

# STRUCTURE AND CHANGE OF THE 'SHAREHOLD VILLAGE' (*BHAGDARI* OR *NARWADARI* VILLAGE) IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH GUJARAT\*

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## *Introduction*

When the East India Company conquered whole Gujarat during 1800 and 1817 and organized about one-third of the Gujarat plains into the British Gujarat of the Bombay Presidency, they found there broadly two types of villages. One was 'landlord village', where overlord families descending from aristocrats, warriors and officials of the medieval dynasties were in possession of from one to some dozens of villages. This type of villages was widely found especially in north Gujarat, and the overlord families were called Gameti, Grassia or Bhumia in the case of Hindus (mostly Rajputs), and Kasbati or Maleki in the case of Muslims. Early British officials came to categorize most of them into Talukdars, and more than five hundred villages held by them came to be called *Talukdari* villages or simply *Taluka* villages.<sup>1</sup>

The other type of the village was 'peasant village', where not a certain landlord family, but peasants or *raiya*s owned most of the lands and managed the affairs of the village for themselves. Bombay government regarded such villages as 'government villages' (*sarkari* villages or *khalsa* villages) following the usage of the previous government, introduced the survey in them, and imposed the regular revenue upon them. There were, however, two different forms in the peasant village in terms of the land system and the method of management of the village. One was the 'sharehold village' called *bhagdari* or *narwadari* village in different regions. In this form of village the peasants often of the same blood or the same caste divided the land of the village into several 'major divisions' (*mota bhag* or *muksh bhag*) and then each major division into 'minor divisions' (*peta bhag*) on the basis of the system of equal inheritance. Peasants of each division managed it and were jointly responsible for the payment of revenue upon it. This form of village being found mostly in the central Gujarat (Broach and Kaira districts) is the topic of this article and will be later analysed in more details. Another form of peasant village was 'unshared (*senja*) village' or 'simple village', in which land was not divided into several major divisions (or

\* This is a slightly modified version of my Japanese article on the same topic which first appeared in *Studies in Economics*, No. 13, Hitotsubashi University, March 1969, and has later been reproduced in my Japanese book entitled *Studies in the Social and Economic History of India*, Tokyo, 1972.

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<sup>1</sup> I have analysed in Japanese the landlordism in the nineteenth century British Gujarat and intend to publish it in English sometime in the future. See the tenth article of my Japanese book, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of India*, Tokyo, 1972.

such divisions had been erased), but peasant family owned plots of land separately, and paid the revenue upon them separately, and headman and accountant of the village managed its affairs. This form of village being quite numerous perhaps covered more than half the total number of villages of British Gujarat. But this article is no more concerned with the simple village.

Here three points should be mentioned regarding the relation among the types of villages pointed out above. First, it seems that the landlord village did not grow from among the peasant village but was established by a certain aristocratic military family which had imposed itself upon a pre-existing peasant village, squashed many of the peasants' rights, and turned them into its subjects or tenants. Second, it may be presumed that of the two forms of peasant villages, some sharehold villages, especially those in which members of militant castes such as Rajputs and Kolis were shareholders, developed out of landlord villages through the repeated partitions of the landed property among the members of the landlord family. But most of the sharehold villages were organized by traditionally agricultural castes such as Kunbis and Bohras, so that this form of village itself ought to be regarded not as a decayed form of landlord village, but as evolved on its own principles. And third, the main difference between the sharehold and simple villages lay in that whether the village land was divided into major divisions, each of which was jointly responsible for the payment of revenue, apart from the fact that the former enjoyed more prestige than the latter. Therefore, when either the major divisions or their joint responsibility for revenue, or both were set aside, a sharehold village could be transformed into a simple village with no great difficulty.

In this article we shall first attempt to reconstruct the general structure of the sharehold village as was found at the commencement of British rule in the early nineteenth century. Then we shall examine the revenue and land policies the Bombay government tried to introduce into the sharehold village upto 1870's, and their effects on the village. Third, we shall enquire into the internal structure of the village, especially the condition of village servants and tenants, on the basis of the official records of 1860's and 1870's. And finally we shall seek out the economic basis for the continuity of the sharehold villages despite the apparently very severe land revenue system during the first half of the nineteenth century.

This article may trace the historical background of the 'rich peasants' in the modern Gujarat<sup>2</sup> on the one hand, and on the other throw some indirect light on the similar form of villages which, though not yet clearly examined, is alleged to have prevailed in some part of north India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The basic source materials for this article are various reports and letters written by British officials who were engaged with the assessment and collection of land revenue in the nineteenth century British Gujarat. These sources naturally throw more light on what was directly connected with the revenue administration, and a very little on such aspects as village servants and tenants who were not directly concerned with revenue matters. In

<sup>2</sup> For the rich peasants in modern Maharashtra see Revinder Kumar, "The Rise of the Rich Peasants in Western India," D.A. Low ed., *Soundings in Modern South Asian History*, London, 1968, pp. 25-58. Professor Minoru Takabatake of the Hokkaido University has also published an article on the rich peasants in Bihar in the early British period: "A Tendency of Indian Agrarian Society at the Commencement of British Rule—A note on the rich peasants in the Purnya District", *Annals of Faculty of Letters, Hokkaido Univ.*, 15.2, March 1967.

addition to this limitation, this article has another limitation in that it is supported by no indigenous evidences. To be sure it is reported that a large number of indigenous land records and agrarian documents since the early nineteenth century are still kept in Taluka Offices and the like.<sup>3</sup> But they are not available to us at present in any form. Therefore until they become available to the scholars in printed form, we have to depend solely on the obtainable English records and documents.

So far as I know, the modern works that refer more or less to the sharehold villages in British Gujarat are as follows: J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, vol. II (Surat and Broach), 1877, vol. III (Kaira and Panch Mahals), 1879, Bombay; B. H. Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, 1st ed., O.U.P., 1892, (reprint) vol. III, pp. 259-69; Do., *The Indian Village Community*, 1st ed., 1896; 2nd ed., New Haven, 1957, pp. 388-94; K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830*, O.U.P., 1957; and R.D. Choksey, *Economic Life in the Bombay Gujarat, 1800-1939*, A.P.H. 1968, pp. 65-78.<sup>4</sup> Of the above works, books by Baden-Powell only slightly refer to our topic, while those of J.M. Campbell, K. Ballhatchet and R.D. Choksey contain several instructive statements upon it and have been useful for this article.

### I. *General Structure of Sharehold Village at the Commencement of British Rule*

While the Bombay government divided the British Gujarat into Ahmedabad, Kaira, Broach and Surat districts (or collectorates) during 1800 and 1817,<sup>5</sup> they started the survey of all the government villages first in Broach during 1811 and 1820, and then in the other three districts during 1821 and 1826. Later more complete new survey based on what was called Bombay Survey System was carried out in Ahmedabad from 1853 to 1863, in Kaira from 1862 to 1867, in Surat from 1863 to 1873, and in Broach from 1870 to 1875, and as the result the condition and structure of sharehold villages became fairly clear. Especially at the new survey in Kaira, many reports and letters regarding the sharehold villages were published in a book form of 308 pages, at the commencement of which there was attached a special report of 48 pages by W.C. Pedder (Survey Settlement Officer, Gujarat) on the general condition of sharehold villages, conducted by the order of C.J. Prescott (Superintendent Revenue Survey and Assessment, Gujarat).<sup>6</sup>

Before we try to reconstruct in this chapter what seems to have been the general

<sup>3</sup> See A.M. Shah, R.G. Shroff and A.R. Shah, "Early Nineteenth Century Village Records in Gujarat", *Contributions to Indian Economic History*, vol. II, ed. T.K. Raychaudhuri, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 89-100.

<sup>4</sup> A.K. Forbes, *Rās Māla or Hindu Annals of Goozerat*, 1st ed., 1856; 2nd ed. (by H.G. Rawlinson), O.U.P., 1924, vol. II, book IV, chap. II, "The Cultivators", pp. 242-53; S.C. Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, A.P.H., 1964; and R.D. Choksey ed., *Early British Administration (1817-1836)*, Poona, 1964 make no direct reference to our subject.

<sup>5</sup> In 1853 Bombay government received the area east to Kaira district from the Sinde prince and organized it into Panch Mahals district in 1877. Since then there were five districts in British Gujarat.

<sup>6</sup> Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government (abbreviated as SRBG in the subsequent foot-notes), No. CXIV—New Series, *Correspondence relating to the Introduction of the Revenue Survey Assessment in the Kaira Collectorate of the Province of Guzerat*, Bombay, 1869, Part I—"The Assessment of Khalsa Nurwa Lands and Villages, held on the Tenure described in Section VIII of Regulation XVII of 1827", pp. 308, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to Captain C.J. Prescott, pp. 2-49.

structure of sharehold village mainly on the basis of reports of 1820's, we shall make a mention of three explanatory points. First, between the two terms *bhagdari* and *narwadari*, there seems to have been no basic difference in meaning,<sup>7</sup> excepting that the former was used in south Gujarat (Broach and Surat), and the latter in north Gujarat (Ahmedabad and Kaira). The two terms are translated as 'sharehold' in this article. Second, though we have no exact idea as to how many sharehold villages did exist in British Gujarat at the commencement of British rule, there were perhaps 138 such villages in Surat and 26 in Ahmedabad in 1817-18.<sup>8</sup> In Broach it was reported in 1820 that many more than three-fourths of total 398 government villages were managed on sharehold system.<sup>9</sup> In Kaira the number of sharehold villages was reported to be 60 as the result of the survey conducted from 1821 to 1826.<sup>10</sup> Therefore we may safely presume that there were five hundred and some dozens of sharehold villages in the British Gujarat at the beginning. And third, regarding the castes of shareholders of the villages, they were predominantly Kunbis in Kaira but in Broach there were many Bohras (a Muslim caste) in addition to Kunbis; here it was reported that eighty-four out of about three hundred sharehold villages were Bohra villages.<sup>11</sup> But in neither district shareholders were not confined to two castes; some sharehold villages were held by Rajputs, Brahmins or Kolis.<sup>12</sup> It does not seem, however, that the basic structure of the sharehold village differed according to the difference in caste of its shareholders, so that we may treat all such villages alike and start our discussion.

### 1. Land System

The reports of 1820's provide similar explanations on the principles of sharing the land of the sharehold village, which we may summarize as follows:

When one or several families (say five) establish the village, they first divide the land of the village into village site (*gabhan*), shared land (*bhagdari* or *narwa*), and village common (*gam majmun*). Then the shared land is divided equally among the five families with due consideration of the quality of soil; hence five major divisions. Perhaps at this stage each major division is presumed to be one *rupee* and hence divided into sixteen equal parts, each part being regarded as one *anna*: all the shared land is regarded as five *rupees* or eighty *annas*. At this stage the village site is also divided into five parts, and a portion of the village common is demarcated as common pasture (*gaochar*).<sup>13</sup>

In the next generation, suppose a major division A has two sons; then A is divided into two equal minor divisions  $a_1$  and  $a_2$ , each holding the land of eight *annas*. The elder brother  $a_1$  becomes the hereditary representative of the major division A and is called *matadar* (one who signs documents), *mota bhagdar*, or *muksh bhagdar*. Thus each of the

<sup>7</sup> Vide *ibid.*, p. 12, para. 28, 1st.

<sup>8</sup> *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company; and also an Appendix and Index*, III. Revenue, communicated from the Commons to the Lords, 21st June 1833, ordered to be printed 20th August 1853 (abbreviated as *Blue Book*, III. Revenue), Appendix No. 121, "Further Minute by Mr. Prendergast, dated the 8th July 1821", p. 628.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix No. 112, "Minute by the Governor, dated the 15th August 1821", p. 554.

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. III (Kaira and Panch Mahals), Bombay 1879, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche; being the Result of a Revenue, Statistical, and Topographical Survey of the Collectorate*; executed by Order of the Bombay Government, London, 1825, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

five major divisions is represented by its representative, and the five jointly become village headmen (*matadar* or *matadar patel*), manage the village affairs and deal with government officials. On the other hand the younger brother  $a_2$  remains a minor shareholder (*peta bhagdar*) or an ordinary shareholding peasant (*patidar*, *narwadar*, *patel* and so on).

Again in the third generation, suppose  $a_1$  has three sons  $a_1$ ,  $a_2$ , and  $a_3$ . Then the share of  $a_1$  is divided into three equal shares, each having the land of two and two-thirds *annas*. The eldest son  $a_1$  succeeds his father and represents the major division A in joint village headmanship, other two sons being ordinary shareholding peasants. On the other hand when the village site is already divided into five portions, each portion is to be divided accordingly. And if division of fields proceeds further and the unit of *anna* becomes insufficient, then each *anna* is subdivided into smaller units with various denominations.<sup>14</sup>

It is not to be supposed, however, that all the land in a division is divided at each stage of succession. It happens that brothers set aside a portion of their joint share and make it the common land of the division (*bhag majmun*), which is quite distinct from the common land of the village.<sup>15</sup> For instance when the major division A (sixteen *annas*) is divided between two brothers, they may set aside the land of four *annas* as the common land of A, and divide the rest into two six *annas* portions: this common land of the division A is jointly to be succeeded by the posterity of the two brothers.

Now the shared land was "considered strictly as property: it is saleable from one person to another, and inherited subject to all the rules and customs by which the inheritance of any other kind of property is guided".<sup>16</sup> When a shareholder emigrated, bankrupted or died without heirs, "the nephews or nearest male relations take the lands",<sup>17</sup> or the land was "let out by the Patells, Tullatee, etc. to any cultivator who will take the lands, and the amount brought to account separately. This is called 'gaum khata zemeen', or land on the general village account".<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand it was reported that the shareholder "might not sell it (his own share of land) outright to a stranger without the consent of the community"; co-shareholders held the preemption to the land, but if this consent "was given the purchaser became a proprietor, and the original owner had no further claim on the land".<sup>19</sup> Accordingly in any sharehold village there seem to have been some outsiders and the like who were not the descendants of the original shareholders, but owned some portion of the shared land.

At any rate it appears that a fairly large portion of shared land had become 'sold' (*vechania*), 'granted' (*pasaita*), or 'mortgaged' (*gharania*) about the year 1820. For instance, in Anand village of Petlad *taluka*, Kaira district, out of the total 5861 *bighas* of shared land, 1321 *bighas* were 'sold with a quit-rent' (*vechania salamia*), 195 *bighas* 'mortgaged without rent' (*gharania nakra*), 90 *bighas* 'granted without rent' (*pasaita nakra*)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-78; *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, Appendix No. 112, "Minute by the Governor, dated the 15th August 1821", pp. 554-55; SRBG, No. XI, Bombay, 1853, J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Nuread Purgunna, and on the Oomret and Dhaluj Tuppas, in the Kaira Collectorate", 1826, pp. 75-76, para 17; *ibid.*, J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna and the Nepar Tuppa, in the Kaira Collectorate", 1827, pp. 96-97, paras. 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-New Series, *op. cit.*, No. 11 of 1862, p. 6, para 11; p. 11, para. 24; p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p.96, para. 27.

<sup>17</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-New Series, *op. cit.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 6, para.13.

and 17 *bighas* 'sold without rent' (*venchania nakra*): about 28% of the total shared land was sold, granted or mortgaged.<sup>20</sup> This state of affairs seems to have been no exception, but rather a general phenomenon, for in 1817-18 about 32% of land of all the government villages of five *talukas* of Broach was either sold, granted or mortgaged.<sup>21</sup> The land thus transferred from the shareholder at least nominally was called *barkhali* (lit. outside the gathering place of grains in the village, viz. alienated), and, as is shown in the case of Anand village, the acquirer of such a land was only to pay a reduced rate of fixed assessment (*salami*) or exempt even from it. But occasionally it was the case that the shareholder of the land in which such an alienated land was located continued to pay the whole assessment upon his share of land including the alienated portion.<sup>22</sup>

It was not only the shared land that was partially alienated. The village common which usually occupied more than a tenth of the land of the village<sup>23</sup> was often alienated to a large extent. For instance in the case of Anand village, J. Cruikshank reports, "The muzmoon (sic) lands consist entirely of alienations held by various classes, and paying from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  rupee as *sulamee* (sic) directly to Government", and those 'various classes' who paid the common land tax (*majmun vera*), presumably same as *salami* above, were four peasant houses, eight merchant houses, four goldsmith houses, one sweetmeat-maker house, two blacksmith houses, five grazier houses, two washermen houses, two Bohra merchant houses, one Rajput house, one potter house, and eight untouchable (Dhed) houses.<sup>24</sup>

The case of Anand village where whole common land was alienated was, however, exceptional. J. Cruikshank reports on the general state in Petlad, "This land (common land) is sometimes divided in equal proportions among the Nurwadars (sic), who are thereby rendered responsible for it, and at other times, it is let out yearly to any cultivator that will take it, by the Tullatee of the village."<sup>25</sup> But it seems more usual that a fairly large portion of the common land in the sharehold village was alienated in some way or other.

## 2. Method of Village Management and Revenue Collection

As pointed out before each major division of land had its hereditary representative, and although there was a certain precedence among the representatives of the village,<sup>26</sup> they were equally headmen (*matadar patel*) or signers (*matadar*) of documents, and jointly responsible for the payment of revenue to the government on the one hand, and for the management of the common land and common affairs of the village on the other. While some of them had a portion of their respective share of land exempted from revenue by the

<sup>20</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 100, para. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Computed from *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, Appendix No. 115, "Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Moniel Williams", pp. 560 (Broach Pargana), 561 (Ankleshwar Pargana), 562 (Hansot Pargana), and 564 (Jambusar Pargana), 567 (Dehej Pargana). As it is mentioned that resurvey was necessary on the Amod Pargana, it has been omitted from the computation.

<sup>22</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 96, para. 27.

<sup>23</sup> In the villages shown in the letter below, the unalienated portion of the common land alone occupied 9%, 5%, 10%, 12%, 22% and so on of the total area of the village. Vide SRBG, No. CXIV-New Series, *op. cit.*, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, pp. 36-47.

<sup>24</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101, para. 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96, para. 27.

<sup>26</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 92, para. 18.

government as a reward for their service,<sup>27</sup> others had no such revenue privilege.<sup>28</sup> At any rate they were not more than the *primus inter pares* among the co-shareholders of the village, and the latter had as a rule the equal right in the management of the village affairs irrespective of the size of their respective share of land.<sup>29</sup>

The land revenue was assessed on the village as a whole.<sup>30</sup> The joint headmen were responsible for it; they first deducted from it the amount of rent from the tenants (to be discussed later) on the village common and the land of the general village account (as mentioned before) and the quit-rent (*salami*) from the owners of the alienated land, as well as the rent on the house-site from tenants and village servants, and then portioned off the rest equally among the major divisions of land. The representative and members of each major division apportioned the amount equally among the minor divisions in it. Members of each minor division divided the amount by the total number of *annas* of the division after due consideration of the alienated portion of it. Each shareholder thus mechanically came to know the amount he was expected to pay for his share of land, whether it was fully cultivated or not. When he was unable to pay up his share of burden, the minor division to which he belonged was jointly responsible for him; when the minor division could not perform it, the major division whereto it belonged was responsible for it; and when the major division was unable to do so, the village as a whole was responsible for the deficiency. The joint headmen of the village collected the expected amount from each major division in this way, added to it the rent on the common land and the land of general village account, quit-rent on alienated land, and rent on house-sites as mentioned before, and paid the total amount of assessment on the village to the government.<sup>31</sup> When the system of the joint responsibility broke down due to the split among shareholders caused, for instance, by too heavy burden of revenue or to the increasing number of shareholders losing their shares of land, the village would lose one of the basic characteristics of a sharehold village and start to be transformed into a simple village based on the individual responsibility.

### 3. Village Servants (*vasavaya*)

There were not only shareholders in the sharehold village; there were besides several families of various artisans and servants, who were expected to perform their respective traditional occupations.<sup>32</sup> It is not necessary to add that such 'village establishment' did exist in the sharehold, landlord and simple villages alike.

Regarding the mode of reward for their services, M. Williams reports on Broach in general, "for the maintenance of which (village establishment) *pussaeta* (sic) land is commonly allotted, although in some villages money may be given to part of the establishment, instead of land",<sup>33</sup> and of the establishment, those who were regularly granted such a land

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92, para. 18. *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 117, "Minute by the Governor, dated 6th April 1821", p. 607. para. 21.

<sup>28</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70. J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", p. 96, para. 27.

<sup>30</sup> M. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 45, 116-17.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69. J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 96, paras. 27-28; p. 100, para. 37.

<sup>32</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche*, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-107. J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92, para. 18.

<sup>33</sup> M. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

were Dheds (untouchables engaged in sundry services,) sweepers, Hindu temples, Hindu ascetics, Masjids, Muslim ascetics, tombs of Muslim saints and village ponds.<sup>34</sup> He often repeats that they were servants of the community, and appointed and paid by the village.<sup>35</sup> Similarly J. Cruikshank also shows the case of a sharehold village, Arara village of Nadiad *taluka* as an example:

"The Loohar or blacksmith receives annually  $1\frac{1}{4}$  maunds of grain per plough from each cultivator, and keeps all agricultural implements in repair free of any other charge. The Sootar or carpenter receives in like manner, and on the like conditions,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  maund; the Koomar or pot-maker, 1 maund; the Durjee or tailor, 1 maund; and the Walund or barber 1 maund. Upon any marriage among the villagers, the blacksmith presents a lamun deewa (a small utensil of iron used as a lamp—Cruikshank), and is presented in return with 1 rupee; the carpenter presents a 'Bajut' or wooden stool, and is presented in return with 1 rupee; the pot maker supplies earthen pots for the marriage feast, and is presented with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  rupee. The tailor has no offering to make, but receives upon the marriage of a boy  $\frac{1}{2}$  rupee, and upon that of a girl 7 pice. The barber receives  $1\frac{1}{2}$  rupee upon the marriage of a Pateedar, and 1 rupee upon that of a Kolee."<sup>36</sup>

Whereas in this village the servants were usually paid in kind, and only on particular occasions in cash, in the Petlad *pargana* grant of rent-free service land to each servant of the village seems to have been in vogue.<sup>37</sup>

Although these statements of early British officials regarding the mode of employment of village servants are too vague to give a clear definition, such phrases as 'pussaeta land is commonly allotted', '(they are) appointed and paid by the village', '(the servant receives certain amount of grain) per plough from each cultivator', and 'every village has its own separate establishment' seem to indicate that these servants were not employed by certain specific families by dividing the sphere of service in the village like under the *jajmani* system of the later period, but were as a rule employed and supported by the village as a territorial whole. And it also seems as shown in the case of Anand village of Kaira that when the servants were granted certain rent-free land by the village it was as a rule located in the common land of the village.

#### 4. Tenants (*ganotia*, *asami*, *kunbi*, or *raiya*)

The shareholders were not always owner-cultivators but more often small landlords who leased out most of their share of land. About 1821 it was reported that most of the shareholders were owner-cultivators in the half of the total number of sharehold villages in Broach district, but such a state was hardly observed in other districts.<sup>38</sup> According to J. Cruikshank the tenant Kunbis were after comers who were subservient to the shareholders, and were divided into two categories in Petlad *pargana*: *chalu* (continual or fixed) and *firta* (temporary or migratory).<sup>39</sup> And the tenants were not allowed to participate in the management of the village.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99, 107.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-107.

<sup>36</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Nureead Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77, para. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Do., "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", p. 91, para. 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix No. 120, "Further Minute by the Governor", p. 627.

<sup>39</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 97, para 29; p. 111, para. 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 120, p. 626.



In accordance with the political inability of tenants, there was also social difference between them and shareholders. J. Cruikshank reports on the Nepad area:

"The distinction between the Pateedar and Koonbee (tenant) is greater than may at first sight be supposed. The Pateedar will not give his daughter in marriage to an ordinary Koonbee, and will only receive a daughter of that class in consideration of a handsome dowry; indeed, he loses character by the connection, and it is therefore avoided by all who pride themselves in pure descent. The Pateedars are very tenacious of their rights, and argue the propriety of the Koonbees being kept in subjection to them, as one link in the chain of society lower than themselves."<sup>41</sup>

Regarding the scale of rent paid by the tenants to the shareholding landlords, however, concrete statements by the early British officials are very scarce. J. Cruikshank states on the same Anand village as mentioned before:

"The Nurwadars underlet the best irrigated lands of the perfect shares at 12 rupees per beega, and the inferior land at the same rates as those of the lapsed shares (from 8 to 11 rupees on the first class, from 3 to 5 rupees on the second class, from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2 rupees on the third class land, and 2 rupees on rice land): they allow waste land newly ploughed up to be exempt from any payment during the first and second seasons of cultivation. The holders of alienated nurwa lands pay a sulamee to the respective Nurwadars of 1 to  $\frac{1}{2}$  rupee per beega."<sup>42</sup>

But he does not mention the relative position between these rents and land revenue paid by the landlords to the government.

The tenants had to pay the rent of their house-site to their landlords<sup>43</sup> in addition to the rent shown above. Moreover according to the reports of 1860's the shareholding landlord used to take certain amount of free labour (*veth*) from his tenants, and when he let certain tenants live on his share of the house-site, he considered himself naturally entitled to their services, so that when they cultivated the land of other landlord they were obliged to pay a certain compensation (*vetali vero*) to the owner of the house-site.<sup>44</sup> It may be presumed that this state of affairs was not always new but rather prevalent since before.

In short it may be safely said that the landlord-tenant relation was not only the contractual relation about rent, but also was mixed with a relation of personal subordination accompanied by political and social discrimination.

Next we shall focus our attention to the policies of the Bombay government to and their effects upon the sharehold villages.

## II. Revenue Policies and Sharehold Village

When the Bombay government adopted the land revenue policies in the British Gujarat in the early nineteenth century, there was no consistent principle prepared at the beginning; they were changed and modified according to the circumstances. Moreover as the Col-

<sup>41</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", p. 111. para. 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100, para. 37.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100, para. 38.

<sup>44</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-New Series, *op. cit.*, No. 11 of 1861, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott., pp. 6-7, 26-27.

lector of district was allowed a considerable discretion in actually carrying out the policies, they sometimes differed from a district to another. In this section we shall try to discuss only the major aspects of the revenue policies enforced upto 1870's with a due consideration of their district-wise differences, so long as they were relevant to the sharehold village system, and then point out the changes that were caused by them in the village.

### 1. Revenue Farming System

As was mentioned before, in the early nineteenth century the British found broadly two types of villages in the British Gujarat: landlord village and peasant village. The early British treated some of the former villages as 'alienated' and recognized private ownership in them, but they left the problem of ownership in other landlord villages indefinite, refrained from direct interference with their internal management, and only collected the tribute from them which they had been paying to the Maratha government. But all of the second type of villages were formally defined as 'government villages' and were to be directly assessed by government officials. In fact, however, the earliest British officials had no enough knowledge or information about them as the basis for the assessment of revenue. Therefore, knowing that the Marathas had widely resorted to the revenue farming in Gujarat, the British officials adopted it in the government villages in British Gujarat. Hence the collection of revenue was farmed out in Broach from 1800 to 1805, and in Kaira from 1803 to 1814.<sup>45</sup>

The government farmed out the revenue collection from village first to hereditary officers of the *pargana* such as Desais and Amins, then to the headman of the village, and finally to the highest bidders, with an intention of improving the village by their capital,<sup>46</sup> but this resulted in failure. Later in 1827 J. Cruikshank reported on the Petlad *pargana* of Kaira;

"Very general complaints are made throughout this Purgunna (sic) of the precipitate measures which were too frequently adopted, on the first accession of the Company's authority, with a view to bring out the supposed concealed resources of the villages. The system of letting villages by auction to the highest bidders, of farming them to strangers with no other interest in them than the temporary one afforded by the contract, has been found by experience productive of great oppression to the Ryuts (sic); of individual loss to the farmers; and of an ultimate decrease of Revenue to Government. No single instance has yet been met with of a farmer of this class expending capital upon the improvement or encouragement of agriculture: these men invariably consider their lease as a bargain, of which they must make the most they can during the short period for which it is given. 'The farming out the nurwa (sic) villages overturns at once all the ancient institutions and customs of the people, supersedes the authority of the Patels, and is a clear infringement upon their just rights.'<sup>47</sup>

It is not always clear how the revenue farming 'overturned' the institutions and customs of sharehold village and 'superseded' the authority of its headmen. But as will be pointed a little later, the fact that the *raiayatwari* system was soon to be introduced into al-

<sup>45</sup> J.M.Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 487; vol. III, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 117, "Minute by the Governor, dated 6th April 1821", p. 611, para. 47.

<sup>47</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", p.104, para. 49.

most all of the sharehold villages in Ahmedabad and Surat may have been preceded by the great decay of basic principles of shareholding and joint responsibility in the sharehold villages in these districts caused by the revenue farming system.

## 2. Survey, Official Village Accountants, and *Raiyatwari* System

In Broach from 1805 to 1836 'village settlement' was adopted, in which not the individual peasants but headmen of the village were responsible for the payment of assessed revenue. And in order to acquire the necessary data for the assessment, the first survey was conducted on all the government villages in the district from 1811 to 1820. The survey was carried out by two or three British officials accompanied by several Indian officials, who visited every government village and conducted the demarcation of village boundary, measurement of land in the village, demarcation of cultivable and uncultivable land, classification of cultivable land into three classes, finding out the main crops and size of land planted with them for each class of land, distinction of land held by ordinary peasants from the 'alienated land' assessed with reduced rate of revenue or totally exempt from it, enumeration of population, cattles, wells, and agricultural implements, and compilation of land register for each village on the basis of above measures.<sup>48</sup> And in the process of the survey, all the land in the government villages came to be divided into 'government land' and 'alienated land' as there was a firm conviction among the British in the 'state ownership of land' in India. Regarding the sharehold village, the portion of the shared lands which was already alienated was called 'alienated shared land', and the rest held by shareholders was termed 'government shared land'. Similarly, the common land of the village was divided into 'alienated common land' and 'government common land'. When the revenue was assessed upon the village as a whole, the 'full assessment' was imposed on the 'government land' alone.<sup>49</sup>

In the other three districts similar survey was carried out from 1821 to 1826.

Another important policy along with the survey was the appointment of official village accountant called *talati*. As was mentioned before, there used to be a hereditary accountant (*talati*) in the peasant village in pre-British Gujarat, who was a member of the villagers and was in charge of writing and keeping various records. But the Bombay government abolished the hereditary accountants since 1814, appointed an official accountant to two government villages on the average, and paid him a certain amount of salary.<sup>50</sup> While it is not clear what kind of persons were appointed to the post, the official accountants were to examine 'every man's condition, and his tenure', and 'to make the collections (of revenue in the *raiayatwari* villages).'<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in the Petlad *pargana* of Kaira, at least, joint management of headmen over the common land of the sharehold village was removed, and the newly appointed official accountant was to manage and lease it out, and collect

<sup>48</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche*, *op. cit.*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>49</sup> Blue Book, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 115, "Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Monier Williams", pp. 560-67.

<sup>50</sup> Such official accountants were appointed to the 'landlord villages', too, at the beginning, but were repealed in 1821 because of the strong apposition and resistance by the landlords.

<sup>51</sup> Blue Book, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 117, "Minute by the Governor, dated 6th April 1821", p. 611, para. 48.

the rent from its tenants directly.<sup>52</sup>

The third important policy was the wide introduction of *raiyyatwari* system. As mentioned before, the East India Company held a strong conviction that the land ultimately belonged to the state in the Indian tradition.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly those portions of land of 'government village' which were not alienated were defined as 'government lands', and peasants owning or holding such lands were termed 'occupants of government lands', separately (or individually) recognized with occupancy right, and separately obliged to pay the assessed revenue upon the lands. This was the *raiyyatwari* system, and was first introduced in the Madras Presidency since late eighteenth century, and was being adopted in Maharashtra. In the British Gujarat, too, the same system was applied not only to all the simple (*senja*) villages but also to many of the sharehold villages. For instance in the Surat district the *raiyyatwari* system was applied not only to the simple villages, but also to 136 out of 138 sharehold villages that had remained in 1820-21. Similarly in Ahmedabad district 23 out of 26 sharehold villages were changed into *raiyyatwari*.<sup>54</sup> In Kaira, too, only 60 out of 277 government villages maintained sharehold system as a result of the survey conducted during 1821 and 1826, as pointed out before.

The Directors of the East India Company at London also were strongly inclined to the general introduction of the *raiyyatwari* system in British Gujarat. To be sure they showed some hesitation to its general adoption by saying: "Where rights are established in behalf of existing middlemen, of whatever denomination, and whether by the express act of the competent authority or by long prescription, they ought to be respected; but when such rights cannot exist without oppression to others, or without materially obstructing the necessary operations of Government, it is desirable that a suitable compensation should be made for them, and that they should be abolished. Prescribing this as the general principle, we are nevertheless aware of the difficulty of applying it to many cases in practice."<sup>55</sup> But they advised and authorized the Bombay government to adopt it as widely as possible by saying, "village communities can be unjust as well as other bodies; and it may always happen, that the power in the village shall pass into hands of one, or a few individuals, disposed to use it to the oppression of the rest.....but these determinations (by the villagers themselves) can be safely confided in only when every individual who is aggrieved, however poor, possesses the means of obtaining redress, which, from the distance of the courts, and the expense of suits, the ryots in general are at present wholly deprived of"; "it is this circumstance that gives its value to a ryotwar over a village settlement"; and therefore "we are decidedly favourable to the general introduction of a ryotwar settlement."<sup>56</sup> It can be safely said from the above quotations that though Directors of the Company conceded the necessity of honouring the customs and vested interests prevailing in British Gujarat, they strongly suspected the 'jointness' of the 'village communities', and wanted to replace it by individualistic principles.

<sup>52</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.," p. 96, para. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Vide E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, O.U.P., 1959, pp. 122ff.

<sup>54</sup> *Blue Book*, III, Revenue, Appendix, No. 121, "Further Minute by Mr. Prendergast, dated the 8th July 1821", p. 628.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 123, "Extract Revenue Letter to Bombay, dated the 4th May 1825", p. 631, para. 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 116, "Extract Revenue Letter to Bombay, dated 23rd May 1827", pp. 603-04, paras. 54, 55, 59.

Only in Broach, the early British officials such as M. Williams and L. Prendergast strongly urged to preserve the sharehold system by pointing out its "very superior advantages", in which "every man by the simplest process instantly knows precisely what he has to pay"; therefore if the system was to be changed or discouraged, it was "very much to be regretted", though certain defects should be abolished.<sup>57</sup> Thanks to their strong advocacy for the preservation of sharehold village system in Broach, the wide disorganization of such villages was avoided here.

At any rate about the year 1820, the sharehold villages in Surat and Ahmedabad were mostly disintegrated and transformed into *raiyatwari* villages, and it may be presumed that a considerable number of sharehold villages in Kaira was also disintegrated. In 1820's about 300 villages in Broach and 60 villages in Kaira remained sharehold as mentioned before. But even in them, a survey had been conducted and official accountants appointed, and at least in some parts of Kaira the management of common land of sharehold villages was transferred to government.

### 3. Mountstuart Elphinstone and Regulation XVII of 1827

Mountstuart Elphinstone, who was promoted from Deccan Commissioner to Bombay Governor towards the end of 1819 and remained on the post till 1827, was inclined to protect the vested interests of the local elites as much as possible and thereby minimize the social confusion caused by the establishment of British rule.<sup>58</sup> In 1821 he closely observed the situations in British Gujarat for himself and came to agree with the opinions of M. Williams and L. Prendergast regarding the preservation of sharehold village system. Though he admitted the necessity of official village accountants already appointed on the one hand,<sup>59</sup> on the other hand he regretted the decline of sharehold villages by saying, "I agree with Mr. Prendergast in believing and in regretting that the *baugdar* (sic) system is destroyed in Surat, and is declining in Ahmedabad. It is, in the former *zillah*, owing to the too great extension of the *ryotwar* settlement; in the latter, the collector told me that when the share (sic) failed the others refused to assist him."<sup>60</sup> He further expressed his desire to preserve and increase the sharehold villages by saying, "I fully concur in the policy of preserving the *baugdar* villages wherever we find them established, and am of opinion that their increasing in number may be taken as a sign of prosperity in the country."<sup>61</sup> Therefore he ordered the Collector of Kaira to restore the lately disintegrated *raiyatwari* villages to their former sharehold system, and this seems to have resulted in the increase of sharehold villages from about 60 to 119 around the year 1830.<sup>62</sup>

Thus Elphinstone stuck to his idea which was rather contrary to that of Directors of the Company, and intended to legalize the then prevailing land and revenue systems of Bombay Presidency sometime before he retired from the post in 1827. He got the Bombay

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 119, "Minute by Mr. Prendergast, dated 29th June 1821", p. 624; Appendix, No. 121, "Further Minute by Mr. Prendergast, dated the 8th July 1821", p. 628.

<sup>58</sup> K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830*, O.U.P., 1957, pp. v-vi.

<sup>59</sup> *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, *op. cit.*, Appendix, No. 117, "Minute by the Governor, dated 6th April 1821", p. 611, para. 48.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 122, "Third Minute by the Governor" (undated), p. 630.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, No. 120, "Further Minute by the Governor" (undated), p. 627.

<sup>62</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 104, para. 49. J. M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 102.

Legislative Council to promulgate Regulation XVII of 1827, which was the first comprehensive land law of the Presidency. The first seven sections of the first chapter of the Regulation provided for the legal rights and duties of government, Collectors and individual peasants in the *raiya* villages, and the eighth section defined the legal position of the sharehold villages as follows:

VIII. First. Nothing contained in any of the preceding sections shall be understood to affect in any way the peculiarities of the tenure of shareholders of villages settling hereditarily and by right for the revenues of their villages in the gross, and thus possessing in some measure a proprietary right in the land of their villages: the said peculiarities shall be respected and preserved, whether they relate to the occupancy, disposal, and assessment of the lands of the village, the collection of the revenue, and the joint liability of the shareholders, or to the intermediate steps prescribed by the terms of the tenure, and by local usage, for the purpose of realizing the revenue, in case of non-payment, without destroying the tenure.

Second. Provided, however, that the land and its crop shall in these villages, as well as in others, be held to be ultimately liable for the revenue, and that when the shareholders fail to pay such revenue, and the intermediate steps in such cases prescribed by the tenure and local usage have been found inefficient, it shall be competent to the collector to manage the said villages in the same way as others, and the lands of any such village shall then revert to the Government unaffected by the acts of the shareholders, or any of them, so far as the public revenue is concerned, but without prejudice, in other respects, to the rights of individuals.<sup>63</sup>

We may summarize the above provisions in this way that while the first portion provided that the sharehold village system was to be respected and preserved in principle, the second modificatory portion provided that in case of failure of payment of revenue by shareholders, and the 'intermediate steps' (perhaps such as joint responsibility) being ineffective, the Collector of district could intervene in the village and transform it into a *raiya* village if necessary.

At any rate as will be pointed out in the next section the revenue burden on the sharehold village was as heavy as or slightly heavier than that imposed on the *raiya* village. Accordingly a number of sharehold villages was disorganized into *raiya* on the one hand, and on the other in Broach, at least, fairly great change of revenue system was introduced since 1837.

#### 4. Scale of Revenue Burden, Abolition of Village Settlement, Depression, Effect of American Civil War, and the New Survey

From 1806 to 1836, as mentioned before, in the Broach district, the land revenue was assessed in a lump sum on the government land both of shared land and common land of the sharehold village. In Kaira in such sharehold villages whose common land was managed by official accountants, land revenue was assessed in a lump sum on the government portion of the shared land, while in other sharehold villages similar system as that adopted in Broach seems to have been carried out. The lump assessment upon a sharehold villages seems to have been carried out through following procedure in Broach:

<sup>63</sup> R. Clarke prep., *The Regulations of the Government of Bombay in force at the end of 1850, to which are added the Acts of Government of India in force in that Presidency*, London, 1851, p. 203.

First the Desai of the *pargana* visited every village under his jurisdiction at every harvest, estimated gross produce of various crops on government land with the assistance of village accountant, and reported the same to the Collector of district. Second, the Collector and his subordinates compared the report from every village with that of the previous year, examined the current market price of each crop, and fixed the assessment of the village at half the produce in cash as a rule. Third, in order to acquire most of the land revenue as early as possible, however, considerably more than half the autumnal crop was fixed as revenue, and the overcharge was to be deducted from the revenue upon the winter crop. Fourth, when the headmen of each village agreed with the amount of revenue thus fixed, the revenue settlement was over. And fifth, headmen of the village portioned off the total amount of assessment to the shareholders of the village in such a way as described in the early portion of this article.<sup>64</sup>

The rate of land revenue at half the produce was the traditional rate with the Indian dynasties and might not be considered too severe in India of that time. But before the British period the survey, if carried out, was rather loose, while under the British after a fairly strict survey disclosing a large amount of concealed cultivation, half the produce was assessed as revenue of the government land, so that the actual burden on the village seems to have been considerably heavier than before. Moreover a large portion of the revenue was taken in advance from the autumnal crop: a fairly harsh revenue system. In addition, according to a report on Nadiad *pargana* of Kaira, slightly more than half the estimated produce was collected in fact.<sup>65</sup>

As a matter of fact, revenue collection during the early British period showed a fairly large and successive increase compared with that of the pre-British period. In the Broach *pargana*, for instance, whereas the total annual collection of revenue towards the end of the eighteenth century varied between about Rs. 330,000 and Rs. 630,000, it rose to more than Rs. 838,000 in the first year of British rule (1803-04), increased to more than Rs. 994,000 in 1810-11, and reached Rs. 1,259,000 in 1820-21.<sup>66</sup> In Nadiad *pargana* of Kaira, though the amount of revenue before the British period is not clear, it amounted under the British to more than Rs. 244,000 in 1817-18, to more than Rs. 286,000 in 1820-21, and to more than Rs. 277,000 in 1822-23,<sup>67</sup> here too showing a rising tendency of collection.

Despite the fairly large increase in the revenue collection during the early British period, a more strict revenue system was devised for sharehold villages of Broach, during 1837 and 1844. The hitherto practised lump assessment was considered "uncertain, because it depended on the hasty estimate of native officers, liable to be mistaken, and still more liable to be corrupt. It was unequal, because the officer might be led, by corruption or other motives, to favour some villages and throw the burden on the rest; and, still more, because the assessment was made on the general state of the village, without regard to the circumstances of the individual, and might, therefore, bear heavily on a man who had a

<sup>64</sup> *Blue Book*, III. Revenue, Appendix, No. 112, "Minute by the Governor, dated the 15th August 1821", p. 553.

<sup>65</sup> J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Nureead Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78 paras. 20, 21.

<sup>66</sup> M. Williams, *Memoir of the Zillah of Baroche*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-29.

<sup>67</sup> J. Cruikshank, *op. cit.*, p. 77, para. 20. It may be noted, however, that in Petlad *pargana* the revenue collection decreased from about Rs. 434,000 in 1819 to about Rs. 385,000 in 1824. Vide J. Cruikshank, "Report on the Pitlad Purgunna etc.", *op. cit.*, p. 106, Table 7.

bad crop, while it was light on one who was more fortunate."<sup>68</sup>

Under the new system, first a committee, composed of district Collector, several British officials and representative village headmen, was formed, which was to assess the revenue to be paid by individual shareholders, after due consideration of the size of land and its quality held by each, and the assessment was to be collected not by the headmen but by the accountant of the village. Second, village common land hitherto left to the joint management of headmen was declared as government land to be managed by the village accountant. And third, the joint responsibility of headmen for the payment of revenue was left only in principle and not to be enforced in fact.<sup>69</sup>

Thus the sharehold village system in Broach became very nominal and approached the *raiyyatwari* system in substance. And as a result of the new system, the revenue collection of Broach district as a whole increased by 24%, viz. from the annual average of more than Rs. 1,450,000 for 1827-35 to the annual average of Rs. 1,914,000 for 1836-44.<sup>70</sup> As the increase in the cultivated land in the district was only 19% during 1817 and 1847,<sup>71</sup> this increase in collection was caused by the additional burden upon the villagers to a considerable extent.

Another important factor which resulted in the increase in the real burden upon the village was the successive fall of the prices of agricultural products all over the British Gujarat from the middle of 1820's to about 1850, possibly caused by the principle of revenue collection solely in cash. For instance, in Broach district, while the price of rice did not change, that of pulse, wheat, *jawar* and cotton which was the most important cash crop fell by 13.68%, 11.98%, 46.1% and 44.63% respectively during 1836 and 1848: the average price for the important crops dwindled by 29%. Accordingly many peasants were unable to pay their assessment, the arrear amounted to more than Rs. 315,0000 (more than 20% of the assessment) in 1844, and the government had to reduce the collection during 1848 and 1850.<sup>72</sup> Despite these measures the general depression in Gujarat continued upto 1861.

In the face of revenue pressure and general depression accompanied by the virtual decay of the principle of joint responsibility, not a few shareholding peasants seem to have sold off their land or got it auctioned by government. Many sharehold villages could not preserve their shareholding form and were transformed into *raiyyatwari* villages. The number of sharehold villages in Broach district decreased from about 300 in 1821, to 284 in 1828, to 277 in 1847 and to 244 in 1862:<sup>73</sup> more than 50 sharehold villages were disintegrated during 40 years. In Kaira, too, the number of sharehold villages dwindled from 119 around 1830 to 90 in 1862: a decrease of 29 villages.<sup>74</sup>

Though the price of agricultural products in Gujarat started to rise gradually since

<sup>68</sup> J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 489.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 491.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 491-92. SRBG, No. CXL-N.S., *Papers relative to the Revenue Survey and Assessment of the Wagra Talooka of the Broach Collectorate*, Bombay, 1874, No. 447 of 1874, (From L.R. Ashburn, Revenue Commissioner, N.D.) To the Chief Secretary to Government, 30th January 1874, p. 2, para. 3.

<sup>73</sup> J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 490.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 101-02. SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 14, para. 29.



about 1850, it suddenly soared up during the American Civil War of 1861-65. For instance in Broach *pargana*, the price of raw cotton of one *bhar* (960 lbs.) rose from the average of Rs. 30-12 in 1840-48, to the average of Rs. 49-8 in 1850-60, and to the average of Rs. 113-8 in 1861-70: 3.7 times increase. Similarly the price of one *kalsi* (640 lbs.) of *javar* rose from the average of Rs. 8-8 in 1840-48 to the average of Rs. 23-8 in 1861-70: 3 times rise; that of one *kalsi* of wheat rose from Rs. 14 to Rs. 31: 2.2 times rise; and that of one *kalsi* of rice rose from Rs. 9-12 to Rs. 35: 3.6 times rise.<sup>75</sup>

TABLE 1. MULTIPLE COMPARISON OF PRICES  
IN THREE YEARS IN ANKLESHWAR *PARGANA*<sup>76</sup>

Products \ Years	1850-51	1864-65	1870-71
wheat	1	4	2.4
<i>javar</i>	1	2.5	2.5
<i>bajri</i>	1	2.8	2.5
<i>gram</i>	1	4	2.8
rice	1	3	1.5

TABLE 2. MULTIPLE COMPARISON OF PRICES  
IN THREE YEARS IN WAGRA *PARGANA*<sup>77</sup>

Products \ Years	1850-51	1864-65	1871-72
wheat	1	4	2.6
<i>javar</i>	1	2.5	2.4
<i>bajri</i>	1	2.8	2.6
<i>gram</i>	1	4	2.6
rice	1	2.9	1.6

and in Broach during 1870-75.

The important aspects of the new survey were as follows: first, more exact measurement of all the land of the village, especially the exact measurement of each of three classes of land, and the class-wise estimate of the average produce were to be carried out; second, all government villages in a *taluka* were to be classified into five or six categories according to the distance of each village from the nearby major market place as well as the nearby

Tables to the left show the similar rise in agricultural prices in two other *parganas*.

Meanwhile a discussion started inside the Bombay government since 1830's for a more complete resurvey of all the government villages in the Presidency in order to remedy the unequal revenue burdens on the one hand, and to ameliorate them in general on the other. This resulted in a new survey, which began in Indapur *taluka* of Maharashtra in 1835 and covered all the Presidency as late as 1901.<sup>78</sup>

The new survey, which was conducted in British Gujarat under the superintendence of C.J. Prescott, Superintendent Revenue Survey and Assessment, Gujarat, was introduced in Ahmedabad during 1853-63, in Kaira during 1863-67, in Surat during 1863-73,

<sup>75</sup> SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S., *Papers relative to the Introduction of the Survey Settlement into the Broach and Ankleshwar Talukas of the Broach Collectorate, Guzerat, Bombay, 1874*, No. 1025 of 1871, (From N.B. Beyts) To J.G. White, p. 26, para. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Computed from *ibid.*, No. 1450 of 1872, (From C.J. Prescott) To J.G. White, p. 162, para. 71.

<sup>77</sup> Computed from SRBG, No. CXL-N.S., *op.*, *cit.* No. 1752 of 1873, (From C.J. Prescott) To W. Ramsay, pp. 30-31, para. 44.

<sup>78</sup> SRBG, No. DXXIV-N.S., *Character of Land Tenures and System of Survey and Settlement in the Bombay Presidency*, Bombay, 1914, pp. 1-5.

railway station, and for all the villages in the same category the same class-wise rate of assessment per acre was to be applied to the first, second and third class of land; third, the class-wise rate of the assessment was to be decided not *a priori*, viz. as a certain proportion of the estimated produce as before, but empirically on the basis of the amount of revenue paid by each village for the past decades; fourth, the alienated land in the village was to be deprived of its total exemption from the assessment, but to be imposed with a fourth of the full assessment (alienated land which used to pay a fixed reduced rate called *salami* was to pay a fourth of full assessment in addition to it); and fifth, thus decided rate of assessment per acre was not to be changed for 30 years.<sup>79</sup>

This measure called Bombay Survey System was applied both to *raiayatwari* and sharehold villages. But for the most of sharehold villages in Kaira, it seems that the decided rate of assessment per acre was not actually imposed on the land of each shareholder, but the aggregate sum was imposed upon the village, and its actual apportion was left to the decision among shareholders.<sup>80</sup> In the process of the new survey a detailed land ledger called *ikrarnama* was prepared for every village, and not only the right to land of shareholders but the right of customary permanent tenants was also registered.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the rent of house-site, the compensation (*vetali vero*), and the additional cesses (*sukri*) which the shareholders used to take from their tenants were abolished.<sup>82</sup> But the custom of free service (*veth*) was to continue.

At any rate the new survey resulted in the nominal rates of assessment almost similar to those prevalent before 1850.<sup>83</sup> But considering the fairly large rise in the agricultural prices, the new rates were estimated to approach about one-fifth or one-sixth of the produce.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, through the American Civil War and the new survey, the sharehold villages in British Gujarat overcame their crisis. But as mentioned before, above 50 sharehold villages in Broach and about 30 sharehold villages in Kaira had been already disintegrated by 1860's. In other words 244 sharehold villages in Broach and 90 sharehold villages in Kaira got away from the crisis despite the apparently severe revenue system accompanied by general depression during the first half of the nineteenth century. How could they avoid it? Before we discuss this problem, we shall next turn to the internal conditions of the sharehold villages.

<sup>79</sup> e.g. J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 108-12; and SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 4580 of 1865, (From A. Rogers) To A.A. Borradaile, pp. 181-85.

<sup>80</sup> In 1865 the shareholders of nine out of ten sharehold villages enquired into in Kaira unanimously preferred old method of apportion (SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 107, para. 3), while in 1867 thirty-five out of fifty-four sharehold villages in Borsad *taluka* preferred the new method. (*Ibid.*, No. 500 A of 1867, From C.J. Prescott to the Collector of Kaira, p. 280, paras. 81, 82).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2481, Resolution (of Bombay Government) dated 30th June 1864, p. 96, para. 9; No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 118, paras. 23, 24.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 44 of 1861, From W.G. Pedder to Captain Prescott, p. 60, para. 28; No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 34; No. 362 of 1865, From C.J. Prescott to A.A. Borradaile, p. 100, para. 8; No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 113, para. 16. SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 1450 of 1872, From C.J. Prescott to J.G. White, p. 181, para. 119.

<sup>83</sup> Vide J.M. Campbell ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 493; vol. III, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> SRBG, No. CXL-N.S. (Wagra Taluka), *op. cit.*, No. 447 of 1874, (From L.R. Ashburner) To the Chief Secretary to Government, p. 4, Para. 12; No. 1752 of 1873, (From C.J. Prescott) To W. Ramsay, p. 22, para. 40; No. 2369 of 1873, From J.T. Francis, p. 120, para. 7; SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S. (Broach), *op. cit.*, (From C.J. Prescott) To J.G. White, p. 168, para. 89.

### III. *Village Servants and Tenants*

This chapter tries to discuss the landlord-tenant relationship in the sharehold villages on the basis of several reports prepared in the process of the new survey. But before the discussion, we shall see an interesting reference to village servants.

#### 1. Village Servants

In 1861 W.G. Pedder, Assistant Settlement Officer in Gujarat was directed by the Revenue Commissioner of Northern Division to make a detailed enquiry in the internal condition of Koobudthal village, Daskroi *pargana* of Kaira district as an example of sharehold villages, and he submitted an interesting report of fourteen pages, in which he states on village servants as follow:

"All the village servants are distributed among the various (three, in this village) mooksh bhags (major divisions), perform service, and receive their grain fees according to the bhags, and may not transfer themselves from one bhag to another. The veeras (dues) on various trades, etc. used to be fixed and levied by the nurwadars (sic), but now entirely by the Collector. The nurwadars have various privileges, e.g. if a nurwadar has a wedding or funeral in his house he may purchase what 'ghee' he requires from the buneeya (sic) of his own bhag at a certain deduction from the market price."<sup>85</sup> (brackets quarter's)

As this village was divided into three major divisions, its village site was also apportioned into three. But the tenants on the village common land as well as the village servants did not inhabit on any of them but on 'a certain portion' of the village site set aside for them.<sup>86</sup>

In the section 3 of chapter I of this article I presumed on the basis of reports written in 1820's that village servants were not employed by certain specific families like under the *jajmani* system, but by the village as a territorial whole. Again in a separate article on the rural servants of the eighteenth century Maharashtrian village, I made it fairly clear that the servants categorized as 'twelve balutas' were employed by the village itself. If the *jajmani* type of employment was later developed, that would be caused by the general decay and change of village system in general.<sup>87</sup>

At any rate the above state of village servants as reported by Pedder to the effect that the servants were employed not by the village as a whole but by the major division, viz. by the families having shares in the division, and were not allowed to shift from a division to another in 1860's may be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is this: as presumed in the chapter I, these servants were at the outset employed by the village, but during the first half of the last century as the number of shareholders and servants was increased on the one hand, and on the other the basic trend of the British rule in general,

<sup>85</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S. (Kaira), op. cit., No. 44 of 1861, From W.G. Pedder to Captain Prescott, p.55, para. 17.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. para. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Hiroshi Fukazawa, "Rural Servants in the 18th Century Maharashtrian Village—Demiurgic or *Jajmani* System?", *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, vol. 12, no. 2, Feb. 1972.

the trend of destroying the territorial solidarity of village, loosened the jointness of the village so that the village servants came to be divided among the major divisions of the village. The fact that the servants did not inhabit on the village site apportioned to the major divisions but jointly on a certain portion set aside for them also indicates that they had not been employed by the division from the beginning but originally by the village as a whole. Against this, the second interpretation is as follows: the reports written 1820's were at any rate vague about the servants; and their writers took the servants of the division for the servants of the village. In the sharehold village both the shareholders and the land were divided into several divisions from the outset, so that it is at least logically feasible that servants were employed by the division from the beginning at least in a large village. Though I myself am inclined to the first interpretation, I cannot be definite at present because of the paucity of informations. The above case has been shown just as an interesting one.

## 2. Tenants

As mentioned before, about the year 1821, the state in which most of the shareholders were owner-cultivators was observable only in half the number of sharehold villages of Broach district but was hardly found in other district. In the reports of 1860's, however, at least in some of the sharehold villages in Kaira shareholders were not small landlords but owner-cultivators. The phenomena like this will be discussed later. At any rate, excepting such cases, shareholders were small landlords leasing out most of their share of land to tenants rather than cultivating it for themselves even during 1860-70's.

As was the case in 1820's, there were two classes of tenants in the second half of the last century: continual tenants, officially called customary tenants who were recognized with permanent tenancy by cultivating the same plot of land at the fixed rent (*udhad*) for a long period of years; and temporary (or migratory) tenants officially called tenants-at-will who renewed the tenancy contract annually or after several years. Of the two classes, the tenants-at-will were reported to be 'by far most numerous class' in British Gujarat in general in 1862.<sup>88</sup> And relatively, customary tenants were more often found on village common whereas tenants-at-will were more frequently seen on the shared land.<sup>89</sup> But this point should not be generalized too far, for we shall point out soon that there were tenants-at-will on the common land, and customary tenants on shared land.

Again, as pointed before, in some sharehold villages in Kaira since 1814, and in all the sharehold villages in Broach since 1837-44, government took over the management of the village common land from its headmen and got it managed by official accountant. In such villages the tenants on the common land were transformed from the tenants of the village as a whole to the tenants of the government, and customary tenants among them were recognized with permanent tenancy while tenants-at-will were also assessed with the rates equal to those applied to the occupants in the nearby *raiyatwari* villages. Therefore we shall exclude from our discussion the tenants on the common land attached by the government. Our topic is the tenants of the shareholders. We shall begin with the customary tenants.

As was already stated, under the new survey which prepared the land ledger of every

<sup>88</sup> SRBG., No. CXIV-New Series (Kaira), *op. cit.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 19, para. 23.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7, para. 14.

village, the permanent tenancy of customary tenants was also registered. Behind this measure there seem to have been rather frequent tenancy disputes caused by the shareholding landlords having tried to raise the rates of rent when necessary or possible which were allegedly fixed by custom on the one hand, and having not agreed to reduce them in proportion to the reduction of land revenue assessment on the other. We may show some cases of the dispute as follows.

In Koobudthal village to which we have already referred in connection with the village servants, the district authorities had fixed the rent to be paid by the customary tenants on shared land since the time of the old survey. But this fixation was apparently rather nominal, for at the new survey the customary tenants "urged that they ought to be considered Sirkari cultivators, not tenants of the nurwadars; that they ought to pay at Survey rates for their lands, ..... and in short that their lands ought to be declared mujmoon (common land, which was attached by the government)." The shareholders, on the other hand, urged that "since they are held responsible for the Koonbees' (tenants') payments, and since the lands of Koonbees revert in the first instance to them and not to Government, they ought to be permitted to fix whatever rates they choose on the lands in the occupation of Koonbees." In the face of these demands, the survey officer considered that whereas the customary tenants had the smallest claim under the government regulation or according to the village constitution, the demand of shareholders was 'far more reasonable', but rejected it because the rent had been fixed since the former survey.<sup>90</sup> As will be referred to soon, the case of this village where the rent of customary tenants had been fixed by the district authorities was rather exceptional.

In 1862 W.G. Pedder reporting the condition of sharehold village in general proposed that customary tenants' rights, "whether of occupancy or to a fixed rental, ought, I think, to be determined, carefully recorded, and strictly upheld. But I do not think it will be expedient to interfere to reduce the amount of their payments, except in cases where the nurwadars' own rental is reduced by the settlement, and where the Collector has already interfered."<sup>91</sup> On this proposal, the Bombay government decided and directed district officials as follows in 1864: "The rights of customary tenants should, as proposed, be carefully recorded and strictly upheld. In cases where nurwadar's own rental is reduced by the survey settlement, a reduction in their payments.....may fairly be made, but in other cases it will not be expedient to reduce the amount of their payments."<sup>92</sup> In other words, firstly, the existing rights of customary tenants were to be registered and protected; secondly, when the assessment of revenue was reduced, the district officials might interfere to reduce proportionately the rent of customary tenants; but thirdly, otherwise they should not interfere even when the rent had been raised. The first item, registration of rights, was duly executed. But the second item was left to the discretion of the local officials. And the third item, the settlement of rent, was left to the bargaining between landlords and tenants. The question of whether the shareholders had a right to raise the rent upon the customary tenants was sometimes appealed to the Civil Courts,<sup>93</sup> but we are not informed of the result.

Regarding the second point mentioned above, the local officials were rather reluctant

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 44 of 1861, From W.G. Pedder to Captain Prescott, pp. 59-60, paras. 26-27.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 19, para. 34.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2481 (Resolution), p. 96, para. 9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 116, para. 22.

to interfere. For instance, A.C. Trevor, who settled the land revenue of nine sharehold villages in Kaira in 1865, reported, "under paragraph 9 of the Government Resolution (as mentioned above), the nurwadars might have been directed to lower their demands on these tenants in a degree proportionate to the decrease in their own assessment. To have done so, however, would, I think, have excited more discontent among the nurwadars than would have been compensated for by the benefit to the tenants, and would besides have been somewhat unfair to the former, who would have had to bear the loss had the Government demand been raised instead of lowered."<sup>94</sup> Similarly A. Rogers, Revenue Commissioner of Northern Division, stated in 1866, "I think.....that in all ordinary cases it would be but fair to decline to interfere with existing arrangements between a nurwadar and a customary tenant, unless the latter could establish in a Civil Court his right to a proportionate reduction of his own rent when his landlords' payment to Government was lowered."<sup>95</sup>

Sometimes local officials tried to compromise both the parties, with partial success and partial failure. In 1867 it was reported on three sharehold villages in Borsad:

"In the villages noted in the margin disputes regarding customary tenures were brought forward at the jumma bundy (sic). Every exertion was made to bring about a right understanding between the nurwadars and their cultivators. In Vehra Kavita (village) and Peeplav (village) the nurwadars not only recognized the rights of customary tenants, but were induced to give reasonable remission on the rent paid by them. In Peeplav the cultivators of one bhag were not satisfied with the remission and phazul (additional concession) offered by the nurwadars, but urged that the whole amount reduced by the new settlement should be paid to them. Under these circumstances the phazul of that bhag has not been paid, but is held in deposit pending....."

"In Khanpoor the nurwadars and cultivators came to terms, but before the completion of the settlement several questions arose between them which could not be settled to their mutual satisfaction.

"In consequence of this the settlement could not be completed in this village, and the collections were made according to the old system, pending....."<sup>96</sup>

In summary, the amount of rent to be paid by customary tenants was left to be decided between them and their landlords. And whether the rent was to be reduced in proportion to the reduction of revenue assessment was left to the discretion of the local officials. Some of them felt reluctant to interfere with this problem, while others who tried to reconcile the both parties sometimes resulted in worsening the dispute. Thus, a report on the Broach *taluka* stated in 1872, "in some parts of Broach the rights of customary tenants are being steadily undermined by the stratagems of the Bhagdars, in enticing them into signing leases for rent differing from what they have been in the habit of paying."<sup>97</sup> It may be safely said that this state of affairs was not always confined to Broach *taluka* but found widely in other regions, too. It was as late as 1938 that the Bombay government took up the topic of tenancy and rent of customary tenants as a subject for legal protection.

Next about tenants-at-will. Regarding them who were reported to have been 'by

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 108, para.5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2091 of 1866, From A. Rogers to F.S. Chapman, Chief Secretary to Government, p. 127, para. 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 500 of 1867, From C.J. Prescott to the Collector of Kaira, p. 286, paras. 101-02.

<sup>97</sup> SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S. (Broach and Ankleshwar.), *op. cit.*, No. 882 of 1872, (From A. Rogers) To the Chief Secretary to Government, p. 102, para. 17.

far most numerous class', the Bombay government resolved in 1864 that they could have no rights beyond those they possessed under the agreements or leases they held from the *narwadars*;<sup>98</sup> hence nothing was provided for their tenancy or rent, excepting the abolition of several items of dues collected from them by their landlords as mentioned before.

According to W.G. Pedder, the tenants-at-will held the land "generally on written leases for short terms of years, at rents entirely dependent on agreement,"<sup>99</sup> and in Ore village of Nadiad, for instance, "If a nurwadar lets his own share of land, he makes his own terms with his tenant, and similarly the body of mooksh nurwadars (viz. representatives of major divisions; headmen of the village) with the cultivators of mujmoon land (village common land), whom they can oust at will."<sup>100</sup> The common land of a division was also leased out by its representatives at the highest possible rent.<sup>101</sup>

The actual rental condition varied from a place to another. For instance, on a part of Nadiad town following was reported:

"They (narwadars) lease their lands to cultivators on written agreements, the lease being sometimes annual, sometimes for five or ten years, but not usually for a longer period. The rent is stipulated for on the 'veta' principle; the tenant pays for the first one or two beegahs (sic), called his 'veta' land, at Rs. 17-12-1 per beegahs, and for the remainder at rates agreed on with the proprietor, which vary from 1 to 12 Rupees per beegah..... Formerly the non-proprietary cultivators paid the nurwadars two cesses—'betali veero' and 'sookree'. Both these have been abolished. They still give a little 'veth' or gratuitous service to the nurwadars, by lending their carts, bullocks, etc. on births, marriages, etc. occurring in the nurwadars' families."<sup>102</sup>

This custom of occasional free service by tenants-at-will was, of course, not confined to this village but found widely.<sup>103</sup>

Then what was the proportion of the rent paid by the tenants-at-will in the gross produce of the soil? And how big was the rent compared with the land revenue paid by the landlords? In 1873 C.J. Prescott reported on the rental condition in Wagra *taluka* of Broach:

"It is very difficult to determine with any thing like correctness, what the subletting value of land really is, especially as the rent is very generally paid in grain, for as very much depends not only on the conscience but also on the caste and position of the landlord that no reliable general estimate can be formed. The regular landlord class is often satisfied with one-fourth of the produce, whereas the money-lending classes and those who become possessed of land by decrees of Court take generally one-third, and frequently one-half, of the produce."<sup>104</sup>

In the Wagra *taluka* where there were thirty-two sharehold villages out of sixty-eight government villages,<sup>105</sup> it is not known to what extent the above statement applied to the

<sup>98</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S. (Kaira), *op. cit.*, No. 2481 (Resolution), p. 96, para. 10.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 19, para. 33.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 16 of 1863, From Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 74, para. 11.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 41.

<sup>104</sup> SRBG, No. CXL-N.S. (Wagra), *op. cit.*, No. 1752 of 1873, (From C.J. Prescott) To W. Ramsay, p. 33, para. 52.

<sup>105</sup> Computed from *ibid.*, pp. 44-61, Appendix A, No. 1.

sharehold villages. At any rate here ordinary landlords were more lenient to their tenants than money lending absentee landlords. But this state of affairs was not always observed in other regions. The same Prescott reported on Borsad *taluka* of Kaira in 1867, "they (narwadars) get a *half share* of the gross produce from the cultivators."<sup>106</sup> (*italics Prescott's*)

Regarding the amount of rent in cash, W. Wilson found in 1871 in the sharehold villages of Broach *taluka* that when the revenue assessment was Rs. 6 per acre, the rent was Rs. 12-8, and when the revenue assessment was Rs. 5 per acre, rent ranged from Rs. 8 to Rs. 12; and he states, "The actual cases inquired into by me have never shown a rental less than Rs. 5 per beegah=Rs. 10 per acre (when the revenue assessment is Rs. 5 per acre)."<sup>107</sup> Because of this rent in cash, prevalent in this *taluka*, "any fall in the price of produce would fall heavily upon under-tenants who, being persons of little capital, would be much reduced."<sup>108</sup> In the Ankleshwar *taluka* of Broach, too, the rent in kind which was perhaps about half the produce was above twice as much as the land revenue paid in cash. C.J. Prescott reported on this *taluka* in 1872 as follows:

"Lands are, I think, very generally let at nearly double the assessment; but sub-tenants are, as a rule, the poorest of the poor, and never out of debt. They pay grain rents and eke out a subsistence by labour. I need scarcely say such high rates could never be paid in money. In the case of grain rents, the extortion and oppression of the landlord is quite terrible..... This state of things is possible only in districts where there is no Government waste land available for cultivation."<sup>109</sup>

Insufficiency of land was not confined to Ankleshwar. 96% of the cultivable land in Nadiad *taluka*,<sup>110</sup> 86% of the cultivable land in Borsad *taluka*,<sup>111</sup> and 96% of the cultivable land in Broach *taluka*<sup>112</sup> was already under plough in 1860's. As a result of this population pressure on land, the price of land rose up in many places,<sup>113</sup> and it amounted to 12.4 times as much as revenue assessment in Broach *taluka*.<sup>114</sup>

Another important result of the population pressure seems to have been a great increase in the landless labourers. C.J. Prescott reported on Wagra *taluka* in 1873, "No doubt the increase of population (which the census shows is enormous—Prescott) has developed a very large class of landless labourers."<sup>115</sup> It may not be correct to attribute the increase in landless labourers solely to the growth of population, for the twentieth century evidences suggest that the landless labourers were often recruited from tribal people in Gujarat. But it may be hardly denied that increasing population pressure on land occasioned many

<sup>106</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S. (Kaira), *op. cit.*, No. 500 A of 1867, From C.J. Prescott to the Collector of Khaira, p. 283, para. 89.

<sup>107</sup> SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S. (Broach and Ankleshwar), *op. cit.*, No. 2642 of 1871, (From G. Wilson, Acting First Assistant Collector in charge) To L. Ashburner, pp. 3-4, para. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1025 of 1871, (From N.B. Beyts, Acting Superintendent, Revenue Survey and Assessment, Guzerat) To J.G. White, Acting Collector of Broach, p. 37, para. 90.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1450 of 1872, (From C.J. Prescott) To J.G. White, p. 151, para. 50.

<sup>110</sup> SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 418 of 1865, From C.J. Prescott to A.A. Borradaile, p. 155, para. 46.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1408 of 1868, (From A. Rogers) To the Chief Secretary to Government, Bombay, p. 250, para. 2.

<sup>112</sup> SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 1654 of 1872, (From C.J. Prescott) To J.G. White, p. 112, para. 30.

<sup>113</sup> On the Nadiad *taluka*, see SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S. *op. cit.*, No. 1349 A of 1868, From A. Rogers to E.W. Ravenscroft, p. 202, para. 4; and on Charottar *taluka* see *ibid.*, No. 424 of 1867, From the Superintendent, Guzerat Revenue Survey and Assessment to the Acting Collector, Kaira, p. 229, para. 49.

<sup>114</sup> SRBG, No. CXLVI-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 1025 of 1871, (From N.B. Beyts) To J.G. White, p. 59, para. 143.

<sup>115</sup> SRBG, No. CXL-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 1752 of 1873, From C.J. Prescott to W. Ramsay, p. 43, para. 74.



tenants-at-will having lost their tenancy and joined the class of landless labourers.

In short, it may be said that the rent paid by the tenants-at-will in the sharehold villages was often about half the produce and about double the revenue assessment paid by shareholders in 1860's and 1870's. At the same time land famine was already started, and landless labourers were increased.

As pointed before, the revenue assessment was estimated at about one-fifth of the gross produce under the new survey. Therefore shareholding landlords were left with a net rent of about 25% to 30% of the produce on their assessed land, and this scale of net rent may be said to have provided them with a reliable economic basis for remaining to be small landlords. But this scale of net rent was secured only under the new survey system, which reduced to a great extent, if not the nominal amount of revenue assessment, its proportion in gross produce of land. Before that, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, the revenue was assessed at half the estimated produce of the government land in sharehold villages. In other words the land revenue was almost as heavy as the rent paid by tenants-at-will to the shareholders. And in fact many shareholders seem to have failed in the payment of revenue and lost their land; about 30 sharehold villages in Kaira and about 50 sharehold villages in Broach were disintegrated into *raiayatwari* villages as discussed before. But at the same time it is also true that 90 villages in Kaira and 244 villages in Broach overcame this crisis as sharehold villages. How was this state of affairs possible, when no significant net rent was apparently left with the shareholding landlords?

Regarding this problem, following three points might be argued. First, as the 'concealed cultivation' was discovered in several places at the time of new survey,<sup>116</sup> the old survey conducted in early nineteenth century seems to have been more or less loose, and the produce of land as the basis for revenue assessment was underestimated to that extent. Second, the shareholding landlords were in the habit of raising the rent from customary tenants when necessary or possible. But this does not explain much, for the rent from customary tenants could not be much higher than that from tenants-at-will. And third, of course, about half the shareholders in Broach were reported to be owner-cultivators themselves rather than landlords. Therefore this problem of apparently insignificant net rent does not apply to them. Besides, some shareholders had ceased to be landlords and cultivated their land for themselves by the time of new survey,<sup>117</sup> as mentioned before. But this does not explain why the overwhelming majority of shareholders could remain landlords and overcome the crisis.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, many shareholders possessed, in addition to the land imposed with regular land revenue, separate landed estates which were exempt (or nearly exempt) from revenue assessment.

#### IV. *Economic Basis of Shareholding Landlords*

At the beginning of this article where we tried to reconstruct the general structure of

<sup>116</sup> On the concealed cultivation in Nadiad *taluka* see SRBG, No. CXIV-N.S., *op. cit.*, No. 424 of 1867, p. 227, para. 41; and on the same in Borsad *taluka* see *ibid.*, No. 1408 of 1868, (From A. Rogers) To the Chief Secretary to Government, Bombay, p. 252, para. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Burara village in Nadiad and Luwal village in Matar may be cited as examples. See *ibid.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, Appendix III, p. 37, Appendix V, p. 39.

sharehold villages as were found in the earliest British period, we pointed out that perhaps about 30% of the shared land and a fairly large portion of the village common land was alienated (*barkhali*) in the forms of sold, mortgaged, or granted land. It was then pointed out also that the Bombay government, following the usage of the pre-British government in Gujarat, either exempted from assessment or levied very reduced rate of assessment on such 'alienated' lands which were established before the British period. Under the old survey the alienated land in the village was summarily measured as 'alienated' and granted with the revenue privilege; it was hardly enquired into who owned the separate plots of alienated land, and why they did. When occasional enquiry was carried out, it was confined to the alienated land instituted on the common land of the village, and it was only reported that village servants, temples, mosques and other 'various classes' held it. Even that much was not made clear as to the alienated land instituted on the shared land.

Under the new survey, however, not only the alienated land of every government village was measured again, but minute enquiry was carried out as to the real owners of each plot of alienated land. It became clear by the new survey that a fairly large portion of land in most of the government villages had been treated as alienated, as before. For instance, 40% of land of all the government villages of Nadiad *taluka*,<sup>118</sup> and 46% of land of all government villages of Borsad *taluka* was alienated.<sup>119</sup> In Borsad *taluka* there were altogether 89 government villages out of which 54 were sharehold ones, and in 42 out of 54 villages alienated land was instituted not only on the common land but on some part or a considerably large part of shared land.<sup>120</sup> Though the actual size of government land and alienated land is reported on several villages<sup>121</sup> it is not necessary to show all of them; as an instance, in Wantwali village of Mahuda *taluka* of Kaira, 28% of shared land and 69% of village common land was alienated, and we may presume that this might be roughly the average case.<sup>122</sup>

It is not known what proportion of the alienated land described above was instituted during the British period. I may be presumed, however, that as the alienated land instituted under the British was not recognized with revenue privilege but levied with the full assessment,<sup>123</sup> such an alienated land could not be large.

Now, a remarkable fact discovered for the first time by the British officials was that a fairly large part of the alienated land in sharehold villages, especially most of the alienated land instituted on shared land was virtually held not by any outsiders but by the shareholders of the village.<sup>124</sup> Moreover there were not a few shareholders who had bought back or resumed the alienated land once sold out or mortgaged to other shareholders of the same village, and owned it as their *own* alienated land on their *own* shared land.<sup>125</sup> There were such shareholders, too, who virtually held the alienated land which had been granted to saints, priests or temples, by paying them a nominal rent called *kothlisanth*.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 418 of 1865, From C.J. Prescott to A. A. Borradaile, p. 156, para. 53.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 500 A of 1867, From C.J. Prescott to the Collector of Kaira, p. 256, para. 7.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284, para. 93.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, Appendix, pp. 24-49.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 16 of 1863, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 74, para. 11.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11 of 1862, From W.G. Pedder to C.J. Prescott, p. 32.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 424 of 1867, From the Superintendent, Guzerat Revenue Survey and Assessment, p. 227, para. 45.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1789 of 1868, (From A. Rogers) To F.S. Chapman, p. 134, para. 2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 20 of 1865, From A.C. Trevor to C.J. Prescott, p. 108, para. 7.

In 1864 when the new survey was to be introduced in Kaira and Broach districts where most of the sharehold villages were concentrated, however, the Bombay government resolved, "nurwa barkalee (alienated shared land), generally, should be guaranteed by a Sanund (sic) as permanently alienated land—(on the nurwadars consenting)—subject to a special quit-rent of 4 annas in the Rupee."<sup>127</sup> But the local officials who actually conducted the survey and found most of the alienated land being held by shareholders themselves came to have a doubt as to whether such an alienated land should be treated as such. On this point C. J. Prescott states as follows:

"During the inquiry, necessary for the preparation of the settlement papers of villages held on the nurwa tenures, it was ascertained that a considerable area of land held as nurwa barkalee, was then in possession of the nurwadars themselves, and a doubt arose as to whether Government was aware of this fact, when they passed the resolution, noted in the margin, ..... The doubt that occurred to us was whether nurwa land (although called barkalee and entered as such in the books, —Prescott) could be considered *bona fide* alienated land when held by nurwadars in their own shares of the nurwa."<sup>128</sup>

In some villages local officials did not admit such an alienated land and levied the full assessment upon it.<sup>129</sup> A. Rogers, Revenue Commissioner of Northern Division, also reported to the Bombay government in April 1866 as follows: "It certainly appears that the question has not yet been clearly placed before Government, and the large extent of land recorded as alienated but held by nurwadars was probably not suspected by the Survey officers themselves until they began to go into the details of the settlement in a greater number of villages than were at first taken in hand. ....they (shareholders) are certainly not entitled to any remission of assessment on account of any land which they may have temporarily alienated and subsequently redeemed or otherwise again obtained possession of." Hence he proposed to the government to levy the full assessment on such alienated land.<sup>130</sup> In receipt of this proposal, the Bombay government made another resolution on the subject in May of the year, which contained the following points:

"When the former orders regarding the alienations in nurwadaree villages were passed, it was not known that a large number of these alienations were in the hands of the nurwadars themselves"; "The view taken by Mr. Rogers is, no doubt, theoretically correct"; "Yet it seemed expedient to treat such cases liberally"; "When the nurwadars themselves are found to have recovered possession of lands which their ancestors improperly alienated, they are not, it is true, entitled to the same consideration as third parties. But it must not be forgotten that the alienations are ancient, that they have to some extent been recognized, and further that, as no revenue has been realized from them for a long course of years, it is questionable how far Government would be justified in assessing them till the nurwa tenure breaks down"; and therefore "from these considerations it is preferable to abandon the additional revenue which might be derived by adopting the course recommended by the Revenue Commissioner."<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 424 of 1867, From the Superintendent, Guzerat Revenue Survey and assessment to the Acting Collector, Kaira, p. 228, para. 45.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28, para. 45.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 20 of 1865, From A. C. Trevor to C. J. Prescott, p. 108, para. 7; No. 424 of 1867, p. 229, para. 48.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1789 of 1868, (From A. Rogers) To F.S. Chapman, pp. 133-34, paras. 1-2.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 1613 (Resolution), p. 135, paras. 1-5.

Government further passed a modified resolution in July to the effect that when the imposition of full assessment not only facilitated the settlement, but was in accordance with the wishes of the shareholders, full assessment should be imposed on alienated land in their possession; and the resolution of the Bombay government as shown above was intended to apply to cases in which objection might be taken to the levy of full assessment.<sup>132</sup>

Thus most of the shareholders passed through the second crisis. As a result of the new survey they got their revenue burden greatly reduced, and their fairly large scale of alienated land imposed only with a quarter of the full assessment; they were to develop as the representative rich peasants in British Gujarat during the first half of the present century.

At the same time, however, their villages had no longer their former structure. Not only a large number of sharehold villages had been disintegrated into *raiayatwari* villages. But in the rest of sharehold villages that survived, official accountants were appointed to prepare records, collect the revenue, and in many of them to manage the common land, too. In the Broach district especially assessment of revenue in a lump sum was abolished and joint responsibility of the village was virtually removed. Moreover the deterioration of tenancy conditions as well as the fall of tenants-at-will into the landless labour had begun on the one hand, and on the other such submissive extra cesses as 'compensation', 'additional dues' and so on which the shareholding landlords used to collect from their tenants had been legally prohibited, and 'class consciousness' had also budded among the tenants against the landlords.

(October 11, 1973)

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2734, p. 137.