

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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Let it not be forgotten, ... that, after nearly half a century of peaceable and undisturbed possession, it [the East India Company] has left the fairest province of Western India, from which it has drawn so much more, and its exactions from which sometimes amounted almost to a general confiscation (e.g. Kirkland's assessment in Broach), - that it has left this province, - so rich, so fertile, so full of promise, and so susceptible of improvement; and that, too, in an age when even the most supine are more or less quickened with the desire for progress, in a condition, as regards all its material interests, as backward as it is possible for it to have been in at the time of Arrian of Alexander the Great.

(Alexander Mackay, Western India, 1853, pp. 262-63)

The first fifty years of the nineteenth century have been deemed by scholars to be a period of immense significance for the economic history of the Indian subcontinent. Immanuel Wallerstein in a recent article, sees two kinds of qualitative change that constituted the incorporation of the Indian subcontinent into the capitalist world economy : "the reorganization of productive structures such that they participate responsively in the social division of labour; reorganization of the political structures such that they facilitate this economic participation." Wallerstein further comments that the "economic change was more concentrated in time, occurring largely in the first half of the nineteenth century".¹ Amal Tripathi expressed a similar opinion thirty years ago : "As the commercial monopoly of the Company succumbed to the much stronger economic force of industrial capitalism, so

1. "Incorporation of Indian Subcontinent into Capitalist World Economy", Economic and Political Weekly, XXI, 4, "Review of Political Economy", January 25, 1986, p. PE 30. The political change, he says, took longer time, occurring over a hundred years, i.e. 1757-1857.

did the agrarian economy of India, which was the basis of that monopoly, to the industrial economy of Britain."² The importance of this phase in terms of changes of far-reaching consequences is generally accepted by historians.³ This can perhaps be seen as a period of transition from pre-colonial to colonial Indian economy.

This thesis is an attempt to study the fortunes of a local economy, specifically the agrarian economy of district Broach, under colonial dispensation during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Broach was celebrated for its textiles and cotton produce well before the British takeover.⁴ Its fertile soils and fairly high level of cultivation had contributed to its richness while its port activities attracted foreigners to its trade. The coastal district of Gujarat lies between 21 deg. 25' 45" and 22 deg. 15' 16" north latitude and 72 deg. 34' 19" and 73 deg. 12' 15" east longitude. It had a total area of 1458 square miles. Separated on the north by the Mahi river from the territory of Cambay and Kaira district, Broach was bounded on the west by the Gulf of Cambay. On the east and partly on the south, it was bounded by the states of Baroda and Rajpipla. The Kim river on the south formed its geographical boundary separating it from the Olpad pargana of Surat district. The lands of the district formed an alluvial plain 54 miles in length from north to south, sloping gently westward to the shore of the Gulf. In breadth this plain varied from 30 miles to over 40 in the north, about 25 miles further south, narrowing again until, at the Kim river, the eastern boundary was not more than 20 miles distant from the sea. Geo

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2. Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, 1792-1833, Bombay 1953, p. 137
 3. See Morris D. Morris & Burton Stein, "The Economic History of India: A Bibliographic Essay", *Journal of Economic History*, XXI, 2 (1961), p. 181; Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India 1781-1906*, London 1970, pp. 243-44; K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company, 1814-38*, London 1971, pp. 2-3; Sumit Guha, "Society and Economy in the Deccan, 1818-50", *IESHR*, XX, 4 (1983), pp. 412-13; Immanuel Wallerstein, *OE.S.II.*, pp. PE 28-PE 39.
 4. M.S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, II, Bombay 1957, pp. 300, 302; Surendra Gopal Commerce and Crafts in Gujarat, 16th and 17th Centuries, New Delhi 1973, pp. 157-59, 171, 192-93, 205-06, 221, 228; Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Dec line of Surat, c.1700-1750*, Wiesbaden 1979, pp. 49-50, 145, 155 & n

graphically the four rivers, Mahi, Dhadhar, Narbada and Lim⁵ divided the district into three parts, almost peninsular in form.

The district comprised of six parganas when the British acquired its full possession. Broach pargana was obtained by conquest from Daulat Rao Sindhia in August 1803. By the treaty of Bassein, December 31, 1802, Ankleshwar and Hansot parganas were ceded to the British by the Peshwa. But they were incorporated into the Broach Collectorate only in 1805. The three parganas of Jambusar, Amod and Dahej were obtained from the Peshwa by the treaty of Poona on June 13, 1817, thus completing the unit of our study.⁶ The only administrative change made in the district was the bifurcation of the large Broach pargana in 1828-29. It was divided into two almost equal parts, Broach and Vagra parganas.⁷

The sarkar of Broach was one of the fertile regions of the Mughal Empire. In 1723, during his governorship of Gujarat, Nizam-ul-mulk had declared the choicest parts of this territory, comprising of the parganas of Broach, Jambusar and Amod, as his Jagir.⁸ However, upon establishing himself in the Deccan, Nizam-ul-mulk entrusted the administration of Broach to its fouidar, Abdullah Beg. But it was not long before Abdullah Beg took advantage of the chaotic conditions and the remoteness of Nizam-ul-mulk to declare his independence and assume the title of Nal Alam Khan, thus founding a short lived line of nawabs at Broach.

Concomitant with the rise of nawabs was the growth of two tendencies which played a considerable role in shaping the agrarian regime of the region in the second half of the 18th century. These

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5. ✓ Bombay Presidency Gazetteer, Vol II Surat and Broach, 1877, pp. 337-39; Alexander Rogers, The Land Revenue of Bombay, Vol I, 1892, p. 130.
 6. Monier Williams, Memoir of the Zilla of Baroche, Bombay 1855 p.ii; A Rogers, op.cit., p.131.
 7. ✓ M.Kirkland, Broach Sub-Collector to John Vibart, Principal Collector, No. 487, 1.7.1834, Revenue Department (henceforward R.D.), 7/629, 1835, paras 95-98.
 8. M.S.Commissariat, op.cit., p.408.
 9. ✓ J. Morley to Bombay, 6.5.1772, Surat Factory Diary No. 661 cited in Gense and Banaji, Guilwads of Baroda (henceforward G.O.B.), Vol II, n.d., pp. 76-77.

were the ascendance of pargana level hereditary revenue functionaries through a process of aggrandizement of power and resources; and, secondly, the development of a financial institution called manotidari. A brief note on these development would help us in putting later developments in clearer perspective.

The dismemberment of the Mughal empire paved the way for the rise of a host of regional and local forces each contending to establish for itself small centres of authority and wealth. The activities of the nawabs of Broach are an apt illustration of the decay of traditional power relations and their replacement by new ones. By and large the interests of elements at the top of the pyramid came to be confined to the expeditious collection of revenues. The uncertain conditions of the times made them heavily dependent on the traditional revenue functionaries. In the absence of an effective centralising force, the revenue functionaries exercised arbitrary powers eventually becoming a force to reckon with in the countryside.¹⁰

The desais and majmudars were two important categories of pargana level revenue functionaries during the Mughal period. They were the counterparts of chaudhuris and ganungos of northern India.¹¹ While the duty of the desai was to superintend the

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10. 'Introduction' to Gissa-i-Ghamgin (an 18th century chronicle in Urdu related to Broach) by Munshi Abbas Ali (ed. Satish C. Mishra), Baroda 1975, p.8; See also R.E. Frykenberg's "Traditional Process of Power in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence", IESHR, I, 2(1963) pp.122-42; "Elite Groups in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence", Journal of Asian Studies, February 1965, pp. 61/80; Guntur District, 1788-1848: An History of Local Influence on Central Authority, Oxford 1965.
 11. B.R.Grover argues that the office of desai was a distinct feature of Gujarat and cannot be identified with any of the local officials like patwaris, mugaddams, Chaudhuris, and Shiddars. See his article, "The Position of Desai in the Pargana Administration of Subah Gujarat under the Mughals", Proceedings Indian History Congress, Delhi Session 1961, pp. 150-55. But a detailed correspondence that occurred between Delhi and Ahmedabad during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign (c.1663), which was discovered by the Revenue Commission chaudhuris and ganungos were called desais and majmudars. Vide their Report of 31.5.1807, R.D., 59,1808 paras 32-33 and an enclosure to the Report containing the translation of the original official documents.

revenue affairs of the villages, the majmudar was the head accountant and record-keeper of the pargana.¹² Traditionally the desai enjoyed a preponderant position in the revenue administration of Broach pargana. In the 1720s Khusal Rai was the principal desai of Broach. In recognition of his position and services, Khusal Rai was conferred with the inam of a village called Kalam by Qamar-ud-din Khan, a yazir of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. This revenue free grant of the village was confirmed by Sarbuland Khan in 1136 A.H. (c.1729 A.D.).¹³

Khusal Rai's contemporary Bhaidasbhai, the principal majmudar was then in a secondary position. But after the establishment of nawabi rule in Broach, Bhaidasbhai exploited the family tension between the desai brothers in his favour. It was believed that he got the principal desai poisoned in 1736.¹⁴ With the reduction of his powerful rival in local administration, Bhaidasbhai manipulated to gain prominence. When the Gaekwads of Baroda secured a 3/5th share in the revenues of Broach in 1741,¹⁵ the majmudar shifted his loyalties to them. Bhaidasbhai managed to get a sanad conferring a village called Mungleshwar in inam on himself. The sanad was signed by Gazi-ud-din, a yazir of Alangir Gany. Subsequently the inam was confirmed by Damajirao Gaikwad in Samyat 1812 (c.1756 A.D.).¹⁶ Bhaidasbhai died in 1764. His son Bhukandas retained the majmudari till his death in 1767. Since the latter had no son, he adopted his nephew Lallubhai who emerged as a powerful figure in Broach. In a sense Lallubhai majmudar epitomizes the predominance of the local factor in shaping up the latter decades of the 18th century. By his intelligence, shrewdness, and knowledge of the locality, Lallubhai won the confidence of Nawab Muaziz Khan and became his close advisor.¹⁷

12. Alexander Walker's Report, S.4.1804, C.D., 44, 1805, paras 34-39.

13. 'Proceedings' of a Committee established to ascertain the validity of various landed claims in Broach, Broach Factory Diary (Henceforward BFD), 262, 1776-77.

14. George Perrott, the collector of Broach in 1776, maintained a record of the rivalry between the desai and majmudar families. Vide his letter 16.5.1778. B.F.D. 262, 1776.

15. Gense and Banaji, The Gaikwads of Baroda, Vol I, p.41; Commissariat, op.cit., p.475.

16. 'Proceedings' of the Committee, B.F.D., 262, 1776.

17. George Perrot. 16.5.1776, B.F.D. 262, 1776.

So great was the nawab's trust in him that when the nawab left for Bombay in 1771 to negotiate matters with the British he entrusted the entire administration to Lallubhai by a mukhtiar-nama.¹⁸ The nawab also declared him as his divan.¹⁹ Besides financial and administrative duties, Lallubhai also performed diplomatic tasks.¹⁹

When the British captured Broach in 1772 ousting the nawab, they felt the services of Lallubhai were indispensable for he was considered the 'repository' of local knowledge. Despite the fact that the British found the influence wielded by the majmudar "to the last Degree contrary to the Principles of a British Government and highly prejudicial to the Interests of the Hon'ble Company",²⁰ they could not ignore him. During the survey of Broach, it was observed by officials that Lallubhai over assessed the lands held by partisans of his rivals, and the patels had no courage to oppose him in his presence as "such is the Dread of his influence from the authority he formerly possessed, and the attention shewn to Him since, that the Patels themselves acknowledge in his presence the propriety of assessments which before and since they have in the strongest Terms shewn their inability to Pay".²¹

Lallubhai typifies the conduct of a selfseeking revenue functionary. He was adept at transferring his loyalties and service to whosoever was at the helm of affairs and he won privileges and profits for himself. Once the new ruler was in command he would conveniently abandon his former master. Thus he not only abandoned the nawab when he saw in him a sinking ship but, according to one report at least, helped the British in occupying Broach.²² No

18. K.M.Jhaveri, "Bharuchno Nawab Sahabe Sheth Lallubhai ne Apelun Kulmukhtiarpatra" in Shri Forbes Gujarat Sabha Traimasil (in Gujarati), Vol III, No. 4 (Jan-Mar 1939).

19. Several letters were written by Lallubhai to the Bombay Government negotiating the settlement of issues between the nawab and the British. See Gense and Banaji, G.O.B. II, pp. 35-40; See also Satish C. Misra, op.cit., p. 9.

20. George Perrott's Report, 16.5.1776, B.F.D. 262, 1776; See also Commissariat, op.cit. Vol. III, Ahmedabad 1980, pp. 717-18.

21. George Perrott's Report, op.cit.,

22. Several pages are devoted in the Qissa to the treacherous role he played in defeating his master's interests. Cf. Satish Misra, op.cit., passim; Commissariat, Vol. III, p. 717.

sooner was Broach ceded to the Sindhias in 1783, he shifted his allegiance, thereby eliciting the following comment from Cruso, the British agent at Broach (1785) : "he [Lallubhai] has contrived to hold the same situation under the Mahratta Government; but is no longer a friend to his former employers, and ungratefully acts on all occasions in opposition to the English interest."²³

In 1791 Lallubhai took the revenues of Broach on farm and imposed an all time high land tax of ten lac rupees. He oppressively collected lacs of rupees over and above the stipulated sum. The next year when the patels brought the state of affairs to the notice of Sindhias the latter confiscated an amount of Rs. 5,75,000 from Lallubhai.²⁴ But, by then the exorbitant taxation had adversely affected agricultural production and Lallubhai's collection dwindled to half of his farm. The Sindhias hence ordered his arrest. The oppressions of Lallubhai was a topic of frequent discussion in the pargana even after his death.²⁵

During his tenure Lallubhai's major interest had come to be centred on the acquisition of land. Besides an entire village procured in inam, he managed to acquire large portions of land in wazifa and pasaita in almost every village in the pargana.^{25a} Furthermore, around 1777 he held 780 bighas of land in mortgage in addition to some land purchased by him.²⁶ Yet another way in which he augmented his resources was by the imposition of new veras (cesses) during the time the revenues of Broach were farmed to him.²⁷

23. Cited in James Forbes, Oriental Memoirs, Vol. III, London 1813, p. 467.

24. Govind Natha's Account, 11.1.1804, R.D., 44, 1805; 'Memoranda' by a son of ex nawab, n.d., R.D. 100, 1815.

25. Dassubhai Yusufji, the mugaddam of village Dyadra, to Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, 8.11.1803, R.D., 39, 1803.

25a. The pasaita land was given to village servants including artisans in lieu of their services. Since it was a revenue free tenure, the revenue functionaries managed to get some land under this denomination.

26. 'Proceedings' of the Committee, B.F.D., 262, 1776-77.

27. For example one of the cesses invented by Lallubhai was the
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What has been outlined above about the principal majmudar family is equally true of the principal desai family, though with a difference of degree. Indeed it typifies the process of self aggrandisement whereby even lesser majmudars and desais endeavoured to create pockets of wealth and privilege by the arbitrary use of advantages offered them by their position in the revenue machinery. The predominance of the 'local influence' in the latter half of the 18th century appears to be, in an essential sense, the concretisation of exceptional powers and resources in the hands of erstwhile revenuefunctionaries and their ability to hold the scene for some time to come.

A conspicuous feature of 18th century land revenue system is the institution of manotidari. In his Glossary H.H.Wilson defines the institution as one "especially becoming surety for payment of the revenue to the government or to a farmer of the revenue, and receiving heavy commission from the revenue payer"²⁸. It is difficult to establish the exact date as to when the institution came to be recognized as a device in the collection of land revenue. The Mirat-i-Ahmadi which offers a detailed account of the history and institutions of Gujarat, compiled in c 1761, does not mention it. But in Broach Factory Diaries, written between 1772 and 1783 during the first administration of Company rule at Broach, there are frequent references to manotidari²⁹. By then the institution was widely prevalent in Gujarat, particularly in its central and southern parts.

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ghee vera. He used to celebrate festival and ceremonies in commemoration of the birth and death of the two gurus of his uncle Bhukandas Bhaidas and his father Dayaldas. The patels of every village were asked to supply one maund of ghee on these occasions, which gradually became a regular practice. When the price of ghee rose to 11 rupees a maund, Lallubhai started gathering eleven rupees from every village. See Enclosure No. 61 to Revenue Commission's Report, 31.3.1907, R.D., 59, 1808.

28. A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms. Calcutta 1940, p.516.

29. And even the British had to resort to the practice. A letter from Bombay was received at Broach on 19th March, 1776 informing that a treaty might be concluded with the Marathas within three days whereby the Company would have to cede parts of Broach. The collector was directed to "collect as much of the Revenues of all the ceded places as possible". James Cheape who was rushed to Amod to expedite the revenue collection, wrote on 21st March that "immediately on my arrival here, I took the necessary steps, but I find that the manotidars here, who are men but of small property, have no other means for raising the money they pay to the Govern-
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R. Barnwell reported from Paira that "the burden of ancient debts to manoteedars in this province (are) particularly heavy - and such as have been incurred for years in past in times of severity and oppression".³⁰ And this does not appear to be unique feature of Gujarat. S.C. Gupta points out that the practice of taking sureties for land revenue was quite prevalent in north India in the second half of the 18th century.³¹

An understanding of manotidari requires a brief reference to the practical functioning of the land revenue system, that is, its mode of assessment and collection. The assessment of land revenue was made twice a year. In the month of October when Uharif crop was ready, the government mehias (talatis), havalgars and malzabtis were despatched to the villages. The mehta was supposed to prepare a statement of the cultivated land of the village and the duty of the havalgar and malzabti was to guard the crops against any kind of 'misappropriation' by the peasants. In the next stage the mehta's statement was forwarded to desais, majmudars and amin patels who prepared the dangur tauji or assessment on the first crop. In principle they were supposed to finalize the assessment on the basis of the preceding years' revenues and the current conditions of the crops. However, during our period of study there was a widespread tendency to settle the dangur tauji at an enhanced rate. The objective, a rather nefarious one, was to reap a heavy rate of interest on that part of the assessment which the peasant failed to pay up. In other words the dangur tauji of this period was often contrived to produce arrears. The latter was sought to be realized with interest at the time of the main crop of rabi.³²

ment than by carrying to market the Produce of the Lands, & that consequently they must have time, as they are utterly unable to pay". B.F.D., 262, 1776, folios 53-58.

30. letter to H.W. Diggle, 27.4.1807, R.D., 57, 1807, paras 2-3.

31. Agrarian Relations and Early British Rule in India, Bombay 1963, pp. 27-28, 30n, & 105.

32. Broach Board's Consultations, 27.5.1776, B.F.D., 262, 1776, folios 138; Revenue Commission's Report, 25.8.1805, R.D., 48-A, 1806, para 23; Revenue Commission's Report, 31.3.1807, R.D., 59, 1808, paras 18 & 23.

At the time of jamabandi (February/March) all the prominent patels from different villages were required to assemble at the pargana headquarters. The statements of jamabandi were prepared in the same manner as described above and at this stage the patels were directed to furnish manoti (surety) for revenue settled on their villages. Now the manotidars were contacted and contract notes were exchanged between the government, patels and manotidars each one pledging to abide by its respective contract (See Appendices B, C, and D for such bonds). From this point onward the entire village was entrusted to the manotidar who assumed charge of the khali (the barn yard). The government guards were removed and replaced by the mehta, havaldars and gumashta of the manotidar.³³

Manotidari involved a number of obligations on the part of the peasantry. The manotidar charged a premium of 3% on the state demand.³⁴ The arrears of dangur tauji were charged at the rate of 5% per month till the rabi crop was harvested.³⁵ In case the sale of the rabi crop was insufficient to clear the debts, the manotidar charged an interest of 45% per annum for the rest of the year.³⁶ Moreover, to undertake cultivation in the following year the peasants had to borrow money from the manotidar, a talavi

33. B.F.D., 262, 1776, folios 138.

34. Alexander Walker's Report, 8.4.1804, F.D., 44, 1805, para 31; Revenue Commission, 25.8.1805, R.D., 487A, 1806, para 23.

35. Broach Board's Consultations, 16.7.1773, B.F.D., 259, 1773; Joseph Smith pointed out "the very great distress the patels, to take money, even at the exorbitant interest of from 25 to 37 p.cent for only five months, which made them in a manner slaves to the monied inhabitants of this Place, who still have old Demands upon them under which they oppress them". letter of 26.7.1775, BFD, 261, 1775.

36. Broach Board Consultations 16.6.1773, BFD, 259, 1773; Consultations 10.4.1781, BFD, 267, 1781; Alexander Walker, 8.4.1804, R.D., 44, 1805, para 31.

loan, at the rate of 5% per month.³⁷

In addition to these usurious exactions, a number of fringe benefits were enjoyed by the manotidar and his employees. For instance the best grain could be procured by him at nominal rates for his personal use and for his barbaris (servants).³⁸ Quite often the maktedar or revenue farmer was himself a manotidar.³⁹ Alexander Walker observed that in a situation where "the Multedar of Farmer, was himself a Manoteedar, his interest led him to league with these securities & the whole combined against the unhappy ryot who was involved in accounts & confounded by Calculations, which he did not comprehend, or if he understood them & detected the knavery, he was obliged to submit to this double authority".⁴⁰

Though the manotidars came mainly from the bania caste (generally the shroff residing in towns), a few brahmins could also be counted amongst them. Quite often the dosais and majmudars themselves tendered sureties and played the role of the manotidar.⁴¹ Evidently, the undertaking could be handled by moneyed men capable of extending advances to the state from their accumulated wealth. These groups were the principal beneficiaries of a system that had trapped the peasantry in its vicious cycle of indebtedness and usury. Quite often the peasant was subjected to oppression by the manotidars. Commenting on the manotidars, James Forbes, a British official working in the region in the last quarter of the 18th century wrote : "the cunning, chicanery, and wickedness of the manotoedars cannot easily be described, or comprehended, by a generous mind,"

37. Alexander Walker's Report, 8.4.1804, R.D., 44, 1805, para 31; In another letter to William Steadman dated 25.2.1801, Walker enclosed a schedule of debts due from 47 villages which Farbhudas, who was a revenue farmer, had held himself in manoti. The debt amounted to Rs. 25,668. Another Rs.1313, taken as takavi remained unpaid from these villages. Thus on an average Rs. 574 were against every village as a debt to the manotidar. R.D., 44, 1805.

38. Revenue Commission 25.8.1805. R.D., 48-A, 1806, para 23.

39. Andre Wink explains that "the word most commonly used to describe a farm of land revenue, of custom-duties (zalat), or of any other item, is makta (a magta; corrupt form malakta). It was applied, in this sense, interchangeably with ijara". "Maratha Revenue Farming, Modern Asian Studies, 17, 4 (1983), p.595

40. Alexander Walker, 8.4.1804, R.D., 44, 1804, para 33; James Forbes, Oriental Memoirs Vol II, p. 419.

41. Broach Board, Consultations of 27.5.1776, B.F.D., 362, 1776; Jambusar Resident's letter 27.11.1779, B.F.D., 365, 1779; See also James Forbes, Oriental Memoirs, II, p. 419.

unused to their artful wiles".⁴² The Revenue Commissioners at Broach reported in the beginning of the 19th century that the outstanding claims of manotidars in the district amounted to nearly twenty lacs of rupees. They observed :

"the Bonds or notes for which the patels have, in most instance been forced by threatening (sic.), flogging, or the torture during the Maratha Government to sign as to the fluctuating circumstances and degree of influence the manotidars had with the durbar enabled them to do so with impunity."⁴³

The tightening control of samindars (i.e. the pargana level revenue functionaries) over the peasants, the farming of the land tax, and manotidari appear to be characteristic developments in the political economy of Gujarat during the second half of the 18th century. It is difficult to say with any degree of precision in what way these features affected agricultural production. However, Andre Wink has attempted to demonstrate in a recent article that such practices did not hamper production. On the contrary "revenue farming was one of the organizational means of agrarian restoration and expansion, internal as well as external".⁴⁴ It is difficult to agree with Wink. In the case of Broach, there seems to have been no agrarian crisis or collapse in the pre-colonial decades for farming (or manotidari for that matter) to step in as restorer. Conversely under such practices there were reports of peasants abandoning cultivation and fleeing from one place to another.⁴⁵ The adverse effects of revenue farming are best exemplified by the history of Lallubhai Majmudar.

The manotidar or revenue farmer's extension of talavi loans for the purchase of seed, is hardly an indication of their concern to extend or improve agriculture. In the context of the progressive impoverishment of the peasantry, the extension of talavi loans (and other seemingly 'philanthropic' measures) served as yet another element in the vicious hold that manotidars and their

42. Oriental Memoirs, II, p.419.

43. Broach Revenue Commission to Bombay 25.8.1805, R.D., 48-A, 1806, para 22.

44. "Maratha Revenue Farming", op.cit., p. 592.

45. Representation of Dasubhai Patel to the Governor of Bombay, 18.11.1803, R.D., 39, 1803.

ill: acquired over the agrarian system, turning it into an instrument of profit-making.

In the chapter that follows I have tried to outline the geography of Broach with reference to the infrastructure of agrarian production obtaining in the district. The general feature that emerges is the predominance of dry-farming in the district, with irrigation never accounting for more than an insignificant one per cent of the total cultivated area at any given time of our period. Nonetheless, it was an area where agriculture came to be greatly commercialised. Symptomatic of this was the extensive cultivation of cotton as a cash-crop. The origins of this process were antecedent to the British takeover. The nature of soil had largely favoured the predominance accorded to cotton cultivation in this part of Gujarat. The land revenue, generally collected in cash in the eighteenth century, was a strong factor in the monetization of economy.

The third chapter deals with the systems of land tenure. As a large part of the total land in the district was arable, and almost all of it was already under the plough by the close of the eighteenth century, the rights on land were fairly well established. The large part of it was managed under the bhagdari or coparcenary tenure, wherein land was held by and divided among the members of the same lineage. This tenure had survived the upheavals of the political and economic climate of the eighteenth century. But a significant portion of such land was let out to tenants either from within the village or from outside. The system due to its prohibition on the sale of bhagdari lands to individuals other than those of the bhagdari lineage had helped in perpetuating the supremacy of the dominant caste over the rest of the village inhabitants. There was a substantial portion of land, amounting to nearly forty per cent of the arable which the British termed as 'alienated', that is held by groups with superior rights. The most important of them were the grasias, erstwhile warring chiefs, holding wanta lands. Apparently these two major tenures reflected a tension in the agrarian society as far as the ownership of landed property was concerned. The British appear to be strengthening their economic base by reducing

the wanta holders who enjoyed revenue exemption and promoting the bhagdars who were the revenue paying block, as far as their machinery permitted them.

Chapter four sets out the revenue history of the district, specially the statistical data on the assessment and collection of land tax. The implementation of the regressive taxation structure introduced by the British was accompanied by efforts at rationalizing and modernising the apparatus of administration. This had far reaching implications for the economy as a whole, particularly between 1820 and the 1850s when depression in agricultural prices coupled with heavy assessment increasingly resulted in peasant indebtedness and a noticeable decline in their capacity to meet the revenue demand. Although the crushing state demand was sought to be countered by a series of remission, especially after 1830, such piecemeal concessions failed to avert a serious crisis in the agrarian order. With mass poverty becoming the hallmark of the 1840s, a common feature of the times was the attachment of peasant properties, eventually leading to an outcry from district officials to rescue the tottering economic system by imposing some check on the ever growing greed for revenue profits.

The fifth chapter analysis the social milieu in which the drama of underdevelopment was unfolding. Under the umbrella of 'Pax-Britannica' the agrarian society was gradually integrated into a wider nexus. The period witnessed dissolution of some old institutions and old ties. New conflicts cropped up. Under colonial dispensation, a very small section of rural society emerged as a 'rich' peasant class in the face of widespread depression. Although caste continued to define social space, the emergence of 'class' as an historically operative category is noticeable too.

The response of the peasantry to the entire scenario has also been touched in this ~~chapter~~ chapter. The peasants do not emerge as passive spectators. In the initial years of British rule, there was an attempt toward organised resistance against the monopolising tendency of the Company government. The later and more persistent protests against increased assessment, and corruption of government officials, appear to be more "constitutional in nature. The peasants resorted to the instrumentality of 'petition' in displaying their grievances with an expectation of being heard and corrected. There seems to be an implicit (at times even explicit) faith in the goodwill of the Company government and the fair-mindedness of its officials. Keeping pace with the growing crisis there was a flood of petitions and litigations. However, as the crisis deepened the tone of the petitions changed; from simple pleadings to aggressive accusations against the instruments of power. Even the highest authority, in the district, the collector is not spared of the charges of oppression, high-handedness, and injustice. It would be of some interest to explore the bearings of all this on the state of peasant consciousness.

The argument is summed up in the concluding chapter. The classic features of underdevelopment emerged throughout the economy, rural as well as urban. Side by side with an agrarian crisis there was in the process of deurbanisation. The textile manufacture of the district suffered heavily, resulting in a fall in urban employment. No less than in the villages, poverty crippled the urban centres culminating in what is termed as the 'ruralization of economy'.

Lastly a word about the sources. I have gone through the available manuscript documents in the Bombay archives. The very large number of volumes on the district inspire awe by their sheer magnitude. Additionally they are a living testimony to the operation of colonialism and the efforts it made to record information copiously. I feel that 'selections' from these records (printed later) can hardly be a substitute for the originals - considering the richness of data contained in the latter. The selections at best provide a very general and limited picture of the situation.

Further, there is the difference in the kind of data one gets for the first half of the century compared with what one gets for the later half. The statistics in the first half of the century, though scattered and incomplete, are not entirely untrustworthy and can be put to good use. But what is really significant about these early records is the wealth of qualitative evidence they contain. This is of immense importance. In future a systematic documentation and analysis of it might yield very fruitful results.

Unfortunately the non-official sources pertaining to the period are limited and inspite of much effort the records in Gujarati could not be traced.

The present study is only a very modest attempt to collate the available evidence to arrive at the picture presented here. The picture of course remains tentative, subject to more rigorous investigation.