecturer at the Fort William College, the aristocrats tried to possess many things as status symbols; one was to have one or more suits being heard before the Supreme Court.<sup>3</sup> The Samachar Darpan wrote, "We remember that it was considered by one as a great honour to keep a case in the Supreme Court. The honour which was achieved by proudly announcing that he had three causes in the Supreme Court simultaneously could not be got by spending twenty thousand rupees during the Durga Puja."<sup>4</sup> The zamindars, however, were often compelled to indulge in litigations in view of the undefined boundaries of their estates, transfer

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<sup>1</sup>See Brajendra Nath Banarji, vol. II, p.297.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 296-299.

<sup>3</sup>See Brajendra Nath Banarji, (ed.), vol. I, p.180.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

of lands by public sale, contumacious conduct of their farmers and renters, etc. But the most ruinous was the litigations between the members of landed families over property shares. On the basis of the Supreme Court records, N.K.Sinha has tried to show that continued litigations between different members, either ruined or impoverished a great many families in Bengal in the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Very often family disputes originated from flimsy differences in the day to day life of a joint family and ultimately ended in partitions and continued litigations. The Pal Chowdhuris of Ranaghat, for example, were a happy joint family till 1813 when ruinous litigations among different members of the family started.<sup>2</sup> The judicial proceedings continued till the 1840s leading to the total ruin of the family.<sup>3</sup> The original cause of the quarrel was believed to be a goat.<sup>4</sup>

All our above discussions as to the life style of the zamindars make it sufficiently clear that most of the zamindars

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<sup>1</sup>See N.K.Sinha, vol. III, pp. 88-92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.90.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Life of Kabi Rashsggar, Tract Vern. 2013, p.39.

were more mindful of proudly upholding and extending their authority and state than of trying to place it on a secure foundation by improving their estates. Their religious extravagance, ostentatious public charities, display of wealth on occasions like births and marriages - all sprang from the idea that they were the social superiors and that one method for the preservation and promotion of that superiority was liberal expenditure. Such a tendency was particularly marked among the new families who, in general, tried to use their solid wealth in buying social acceptance. In search of social recognition they not only spent recklessly but also took special care to furnish themselves with a coat of arms, and quite often with a pedigree to match. In short, most of the zamindars, both old and new, held land more as a means to establish and enhance social standing than to accumulate more and more wealth as landed entrepreneurs.

Chapter EightCONCLUSION

It had been pointed out in the beginning of this study that this work is designed to explore the changes in the structure and constitution of the landed society under the operation of the Permanent Settlement. With this end in view, attempts have been made to explain and illustrate the zamindars' position under the original constitution and subsequent changes in it, the dismemberment of the great territorial families and general turnover of lands, the rise of new landed families in place of the old. It has then been explained whether or not noticeable changes took place in the management pattern and in the mode of life of the landed class. It is thus possible now to sum up the important findings towards the goal of this study.

So far as the structural changes are concerned, Cornwallis's constitution for the Permanent Settlement was itself revolutionary in the sense that it created a zamindar class privileged with absolute proprietary rights over land which was then, and largely still is, the foundation of the Bengali society. It was still more revolutionary in the sense that the zamindars were shorn of all their traditional powers over their inferiors and, on top of all, it introduced a state sponsored land market by making land the security for public revenue and thereby facilitating the exit

of the incapable and indigent proprietors as well as the entry of the new elements into land.

The authors of the system fervently hoped that everything was set for a dramatic change in the country. But after the first flush of excitement their idealism began to wane when they saw that they unduly undermined the strength and resilience of the traditional landed class. The zamindars, though appreciating the principle of permanently fixed assessment, never accepted the other details of the constitution such as rasad, distribution of assessment, separation of taluqas, abolition of sayar, abatement of traditional powers over tenantry and, above all, the provision for the invariable sale of lands for revenue arrears. They fought hard to preserve their status, authority and powers. Their stubborn resistance to the operation of the new constitution made the public revenue so insecure that within six years of the Permanent Settlement the Government, for the sake of the security of the public revenue which was the ultimate object of the system, was compelled to compromise with the zamindars. The result of the compromise was the enactment of Regulation 7 of 1799 which restored all the traditional powers. By the same method of agitation they forced the Government to pass Regulation 5 of 1812 which empowered them to let their lands at whatever rate of rent they liked. In 1819, they acquired the power to create patni tenures and thereby the right to live on their unearned

income. All the subsequent developments of zamindari oppression and exploitation which were so much discussed throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries originated from these laws which were the outcome of zamindars' pressure and government's compromise with them. Thus all the radical changes in the structure of the zamindar class brought about by the Permanent Settlement constitution were nullified by the subsequent developments.

By constant agitations the zamindars could succeed in getting back most of their feudalistic powers and privileges but they failed to persuade the Government to repeal the sale laws which worked as the main engine of their destruction. The worst victims of the sale laws were eleven great territorial families who controlled 51<sup>0</sup>/<sub>o</sub> of the landed property of Bengal at the time of the Permanent Settlement. Of them, only two families, the zamindars of Potia in Rajshahi and Jahangirpur in Dinajpur, came out unhurt. No portion of their estates was sold on account of arrears of revenue. The Rajas of Burdwan lost about one-sixth of their territories, but subsequently they recouped their losses by new purchases. The rest of the eight families, namely, the Rajas of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Nadia, Birbhum, Bishnapur, Yusufpur, Muhammedshahi, and Idrikpur were completely ruined within the first seven years of the Permanent



Settlement. The most common factors that forced them to come under the operation of the sale laws were the intrigues of the zamindari amla, natural calamities and the zamindars' own indifference or incapacity to manage their vast estates efficiently. Besides these common factors, each of these families suffered from some formidable and peculiar difficulties. For example, the Rajshahi Raj was overrated at the time of the decennial settlement. So was the Bishnapur Raj which was also sinking under the pressure of long standing family feuds. The Rajas of Nadia, Yusufpur and Birbhum were inextricably immersed in debt. The Raja of Dinajpur was never free to manage his estate independently because of the most unjust interference from the authorities.

While the above forces were enough cause for their fall two other invisible forces worked against the territorial integrity of the principal zamindars. In the first place, it was government policy, from both political and economic considerations, to break up these big estates into more manageable and economic units. Such a state policy of freezing these overgrown zamindaris must have put them at a considerable disadvantages because they were denied all government support and leniency whenever they needed them in event of distress from natural calamities or other causes. The next invisible force that hastened their fall was a natural one. It is indeed a strange coincidence that

all the great zamindars who were ruined were in their teens when the destructive sale laws were put into full force in 1794. The only exception was the Raja of Bishnapur who was, again, disabled by his great age of over seventy. The juvenile zamindars were circumstantially so ill equipped both from their lack of worldly experience and from their traditional reluctance to work to face the challenge of the new system that they became an easy prey of their rapacious amlas who could, under the new laws, promote themselves at ease from zamindari officers to the rank of zamin<sup>d</sup>ar by throwing their masters' lands into default and sale. It is, however, impossible here to infer from the survival of the three large zamindaris which were headed by adult proprietors that the eight ruined zamindaris might have survived had they not been piloted by the most inexperienced boys at the time of the greatest crisis in their history as zamindars. The official policy towards the large zamindaris and the measures that were taken to destroy them made it extremely difficult for them to survive unassailed. Their internal conditions made them still more incompatible with the new system. To endure this system the small-sized holdings were decidedly more capable than the large estates. In fact, this realisation led the Raja of Burdwan to divide his zamindari estate into a confederation of zamindaris. The other two surviving estates gave up their customary law of primogeniture and

were divided between different lawful successors though externally they always used the common label of their family name.

The breakdown of the monopoly ownership of land and its redistribution certainly enlarged the composition of the landed society. But that was a limited enlargement because of the emergence of a few dozen new families who monopolised the purchases of land on the market. One peculiarity of these families was that their estates were invariably scattered all over the country. Because their demands for land were much greater than the limited supply of land available in any one area they were compelled to look for land wherever this was to be found. Such scattered situations of their estates led to unavoidable absenteeism. Powers had to be delegated to the resident naibs who thus became the virtual masters of the areas under their management.

The entry of new men of capital into land did not introduce anything new in the methods of zamindari management. They faithfully copied the traditional method of estate management and accounting. Some differences lay in the personal participation in management. While the older class of zamindars were almost wholly dependent on their amla, the new proprietors seemed to have taken greater personal interest in the day to day administration of the zamindari. But such interest gradually

faded when they got themselves established in society and their successors as recognised members of the aristocracy tended to withdraw themselves from estate management almost entirely, as did most of the other older zamindars.

It is claimed that the medium and small zamindars who controlled the remaining half of the landed property of Bengal were least affected by the operation of the sale laws. It has been estimated that about 45 per cent of the landed property of Bengal was transferred through default of revenue during the period under survey. About 70 per cent of these transfers belonged to only ten great families. Here we find the relative stability in structure and composition of the medium and small landowning class. Their stability is further emphasised by the fact that among the purchasers of lands the established zamindars constituted the biggest occupational group.

The dismemberment of monopolistic families is the most visible demonstration of structural changes in the districts formerly under their control. But though their lands were purchased by hundreds and thousands of new people they did not represent a significant social force so far as their territorial acquisitions were concerned. For the bulk of the lands transferred to new men was purchased by only about thirty wealthy families, the majority of whom were formerly either zamindari

or government officers. It is entirely a wrong notion to believe however that the Calcutta banians and merchants monopolised the purchases of the zamindari lands. The banian and merchants from all over the country constituted the third most extensive purchasers of lands. The top group of purchasers were the established zamindars themselves who were followed by their officers and officers of the government.

As regards lifestyle, the established landed class proved to be more resilient in absorbing the newer class of zamindars into their fold. The new zamindars considered the purchase of lands only the first step towards social recognition. Their next and most important move was to gather blue-blood spirit by spending lavishly on all occasions of social and religious ceremonies. They also never hesitated to construct such public works as would win them laurels both from the members of the public and the government. In fine, the system of the Permanent Settlement created a tremendous social upheaval during the first decade of its operation when a great many families lost their Possessions and social consequence and a great many others moved up in the scale of society. But the process of disintegration of the traditional landed society virtually stopped from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

APPENDIX A

The Board of Revenue issued a circular letter to all the collectors on June 7, 1811, which directed them to report as to the operation of the law of distraint and sale of tenant's property on account of arrears (Act 7, 1799). All the collectors were at one that the operation of the law proved to be too oppressive and needed remedies. In this connection the Nadia Collector narrated a story of oppression from his personal experience. He, in his report, recommended that at least the implements of husbandry and other property immediately needed for cultivation should be exempted from the law of distress and sale of defaulters' property. His recommendation was accepted and incorporated into section 14, Regulation 5 of 1812. The following extracts from his report would explain how the family of Shibu, the blacksmith was oppressed by the local farmer:

"Seeboo, a blacksmith in my employ came to me in May last, in a state of considerable agitation and represented that the farmer of his village had on an unjust demand, not only seized his brother's ploughs but had driven off in distress, the whole of his own cattle and sheep, intreating my interference in their release, or he and his family would be

reduced to inevitable ruin. The tale was told with so much feeling and apparent truth that I did not hesitate to request the attendance of the farmer (who lives near me) which he complied with accompanied by his gomastha, when an act of such oppression and injustice was disclosed that quite astonished me. It appeared that during the past year Luckon the brother of Seeboo had taken from Ramjoy Sing the farmer of the village Pinalla - a tract of land that constitutes part of the northern bank of the Jellinghy river, and was then under water on the stipulation of paying for it in kind, and in this proportion two thirds of whatever it provided, was to go to the farmer, and the remaining third, to the cultivator. The land was regularly ploughed and sown as the waters receded, but unfortunately, they did not subside sufficiently fast, to admit of more than one fourth of the land, being brought into cultivation at the proper season, the remaining three fourths consequently continued uncultivated and of course unproductive, the rapacious farmer, irritated, most probably by his disappointment, not contented with seizing on the whole of the crop produced from the one fourth, but now demanded 80 rupees as the estimated value, of his share of the crop that might have been produced from the remaining three fourths of the land, had it been brought into cultivation,

and to enforce the payment of this unjust claim, dignified by the appellation of arrears of rent, the farmer applied to the thanadar of Noparra, who granting him a police officer, the implements of husbandry belonging to Luckon and 47 head of cattle and a flock of 25 sheep, the property of Seeboo was seized and carried off in distress. No part of these circumstances being denied by the farmer, I pointed out to him not only the gross impropriety of his conduct and the disagreeable consequences that would probably result therefrom, but recommended the property being released. Finding however five days after, that the distress still continued, I desired the blacksmith to petition the court, (which I sent with a note) when an order was passed, that the property should be released on the amount being deposited in court, the poor man, having paid his little all in discharge of his rents for the year just expired, had not the means of depositing the amount, and the influence of the farmer deterred every one from lending him the money. In this exigency, he again came to me, when extremely incensed at the villainy of the farmer, I agreed to deposit the amount, provided the injured party, would faithfully promise to prosecute for damages, which he acceded to, I intended to have advanced the sum, but the circumstance coming to the knowledge of the farmer he instantly released the property, relinquished the demand, and ultimately prevailed



upon the blacksmith and his brother to enter into a Razimamah (agreement). On reproaching these men some days after for breaking their faith with me, they candidly acknowledged, they had been induced to a compromise, under the influence of personal apprehension, for if they had refused, the farmer in revenge, would most probably have bribed a Goindah (village spy) to give in their names as Budmaushes (miscreants), or have sent them himself to the magistrate as such, in which case they would have been committed to the fouzdary jail, where they might have remained for years, unheard, and untried, and either have died there, or become outcasts, the farmer might also have ruined them by a fictitious claim in the Dewanny Court under Regulation 7, in which case they would be confined in the Dewanny jail, until the season for cultivation was past, when falling really in arrear the farmer would take advantage of the circumstance and sell the whole of their property (for the fourth of its value) in liquidation.

The fears of these poor people were not without foundation, for it is a lamentable but well known fact that a great number of ryotts who have presumed to contest unjust demands, have been made victims of the farmers revenge; innumerable instances could be quoted in support of this assertion, and I

am persuaded had I not interfered in favour of the blacksmith and his brother that their property would have been sold in satisfaction of this unjust claim."

Source: Collector of Nadia to B.O.R., 20 June 1811,  
B.O.R.P., 31 December 1811, No. 9, P77/1.

APPENDIX B

Please see pocket.

Appendix CSources of the figures in Table 12

<u>SL, No.</u>	<u>Original Purchases</u>	<u>SL No.</u>	<u>Subsequent Sales</u>
1	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Aug. 1797, No. 1, P73/22 " 29 Aug. 1797, No. 58, P73/22	1	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 8 Aug. 1801, No. 37, P74/35 " 30 Sept. 1800, App. C., P74/23
2	" 17 April 1798, App. D, P73/31 " 8 June 1798, App. E, P73/33 " 3 August 1798, App. D, P73/35 " 12 Aug. 1800, No. 29, P74/15	2	" 29 Sept. 1801, No. 31, P74/35 " 15 Feb. 1799, App. C, P73/43
3	" 5 June 1793, Board's Pro- ceedings (no number)	3	" 13 Aug. 1799, App. A, P73/51 " 6 Dec. 1799, No. P74/13
4	" 15 May 1798, App. D, P73/32	4	" 18 Sept. 1801, App. B, C, P74/41
5	" 5 April 1799, App. C, P73/46 " 11 June 1799, App. M, P73/49 " 30 July 1799, App. F, P75/50	5	" 18 August 1801, App. A, P74/41 " 18 Sept. 1801, App. A., P74/41
6	" 19 April 1799, No. 7	6	" 30 Sept. 1800, App. C, P74/23 " 2 January 1801, App. C.D., P74/4 " 12 July 1801, App. B, P74/41
7	" 23 Aug. 1799, No. 49, P73/51	7	" 16 Dec. 1800, App. D, P74/23
8	" 7 July 1801, No. 38, P74/32	8	" 7 July 1801, No. 38, P74/32

## Appendix C (cont.)

<u>SL.</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Original Purchases</u>	<u>SL.</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Subsequent Sales</u>
9	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Aug. 1797, No. 1, P73/22	9	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 30 Sept. 1800, App. C, P74/23 " 4 Aug. 1801, App. E, P74/91
10	" 14 May 1799, App. B, P73/47	10	" 9 July 1802, App. B.
11	" 20 Sept. 1799, No. 14, P73/52	10	" 9 July 1802, App. Q, P75/9
12	" 18 June 1799, App. D, P73/49 " 8 July 1800, No. 34, P74/13	12	" 5 June 1801, App. A, P74/41
13	" 11 June 1799, App. O, P73/49 " 23 Aug. 1799, App. A, P73/51	13	" 13 January 1801, App. H, P74/23
14	" 6 June 1797, No. 7, P73/20	14	" 20 Feb. 1798, App. B, P73/29
15	" 23 Aug. 1799, App. A, P73/51	15	" 16 Dec. 1800, App. E, P74/23
16	" 21 May 1799, App. A, P73/47	16	" 7 Oct. 1800, App. F. P74/23
17	" 11 Nov. 1796, No. 22, P73/10 " 14 April 1797, No. 3, P73/18 " 21 April 1797, No. 13, P 73/18	17	" 13 Nov. 1802, No. 12, P74/38

Appendix D

THE VALUE OF LANDED PROPERTY OF BENGAL

Year of purchase reckoning zamindars' profits at 10 per cent of the sadar jama

	1201 B.S.	1202	1203	1204	1205	1206	1207	1208	1209	1210	1211	1212	1213	1214	1215	1216	1217	1218	1219	1220	1221	1222	1223	1224	1225	Average Year of purchase
Birbhum	21	14	10	7	5	9	9	2	3	8	4	2	12	30	7	64	46	65	12	8	12	7	160	14	29	8
Burdwan	nil	12	7	6	4	8	8	9	7	1	4	2	16	26	49	17	74	74	44	44	58	72	7	74	29	22
Chittagong	17	21	12	37	37	10	10	25	29	33	16	16	52	52	49	17	94	42	49	32	25	23	48	14	56	41
Dacca	23	23	21	12	2	23	7	8	8	18	10	18	30	7	41	64	7	42	49	32	25	23	48	14	17	24
Dinaipur	nil	nil	10	5	9	10	11	11	11	19	62	16	nil	nil	18	28	nil	52	28	27	73	15	nil	60	nil	27
Jessore	nil	18	15	7	13	16	21	23	23	24	9	14	32	83	47	7	23	55	161	10	30	26	9	50	29	30
Murshidabad	30	15	15	nil	16	14	19	19	23	10	14	21	23	19	12	144	1	1	52	11	61	30	196	44	57	36
Mymensingh	15	24	25	17	6	20	19	12	12	13	13	19	36	14	82	4	20	101	18	15	26	14	22	25	50	25
Nadia	20	18	10	10	8	15	10	6	6	16	12	8	54	nil	11	nil	5	23	48	106	nil	50	82	nil	42	24
Purulia	8	16	16	25	9	10	4	2	2	11	nil	nil	44	nil	8	62	nil	nil	36	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	17
Rajshahi	9	17	7	7	nil	13	5	7	7	7	8	1	9	29	18	nil	20	3	7	72	11	nil	nil	nil	80	23
Rangpur	15	24	nil	nil	nil	12	7	9	9	1	nil	63	nil	nil	48	44	247	465	nil	nil	123	nil	nil	76	nil	62
Sylhet	nil	nil	2	8	8	14	5	12	16	3	5	19	9	22	22	21	41	19	12	nil	nil	120	8	8	40	20
Tipperah	nil	18	11	8	8	7	9	9	8	13	6	18	7	1	27	18	12	39	3	4	10	16	24	8	13	12
24 Parganas	23	9	6	8	8	10	8	10	10	11	10	23	7	41	36	nil	160	nil	38	13	60	nil	80	80	11	26
Total	20	13	9	6	7	10	12	11	11	11	9	8	15	24	28	29	23	41	68	40	30	70	42	42	29	

Source: See the sources of Appendix B against every year.

Appendix E

The annual account sales of landed property for 1800-1 and 1801-2 are not available in the India Office Records. Sales in these two years have been compiled from the Collectors' reports and advertisements taken from the Calcutta Gazette from 1 April 1800 to 30 March 1802.

COLLECTORS' SALES REPORTS

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of lands sold</u> S.R.	<u>Sources</u>
Birbhum		1,266	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 15 Aug. 1800, App. B, P74/23
	1800-1	<u>44,818</u>	" 31 March 1801, App. A, P74/41
		<u>46,084</u>	
		1,000	" 22 Sept. 1801, App. M, P74/41
		10,647	" 9 Oct. 1801, App. A, P74/41
		4,702	" " " " B "
		14,577	" " " " C "
	1801-2	<u>60,843</u>	" 13 Nov. 1802, No. 12, P74/38
		<u>91,769</u>	
	Burdwan		88,670
		324	" 14 Oct. 1800, App. A, P74/23
		548	" 16 Dec. 1800, App. C, P74/25
		263	" 2 January 1801, App. G, P74/41
		738	" 13 January 1801, App. G, P74/41
		9,798	" 24 Feb. 1801, App. C, P74/41
		97	" 4 April 1801, App. G, P74/41

## Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Burdwan		1,08,705	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 5 June 1801, App. " ,P74/41
		542	" 17 July 1801, App. A, P74/41
		<u>3,127</u>	" " " " " D "
	1801-2	2,12,812	
		662	" 28 Aug. 1801, App. A, P74/41
		1,852	" 1 Sept. 1801, No. 48, P74/34
		707	" 4 Sept. 1801, App. E, P74/41
		5,954	" 15 Sept. 1801, App. C, P74/41
		120	" 24 Nov. 1801, App. D, P74/41
		3,849	" 8 Dec. 1801, App. A, P74/41
		23,378	" 25 May 1802, App. C. & D, P75/9
		<u>6,509</u>	" 4 June 1802, App. A, P75/9
	1801-2	<u>43,031</u>	
Chittagong		60	" 22 Aug. 1800, App. I, P74/23
		81	" 26 Aug. 1800, App. F, P74/23
		208	" 26 Sept. 1800, App. A, P74/23
		2,560	" " " " " D "
		90	" 14 Oct. 1800, App. B, P74/23
		86	" 24 March 1801, App. A, P74/41
		129	" 12 June 1801, App. I, P74/41
		<u>40</u>	" " " " " J "
	1800-1	3,094	



Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>	
Chittagong		4,190	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 11 Sept. 1801, App. A, P74/41	
		629	" 22 Sept. 1801, App. B, P74/41	
		100	" 6 Nov. 1801, App. B, P74/41	
		120	" 10 Nov. 1801, App. B, P74/41	
		400	" 15 Nov. 1801, App. A, P74/41	
		470	" 1 Dec. 1801, App. E, P74/41	
		<u>63</u>	" 19 January 1802, App. H, P75/9	
	1801-2	6,131		
	Dacca		3,622	" 15 August 1800, App. A, P74/23
			1,46,299	" 26 Aug. 1800, App. A, P74/23
		16,474	" 24 Oct. 1800, App. B, P74/23	
		14,362	" 18 Nov. 1800, App. B, P74/23	
		3,002	" 24 Oct. 1800, App. B, E, G, P74/23	
		4,855	" 18 Nov. 1800, App. A, B, P74/23	
		605	" 30 Dec. 1800, App. A, P74/23	
		373	" 13 January 1801, App. D, E, P74/41	
		105	" 4 April 1801, App. A, P74/41	
		<u>42</u>	" 12 June 1801, App. K, P74/41	
1800-1	1,89,739			
	46,814	" 15 Sept. 1801, App. B, P74/41		
	604	" 15 September 1801, App. A, P74/41		
	16,106	" " " " B "		

## Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
		1,378	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 6 November 1801, App. C, P74/41
		7,355	" " " " " C <sup>2</sup> "
		367	" " " " " C <sup>3</sup> "
		11,136	" " " " " D "
		213	" " " " " E "
		100	" 17 November 1801, App. A, P74/41
		1,74,800	" 1 January 1802, App. A, P75/9
		<u>2,697</u>	" 23 February 1803, App. A, B, E, P75/9
	1801-2	2,62,570	
Dinajpur		1,221	" 12 June 1800, App. L, P74/23
		73,234	" 22 August 1800, App. G, P74/23
		1,215	" 30 September 1800, App. E, P74/23
		<u>6,048</u>	" 26 May 1801, App. A, P74/41
	1800-1	81,718	
		17,359	" 18 August 1801, App. A, P74/41
		14,252	" 21 August 1801, App. D, P74/41
		4,018	" 18 September 1801, App. B, C, P74/41
		5,670	" " " " " A, "
		737	" " " " " D, "
		24,076	" 6 November 1801, App. N, P74/41
		677	" 24 November 1801, App. F, P74/41
		21,499	" 11 December 1801, App. A, P74/41

Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of lands sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Dinajpur		13,595	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 7 May 1802, App. D, P75/9
		1,970	" 4 June 1802, App. E, P75/9
		<u>12,787</u>	" 9 July 1802, App. B, P75/9
	1801-2	1,16,230	
Jessore		19,152	" 10 June 1800, App. G, P74/23
		288	" 12 Aug. 1800, App. B, P74/23
		19,198	" 7 October 1800, App. F, P74/23
		15,276	" 23 Dec. 1800, App. B, P74/23
		10,483	" 4 April 1801, App. C, P74/41
		25,347	" " " " L, "
		9,404	" 10 April 1801, App. C, P74/41
		6,585	" 21 July 1801, App. A <sup>2</sup> , P74/41
		131	" 22 Aug. 1800, App. E, P74/23
		1,988	" 26 Aug. 1800, App. E, E <sup>2</sup> , P74/23
		3,633	" 9 Sept. 1800, App., F, F <sup>2</sup> , F <sup>3</sup> , P74/23
		1,182	" 7 October 1800, App. E, E <sup>2</sup> , G, H, H <sup>2</sup> , H <sup>3</sup> , P74/23
		1,176	" 23 Dec. 1800, App. C, C <sup>2</sup> , D <sup>2</sup> , D <sup>3</sup> , P74/23
		80	" 2 January 1801, App. I, P74/41
		865	" 13 January 1801, App. I, P74/41
		80	" 4 April 1801, App. B, P74/41
		39	" 17 April 1801, App. B, P74/41
		736	" 26 May App. C <sup>2</sup> , P74/41

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Jessore		444	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 26 May 1801, App. C <sup>3</sup> , P74/41
		751	" 21 July 1801, App. A, A <sup>3</sup> , P74/41
	1800-1	<u>1,16,788</u>	
		594	" 8 August 1801, App. D <sup>2</sup> , E <sup>2</sup> , E <sup>3</sup> , P.74/41
		583	" 1 September 1801, App. B, B <sup>2</sup> , C, C <sup>3</sup> , P74/41
		334	" 4 September 1801, App. I, J, J <sup>2</sup> , J <sup>3</sup> , P74/41
		32,613	" 29 September 1801, No. 31, P74/35
		200	" 10 November, 1801, App. D, P74/41
		<u>1,183</u>	" 1 December 1801, App. A, P74/41
	1801-2	35,507	
Murshidabad		31	" 26 August 1800, App. J, P74/23
		13,152	" 23 September 1800, App. E, P74/23
		15,793	" " " " " "
		201	" 14 November 1800, App. A, P74/23
		825	" 4 April 1801, App., F, P74/41
		<u>2,731</u>	" 16 June 1801, App. A, P74/41
	1800-1	32,733	
		15,647	" 21 August 1801, App. A, P 74/41
		810	" 18 August 1801, App. B, P74/41
		<u>7,743</u>	" 21 August 1801, App. A, P74/41
1801-2	24,200		

Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Mymensing		168	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 26 August 1800, App. G,H,I,P74/23
		57	" 8 September 1800, App. D, P74/23
		4,116	" 16 September 1800, App. C, P74/23
		10,867	" 19 September 1800, App. B, P74/23
		1,400	" 28 September 1800, App. A, P74/23
		<u>7,209</u>	" 10 April 1801, App. D.E.P74/41
	1800-1	23,817	
		2,048	" 8 August 1801, App. F, P74/41
		10,203	" " " " G, "
		1,111	" 2 October 1801, App. C, P74/41
		1,200	" " " " F, "
		400	" 18 December 1801, App. A, P74/41
		137	" 12 January 1801, App. A, P75/9
		200	" 26 March 1801, App. A, P75/9
		<u>40,731</u>	" 9 July .802, App. C, P75/9
	1801-2	56,030	
Nadia		30	" 9 September 1800, App. C, P74/23
		46,279	" 30 September 1800, App. C, P74/23
		1,486	" 7 October 1800, App. B, P74/23
		18,154	" 16 December 1800, No. 37, P74/21
		14,851	" 2 January 1800, App. C, D, P74/41
		20	" " " " J, "
		933	" 4 April 1801, App. D, P74/41

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Nadia		933	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 4 April 1801, App. D, P74/41
		65	" 17 April 1801, App. C, P74/41
		3,680	" 23 June 1801, App. A,B,P74/41
		28,586	" 14 July 1801, App. A,B,C,P74/41
		22,025	" " " " D, "
		14,176	" 17 July 1801, App. I, P74/41
		<u>1,17,408</u>	" 31 July 1801, Nos. 48, 49, 50, P74/33
	1800-1	2,57,693	
		38,843	" 4 August 1801, App. B,C,D,E,F, P74/41
		20,702	" 28 August 1801, App. C,C,E,F,H, P74/41
		8,250	" 4 Sept. 1801, App. K, P74/41
		5,793	" 2 Oct. 1801, App. A, P74/4k
		16,196	" " " " B, "
		428	" 26 March 1802, App. B, P75/9
		25,874	" 2 July 1802, App. B, P75/9
		<u>4,571</u>	" 20 July 1802, App. C, P75/9
	1801-2	1,17,657	
Purnia	1800-1	12,844	" 16 June 1801, App. E, P74/41
	1801-2	X	

Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
Rajshahi		1,19,216	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 18 April 1800, App. B,C,D, P74/10
		2,876	" 13 May 1800, App. B, P74/10
		86,211	" 11 July 1800, App. A, P74/23
		96,265	" 12 Aug. 1800, No. 29, P74/15
		35,474	" " " App. A, P74/23
		1,554	" 15 Aug. 1800, App. D,E, P74/23
		3,443	" 30 Sept. App. B, P74/23
		19,684	" 7 October 1800, App. C,D, P74/23
		1,78,465	" 16 Dec. 1800, App. D,E,F,G,H,I, P74/23
		22,699	" 13 January 1801, App. A,B,H, P74/41
		21,177	" 23 January 1801, App. A,B, P74/41
		22,726	" 10 April 1801, App. F,G, P74/41
		3,618	" 14 July 1801, App. E.F.G.H.I, P74/41
		<u>44,520</u>	" 17 July 1801, App. E, P74/41
	1800-1	6,57,926	
		19,547	" 28 August 1801, App. B,I, P74/41
		20,760	" 6 November 1801, App., G,H, P74/41
		445	" 22 December 1801, App. E, P74/41
		192	" 26 March 1802, App. D, P75/9

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
		2,600	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 2 February 1802, App. C, P75/9
		27,750	" 7 May 1802, App. C, P75/9
		9,872	" 25 June 1802m App. C, P75/9
		1,406	" 11 September 1801, App. D.F. P74/41
	1801-2	<u>82,572</u>	
Rangpur		8,479	" 12 August 1800, App. P74/23
		<u>31,263</u>	" 21 July 1801, App. C, C <sup>2</sup> , P74/41
	1800-1	39,742	
		29,832	" 8 August 1801, App. A, B.C, P74/41
		6,000	" 1 December 1801, App. E, P74/41
		<u>2,250</u>	" 23 February 1802, App. D, P74/41
	1801-2	38,082	
Sylhet		6,208	" 12 August 1800, App. D.D <sup>2</sup> , P74/23
		1,774	" 22 August 1800, App. B, C, D, P74/23
		4,865	" 16 Sept. 1800, App. D.E.F.G., P74/23
		883	" 14 Nov. 1800, App. B, C, P74/23
		3,847	" " " " A, "
		303	" 23 December 1800, App. E, E <sup>2</sup> , P74/23
		151	" 13 January 1800, App. K, P74/41
		1,487	" 4 April 1801, App. J, P74/41
		<u>500</u>	" 14 April 1801, App. A, P74/41
	1800-1	19,018	



Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>
		567	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 4 August 1801, App. G, P74/41
		2,291	" 18 August 1801, App. C,X,P74/41
		8,971	" 21 August 1801, App. B C.,P74/41
		2,873	" 25 August 1801, App. A,B,P74/41
		641	" 11 September 1801, App. G,H,I,J, P74/41
		2,000	" 20 October 1801, App. A, P74/41
		237	" 6 November 1801, App. L,M,P74/41
		300	" 24 November 1801, App. A,P74/41
		<u>2,750</u>	" 22 January 1802, App. A,B,P75/9
	1801-2	20,630,	
Tipperah		1,688	" 26 August 1800, App. D, P74/23
		166	" 19 September 1800, App. A, P74/23
		445	" 26 September 1800, App. C(b), P74/23
		223	" 30 September 1800, App. C, P74/23
		86	" 13 January 1801, App. C,P74/41
		1,900	" 4 April 1801, App. I,P74/41
		431	" 10 April 1801, App. H,P74/41
		4728	" 17 April 1801, App. A, P74/41
		221	" 17 July 1801, App. C, P74/41
	1800-1	<u>9,888</u>	

Appendix E (cont.)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Jama of land sold</u>	<u>Sources</u>	
Tipperah		725	<u>B.O.R.P.</u> , 22 September 1801, App. C, P74/41	
		470	" 27 October 1801, App. A, P74/41	
		1,229	" 10 November 1801, App. H, I, J, P74/41	
		1,300	" 8 December 1801, App. D, P74/41	
		13	" 12 January 1802, App. A, P75/9	
		1,900	" 2 February 1802, App. B, P75/9	
		400	" 19 February 1802, App. B, P75/9	
		100	" 6 April 1802, App. B, P75/9	
		777	" 9 April 1802, App. B, P75/9	
		1801-2	<u>6,914</u>	
24-Parganas		8,913	" 12 August 1800, App. E, P74/23	
		1,685	" 22 August 1800, App. I, J, K, P, Q, P74/23	
		3,326	" 23 September 1800, App. A, B, C, D, P74/23	
		6,673	" 7 November 1800, App. A, P74/23	
		<u>519</u>	" 24 February 1801, App. B, P74/41	
		1800-1	21,306	
		414	" 8 August 1801, App. H, J, P74/41	
		520	" 11 September 1801, App. K, P74/41	
		4,525	" 29 September 1801, App. C, P74/41	
		274	" " " " C <sup>2</sup> , "	
	<u>1,270</u>	" 10 November 1801, App. R, P74/41		
	1801-2	6,993		

Appendix FStatements of the lands purchased by some great new familiesTable 1The estates purchased by the Kandi family, Murshidabad

<u>Names of parganase</u>	<u>Districts where situated</u>	<u>Jama</u>
Pargana Bullua )		
" Amidabad)	Noakhali	Not given
" Babupur )		
" Naldi	Jessore	"
Turuf Tulsipur .	Rajshahi	"
" Shasan	24-parganas	"
Pargana Bagaun	Nadia	"
Lot Bishnulaksipur	Burdwan	"
Taluk Gopalpur	Midnapur	"
Lot Joyi )		
" Srihati )		
" Dalia )	Birbhum	"
" Kagash )		
Turuf Saktoria and Sadipur	Burdwan	"
Pergana Radhaballabpur)		
Kismat Radhaballabpur )	Murshidabad	"
Bhalagachi)		
Kasimpur )	Dinajpur	"
Amnagur )		
Rogupur )		
Ramnia )	Purnia	"
Pergana Rahuni )		
" Chabukad)	Cuttack	"
" Anupsha	Balandhar	"
Turuf Alampur	Aligarh	"
" Mathura	Mathura	"
	Total jama:	<u>S.R. 4,75,413</u>

Source: Kissory Chand Mitra, "Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal, Kandi Family", The Calcutta Review, vol. 58, 1874, p.116.

Table 2

The estates purchased by the Banarji family  
of Telinpara, Hughli

<u>Parganas/Districts</u>	<u>Jama</u>		<u>Amount paid</u>	<u>Sources</u>
		S.R.	at purchase S.R.	
Pargana Amirabad, Rajshahi		5,961	665 )	
Tuppah Arungnagar "		2,252	400 )	
Bongong Khalsa "		21,421	2,525 )	
Bazuras Mahabbatpur "		8,738	1,512 )	
Bongong Jagir "		11,495	1,177 )	
Begamabad Jessore		7,651	1,330 )	
Berahimpur "		19,184	1,205 )	
Telihatī Amirabad "		13,805	1,505 )	1
Turf Kachabaria "		1,287	185 )	
Pargana Havely "			)	
Sudya "		37,989	3,570 )	
Tuppa Binudpur "		2,841	500 )	
In the name of his son Joyram Dutt:				
Pargana Eussufpur "		14,168	16,100 )	
Begamabad (the remaining half of the mahals)			)	
Belgatchi "		7,651	13,500 )	2
		7,098	15,600 )	
In the names Shibnath, Ramnath and Kamalkrishna:				
Pargana Khattia (6 mahals) "		6,792	2,309	3
Dhee Shajadpur "		10,342	4,700	4
Total jama and amount of purchase	S.R.	1,68,673	66,783	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 11 September 1795, No. 1, P72/46.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28 June 1796, No. 2, P73/5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 23 August 1799, App. A, P73/51.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., No. 49.

Table 3

The estates purchased by the Narail family, Jessore

<u>Names of parganas</u>	<u>Former Proprietors</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u>	<u>Amount paid at purchase</u>	<u>Source</u>
		S.R.	S.R.	
Tuppa Bhadaressur, Burdwan	Raja of Burdwan	2,347	13,100	1
Noapur Burdwan	Ramnidhi Ghosh	10,547	2,600 )	
Rajgram "	" "	9,872	2,400 )	
Khurd Selampur "	" "	11,105	4,500 )	
Ninganj "	" "	13,987	2,000 )	
Kismat Pandua "	" "	43,984	13,100 )	
Tuppa Ganghadharpur, Burdwan	" "	3,395	2,900 )	2
Tuppa Serajabad, Burdwan	" "	2,745	1,100 )	
Turf Ghidganj, Burdwan	" "	6,896	13,100	3
Uzzedia "	Natu Sinha	11,191	2,355	4
Pargana Okra, Nadia	Raja of Nadia	57,819	6,20,000	5
Total	S.R.	1,73,888	6,77,155	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 23 May 1798, No. 37A, P73/19.<sup>2</sup>B.O.R.P., 10 May 1799, Appendix E, P73/47.<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 17 May 1799, No. 1, P73/47.<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1 Feb. 1814, No. 28, P77/31.

Table 4

The estates purchased by the Manik family  
of Patna now settled in Dinajpur

<u>Names of mahals</u>	<u>Former Proprietor</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u> S.R.	<u>Amount of purchase</u> S.R.	<u>Sources</u>
<u>In the name of Manik Chand</u>					
Pargana Burbila	Raja of Dinajpur	Dinajpur	35,520	31,100	1
" Taria	"	"	5,377	2,750	2
Mouja Rogonatpur	"	"	7,927	8,000 )	
Kashba Ghajnagar	"	"	4,233	9,000 )	
Mouja Keshabpur	"	"	7,288	6,000 )	3
" Singuriganj	"	"	6,675	2,000 )	
Pargana Madabpur	"	"	5,494	1,400 )	
<u>In the name of Karti Chand, his grandson</u>					
Milanpur	"	"	5,590	3,300 )	
Pallashbari	"	"	7,335	1,800 )	
Matikatha	"	"	4,588	1,750 )	
<u>In the name of Mitunlal Chand, his grandson</u>					
Jatmanpur	"	"	5,592	1,800 )	
Fulpur	"	"	4,520	2,300 )	4
<u>In the name of Anand Chand, Bhoyrob Chand, Ramchand, his grandsons</u>					
Golahor	"	"	4,835	2,400 )	
Shamnagar	"	"	3,842	1,040 )	
Maheshpur	"	"	5,178	1,775 )	
<u>In the name of Ullumchand, his grandson from his daughter's side</u>					
Shujapur	"	"	5,140	3,425 )	
Krishnapur	"	"	4,694	4,025 )	
Mariamganj	"	"	2,210	2,500 )	5
Bahuganj	"	"	3,364	3,725 )	
Tagarah	"	"	4,713	3,550 )	

Table 4 (cont.)

<u>Names of mahals</u>	<u>Former Proprietor</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u>	<u>Amount of purchase</u>	<u>Sources</u>
In the name of <u>Anand Chand</u> Surbari	Raja of Dinajpur	Dinajpur	2,219	2,325	6
Total		S.R.	<u>1,36,334</u>	<u>67,965</u>	

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<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 1 August 1797, No. 37, P73/22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2 April 1799, App. Q., P73/46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 11 May 1798, App. B, P73/32.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 14 May 1799, App. B, P73/47.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 30 July 1799, App. G, P73/50.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 31 May 1803, App. A, P75/23.

Table 5

The estates purchased by the family of AbhoyCharan Dutt of Calcutta

<u>Names of parganas</u>		<u>Former Proprietor</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u> S.R.	<u>Amount of purchase</u> S.R.	<u>Source</u>
Woolusi,	Nadia	Raja of Nadia	6,087	1,400 )	
Krishnapur	"	"	4,169	1,300 )	
Bashbaria	"	"	3,447	2,000 )	
Rampur	"	"	4,977	1,100 )	
Kenairali	"	"	5,066	1,500 )	
Samtab	"	"	4,088	1,600 )	1
Chandurah	"	"	5,349	2,800 )	
Rudrapur	"	"	5,381	2,000 )	
Barakpur	"	"	5,186	2,100 )	
Diarah	"	"	4,922	2,000 )	
Ganganandpur	"	"	4,562	1,200 )	
Malchulah	"	"	5,245	4,800 )	2
Total		S.R.	58,479	23,800	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 11 August 1797, No. 1, P73/22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 29 August 1797, No. 58, P73/22.



Table 6

The estates purchased by the Kassimbazar family  
of Murshidabad

<u>Districts in which the</u> <u>Kassimbazar estates</u> <u>were situated</u>	<u>Sadar jama of</u> <u>the estate in</u> <u>each district</u>
	S.R.
Murshidabad	29,451
Rajshahi	46,169
*Rangpur	78,900
Dinajpur	24,588
Nadia	57,275
*Bhagalpur	1,063
Jessore	3,267
Birbhum	1,547
Burdwan	558
Dacca	87
	<hr/>
Total jama	S.R. <u>2,42,905</u>

Source: C.O.W.P., 28 Feb. 1809, No. 23, P114/28.

\*Estates that Loknath Nandi inherited from his father.

Table 7

The estates purchased by the Tagore family (senior  
branch), Calcutta

<u>Names of Parganas</u>	<u>Former proprietor</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u>	<u>Amount paid at purchase</u>	<u>Source</u>
		S.R.	S.R.	
Chingotteah, Jessore	Raja of Jessore	19,522	36,100	1
Nurnagar	"	6,161	10,700	2
Behgong, Nadia (He shared it with his brother, Harimohon Tagore)	Raja of Nadia	10,672	30,100	3
Kaliganj, Rajshahi	Raja of Rajshahi	10,943	5,200	4
Hakimpur	"	6,494	8,500	5
Serdah	Balram Roy	32,613	21,000	6
Total	S.R.	86,405	1,11,600	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 17 January 1797, No. 1, P73/19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 24 January 1797, No. 1, P73/15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 18 August 1797, No. 41, P73/22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 10 Sept. 1799, No. 55, P73/52.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 12 August 1800, No. 29, P74/15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 29 September, 1801, No. 31, P74/35.

Table 8

The estates purchased by the Pal Chowdhury family  
of Ranaghat, Nadia.

<u>Names of mahals</u>	<u>Districts</u>	<u>Former proprietors</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u> S.R.	<u>Amount paid at purchase</u> S.R.	<u>Sources</u>
Dhees Sibpur ) " Digrah ) " Sikarpur )	Nadia	Raja of Rajshahi	13,509	11,500	1
Dantia	Jessore	Raja Srikanta of Jessore	27,580	54,500 )	
Hussainpur	"		9,189	19,900 )	
Magura and Gonah	"	"	2,666	6,200 )	2
Munagacha	"	"	3,090	9,000 )	
Bhagmarah	"	"	2,800	9,900 )	3
?	"	"			
Alampur	Nadia	Raja of Nadia	11,757	13,700 )	4
Bagmarah	"	"	9,499	14,700 )	
Ghoubaria	"	"	5,638	4,500 )	
Beezriah	"	"	4,338	3,900 )	5
Anandpur	"	"	3,663	3,000 )	
Sibpur	"	"	5,473	4,200 )	
Barbakabad	"	"	4,729	2,100 )	
Serampur	"	"	4,708	2,100 )	
Gourshali	"	"	4,625	2,700 )	
Kumargorah	"	"	4,944	2,900 )	6
Surapur	"	"	4,145	2,700 )	
Maragateh	"	"	5,005	3,400 )	
Pallah	"	"	5,174	2,700 )	
Dhee Alfa	"	Ramlöchon Ghosh	8,128	3,400	7
Total		S.R.	1,32,714	1,82,100	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 22 August 1797, No. 36, P73/22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 24 January 1797, No. 1, P73/15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27 June 1797, No. 40, p.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1 August 1797, No. 40, P73/22.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 11 August 1797, No. 1, P73/22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 29 August 1797, No. 58, P73/22.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2 July 1802, App. Q, P75/9.

Table 9

The estates purchased by the Danishmand family, Murshidabad

<u>Name of pargana</u>		<u>Former proprietor</u>	<u>Amount of jama</u> S.R.	<u>Amount paid at purchase</u> S.R.	<u>Source</u>
Decca,	Birbhum	Raja of Birbhum	15,665	40,000	1
Giashpur	"	"	14,894	31,100	2
Fatehpur	"	Raja of Rajshahi	11,235	14,625	3
Sherpur	"	"	4,383	6,125	4
Sadatpur,	Dinajpur	Raja of Dinajpur	7,717	10,460 )	5
Shanbari	"	"	4,786	9,600 )	
Kurunjerah	"	"	2,790	1,825	6
Kutcha	"	"	6,610	7,100 )	7
Woodhub	"	"	6,476	6,575 )	
Rasulpur	"	"	5,216	5,300 )	
Khamar	"	"		)	
Durgapur	"	"	3,476	3,250 )	
Rogobindpur	"	"	4,205	3,400 )	
Jat Ganesham	"	"	4,409	3,500 )	
Kharamjurah	"	"	2,790	1,825 )	8
Shahlam	"	"	5,698	3,625 )	
Kalidassi	Rangpur	Raja of Idrikpur in Rangpur	17,999	40,100 )	9
Harinarayanpur	"	Rajshahi Raja's lands in Rangpur	771	1,736 )	10
Hajipur	"	"	1,189	3,455 )	
Chandranarayan	"	"	945	3,061 )	
Angurpur	"	"	563	1,956 )	
Bhagabanpur	"	"	523	1,812 )	
Khurd Miapur	"	"	711	2,435 )	
Dhunapara	"	"	156 )	)	
Balari	"	"	88 )	1,565 )	
Bhargallabpur	"	"	103 )	)	
Mahal Julkar	"	"	292 )	)	
" Bankar	"	"	18 )	2,829 )	
Total		S.R.	1,20613	1,97,259	

- <sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 12 February 1796, No. 33, P73/1.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14 April 1797, No. 3, P73/18.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 30 June 1795, No. 12A, P.73
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 4 August 1795, No. 40, P
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2 April 1799, App. Q, P73/46.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 22 August 1800, App. Q, P74/23.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., 10 May 1799, App. F, P73/47.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 22 August 1800, App. G, P74/23.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., 5 May 1797, App. A, P73/19.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., 12 August 1800, No. , P74/23.

Table 10

The estates purchased by the Haldar family of

Noapara, Hughli

<u>Name of pargana</u>	<u>Former Proprietor</u>	<u>Amount of jama S.R.</u>	<u>Amount paid at purchase S.R.</u>	<u>Source</u>
Jagdishpur,	Burdwan Raja Tejchandra	6,269	44,500	1
Tuppa,	Hughli "	50,212	35,100	2
Bhagavatpur	" "	9,721	14,300	3
Bahadurpur	" "	9,634	7,000 )	4
Naruttampur	" "	5,367	7,200 )	
Haripur	" "	6,391	20,000 )	
Mahmudpur	" Ramnidhy Ghosh	10,118	4,700	5
Total	S.R.	97,712	1,32,800	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 28 April 1797, No. 33, P73/18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 30 July 1799, No. 33, P

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4 May 1798, No. 1, P73/ and 11 Sept. 1798, App. A, P

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 17 May 1799, No. 1m P73/47.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 10 May 1799, App. E, P73/47.

Table 11

The estates purchased by Dwarkanath Babu of Singhur, Hughli

<u>Names of lots</u>	<u>Districts</u>	<u>Former Proprietors</u>	<u>Amount of jama S.R.</u>	<u>Amount paid at purchase S.R.</u>	<u>Source</u>
Kismat Khalore	Burdwan	Ramnidhi Ghosh	7,312	7,100 )	
Tuppa Joypur	"	"	43,351	13,500 )	
Pergana Endrain	"	"	24,332	18,100 )	
Kismat Gopalnagar	"	"	8,337	4,500 )	
Birluk	"	"	13,963	3,500 )	
Somidah	"	"	3,275	2,500 )	
Kismat Dashpur	"	"	27,909	21,700 )	
Kismat Gongapur	"	"	225	160 )	
Kismat Muzaffarshahi	"	"	9,643	4,000 )	
Hidarampur	"	"	10,982	24,100 )	
Ganeshpur	"	"	10,508	4,700 )	1
Kismat Joykrishnapur	"	"	3,499	3,500 )	
Saljhaur	"	"	10,010	5,200 )	
Sawarah	"	"	9,718	3,700 )	
Beldhia	"	"	10,170	4,100 )	
Julkarmayal	"	"	9,848	2,000 )	
Ramchandrapur	"	"	9,684	3,000 )	
Paschimparah	"	"	6,106	1,200 )	
Baur Radhakrishnapur	"	"	10,073	3,100 )	
Huda Sankhakhali	"	Raja of Burdwan	9,597	10,200 )	2
Kumarmarah	"	"	9,403	4,100 )	
Turf Beni	"	Ramlochon Kund	9,500	2,380 )	3
Turf Bahirgarh	"	"	7,369	5,905 )	
Pergana Mandalghat	"	Government	2,09,988	5,100	4
Total		S.R.	4,74,852	1,57,245	

<sup>1</sup>B.O.R.P., 10 May 1799, Appendix E, P73/47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 17 May 1799, No. 1, P73/47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 25 May 1799, Appendix C and D, P75/9.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 20 January 1807, No. 42, P

GLOSSARY

The explanations of these revenue terms are based entirely on H.H.Wilson's Glossary.

- Amin                    An Indian judicial functionary, also a zamindari officer responsible for survey and valuation of lands.
- Abwab                    Subjects of taxation or the taxes which were imposed under the Mughal government in addition to the regular assessment on land. Miscellaneous cesses and imposts levied by the zamindars on their ryots.
- Bandobast                Settlement or agreement between the zamindars and government and between the zamindars and the farmers and ryots.
- Chakaran                The rent-free lands given to the zamindari officers. Under the Mughal government lands so appropriated were exempted from the state assessment but this privilege was withdrawn on the formation of the Permanent Settlement.
- Hastobud                A comparative account, showing the present and past produce of an estate, a detailed statement of any lands yielding revenue.
- Jama                     Revenue demand.
- Jotedar                 A farmer or an overgrown ryot who held their lands with some special privileges from the zamindars or government.



- Kachahri      An office from where revenue collections were made and general administrations were conducted.
- Kanungo      Under the Mughal administration a kanungo was a district revenue officer who recorded all circumstances within their areas which concerned landed property and the realization of the revenue.
- Kist          Instalment of revenue payment by the zamindars to government and also by the tenants to the zamindars.
- Mahal        A revenue division of a zamindari.
- Mandal      The headman of a village who acted as a middleman between the ryots of his village and the government.
- Mufassal    A relative term meaning outside the headquarters. An officer stationed in Calcutta went to mufassal when he visited any district headquarters; again, an officer stationed in a district headquarters went to mufassal when he visited a place outside his station. A zamindar visited mufassal when he visited one of his mahals. Its exact opposite is 'sadar'. The zamindari kachari was a sadar for a village officer and the collector's kachahri was a sadar for the zamindar.
- Mustajir    A farmer or a renter who held lands under a zamindar at stipulated rate; also a revenue farmer appointed to make the collections on behalf of the

	zamindars on condition of paying a fixed sum.
Pargana	A revenue district within a zamindari. The smaller units of a pargana were termed as taraf, joar, mouja, etc.
Patta	A deed of lease, a document given by the zamindar to under tenants specifying the condition on which the lands were held and the value to be paid to the authority or person from whom the lands were held.
Patwari	A zamindari village officer who kept accounts of the village.
Patni	A land tenure at first practised by the raja of Burdwan after the Permanent Settlement. Under this system a zamindar could create permanent landed interests called patnidars who could enjoy the right of hereditary succession and of letting or selling the whole or part of their right as long as stipulated amount of rent was paid to the zamindar, who retained the power of sale for default.
Rasad	Progressive increase of revenue settlement.
Ryot	Cultivator holding lands from the zamindars under various rights and obligations.
Sazawal	An officer specially appointed to administer an estate the proprietor of which was removed on default.

- Tahsildar      A local zamindari or government officer who collected revenue from the ryots.
- Takavi          Advances of money made by the government to the cultivators in order to encourage extension of cultivation or sometimes made to the cultivators at the time of bad seasons.

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