<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Rural Servants in the 18th Century Maharashtrian Village - Demiurgic or Jajmani System?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Fukazawa, Hiroshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics, 12(2): 14-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Date</td>
<td>1972-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Departmental Bulletin Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Version</td>
<td>publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://doi.org/10.15057/8021">http://doi.org/10.15057/8021</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RURAL SERVANTS IN THE 18TH CENTURY
MAHARASHTRIAN VILLAGE—DEMIURGIC
OR JAJMANI SYSTEM?*

By HIROSHI FUKAZAWA**

I. Introduction

When we glance over the mode of employment of rural servants in Indian villages as depicted in socio-economic writings since the middle of the last century, we may discern broadly two different theories on the subject. One is the old theory that tends to regard the servants as employed by the village community as a territorial whole, such servants being called in this article demiurgic servants following Max Weber's terminology. The other theory is the new one that is inclined to consider the servants employed by certain specific families (jajmans according to W. H. Wiser).

We shall begin with examining what the representative writings in line of the old theory have mentioned about the mode of employment of servants in Indian villages.

Karl Marx in his Capital (first ed. in 1867) has written what follows about the Indian village community and its servants on the basis of two books on India written by two British administrators in 1810's and 1850's respectively.

"The constitution of these communities varies in different parts of India. In those of the simplest form, the land is tilled in common, and the produce divided among the members. At the same time, spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the 'chief inhabitant', who is judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the bookkeeper who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official, who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through, and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water- overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin, who conducts the religious services; the schoolmaster, who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calendar-Brahmin, or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed-time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber, the washerman, who washes clothes, the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. This

* This English article is a slightly modified version of my Japanese article on the same topic that appeared in Studies in Economics, Annual Journal of Faculty of Economics, Hitotsubashi University, No. 8, March 1966, pp. 91–215.

** Assistant Professor (Jokyōfu) in South Asian Studies.
dozen of individuals is maintained at the expense of the whole community. If the population increases, a new community is founded, on the pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land. The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that in manufactures is impossible, since the smith and the carpenter, etc., find an unchanging market, and at the most there occur, according to the sizes of the villages, two or three of each, instead of one.”1 (italics quoter’s)

As is well known, Marx writes that “the simplicity of the organization for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies.”2 We are not concerned here with estimating the validity of this statement of Marx. Suffice it to bear in mind that according to Marx these various servants were maintained at the expense of the whole community; they were servants of the village.

Baden-Powell in his The Indian Village Community (1896) states about the rural servants in Indian villages as follows:

“But something else was wanted besides officers (headman, accountant, village-watchman, and so on—-quoter) to make provision for the self-contained life of the ‘community’. A village group established perhaps in the forest at some distance from any other village, to say nothing of larger town, would need some purely local means of providing for the simple wants of daily life. And therefore villages of this (raiyatwari type—quoter), and, naturally, of the joint type also, have always solved the difficulty by attracting to themselves a body of resident craftsmen and menials, who are not paid by the job, but are employed by the village on a fixed remuneration, sometimes of a bit of rent-free (and perhaps revenue-free—Baden-Powell) land, sometimes by small payments at harvest, as well as by customary allowances of so many sheaves of corn, millet, etc., or certain measures of grain, and perquisites in kind. Each is also given a housesite in the village, or in some cases, as in Madras, in a group outside it, forming a sort of suburb.”3 (italics quoter’s)

He further writes that the custom of paying the artisans and menials by allowances of grain often accompanied by a small grant of land was very ancient and found in every province, the grain allowance was taken out before the division of crop between the state and cultivators, and the villagers supplied the materials for the work to be done, but did not pay for the labour at the time of work.4

Then Max Weber in his General Economic History (1924) takes up the servants in Indian villages as the typical case of demiurgic mode of employment and states as follows on the basis of works by Baden-Powell and the decennial census:

“Here are settled craftsmen, temple priests, (which in contrast with the Brahmins play only a subordinate role—Max Weber), barbers, laundrymen, and all kind of laborers

2 Ibid., pp. 393-94.
4 Ibid., pp. 16-17, footnote, 1.
belonging to the village—the village 'establishment'. They hold on a 'demiurgic' basis; that is, they are not paid for their work in detail but stand at the service of the community in return for a share in the land or in the harvest.\(^5\) They (hand workers—quoter) are attached to the village, subject to the disposal of anyone who has need of industrial service. They are essentially village serfs, receiving a share in the products or money payments. This we call 'demiurgical labour'.\(^6\)

Whereas Marx considered that 'the economic self-sufficiency' of Indian village containing a number of servants provided the key for explaining the 'unchangeableness' of Indian society, according to Max Weber the 'stability' of Indian society was based upon the caste system combined with 'magical traditionalism'.\(^7\) In this way opinion differed between Marx and Weber regarding the historical role of the servants in Indian rural society and economy. Yet, both of them commonly regarded the servants as maintained by the village itself.

Now we shall turn to the Maharashtrian villages and show some representative opinions on the rural servants which broadly conform with the old theory.

S.N. Sen, historian of Marathas, writes in his *Administrative System of the Marathas* (1st ed. 1923; 2nd ed. 1925) about the 'village community' during the Maratha period on the basis of several contemporary Marathi documents as well as M. Elphinstone's *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa* (1st ed. 1819):

"As it had its political autonomy, the Maratha village tried to have its industrial autonomy also; and this brought into existence the twelve balutas or the village artisans. The logical consequence of the idea and the ideal of industrial autonomy was that the artisans became watan-holders, and expected that they and their descendants should enjoy a monopoly of their particular trade in the village and their right to such a monopoly in theory as well as in practice was recognised by all."\(^8\) "The Balutas or village artisans played an important part in Maratha village. They enjoyed hereditary monopoly of their trade within the village, and in the harvest time got a share of grains from each cultivator."\(^9\) (italics quote's)

He defines the twelve *balutas* or *balutedars* as 'Mahar, Sutar (carpenter), Lohar (blacksmith), Chambhar (leather-worker), Parit (washerman), Kumbhar (potter), Navi (barber), Mang (rope-maker), Kulkarni (village-accountant), Joshi (astrologer), Gurao (Hindu shrine-keeper), and Potdar (money-assayer)', and states that they received a certain amount of grain called *baluta* at the harvest.\(^10\)

Next, A.S. Altekar, historian of ancient India, wrote in 1927 on the basis of several ancient books as well as the District Gazetteers written by British administrators in the early 20th century to the effect that the system of servants in the Deccan villages had continued since ancient period. He states as follows:


\(^5\) Max Weber, a.a.o., SS. 110-11; English transl., p. 97.


\(^8\) Ibid., p. 521.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 235.
"All these (smith, carpenter, barber, shoe-maker, potter, washerman) and similar other artisans have been existing in villages from times immemorial, but they exist merely to serve the needs of the community. Hence it is that they are called 'servants of the community'...; hence it is that their maintenance was guaranteed by the community; hence it is that they were not, and even now are not, accustomed to migrate from village to village in search of better employment."

"The peculiarity of the village occupations is that they are just what are required to make the village community self-contained and self-sufficient..."

"...We find that all over Western India the village community possesses just as many professions as, and no more than what are required to serve the needs of its mainly agricultural population.... Let us now see how their members were remunerated for the services which they used to render to the village community. Usually the 'Balute' or the grain share system was followed, the origin and main features of which will now be discussed."

"Under this system a certain grain-share was paid every year by each farmer to all the village artisans at the time of the annual harvest. Payment was not made in cash but in kind; nor was this payment in kind made on each occasion the service was rendered, but annually at the harvest time. And finally we must note that each farmer has to give a certain grain-share to each of the village servants whether he requires his services or not."11 (italics quoted's)

And Altekar adds that the servants usually included in the twelve balutas were Chaugula (assistant village-headman), astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, goldsmith, blacksmith, carpenter, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, Mahar (village-watchman) and Tarala (bearer of burdens and helper to travellers); and Mulani (Masjid-keeper) was also included in them in such a village as contained a large Muslim population.12

Though there is some difference in expression among the various opinions quoted above, they all agree that the servants in Indian village did serve and were employed by the territorial group called village or more often village community; they were servants of the village. On the other hand, as to whether they were hereditarily attached to the village, these opinions except S.N. Sen's are not very clear. But Baden-Powell uses the term 'resident', Max Weber 'settled', and Altekar almost negates their mobility: these three at least indicate the hereditary settlement of the servants in a specific village.

Against this demiurgic theory, the new theory here conveniently called jajmani theory asserts that the rural servants have been hereditarily employed by certain specific families. Incidentally the sociologists including anthropologists working in line of jajmani system usually do not care for the old demiurgic theory.

To begin with, W.H. Wiser, American Christian missionary, who stayed in a north Indian village for about five years from 1925 for his missionary activities, incidentally found there complicated economic relationships among villagers belonging to twenty-four castes, and examined them in great details. The result of the research was his The Hindu Jajmani System (1st ed. 1936) in which he writes as follows:

12 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
"While in the village we heard for the first time the terms ‘Jajman’ and ‘Jajmani Haqq’. Gradually we discovered that these terms referred to an established service relationship which was somewhat like the old feudal system, yet unlike it. It contained a mutuality that was lacking in the feudal system..."13

"References to the term ‘jajman’ or ‘jujman’ as it is spelled in older literature, are found in court records usually in reference to the employer of a Brahman priest... We have discovered in Karimpur, however, that the term ‘jajman’ is used for all who have the employer relationship. And the rights involved in the employer-employee relationship are popularly called ‘Jajmani haqq’. Just how general this ‘Jajmani’ relationship is in villages of India we are not prepared to state..."14

"In a Hindu village in North India each individual has a fixed economic and social status, established by his birth in any given caste. If he is born into a carpenter family, he finds himself related by blood to carpenters exclusively... Each carpenter has his own clientele, which has become established through custom, and which continues from generation to generation. Where the village is large enough, the clientele will be limited by the boundaries of the village. If the village is not large, or the members of carpenter families are too numerous to meet the needs of one village, the clientele extends to small neighbouring villages where there are no carpenters in residence. This relationship once established cannot be broken except by the carpenter himself who may choose to sell his right to another carpenter. It is heritable and sometimes transferable..."15

"The carpenter calls his entire clientele his ‘jajmani’ or ‘birt’—these terms being identical in meaning. The individual family or head of the family whom the carpenter serves is called the carpenter’s ‘jajman’. The ‘jajman’ speaks of the carpenter’s family and all other families that serve him as his ‘Kam-wale’ or ‘Kam karne-wale’ (i.e. workers—Wiser), if they are of the serving castes, i.e., Sudras or lower..."16

"...Each has his own clientele comprising members of different castes which is his ‘jajmani’ or ‘birt’. This system of interrelatedness in service within the Hindu community is called the Hindu ‘Jajmani system.”17 (italics quoter’s)

Unlike the scholars in line of demiurgic theory, for Wiser the village as a territorial group as such did not matter much. For him a village was not more than an inhabited area, which was disintegrated into various castes, economic relations among which and especially those among families belonging to which interested him; these relationships were hereditarily fixed between patron (jajman) and his servants and were transferable by the latter to their respective caste-fellows.

After being ignored for nearly two decades Wiser’s work was discovered as it were by the sociologists on India after the Second World War when they developed a vigorous interest in the politico-economic relations in the ‘little communities’ of India, and a large number of works have been published in line of jajmani theory. Indeed, the term jajmani system has become one of the most important technical terms among sociologists on rural

14 Ibid., p. ix.
15 Ibid., p. xvii.
16 Ibid., p. xviii.
17 Ibid., p. xxi.
India and been applied by them to the similar phenomena not only in north India but also all over India, though regional distribution and intensity of these works is not very fair, and only a few works have been done on the Deccan or Maharashtra and throw little light on the servants in the villages there; unfortunate condition for our present article.

At any rate T.O. Beidelman on the basis of a large number of post-War (or post-Independence) works on rural India has defined the jajmani system as follows: "The jajmani system is a feudalistic system of prescribed, hereditary obligations of payment and of occupational and ceremonial duties between two or more specific families of different castes in the same locality." 19

Unlike many other sociologists who simply ignore the old theory on rural servants Beidelman states, "before Wiser the jajmani system had been mentioned in terms of 'village menials', 'village servants', 'village artisans', kamins, etc." 20 Similarly Oscar Lewis, too, writes, "it (the concept of jajmani system) provides us with a framework for a better understanding of much discrete data which earlier observers, such as Russel, Crooke, Baden-Powell, Ibbetson and Darling, described under the heading 'village menials', 'village servants', artisans, jajmans, kamins, etc." 21 They simply take it for granted that the servants employed and maintained by the village community as described by the old theory were, in fact, servants of the specific families belonging to the dominant castes in the locality under the jajmani system.

To be sure there can be found many cases in north India as well as in the south that conform with the concept of jajmani system. 22 But at the same time there are some other instances which deviate from it. For example, on a Mysore village M.N. Srinivas states, "But this tendency toward stability (of service relationship between patron and his servants) does not mean that continued unsatisfactory behavior on either side will be tolerated. After protesting to the village elders, the aggrieved party will break off the old relationship and form a new relationship with another. Shifting relationship may ultimately make one Smith or Potter more popular and therefore richer than others. Such shifting of relationship is also partly responsible for the rivalry which exists between members of the same non-agricultural caste in a village...." 23 Here hereditary service relationship does not mean much. 24 Moreover not all the servants were employed by specific families. In the
same village, "of the thirty Untouchable families, fifteen are cultivators, and fifteen live
by coolie work. Some of the cultivators are cákaras, or hereditary village servants, whose
duty it is to assist the headman and accountant in the collection of land tax..."25 (italics
of English words quoted's). Again on a north Indian village generally conforming to the
concept of jajmani system Oscar Lewis states, "there were three other court cases between
the Camars and Jats from 1930 to 1947. In one case the Jats asked the Camars to
assign a man each day to keep a day watch to guard Jat harvest against animals and
thieves. When the Camars refused, the Jats took the case to court. A compromise was
reached in which the Camars agreed to a night watch rather than a day watch. The Camars
interpreted this as a victory and they became more aggressive..."26 In this case both
Jats and Chamars of the village behaved as a group to one another, and a night watch was
agreed not between a Jat family and a Chamar family but between all the Jats as a group
and all the Chamars as a group. Here the jajmani relation as a relation between specific
families is not visible.

Though there are some sociologists who try to modify or more delimit the concept
of jajmani system,27 it is yet treated as one of the major frameworks for research among
the modern sociologists on rural India.

Thus we have shown two kinds of theory on the mode of employment of Indian rural
servants. One point to be noticed on the old theory is that it is not always backed by any
empirical evidences. What it is based on is mostly writings by British administrators,
who may simply have taken the servants of specific families for the servants of the village.
On the other hand works of modern sociologists usually have not much historical perspec-
tive. They tend to regard the phenomena which seem old at the time of field work as tradi-
tional with the implication that they have continued as if since the time immemorial. The
'traditional' systems and institutions, however, may have been historically developed in the
unexpectedly recent past.

In this article I will try to examine as concretely as possible the modes of employment
of the servants in the 18th century Maharashtrian villages on the basis of about thirty con-
temporary records written in Marathi. The topics to be discussed are firstly about those
servants who are collectively called twelve balutas in our records; were they servants of the
village or of specific families in the village, was the sphere of their service hereditary (and
transferable) or temporary, how were they paid, and how was their service-sphere divided
when necessary? Secondly we will take up the mode of employment of priests as represent-
ing the typically jajmani system.

Due to the paucity of materials my work cannot but be tentative and static.

II. The Twelve Baluta-Servants (Bara Balute)

Various servants in Maharashtrian villages have been often classified into two categories:
'twelve balutas' and 'twelve alutas'. A few words of explanation may be necessary

26 Oscar Lewis, op. cit., p. 74.
27 David F. Pocock, "Notes on jajmani relationships", Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. VI,
December 1962, pp. 79 ff.
regarding these two categories of rural servants. First, there is some difference in explanation regarding components of twelve among the modern scholars. As mentioned before, S.N. Sen enumerates as twelve *balutas* carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, village-accountant, astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, money-assayer, and Mahar (untouchable caste of village watchman and other menial works). Of these money-assaying used to be done by goldsmith (Sonar) so that money-assayer could be put as goldsmith. On the other hand A.S. Altekar removes village-accountant from the twelve *balutas* and adds to them assistant village-headman, Masjid-keeper, and Tarala (bearer of burdens and helper to travellers) as mentioned before. Again H.H. Wilson states that village-headman, village-accountant and assistant village-headman are usually not included in the *balutas* and quotes the opinion of J. Grant-Duff which excludes village-accountant and money-assayer (or goldsmith) from and adds bard (Bhatti) and Masjid-keeper to the list of twelve *balutas* shown by S.N. Sen above. Against this the twelve *balutas* as shown in a record of 1799 from Saswad region include goldsmith in the place of bard. In short those who were almost regularly included in twelve *balutas* were carpenter, blacksmith, potter, leather-worker, rope-maker, barber, washerman, astrologer, Hindu shrine-keeper, and Mahar. In addition to above ten, goldsmith, bard, Masjid-keeper and bearer of burdens were often included in the *balutas*.

Second, list of 'twelve *alutas*' is also slightly different among scholars. For instance, J. Grant-Duff includes in them goldsmith, Lingayat priest (Jangam), tailor (Shimpi), water-carrier (Koli), bearer of burdens (Tarala), gardener (Mali), drum-beater (Dauryagosavi), vocalist (Ghadhshi), musician (Gondali), watchman (Ramoshi or Bhil), oil-presser (Teli), and betel leaves-seller (Tamboli). Against this H.H. Wilson's list includes bard in the place of goldsmith. In other words goldsmith, bard and bearer of burdens were sometimes included in the twelve *balutas* as mentioned before and sometimes in the twelve *alutas*.

Third, whereas the terms 'balutas' and 'twelve balutas' are frequently found in the 18th century Marathi records, terms 'alutas' and 'twelve alutas' are not found in them to the best of my knowledge. The names of individual occupations shown above as to be included in *alutas* are mentioned in them. This may mean that the terms *alutas* and twelve *alutas* were scarcely used in Maharashtra during the pre-British period. At any rate it is said that the term *aluta* was formed alliteratively from *baluta* in extension of the application of that word, and unlike *balutas* the *alutas* were not regularly found in every village but were only occasionally seen in some villages; they were much less indispensable than the *balutas* for the daily life of the villagers. This is also indicated by the fact that scholars like S.N. Sen and A.S. Altekar make no mention of *alutas*. Accordingly they shall be excluded from the discussion in this article.

And fourth, a few words about the caste of *balutas*. Of them astrologer and bard were as a rule Brahmins by caste. And village-accountant, whether regarded as a *baluta*...
or not, was also a Brahmin in Maharashtra. Therefore a Brahmin family sometimes performed these different functions. Also, carpenter and blacksmith were of two different castes, but in some villages a carpenter of the carpenter caste was engaged in blacksmithery, and vice versa. Except for such cases the balutas as a rule belonged to different occupational castes.

1. Watan-holding Balutas and Stranger (Upari) Balutas

The idea that each rural servant had hereditary monopoly of work in the sphere of his service is widely prevalent among the scholars. Of the scholars in line of demiurgic theory S.N. Sen expressly states so, and Baden-Powell, Max Weber, and A.S. Altekar also suggest the same. Many of the modern sociologists also take it for granted as it were. R.V. Oturkar also once stated, “one would be led to think that any conceivable profession under the sun could possibly be crystallised into a Watan, so deep was the idea rooted in the mentality of the people (during the 18th century).”

But such an idea is not correct as far as the baluta-servants in the 18th century Maharashtra were concerned. There was a clear distinction between wartandär (or mirāsdār) balutas and uparti balutas. As are well known both the words of watan and mirās are of the Arabic origin; the former ordinarily means ‘native country’ or ‘home’, and the latter ‘patrimony’ or ‘inheritance’. These two words are used in our records interchangeably, so that we shall use only watan for convenience. On the other hand upari is an indigenous word used in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi and means ‘new comer’, ‘stranger’ or ‘extra’. Regarding this distinction we shall show some instances.

A very lengthy record of the year 1765 shows detailed process and result of a dispute over the goldsmithery watan (sonārki che watan) of a village named Lonikurd of Sangamner region about 130 kilometres north-north east of Poona between Lakshman, goldsmith of Village Lonibudruk and Village Hasanapur, and Sadashiv, goldsmith of Village Lonikhurd. The story goes as follows. Goldsmith Lakshman asserted that when the Village Loni was divided into three villages mentioned above, his ancestors held the watan of goldsmithery in these villages, but after his great grandfather died the great grandmother was remarried to a goldsmith residing in other village taking a small boy (Lakshman’s grandfather) with her, and entrusting the goldsmithery of three villages to a relative; after some time Sadashiv’s grandfather migrated into Village Lonikhurd and started the goldsmithery there; the relative who had been entrusted with the work informed the matter to Lakshman’s grandfather who accordingly sent back Lakshman’s father and uncle to their ancestral villages; the father and uncle settled down in Village Lonibudruk and started the goldsmithery in Village Lonibudruk and Village Hasanapur, and demanded Sadashiv’s grandfather and father to restore the watan of goldsmithery at Village Lonikhurd to them, which demand Sadashiv’s ancestors refused by saying that the goldsmithery watan had been theirs though the document given by the villagers to that effect had been lost in an accident. The case was appealed...

3 H.H. Wilson, op. cit., p. 853 (upari).
to the local governor who summoned both the disputants, as well as village officers and balutas of the three villages as witnesses before him. All the witnesses submitted the statement one after another to the effect that goldsmithery watan of Village Lonikhurd was Lakshman's while Sadashiv and his ancestors were 'new strangers' (navā upari) although they worked in the village for three generations as goldsmith and enjoyed the goldsmith's remuneration (sonārkichen balute) during the period. On the basis of these evidences, Sadashiv admitted his defeat, gave his Defeat Letter (yajitpatra) to Lakshman in front of the governor and left the village with his family.37

This clear distinction of status between the watan-holder and the stranger within a rural service was applicable to all kinds of rural services. For instance a lengthy record of the year 1763 shows a dispute over the watan of blacksmithery of a village named Koradh in the Junnar province. There resided several families of carpenters related to one another and a family of blacksmith. The carpenters claimed that not only carpentry watan but also blacksmithery watan of the village properly belonged to them, and appealed the case to the local governor. The governor summoned both the disputants and twenty-five villagers including headman. In the justice assembly the plaintiffs (carpenters) asserted that the blacksmithery watan of the village being theirs a member of them had been engaged in blacksmithery; but this 'carpenter blacksmith' (Sutar lohar) was one day summoned to the local office, beaten and fined because he had lost an ax entrusted by a villager for repair who, then, appealed to the local officer; the 'carpenter blacksmith' got angry and disappointed, gave up the blacksmithery and shifted to a nearby town; the villagers (gānvakari) went to the town once or twice to tell him to come back but he did not do so telling that he had lost his face; then the villagers brought a blacksmith (defendant) from other village and got him to do the blacksmithery of the village, whom the carpenters were opposed to, and the villagers also told the carpenters to pay him some money for he had worked there for some time, and do the blacksmithery themselves; but the blacksmith did not agree with the proposal.38 Against this assertion the defendant stated that the blacksmithery watan of the village had belonged to his family till his grandfather's time, but his father in infancy left the village due to a famine and settled down in other village where the defendant was later born; after his father's death when he was fifteen years old, the officers (kārbhāri) of the Koradh Village came to know his whereabouts and took him back to the village saying that he was the watanādar; and since then he was being engaged in the blacksmithery of the village, hence watan was his.39 Now the statements made by twenty-five villagers were divided into two. One party comprising fifteen confirmed the assertion of the plaintiffs and stated that as the 'carpenter blacksmith' who had shifted to the town did not return to the village, 'headman and other officers of the village brought a stranger blacksmith named Satva (Satva Lohar upari, defendant) from other village... and got him to do the blacksmithery.... Since then he has been doing the blacksmithery and getting the balute-remuneration. He also stamps the seal of blacksmith upon the documents when they are prepared in the storehouse in the village. But this blacksmith is not the watanādar; neither his grandfather nor his father lived in the village. Nor was he brought to the village as watanādar.... Blacksmith Satva has no watan's house (watanāchā vādā)
in the village; he lives in the house of goldsmith." The other party of ten villagers, on the other hand, stated that they did not know who had been the original blacksmith of the village, whether Blacksmith Satva was watan-hearted or whether the blacksmithery of the village belonged to carpenters, and "so far as we see, Blacksmith Satva is doing blacksmithery and carpenters' carpentry. The blacksmith receives the baluta-remuneration for blacksmithery, and Blacksmith Satva stamps the seal upon the documents as blacksmith, and carpenters the seal of carpentry." They further stated that they did not know whether Satva was brought to the village 'as watan-hearted or watanless (gairvatant)." As the statements were divided in this way the local governor refrained from giving decision and entrusted the matter upon a panchayat composed of the hereditary officers (Deshmukh and Deshpande) of the region as well as headmen of nearby villages. The panchayat considered the above statements given by villagers and decided, "there is no evidence in the statements to show that Blacksmith Satva is watan-hearted blacksmith, nor is the evidence available to prove his father, grandfather and great grandfather (having been in the village) . . . . He has simply practised (the blacksmithery) as a stranger (uparetwad). He has received the baluta-remuneration by doing blacksmithery, and it is because of this that he stamps the seal (of blacksmithery) upon documents . . . . This blacksmith has enjoyed (the blacksmithery) only for thirty or thirty-two years. He has nothing to do with the watan. On the other hand it is proved that carpenters' uncle (carpenter blacksmith), grandfather and great grandfather lived (in the village) for three generations. And some of the villagers (pandharta) state that the blacksmith who left the village in disappointment was a carpenter (by caste). Then the carpenters (plaintiffs) have arrived at the blacksmithery watan . . . ." Thus the plaintiffs won the case, and the defendant admitted his defeat and wrote a document to that effect to the former.

As was mentioned before in this article carpentry and blacksmithery were performed sometimes by the same family. At any rate in this case, too, there can be observed a clear distinction between one who held a certain sphere of service as his watan (patrimony) and one who held no watan (gairvatant) or upari.

Similarly when there was no hereditary accountant (Kulkarni) in a village in Paithan region headmen of the village jointly sold for Rs. 150 the watan of accountancy of the village and a housesite to an accountant-cum-astrologer of a nearby village and gave him a miraspatra in which it is stated, "there was no old watan-hearted accountant in our village. A stranger (upari) came and did the work (of accountant)". Again, when two barbers disputed over the watan of hairdressing in a village in Navase region, one of the disputants stated in the justice assembly, "Headmen of the village appointed my grandfather to the work of the village. Since then we have been doing. But that is not our watan."

---

40 Ibid., pp. 136-38 (left). "gānvache pātīl vagaire kārbhārī yānnīn Mauje Kanañ Turf Mahalunje yethe Satva Lohar upari rāhat hotā, tyās ānīn lohārkičen kām chālān, tyājvar varsheh dōhovarshēn Kiliēkhānāchē dhūdāmūn jāhālī tevānhpāsūn lohārkičēn kāmkēj toch karīto va baluēn ghēto. gānvānti kotēn kāgad patraḥ jāhālēn, tyānīvarē tyānēn sākṣē lohār mhaỌon ghēlyā, parantu hā lohār vatañdēr nāhn, yāchā ājā pānjā gānvāvār nālālī nāhīn va yās vatañdēr mhanon gānvāvār ānīlā nāhīn."

41 Ibid., pp. 136-38 (right).

42 Ibid., p. 138.

43 Ibid., pp. 138-39.


45 SSRPD, vol. 11 no. 16. "āple ājās gānvāchen kāmkēj chālāvāyās thevēlēn hotēn; tyāpāsūn āpṇa chālvitone parantu āplen vatañ navē."
In short not all the baluta-servants held the hereditary exclusive monopoly over the sphere of the service. There was a distinction between those who held it (watandar) and those who did not (upari). Then were they employed by the village itself as a territorial whole or by a certain specific families separately? We shall begin with the examination of the extent of the sphere of their service and proceed to the mode of their remuneration.

2. Service-sphere of the Baluta-Servants

Of the records I have consulted there is none which indicates that the baluta-servants in the Maharashtrian villages were employed by certain specific families in the village. Rather all of them show that they were servants of the village as a whole. In the record on the goldsmithery watans referred to above, the presiding local governor, the disputants, and the witnesses all often utter such phrases as ‘goldsmithery of the village’ (gānvachī sonārti), ‘work of goldsmithery of the village’ (gānvachī sonārkīchē kāmkāj), ‘service to the village’ (gānvachī chāktrī), ‘work for the village’ (dehāyachē kāmkāj, gānvachē kāmkāj), ‘watans of the village’ (gānvachē vatan), and ‘goldsmithery watans of the village’ (dehāmaja-kūrkīchē sonārkīchē vatan).\(^{46}\) A village headman states that when Goldsmith Shidu by name came from village Vadegavhan, “all the villagers (gānvachē samast) appointed him to the work of the village.”\(^{47}\) To be sure the headman of Lonibudruk Village uses the phrase of ‘our goldsmith’ (āple Sonār),\(^ {48}\) and the headman of Hasanapur Village also says, “it is true that Goldsmith Lakshman is our old mīrasdar brother bound through watans (Lakshman Sonār āplā purātān mīrasdār vatan bhāū khare āhe).”\(^ {49}\) But this does not mean that the goldsmith was specifically employed by the families of headmen. Headmen state so in their capacity of the representatives of their villages, for the latter headman immediately states that “he was made to do the work of goldsmithery of our village”,\(^ {50}\) and the former also says of ‘work of watans of goldsmithery of the village’.\(^ {51}\)

In the record on the dispute over blacksmithery of a village referred to above, too, such phrases are often used as ‘watans of blacksmithery of the above village’ (mauje majkūrkīchē lohārkīchē vatan),\(^ {52}\) and ‘watans of carpentry and blacksmithery of the above village’ (mauje majkūrkīchē sutārkīchē va lohārkīchē vatan).\(^ {53}\) And as the disputants agreed to “behave according to what the villagers will say, if (the local governor) collects all the villagers (samakūl pāndhar) and asks them by putting the symbol of truth (belbandar, namely leaves of Bel-tree and turmeric powder that are on a deity) upon their forhead,”\(^ {54}\) the governor “collected the villagers (pāndhar), . . . summoned one by one separately and asked him to state the evidence on the watans of blacksmithery”.\(^ {55}\) Though the term ‘all villagers’ should not be understood literally, for the persons collected were only twenty-five in number


\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 160 (right). “Shidu Sonār Vādegavhānīhin ālā, tyāns ĝānvakart samastāṃtā ĝānvache kāmkās thevilā.”

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 159 (left).

\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 160 (left).

\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 160 (left). “ānche ĝānvacheht sonārkīchē kāmkāj karāvyāsā lāgle.”

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 159 (left). “ĝānvachī sonārkīchē vatan kāmkāj.”

\(^{50}\) Ibid., vol. VII, no. 532, pp. 133, 134 (left), 139.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 134 (left).

\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 135.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., pp. 135–36.
comprising headmen, peasants and various servants, yet there is no doubt that people concerned were very conscious of the fact that carpenter and blacksmith were 'of the village,' and therefore the dispute over their service-sphere was to be decided by the evidences of all the villagers.

When another dispute took place over the \textit{watan} of blacksmithery of other village (\textit{mauje majkūre lohāpanāchya vatan}) between a carpenter and a blacksmith of the village, 'all the villagers, landholders, and twelve balutas' were collected in front of the village-shrine and made to state their evidences. Here only twenty-one persons were collected, yet as 'the blacksmith of the village' was concerned so that ‘all the villagers’ were to decide the dispute. \textsuperscript{57} Regarding a barber, too, '\textit{watan} of hairdressing of the above village' (\textit{mauje majkūre nhāvīpanāche vatan}), and 'work for the village' (\textit{gānvacheṇ kām, gānvacheṇ kāmkāj}) are mentioned in a record on a village in Navase region. \textsuperscript{58}

Regarding the untouchables such as Mahars and Mangs (rope-makers) the following examples may be quoted. In 1738 Deshmukh and Deshpande of Lalagun Buddh Panchgau region enquired into the duties and remunerations of the Mahars \textit{vis-à-vis} village-headmen in their region and reported the result to their counterparts of Saswad region. This report contains seventeen items details of which will be shown later in connection with the modes of remuneration for baluta-servants. The first item is: ‘Mahārs should work for twenty-four hours (per month ?) during twelve months in order to deepen the reservoir (of the village)’. And the second item is: ‘In case there are other Mahārs they should do the service for the village in accordance with the order of the village-headman.’ \textsuperscript{59} In a record concerning a dispute over the remuneration between Mahars and Mangs in Garad Village near Poona in 1810 (to be referred to later in details), a Mahar states, ‘then Māṅs appealed to villagers (\textit{pāṇḍhāri}). Accordingly villagers summoned me and said . . . ’ \textsuperscript{60}

The examples shown above suggest that sphere of service of the baluta-servants was not a certain specific families but the village conceived as a territorial whole.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the village in the 18th century Maharashtra was nothing like an agrarian commune based on the common ownership of land and other property among the peasants. There was a class division so to say among them between \textit{mirāsār}s (landholders) and \textit{uparī}s (stranger peasants or tenants), and the peasants (along with servants) lived on the inhabited area (\textit{pāṇḍhāri}) of the village on the basis of individual families, and their daily life of production and consumption was carried on on the basis of family. \textsuperscript{61} Accordingly each baluta-servant served individual families in the village. For instance in the dispute over blacksmithery between carpenters and blacksmith referred to above, the following is stated, ‘Carpenter Kashi, uncle of Darkoji, was engaged in blacksmithery. Sabaji Kuchila of the above village placed his ax with Kasi for repair, which

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 136.
\textsuperscript{55} Oturkar, no. 37.
\textsuperscript{56} SSRPD, vol. II, no. 16.
\textsuperscript{57} Oturkar, no. 46. “Mahār bādhale khoлечā bārāmāḥī ashtoprahara rābiṭā āσāvā.” “Varkad Mahār aśtīl tyās pāṭilācche hukūmāpramāṇen ubhi pāṇḍharichchā khārti karāvī.”
\textsuperscript{58} Oturkar, no. 77 (nakal). “tevha pāṇḍharikade Mōg firyād gelā tyāvarūn pāṇḍharine maḷḷā bōḷān sāgtile.”
disappeared from him. In this record it is not clear whether the man surnamed Kuchila was a peasant or an artisan. At any rate it shows that it was individual villagers living in different families who enjoyed the service of the baluta blacksmith. But, at the same time, this blacksmith was not specifically employed by the Kuchila family, for when he lost the ax of Kuchila, was complained of by the latter to local governor, was beaten and fined by this, got angry and disappointed, and shifted to a nearby town, “villagers (gānvakart) once or twice went to the town to persuade him (to come back). But he did not return to the village saying that he had lost his face. Then villagers (gānvakart) brought another blacksmith... and got him to work the blacksmithery.” In other words those who went to the town to bring back the blacksmith or brought another from somewhere else were not the Kuchilas but the villagers conceived as an aggregate. In short the sphere of service of the baluta-servant was a village as a territorial group. He offered his service to individual villagers belonging to the village irrespective of their family affiliation.

In order to ascertain this point further we shall examine next the kinds and modes of remuneration for the baluta-servants.

3. Remuneration for Baluta-Servants

There seem to have been broadly three kinds of remuneration for baluta-servants. One was the remuneration in kind or in cash called baluta which we shall here designate as baluta-remuneration; the second was additional minor remunerations in kind or in cash variously called hakk (rights), lavajima (perquisites) or mānpān (privileges) which we shall categorize as perquisites; and the third was revenue-free inām land which was often held by some of the baluta-servants. We will begin with the baluta-remuneration.

Not only watan-holding servants but also strangers were entitled to the baluta-remuneration so long as they offered specific service to the village. This is clear from the fact that Goldsmith Sadashiv, finally judged to be an upari in the dispute over goldsmithery as referred to above, is repeatedly stated to have received baluta-remuneration for goldsmithery by doing the work of the village. In another dispute over the blacksmithery referred to above, also, village-headmen and villagers state about Blacksmith Satva, finally judged to be an upari, as follows: “... since then, he has been doing the work of blacksmithery and getting the baluta-remuneration.... This blacksmith is, however, not watan-holder.” And “so far as we see, Blacksmith Satva is doing blacksmithery, and carpenters carpentry. Baluta-remuneration for blacksmithery is received by the blacksmith.”

On the other hand it seems that even the watan-holding servant was not entitled to baluta-remuneration if he was absent from the village for a long period of time, for, in the above two examples, neither the watan-holding goldsmith nor the carpenters holding the watan of blacksmithery demanded the baluta-remuneration for the period of their absence.

---

64 Ibid., p. 134 (left). “tyāvar ek don velān tyāche samajāvāsīt gānvakarti ēle parantu ātplā abrā geli ṭamnān to gānvavar gelā nāhn. mag gānvakarti yānnāt ....”
65 Ibid., vol. VII, no. 532. “tevāpāsūn lohārktiche kāmkāj toj karito va balutey gheto ... parantu hā lohār vartandār nāhn ....”
66 Ibid.
Moreover, there is a record showing the remuneration for twelve baluta-servants in cash in a village of Saswad region, which after showing the total amount at Rs. 70 states, "Mahars are not serving on their watan. Therefore deduct Rs. 10 (amount due to Mahars.) The rest is Rs. 60."

Now there seem to have been at least three different modes of paying baluta-remuneration which may have corresponded to three different methods of collecting land revenue by the state.

The first mode corresponds to the batāi system of revenue collection in which a certain proportion of the agricultural products of the village was collected in kind. A record of 1774 recollects the state of affairs of Junnar region under the Mughal rule perhaps in the 17th century and states, "formerly when the batāi system of the village was practiced under the Mughal rule, the whole products of the village were collected in one place, and after weighing the products by the hands of weigher, baluta-remuneration was paid." In other words, the headman, responsible for the collection of revenue, made each peasant bring his products to a certain place in the village, and let him pay certain amount of them to each baluta-servant, and then fixed proportion of the rest was collected as revenue.

The second mode may correspond to the method of revenue collection where the amount of revenue from each peasant family was prefixed in kind or in cash, and peasants were not required to bring all the produce to one place. In a record from Saswad region supposed to have been written before 1746, a village-headman complains to the Deshpande of the region of misbehaviour committed by the accountant-astrologer of his village as follows:

"Baluta-remuneration for astrologer used to be paid after (headman) inspected the peasants (kula) and fields, and according to the state of crops. He (astrologer) also used to receive (it). At present, however, Kusajipant (astrologer) not only userps the cotton-cloth for marriage go-between (due to the barber ?) by force, but also sends his female slave and ruffians (?) rangadya) along with a horse to each field for baluta-remuneration, and the female slave makes bundles of produce as she pleases, gets the peasants (setkart) to pile them up on the horse, and carries it back (to the house of the astrologer). . . . When I went to reprimand Kusajupant on this matter, he came out with a stick to beat me. (He) has begun to behave rudely in these ways. He is the astrologer-accountant and I am the headman. How could I endure his rudeness ? . . . Land of 5 partanes (perhaps 20 to 25 bighas) was going on (with the astrologer-accountant) as Brahmin land (brahmanatike) since before. Now, however, (he) is eating 10 partanes by force: (he) has taken other 5 partanes out of the land of peasants (kunbt), who are forced to labour (shrāmti) (by him)."

In this instance the correspondence with revenue system is not clearly stated. At any rate this record shows that the normal procedure in this village was for the headman to inspect the state of the crops perhaps at each harvest and to get each peasant to pay a part of the produce to each baluta-servant.

The third mode was to pay a certain amount of money to baluta-servants. For instance a record of 1799 from Saswad region states as follows:

66 Oturkar, no. 75. "paikī vajā māhār vatanāvār chākris nāhīt sabab rupye 10 bāki rupye 60."
67 SSRPD, vol. VI, no. 710. "peśhīn Moglāi amalānti gānvachit bājāti hot hoti, tevāhān sāre gānvachā māl ekjāgen jamā hoin, ātakāyāche āteñ mālāchā mojñī hoin, baluteh pāvat hoteñ."
68 Oturkar, no. 90. "balute josti yāche denēn te kīl pāhūn set pāhūn pikāsārikhe det ālōn teñī ghet āle . . . ."
**Year 1200 in Shuhur era (1799 A.D.) Details of the remuneration for baluta-servants per year in rupee.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st class (कास थोरली)</th>
<th>2nd class (कास मध्यली)</th>
<th>3rd class (धाक्ती कास)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carpenter 10</td>
<td>potter 5</td>
<td>astrologer 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leather-worker 10</td>
<td>barber 5</td>
<td>shrine-keeper 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rope-maker 10</td>
<td>washerman 5</td>
<td>goldsmith 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahār 10</td>
<td>blacksmith 5</td>
<td>Masjid-keeper 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 40</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total 10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand total 70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of them Mahārs are not serving on their *watan*. Therefore deduct Rs. 10. The rest is Rs. 60.**

The above record does not show the name of the village. Nor is it clear whether the sum was borne by each peasant family or by whole peasant families. The latter may be more plausible. At any rate the above record indicates that *baluta*-remuneration was sometimes paid in cash perhaps when the revenue of the village as a whole was fixed at a certain amount of money.

In short there is hardly any doubt that there were at least three modes of *baluta*-remuneration, and that it was borne by peasants as a whole.

The second kind of payment is called here perquisites, and the third is small plot of *inām* land. Some examples of these payments will be shown below.

In a record of 1740 an astrologer of Khed region is stated to have held the following two rights (*hakk*) in addition to *baluta*-remuneration equal to that of Hindu shrine-keeper (*balute guravābarobar*): 1. A share of the offerings to village-shrine equal to other *baluta*-servants (*devalt prasād bhar balutiyābarobar*); 2. *Inām* land of 25 bighas (about 8 hectares) producing the grain of 12.5 *mans* (probably about 157 kilograms).

As already referred to the Deshmukh and the Deshpande of Lalagun Buddh Panchgau region enquired into the following seventeen items of rights and duties of the village-headman and the Mahars in the year 1738.

1. Mahars should work for twenty-four hours (per month ?) during twelve months in order to deepen the reservoir (of the village).

2. In case there are other Mahars they should do the service for the village in accordance with the order of the village-headman.

*Items (of remunerations) for Mahars are to go on as follows:*

1. They should eat *harāti* land (a kind of *inām* land) and do the miscellaneous works for village-headman.

2. They should eat *Mahārīk* land (a kind of *inām* land), and do the miscellaneous works for government.

3. Headman (*mhetare*) of Mahars should take the *baluta*-remuneration (*baite*=*balute*) for useless fellows (*gandu gudadya*). Excepting eight Mahars the rest is his. (The meaning of this item is not clear.)

4. Grains left in the threshing ground.

---

**Notes:**

69 Oturkar, no. 75.

70 *SSRPD*, vol. I, no. 283, p. 137.

2. People say that Mahars hold fifty-two rights besides those shown above.

Total six items

1. Besides the above items, if there are fallen trees (padjhad) in the residential area of
the village, they are Mahars’.
2. Village-headman should give a cloth to messenger Mahar (lābechā mahār) when (the
latter) wishes.
3. Mahar should offer a bundle of firewood (to village-headman) on each festival day
(sana), and then ask for food.
4. (Mahārs) should remove the skin of (dead) cattle of the headman’s, accountant’s
and assistant headman’s families, and submit it to its respective owner. Besides, the
skin of the plough ox of important families of the village (pandharichi khot maikhasar
kulavāvādā) should be submitted to its owner.
5. Headman responsible for the cultivation (? nangare patil) should take the meat of
the female buffalo-calf dedicated on the festival of goddess Lakshmi.
6. On the Holi festival of village (gāntyche Holi) (the headman) should give to Mahars
a half of coconut-shell, betel-leaves (pānsupārī) and cigars in order to make Mahars
bring the fire for Holi.
7. Offerings called naivedya at the Holi of the village should be taken by the water-carrier
(Koli) and vocalist (Ghadshi), and Mahar should receive in the open hands as much
as the water-carrier may give.
8. When merchant family (vāniyāche birād) throw copper coins (? votal dām) on the
ground they should be given to him (Mahār). (Meaning is not clear.)
9. Headman should take 4 rukas (small amount of money) from each family (? dar
birāḍās), and watchman Mahar (Māhār rākhan) 2 rukas from each family (? dar birāḍās);
total 6 rukas. (Meaning is not very clear.)

Again in Village Pargao near Poona there was a custom that headman should give to the
leather-workers of the village five items (details not shown) out of the offerings (naivedya)
dedicated to the village-shrine at the Holi festival.

In a record of 1776 Mahars of villages in Parner region to the west of Ahmadnagar are
stated to have enjoyed the following rights (hakk):

1. When oxen and cattle in general die in the village Mahars should have their skin ex-
cepting plough oxen.
2. On the Dasahara festival, while rope-makers receive a bowl of food from each family
(gharoghar) (in the village), Mahars are entitled to five kinds of offerings (panch naivedya)
dedicated to village-shrine) as well as five pais of cash.
3. Ox offered to god (polyāche bailāchā naivedya) (on festivals) is given to Mahars.
4. When cattle is dead in the house of rope-makers it is also given to Mahars.
5. On the Dasahara festival, the pot of sweets (pedhyāchi ghāgar) hung from the neck of

\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{72}} Oturkar, no. 46.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{73}} Ibid., no. 70.}\]
a male buffalo going round the village should be given to Mahars along with the male buffalo.

1. Offerings dedicated to village-shrine in order to avoid the cholera epidemics are given to Mahars.74

In short, whereas the baluta-remuneration was paid by the peasants in kind or sometimes in cash, the perquisites variously called hakk, manpan and so on were given to servants by all the villagers including not only peasants but also village officers, merchants and village servants in the form of offerings to village-shrine or on other various occasions and under various pretexts. And there were complicated customary rules in the village and region as to which servant was to receive what kind of perquisites, how much, when and where.

It is, however, not clear due to the paucity of data whether an upari servant who did not hold his service-sphere as watan but worked in the village for an uncertain period of time enjoyed the same perquisites as a watan-holding servant so long as he served in the village, or there was any discrimination between the both in this regard.

On the other hand, as inām land was hereditarily enjoyed in principle,75 it may be safely presumed that only watan-holding baluta-servants could have such an inām land.

At any rate it may be thus concluded that the twelve baluta-servants were maintained and supported by the village as a territorial whole.

Then the question that may immediately occur in mind is: Is it not the case that only so long as one family of each serving caste resided in the village, he was treated as ‘servant of the village’, but when several families of the same serving caste took place in the village, they may have divided the villagers among themselves, and thus each of them turned to become ‘servant of families’ only serving certain specific families in the village? In order to answer this question, we shall next turn to the mode of dividing the watan of baluta-servants.

4. Division, Transfer and Sale of Baluta-Watan

The baluta-watan was heritable or hereditary on the patrilinial line as pointed out in several examples above. Moreover the watan could be divided, transferred or sold by its holder. Regarding the sale, an example is shown in the following statement made by Goldsmith Sadashiv when he stated before the justice-assembly presided over by the local governor: “Goldsmith Lakshman told me, ‘as I will give you Rs. 200, give me the watan’.”76 This means that the sale of watan among the same professional group (caste) was by no means extraordinary.

However, the record showing the details of the mode of division, transfer and sale of watan is rather rare. Yet there is a watan certificate (watanpatra) issued by King Shahu’s government to two Brahmin brothers surnamed Chandrachud, half accountant and half astrologer (ninme Kulkarni va Jyotishi) of Village Nimbgaon Nagana, Khed region, Junnar province, dated October 17, 1740. The record may be translated as follows:

“(Date, names of addressees, their professions etc.) You came to the camp of Satara and requested His Majesty (swami) as follows:

74 SSRPD, vol. VI, no. 816.
Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre of Atri clan (gotra), accountant and astrologer of the above village, has no son (putrasantān). (She) had to repay a debt incurred in connection with the watans as well as for living (yogakshem), and, getting old, wanted to do some offering (dana dharma). Therefore (she) offered half the watans (ninme vatan) to her son-in-law (jāhval), Lakshman Govind surnamed Tallu, and, coming to our house, sold (vikat dilhen) to us for Rs. 2,000 the other half watans of accountancy and astrology above mentioned, along with customary remunerations (kānakāyade) and house of her own accord (aple khush rajāvandine). And (she) gave (us) sales-deed (khare-dikhat) and certificate of local assembly (gotadchd maha~tfar). (We) showed them to Peshwa Bajirao and got him to grant a certificate (of the Peshwa government). Your Majesty, please take them into account, grant a watan certificate and make us carry on hereditarily.

(You) petitioned like this, and submitted sales-deed, certificate of local assembly, and certificate of the Peshwa to the presence of King.

Sales-deed. I, Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre of Atri clan, accountant and astrologer (Kulkarni va Jyotishi ashtadhikāri) of Village Nimbgaon Nagana, Khed region of Junnar province, write and hand over the following sales-deed to Mr. Baji Eshwant and Mr. Gangadhar Eshwant surnamed Chandrachud, working under the Deshpande of Junnar province, on the first day of the second half of the seventh month (ashvin vadya), the year 1656 named anand in Shaka era, the year 1135 in Suhur era, and the year 1144 (in Fasli era; 1734 A.D.).

‘Accountancy (kulkarna) and astrologership (jyotishpana) of the above village are (our) old watans. I have, however, neither son nor anyone of kindred (to succeed the watans). I have lived alone. There has been no increase of kindred (vanshavriddh) to carry on the family occupation (vritti) and service to the village (pändharichi sevā). (I) lost the hope, getting old, wanted to come to the end of my life by doing some offering, and had to repay a debt incurred for my living and family occupation. For these reasons, I offered to my son-in-law named . . . half the watans, along with house and customary remunerations, out of the accountancy and astrologership of the above village, which had been my old watans. And I have come to your house, bowed my head before you, sold to you the other half watans, including house and customary remunerations, out of the watans of accountancy and astrologership above mentioned, along with the seniority (vadilpana), and accepted Rs. 2,000 from you. The right half of the house is given to you, and the left half to Lakshman Govind (my son-in-law). Reside in the right (half), and live happily generation after generation.

‘The payment (mushāhira) for accountancy is 60 takes or Rs. 24 and three khandīs of grains (perhaps about 750 kilograms) (probably per year). Take a half of them and give the other half to Lakshman Govind, and enjoy hereditarily (ninme tuhmth gheneh va ninme Lakshman Govind yānī deīn vanshparanpareṇeḥ anabhāvīn rāhanen). (Besides) privileges (mān) for accountancy and astrologership are as follows:

Privileges for accountancy (shown to the left and right sides on the same page).

(Seven items to the left side)

1. The turban granted by the government should be received next to the headman.
2. The oil from the oil-presser (Teli) should be received from each shop daily per 9 tanks (a tank being from 3 to 13 grams in different localities).
3. A pair of shoes from leather-worker per year.
1. Water from water-carriers (Koli) should be received next to the headman.
2. A bundle of firewood (from Mahars ?) on festival days (sana).
3. The oil for ink and the cloth for covering documents are to be taken from the village (fund).
4. Betel leaves to be taken from betel leaves-seller should be received at half the amount taken by the headman.

Total seven items

(Six items to the right side)

1. On the Dewali and Dasahara festivals performance of music (by musicians at the door) is to be done next to the headman.
2. The share (seva) to be taken from gardeners should be received next to the headman.
3. The shares (utpann) to be taken as the right from (the offerings dedicated to) the shrine of the god Maltand (an incarnation of Shiva) as follows.
   a. (A cash of) two and half takes on the monthly full moon festival.
   b. Turmeric-powder (for blessing) (bhandarprasād) is to be taken next to the headman.
   c. Frankincence is to be received once the month next to the headman on Sundays of the seventh month (ashvin of the Hindu calendar).
   d. On the full moon festival of the seventh month sweets should be received at half the amount taken by the headman.

Total six items

Rights for Astrologership
1. The baluta-remuneration of the equal amount as that for shrine-keeper.
2. Share of the offering to the shrine equal to that taken by (other) baluta-servants.
3. Inām land of 25 bighas (about 8 hectares) (with the produce) of 12.5 mans (of grains, probably about 157 kilograms).

Total three items

As shown above there are 13 items of privileges for accountancy. Take a half of them yourselves and give the other half to Lakshman Govind. Regarding the shares of the rights for astrologership, too, take a half and give the other to Lakshman Govind. I have given (sold) to you half the accountancy and astrologership mentioned above. Taking the various emoluments (mānpān, hakk, utpann, vagaire lājime) live happily and enjoy hereditarily. Also I have given you the right half out of my patrimonial house-site (mirāṣchā gharthānā) and the left half to Lakshman Govind. If anyone of mine or I raise an objection to this matter my ancestors will bring a curse upon us. I have written and handed this sales-deed over to you'.

In this way (you) have brought and shown the sales-deed, the certificate attested by local assembly (mahājar gotāche sākshinīshī) and the certificate of the Peshwa. It has been clearly established by taking them into consideration that you have bought a half accountancy and a half astrologership of the above village along with customary remunerations and house from Hmalsabai, widow of Malhar Raghunath Atre, for Rs. 2,000. Accordingly His Majesty (swami) granting his favour on you has confirmed upon you and your descendants generation after generation, a half accountancy watan and a half astrologership watan of the above village along with house, payment for accountancy, inām, customary remunerations (hakk lājime kānūkāyade), seniority and turban from the government, in accordance with the sales-deed, and granted this watan certificate. Holding the
above watans yourselves perform the service of the watans, enjoy the watans for yourselves and your descendants, and live happily. A tribute of Rs. 500 is imposed upon you in two instalments in connection with the watans. Pay it and live happily."

Three points may be explained regarding the record translated above. First, the term vadilpana appears several times. This is the antonym to dhāktepana in Marathi, means to be ancestors, father, elder brothers, and seniors in general and may be properly translated into 'seniority'. Likewise dhāktepana means 'juniority'. These two terms were (even now are) often used in Marathi in connection with division of family or patrimonial properties; the holder of seniority had social (but not always economic) privileges of occupying a superior seat in a meeting, stamping the occupational seal upon documents, and having priority in receiving the emoluments and gifts, for instance. In the above record the Chandrachuds who bought half the watans held the seniority, and Lakshman Govind offered with the other half watans had juniority. Second, as mentioned before, there is difference of opinions among modern scholars as to whether village-accountant was included in baluta-servants. In the record shown above as the 13 items of privileges for accountancy do not contain the baluta-remuneration, this accountant was not considered a baluta-servant. But he was a baluta-servant as the astrologer. And third, castes such as water-carriers, betel-leaves-sellers and gardeners appear in this record. As mentioned before they belonged to a category called twelve alutas in modern works and different from baluta-servants. But as mentioned before we are not concerned here with so-called alutas.

Now the above record shows at least four important points with regard to the division of baluta-watans.

First, the division of astrologer's watans into two did not mean the emergence of two watans of astrologership, but two half watans, and watan of astrologership fo the village remained one after the division as before. This indicates that the baluta-servants were not employed by specific individual families directly but were to serve the village as one territorial unity.

Second, the object of division was not the 'service-sphere' but the 'emolument' comprising house or house-site, inām land, and various remunerations in kind and in cash. Regarding two families of astrologers shown in this record, they were expected to divide house or house-site as well as inām land into two equal shares, and then the 'senior family' was to receive all the remunerations in kind and in cash and to give a half of them to the 'junior family'; but nothing is mentioned to the effect that the two families divided the village or the sphere of service into two parts, for instance, according to the number of families of villagers. This indicates that the two families were simultaneously engaged in the work of astrology for the sake of the village as a whole.

Incidentally, not the astrology but some more official service like village-accountancy may have been faced with technical inconvenience if plural accountants existed in a village and were engaged simultaneously in the same profession. What arrangement was made in such a case is not shown in the above record. But in other record pertaining to Village Diya of Saswad region, when the accountancy was divided among a kinship group into two, the following was arranged between two branches: "you (the senior branch) are expected to eat the accountancy for three years, and we (the junior branch) for three years. But
during the five years out of the (first) six years, your (senior) three families should do the accountancy for three years, and we (junior branch) for two years in consideration of the (common) debt repaid (by the senior families). Whether the village-accountant was included among the baluta servants, here it is clear that the service-sphere for accountancy was not divided but the service was rotated between them.

At any rate, on the basis of the above evidences it may be generally stated that division of baluta-watan was not a division of service-sphere but a division of emoluments. In other words repeated division of a watan did not lead to the transformation of a baluta-servant from 'the servant of the village' to 'the servant of certain specific families'.

Thirdly, division of a baluta-watan into two did not mean the total amount of emolument being doubled; amount of emolument for the whole watan remained the same as before. That is, amount of burden for the whole villagers, and more especially for the whole peasants did not change due to the division. Accordingly it may be said that increase in the number of shares in a watan caused by its division or partial transfer was not itself a serious concern for the villagers. Therefore the division, transfer or sale of a watan could be carried out without 'permission' or 'consent' of the villagers as a whole, but merely with the voluntary will of the watan-holder. In other words, the main reason for the baluta-watan having the village as its service-sphere on the one hand, and yet being considered the 'patrimony' of its holders and able to be disposed of by their (or his) will on the other was, it may be fairly presumed, that no change occurred in the amount of burden of villagers along with such a disposal.

And fourthly, that division, transfer or sale of a baluta-watan could be carried out by the voluntary will of its holder and did not require the 'permission' or 'consent' of the village as a whole did not mean that the village as a group was in no way concerned with the transactions of baluta-watan. It may be stated as shown in the above record that for such a transaction to be effective 'confirmation by local assembly' (gotâche sâkshi) and 'the certificate of the local assembly' (gotâche mahâjâr) were required.

Now we may summarize our findings on the 'twelve baluta-servants' of the 18th century Maharashtrian village as follows:

Firstly, there were baluta-servants who held their occupation as watan or patrimony and who were merely strangers employed on temporary basis. In other words to conceive that all the village-servants held hereditary monopoly of their respective job in the village is a clear misunderstanding. Such a fixed state of affairs must have been impossible in reality; those who held hereditary monopoly sometimes transferred or sold their rights or left their sphere of service when necessary on the one hand, and there were, on the other, 'migratory servants' so to speak who looked for a vacancy in the watan system and filled it up provisionally.

Secondly, whether watan-holders or not, baluta-servants were conceived as 'the servants of the village'. In other words the village as a territorial whole was their sphere of service, and they offered their respective service to individual villagers and more especially to individual peasants belonging to this territorial community.

18 Oturkar, no. 48. "tin varshe tumhi kulkarna khâve tin varse âmhi khâve tyâst sâ varsâchi pâch varse varsâli kharchvechâmule tharvalyâpakti tin varshe tumhi rikharkâi kulkarna karâve va don varshe âmhit kavâî."
Thirdly, regarding the emoluments for the baluta-servants, the baluta-remuneration was paid by the peasants in kind or in cash at the time of harvest, and this was enjoyed both by watan-holding servants and watanless ones, so long as they worked for the village. On the other hand various additional ‘perquisites’ were borne by all the villagers including peasants on various occasions and under various pretexts, but it is not very clear if watanless servants were also entitled to them equally as watan-holders, though it may be presumed that they were. Again there were some baluta-servants who were granted with a small plot of inām land by the village or by the government. This was so enjoyed hereditarily that only watan-holding servants are presumed to have held it.

And fourthly, there was conceived to be one baluta-watan per occupation in a village. Division of the watan did not increase its number; each sharer was conceived to have its fraction. Moreover what was divided was not the sphere of service but the emoluments. Therefore so far as baluta-servants were concerned they were not transformed from ‘the servants of the village’ to ‘the servants of certain specific families’ in the process of division of watan. If they turned to be ‘the servants of families’ in later period as suggested by recent sociological works in various parts of India, they did so, it may be presumed, not because of any logical necessity inherent in the baluta system, but because of the changes and decays of the village system as a whole.

The above summary is only tentative on the basis of very limited number of evidences and subject to modification whenever new evidences contrary to it are discovered.

Now not all the servants who worked in the 18th century Maharashtrian village were either baluta-servants or so-called aluta-servants. There were some others such as priests (upādhyāy). To my knowledge many of them seem to have served certain specific families and been supported by them. We shall turn to them next.

III. Servants Employed by Families—Especially the Priests

In the Marathi records we sometimes come across the term grāmopādhyāy (priest of the village). Therefore there seem to have been priests employed by the village as a whole. But we can not make it clear how they functioned in the village.

Generally speaking, however, routine ceremonies performed in connection with sacred thread, marriage, ancestors and so on in Hindu society have been essentially family ceremonies accompanied by complicate rituals and mantras more or less different in accordance with family-god (ku!aswami), caste and religious sect of the people concerned. Religious events not directly concerned with life-cycle of the Hindus such as seasonal festivals, and festivities of the tutelary god or goddess of the village and other Hindu divinities seem to have been usually performed at the village-shrine as collective activities; yet rites of life-cycle were performed at home with the participation of officiating priests as well as close kinship group.

The priests, specialists of such rites, were usually Brahmins by caste. Exception should be mentioned, however, in this regard: as the priest was as a rule invited at home and was to

---

officiate the rite he could not do so at the home of untouchable castes such as Mahars, leather-workers, rope-makers and so on. He could officiate the rite only at the home of "clean castes" (shuddh jāti). Among the untouchables there were special priests belonging to the untouchable caste. Excluding for such cases, we may safely assume that priests were Brahmins by caste so far as "clean castes" were concerned. The Hindu shrine-keepers often referred to in this article were not priests as such but merely managers or attendants of shrines, and they were considered to be Shudras.

At any rate as the rites of life-cycle among the Hindus were complicate family events different according to caste, sect, family-god and so on, priest for such rites seems to have tended to serve only certain specific families.

To the best of my knowledge there are following two records from Saswad region which show that priests were in direct clientele relationship with specific individual families.

Record No. 1. This record dated February 7, 1746 was written by three land-holding peasants (thalví) surnamed Jadav of Village Diya of the above region to two Brahmins surnamed Pansi, accountants and astrologers of the same village. It may be translated as follows:

"(Date in Shaka era, names and occupations of the addressees, names of the addressees, Shuhur year, and Fasli year) Mr. Kando Shivdeva Pansi (one of the two addressees) came to us and told, 'since olden time your priesthood (tumche upădhepana) has been ours. Your ancestors used to let our ancestors perform the rites. Until now you are also doing the same. Recently, however, your steward (majmudar) Ragho Anant telling a lie started a dispute with us. We do not understand this. You and we are brothers bound by watan (wataandār bhāū). In accordance with the ancestral usage you and we should behave'. Then, in our thought, you are original priests (mid upedhe). We shall make you officiate the rites generation after generation just according as our ancestors used to pay the perquisites (mānpān) for priesthood to your ancestors. Steward Ragho Anant has nothing to dispute with you. Ragho Anant is doing the work (kārbhār) with us in his own way (? yekhatarine), and therefore we did not know (his dispute). If an adverse time (kālkālā) takes place hereafter when (we) grant document (of priesthood to him) or appoint (him) to priesthood from our carelessness, (we shall) remove him. Ragho Anant, his relatives or any others have no reason anywhere to trouble your priesthood at our family (ghar) or at the family (ghar) of our kinship group (bhauband). You and your kinship group of the Pansis should enjoy upto your descendants priesthood of our family (āmche gharche upādhepana), worship of gods (deva devatārchān), spiritual guidance (āchyāryatvan), rite of offering (dāndharmāsh), sacrifice for fire and god (hāvekāvē), marriage (lagna), re-marriage (muhūrta) and other perquisites (mānpān) with complete peace of mind, and perform the priesthood hereditarily and freely from care. If we deviate from you on this matter, curse of our family-god will fall upon us and our kinship group. Please carry on the profession of your priesthood (āple upādhepanācht birt) with contented mind both in home country (shvadesi) and foreign country (videsi)."

Record No. 2. This record is also from Sawad region, but its first half is unfortunately

---

82 Oturkar, no. 49.
lost. At the end of the record there are two lines: “This statement is written and submitted. By the hand of Mahadaji Balal Gokhale, revenue-farmer and accountant of the above village,” and, “Such are written in the seven items above. Signed by Narashinbhat Bapat dated the 10th day of the second half of the 4th month in the year 1696 in Shaka era, the year called jaya (August 1, 1774 A.D.).” The name of the ‘above village’ as well as the first two of the ‘seven items above’ are, however, not shown for the first half of the record is lost.

At any rate it appears that a Brahmin named Narashibhat Bapat had this record written by Mahadaji Balal Gokhale, which was a statement submitted by the former to some local assembly when a dispute started over a priesthood in a village between him and another Brahmin surnamed Paranjapye. Of the five items shown in the existing record only significant parts will be translated as follows:

1. When Brahmin clients belonging to Apastanbha or Rigvedi sect (āpastanbha athvā rugvedī yejmnā) perform great rite (māhā anushthān) at the shrine dedicated to god Vishveshvar (an incarnate of Shiva), the guidance (āchāryapana) and putting the fire on the altar ((kuṇḍmaṇap) are ours (Bapat’s).
2. At the families of Rigvedi Brahmins, the second water-pot (? dusrā kalash) as well as brahmatva (?) are ours and the priesthood (upādhepana) is Paranjapye’s.
3. There is no dispute between us and Paranjapye regarding the priesthood for Brahmins. Both the parties are carrying on as before. (the rest omitted)
4. Dispute has been going on for the last two or four years as regards to the priesthood for peasants (kunbi). (the rest omitted)
5. Our ancestors have been carrying on the priesthood of the families of peasant and other castes of the above village (mārje maļkure kunbi vagaire khum yache gharche upādhepana), and Paranjapye is carrying on (the priesthood of) some (families). While this was the case, Bālanbhāt Paranjape, father of Lakshmanbhāt Paranjane, gave some (money) to shrine-keeper (Gurao), Marathā by caste, and several peasants (kulbi) of the village, collected them to the shrine dedicated to a goddess, and formed a party (kat) by saying, ‘let us expel such peasants (kunbi, the last two letters bi and following several words lost)... who support the priest (Bapat) from their caste,’ and putting five coconuts on five places. (the rest omitted)

Three points should be particularly noted in the above record. Firstly the term yejmnā appears in the sense of clients vis-à-vis a Brahmin priest: prototype of the so-called jajmani system.

Secondly, although Priest Bapat conducted the guidance and one more function at the ‘great rite’ performed by Brahmin clients at the shrine as well as some specific functions at the ceremonies instituted at Brahmin families, the priesthood as such at the rites of Brahmin families was performed by another priest surnamed Paranjapye. Bapat’s priesthood was limited to the families of ‘peasant and other castes’, who may be collectively called ‘clean Shudras’. This indicates that the principle delimiting the service-sphere for a priest was not the territorial principle like a village but pseudo-consanguinity of caste as an endogamous group. The fact that though ‘peasant and other castes’ served by

83 Ibid., no. 66, p. 47.
84 Ibid., p. 46.
Bapat are stated to have been of ‘the above village’, nothing is mentioned of the Brahmins served by Paranjapye as to where they resided also suggests that the sphere of service for a priest was determined not by territorial but by pseudo-consanguineous principle. Moreover, it is also not clear regarding both Bapat and Paranjapye whether they resided in ‘the above village’. As the first part of the record is lost we can not say definitely; yet it is quite possible that they or one of them resided in some other village or town not very far from ‘the above village’. At any rate it may be fairly repeated that sphere of service for a family priest tended to be confined to certain specific caste (or castes).

And thirdly, Parajapye had been the priest of Brahmin families since ‘before’, and Bapat was likewise the family priest of ‘peasant and other castes’ since ‘ancestors’. This means that both held their priesthood hereditarily in fact. This record does not, however, clarify whether their hereditary service-sphere was confined to certain caste (or castes) or to certain specific families belonging to such caste (or castes). This point is important when we remember that there were broadly two classes among the peasants as well as among the rural servants: landholding peasants (mirāṣādōrs, thalkarīs or thālvāīs) and temporary peasants (uparīs) among peasantry; and watan-holding servants (watandar balute) and temporary servants (uparī balute) among rural servants. In other words whereas families of landholding peasants as well as watan-holding rural servants could employ a certain priest on the permanent basis (that is, hereditarily) as is clearly shown in the Record No. 1 above unless they disposed of their family property entirely and left the village for ever, temporary peasants and servants could not do so in principle however long they may have resided in the same village. They could employ a priest suitable for their caste (or castes) on ad hoc basis. Accordingly the ‘peasant and other castes’ shown in the fifth item of the above Record No. 2 may be presumed to have included both permanent and temporary clients for Bapat.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

We may summarize our tentative findings as follows:

First, the servants in the 18th century Maharashtrian village who were categorized into ‘twelve baluta-servants’ served and were maintained by the village as a territorial whole. In this sense the old theory or demiurgic theory as we put at the beginning of this article as against the new theory or jajmani theory was correct. But there was a clear distinction amongst them between those who held their sphere of service and accompanying emoluments as their watan or patrimony and those who did not have such a watan and worked in a certain village for a temporary period (namely uparīs).

And secondly, there were priests (upādhyāya) in the village as well. They were Brahmins by caste and often concurrently worked as village-accountants and (or) astrologers. The service-sphere of a priest was determined not by the territorial principle but by pseudo-consanguineous principle. That is, his service-sphere tended to be limited to certain caste (or castes). This was, it may be presumed, due to the fact that routine rites among the Hindus were intensely various for the different castes. Moreover, ceremonies of life-cycle among the Hindus were essentially family rites performed at individual families, so that the priest tended to serve certain specific families of certain caste (or castes). Such families (yejmān) were, however, either permanent or temporary clients of the priest in accordance
with their economic status.

In short the new (jajmani) theory propounded by the recent sociologists on rural India is acceptable for the family priesthood, but not for the twelve baluta-servants so far as the 18th century Maharashtra is concerned. At the same time, however, there is hardly any doubt as is empirically demonstrated by a number of modern sociological works that in many parts of modern India many of the rural servants were until recently (or are even now to a great extent) under the mode of employment that may be termed jajmani. Then this may indicate that during the British period the territorial social group called village was greatly disorganized or disintegrated so that village-servants were transformed into family-servants. But unfortunately for us, sociological surveys on modern rural Maharashtra are so scarce that we are unable now to compare our findings with the modern state of affairs. It is yet to be studied whether the mode of employment which can be categorized as jajmani system can be widely found among the former baluta-servants in the modern rural Maharashtra. Finally, however, it may be interesting to note that H.H. Mann still regarded the baluta-servants in the two Maharashtrian villages as essentially 'servants of the village' during 1910's.85

(October 25, 1971)

---