

CHAPTER IV

LAND REVENUE

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1. Extent of Agricultural Lands

Any discussion of land-revenue involves the primary question of the magnitude of land under cultivation and what proportion of it is considered taxable. Soon after the takeover of Broach the British launched extensive surveys with the aim of determining the extent of agricultural lands and the fixation of land-tax. These surveys, completed in 1820, revealed that 65.5% of the total land in the district was arable, the category arable including land cultivated as well as fit for cultivation or cultivable Table I below gives the pargana-wise breakdown of productive and unproductive lands of the district.

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF LAND IN BROACH DISTRICT : 1820

Pargana	No. of Villages	Total Bighas	Land Wus sas	Arable Bighas	Land Wus sas	Unproductive Bighas	Land Wus sas
Broach	162	5,37,665	17	4,40,557	09	97,108	08
Ankleshwar	50	1,67,635	09	1,14,207	05	53,428	04
Hansot	51	1,77,842	00	92,443	17	85,398	03
Jambusar	82	4,21,485	02	2,58,573	05	1,62,911	17
Amod	42	2,53,005	09	1,27,797	12	1,25,207	17
Dahej	10	69,338	16	31,214	13	38,124	05
Total	397	16,26,972	13	10,67,594	01	5,62,178	12

Source : Monier Williams, Memoir of Broach, 1855, p.23.

However, the arable land was distributed unevenly within the district. The parganas of Broach and Ankleshwar had a much larger share of it compared with Jambusar, Hansot, Amod and Dahej with a very sizable zone of wasteland (See Table II). The quantity of unproductive land in the latter parganas was augmented by the salt flat lying between the productive parts of the parganas and the sea.

TABLE II

PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE LANDS		
Pargana	Productive Land	Unproductive Land
Broach	81.94	18.06
Ankleshwar	68.13	31.87
Hansot	51.98	48.02
Jambusar	61.35	38.65
Amod	50.51	49.49
Dahej	45.00	55.00

Source : Computation based on figures in Monier Williams, Memoir, p.25.

Within the agricultural lands the surveyors distinguished between the 'talpad' or revenue paying land, and 'alienated' or those lands held revenue free. Of the total arable lands in Broach 28.5% came to be reckoned by the state as 'alienated', the rest being subject to revenue payment. Even here a distinction can be observed between Hansot, Jambusar, Amod and Dahej with a considerably higher percentage of alienated lands compared with Broach and Ankleshwar (See Table III).

TABLE III

PROPORTION OF ARABLE TALPAD AND ALIENATED LANDS
(in bighas)

Pargana	Talpad Bighas	Land Wus sas	Alienated Bighas	Land Wus sas	Alienated Land as a percentage of Talpad
Broach	3,45,845	14	94,711	15	21.50
Ankleshwar	83,988	11	30,218	14	26.45
Hansot	60,240	01	32,203	16	34.84
Jambusar	1,74,113	07	84,461	18	32.64
Amod	76,302	02	51,495	10	40.29
Dahej	19,990	12	11,224	01	34.96
Total	7,60,478	07	3,04,315	14	28.58

Source : Memoir, p. 26.

It is of some significance that of the total culturable lands of the district 88% should have been actually under cultivation (See Table IV) - indicating optimum utilization of available land resources.

TABLE IV

PROPORTION OF CULTIVATED AND CULTIVABLE TALPAD LAND
C. 1820

Pargana	¹ Talpad (Cultivated) Bighas Wussas	² Talpad (Uncultivated) Bighas Wussas	² as a percentage of ¹
Broach	3,16,530 08	29,315 06	8.48
Ankleshwar	54,173 08	29,815 03	35.50
Hansot	51,266 04	8,973 17	14.90
Jambusar	1,59,307 10	14,803 17	8.51
Amod	66,022 18	10,279 04	13.47
Dahej	19,497 12	493 00	2.47
Total	6,66,798 00	93,680 07	12.32

Source : Monier Williams, Memoir, p. 26.

There seems to have been no increase in the land under cultivation in the next thirty years. On the contrary less bighas are reported under the plough. In 1852-53, 6,66,020 bighas were cultivated while it was even less in the preceding years (See Table V).

TABLE V

EXTENT OF CULTIVATED LAND IN BROACH DISTRICT

Year	Land Cultivated Bighas
1845-46	6,34,319
1846-47	6,19,440
1847-48	6,29,992
1848-49	5,78,128
1849-50	5,94,939
1850-51	6,25,486
1851-52	6,57,646
1852-53	6,66,020

Source : Broach Coll. to Revenue Commissioner N.D., No. 1144, 15.9.1854, R.D., 52, 1856.

The collectors, however, displayed a marked tendency to furnish, from time to time, inflated figures of land under cultivation. This was purposely done to justify increased assessment and earn the appreciation of their superiors. Inflated land returns were managed in two ways : (a) by showing a portion of alienated lands under talpad;¹ and, (b) by counting grass land, village fallows and temporary wastes as land actually under

1. J.M.Davies, the Collector of Broach, discovered that in the returns of the land cultivated in the district for 1846-47, 37,832 bighas of wanta land was also included. His letter to Revenue Commissioner (N.D.), No. 130, 31.3.1849, R.D., 16, 1851, para 26.

cultivation. In 1847-48, for instance the total land cultivated in the district was reported at 7,36,737 bighas, but this figure included (surreptitiously) 1,03,292 bighas of grass land and fallow.² Thus 14% of the stated figure was in excess of the area actually cultivated.

Fortunately, the colonial records contain sufficient internal evidence to work out the real estimates of cultivated land and we can arrive at a fairly accurate picture of the available land resources in the district during the first half of the 19th century.

2. MAGNITUDE OF LAND TAX : 1821

The next question relates to the magnitude at which land was taxed. The district of Broach acquired administrative and political unity only in 1817 with all the parganas comprising it eventually coming under British political umbrella. We would first focus on Broach pargana, which was conquered first and for which we have continuous data from years preceding even the British takeover. In 1783 when Broach passed to the Sindhis after a brief phase of colonial rule its land revenue was settled at Rs. 6,08,033.³ The Sindhis farmed out revenues to one Gopalrao at the annual amount of Rs. 8,50,000. Gopalrao retained the farm from 1783 to 1791.⁴ We have detailed estimates of land revenue for the Broach pargana from 1791-2 to 1802-03 in Alexander Walker's report. For all these years the land revenue was collected under two different heads; jamabandi (land revenue settlement) and veras or cesses (See Table VI)

2. Ibid., para 28.

3. Broach Coll's letter, 5.2.1783, Broach Factory Diary, 269, 1782-83.

4. Govind Natha's Account of Broach Revenues, enclosure to Alexander Walker's Report, 8.4.1804, R.D., 44, 1805.

TABLE VI

LAND REVENUE SETTLEMENT OF BROACH PARGANA :
1791-92 TO 1802-03 (in rupees)

Year	Jamabandi	Veras*	Total
1791-92	10,32,529	1,34,228	11,66,758
1792-93	7,39,781	96,769	8,36,550
1793-94	7,10,003	87,997	7,98,000
1794-95	3,97,549	57,316	4,54,865
1795-96	5,21,188	1,05,271	6,26,459
1796-97	7,10,309	1,15,425	8,25,734
1797-98	6,35,879	1,03,219	7,39,098
1798-99	5,94,679	96,511	6,91,190
1799-1800	6,00,113	97,405	6,97,518
1800-01	5,34,277	86,706	6,20,983
1801-02	5,97,741	1,42,146	7,39,887
1802-03	5,53,513	1,36,819	6,90,332

* The veras or cesses were levied at a certain percentage of the jamabandi, varying from year to year. In the above table the rates are as follows : 1791-94, 13%; 1794-95, 14.5%; 1795-1801, 16.25%; 1801-03, 24.75%.

Source : Alexander Walker's Report, B.A.1804, R.D., 44, 1805, paras 49-51.

The average revenue per year calculated from the yearly totals above comes to Rs.7,40,614. In 1804, after reestablishing their hegemony over Broach pargana, the British fixed it at Rs. 8,38,128.⁵ : an excess of Rs. 97,514 over the average of the preceding decade (during the rule of the Sindhias) and Rs. 1,47,796 over the previous year's assessment. Next year (1805) the revenue was further increased to Rs.9,18,535.⁶ Official explanation ascribed the high figure to the rise in grain prices which in turn had been caused by a severe famine raging in the Deccan.⁷

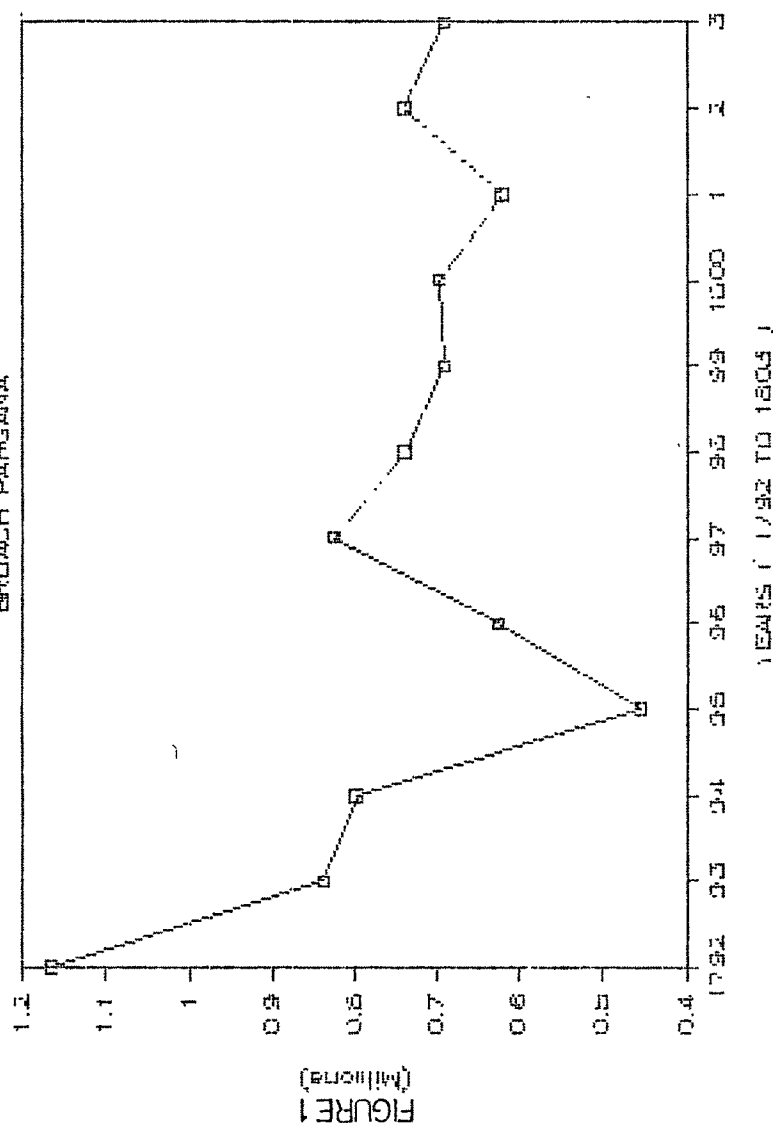
5. Memoir, p. 59.

6. Ibid.

7. Broach Rev.Comm. to Bombay, 24.1.1808 R.D., 60, 1808, para 11.

LAND REVENUE SETTLEMENT :

BROWCH PARISH



In 1805 the parganas of Ankleshwar and Hansot, which had been ceded by the Peshva to the British in 1802 by the treaty of Bassein, were also attached to Broach and a collectorate carved out of them. The annual revenue of Ankleshwar and Hansot at the time of their cession was reported at Rs. 78,000 and Rs. 85,000 respectively. But in 1806 the parganas were assessed at Rs. 1,47,540 and Rs. 1,35,815⁸ - an increase of 89% and 59% respectively.

We get details of land revenue assessment for three parganas - Broach, Ankleshwar and Hansot - from 1806 through 1821 (See Table VII).

TABLE VII

LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT :
BROACH, ANKLESHWAR AND HANSOT PARGANAS,
1806 TO 1821
(in rupees)

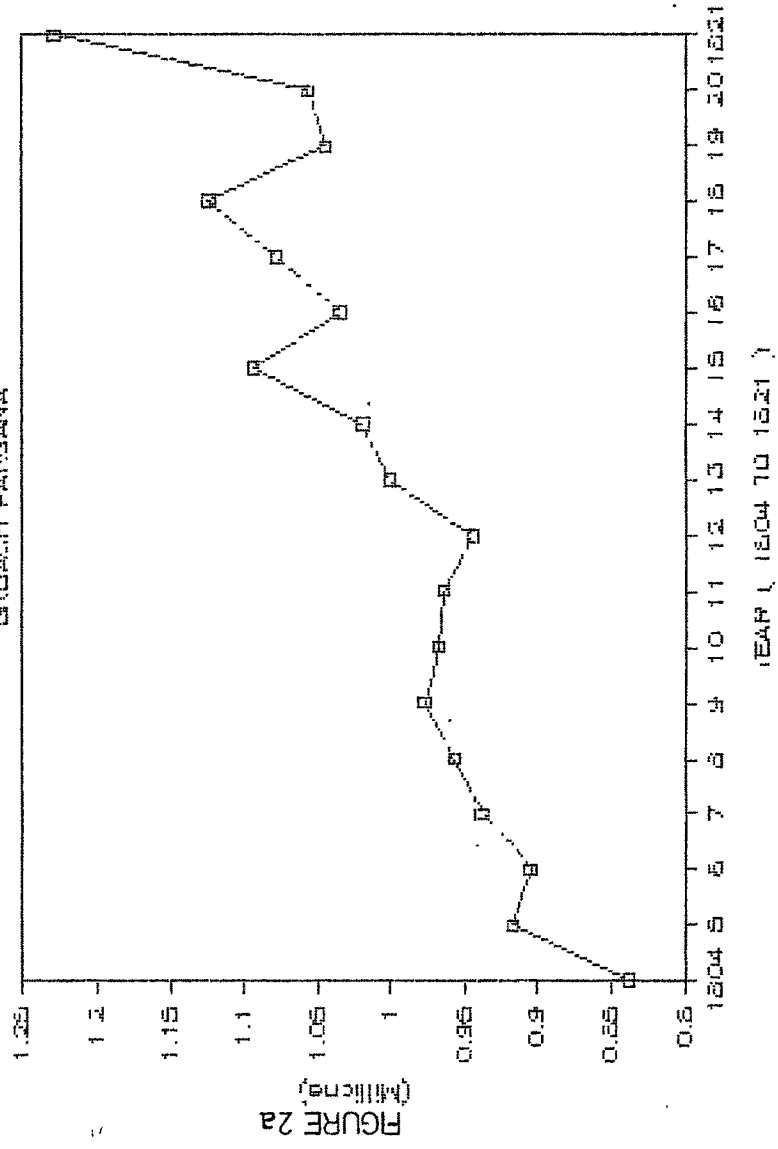
Year	Broach	Ankleshwar	Hansot	Total
1805-06	9,05,133	1,47,540	1,35,815	11,88,488
1806-07	9,38,364	1,42,736	1,22,188	12,03,288
1807-08	9,57,170	1,48,316	1,23,536	12,29,222
1808-09	9,76,828	1,50,683	1,25,099	12,52,610
1809-10	9,67,513	1,54,633	1,24,302	12,46,448
1810-11	9,64,338	1,60,056	1,26,589	12,50,983
1811-12	9,44,016	1,61,469	1,27,886	12,33,371
1812-13	10,00,796	1,68,800	1,30,616	13,00,212
1813-14	10,18,940	1,76,692	1,33,521	13,29,153
1814-15	10,92,748	1,79,633	1,41,843	14,14,224
1815-16	10,34,733	1,53,718	1,03,557	12,92,008
1816-17	10,77,356	1,77,217	1,32,859	13,87,433
1817-18	11,24,168	1,81,383	1,52,172	14,57,723
1818-19	10,43,755	1,70,841	1,48,868	13,63,465
1819-20	10,56,132	1,43,836	1,38,393	13,38,362
1820-21	12,28,496	2,27,337	1,92,482	16,48,315

Source : Revenue and Judicial Accountant to Revenue Board, letter No. 95, 10.4.1822, R.D., 14/38, 1822.

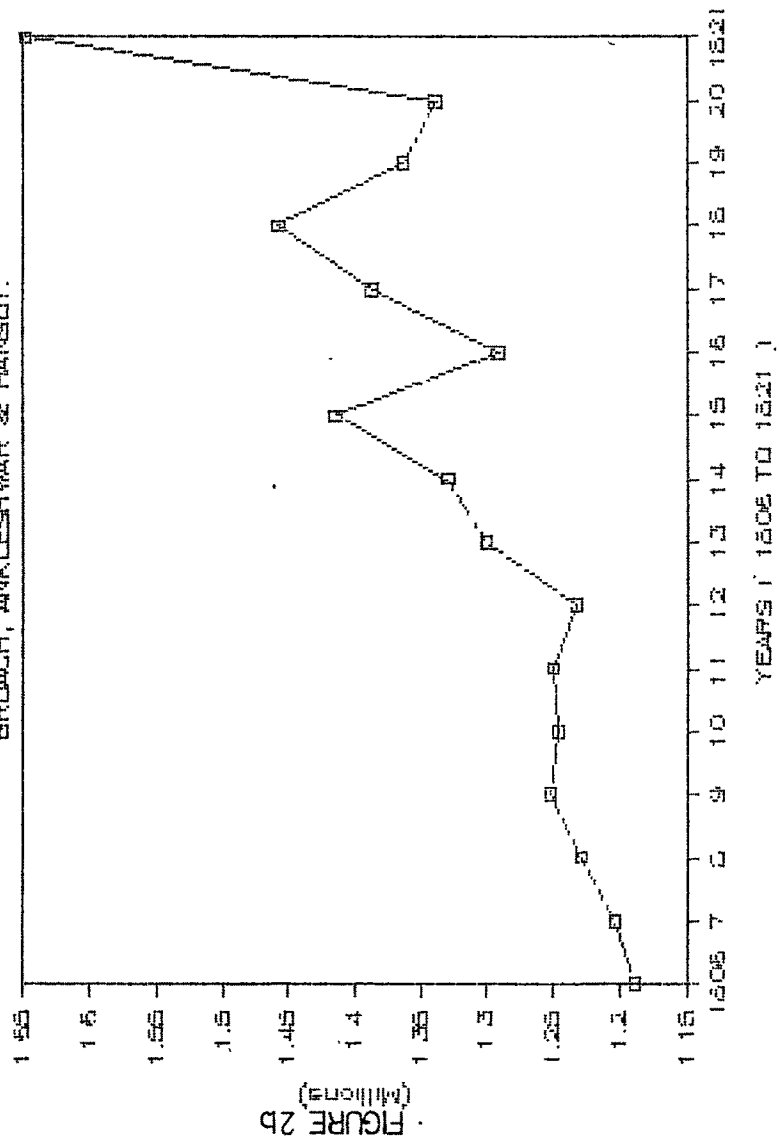
8. Broach Coll. to Bombay, letter No.67, 17.5.1824, R.D., 17/101, 1824.

LAND REVENUE ASSESTMENT :

BROACH PARASANA



LAND REVENUE : BROACH, ANKLESHWAR & HANSOT.



Even a cursory glance at the data furnished in Tables VI and VII and their graphic depictions (fig 2a and 2b) leave one with the strong impression of a government that had assigned itself the task of improving upon the track record of all past governments when it came to exacting agrarian surplus. The average assessment for the first eight years (1806-13) comes to Rs. 12,38,078 (Phase I) and for the next eight years (1814-21) Rs. 14,03,835 (Phase II). Phase I represents an increase of 27% over the previous decade (computed from the land revenue returns of Broach alone as data on the other two parganas are not available for the previous decade) and Phase II an increase of more than 13% over the first 'decade' of British rule. We are thus faced with differences in the very order of magnitude that needs some accounting.

3. INSTRUMENTS OF AGRARIAN TAXATION :

With no substantial advances in the frontiers of agriculture how could these prodigious increases in revenue demand be achieved? Part of the explanation is of course the sheer rapacity of colonial rule which imparted to it the drive and comprehensiveness to reach into the very innards of the countryside and know directly what it could lay its hands upon. Thus a major strategy of maximizing profits came to revolve around investigations and researches into the structure of agrarian society and economy - a method that had been suggested by George Perrott as early as 1776.⁹ In effect the intensive surveys, so characteristic of British government, were directed to the aim of digging up or exposing lands that had thus far escaped or stood on the borderline of taxation owing to a variety of reasons.

9. George Perrott's Report 16.5.1776, BFD, 262, 1776.

The first requisite for the success of this programme was a modern and reformed administrative set-up. Given the propensity and objective of colonial rule an ordinary system of administration - such as, for instance, possessed by medieval governments - would not have sufficed. A modern, more efficient and penetrating system had to be constructed. As it transpired this was not long in waiting. Researches into the 'formal' aspects of colonial rule indicate that "By 1800 the East India Company's civil service had developed into a 'modern bureaucracy' : it kept copious written records; it functioned according to uniform rules; it maintained political neutrality; and it separated public from private matters".¹⁰ Symptoms of such an apparatus can be seen in the functioning of the Company employees at Broach during their first possession of the place from 1772 to 1783. The records they maintained not only contain considerable information about the locale but also open out a window on the working of their minds; their motives, ideas and actions. One often finds them genuinely baffled by the intricacies of usages and revenue matters but also possessed with the will to investigate them with a sense of curiosity. In an attempt to grapple with agrarian realities in Broach several committees were appointed and a general survey of the pargana conducted in 1776-77.¹¹ It must go to the credit of British that they made minute and painstaking enquiries into local conditions and resources - beyond the imaginings of any Indian ruler. If, for example, the validity of certain claims over land had to be ascertained, it was done thoroughly, putting every detail on record.¹²

A permanent financial and judicial administration was

10. Neil Rabitoy, "British Administration in Western India", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 1972, Ch.VI.
11. The records maintained by Broach administrators are collected in 16 diaries called Broach Factory Diaries, preserved in the Maharashtra State Archives, Bombay.
12. cf. "Proceedings" of a Committee, BFD, 262, 1776-77 folios 1-54.

established at Broach in January 1805. William Steadman was appointed the collector and Guy Lenox Prendergast Judge and Magistrate of Broach.¹³ By the same government resolution they were jointly appointed Commissioners to settle the jamebandi of Broach for that year. This was to be followed by the establishment of a 'Court of Appeal and Circuit' for the territories of Gujarat at Broach.¹⁴ After taking charge both the officials commenced their investigations into the rural economy of Broach and noticed several drawbacks in the administration which needed corrections. Among the many impediments to complete British control they pointed out to the difficulties posed by the local revenue functionaries and recommended a general survey of the parganas as a precondition to curbing these elements.¹⁵

A direct outcome of these early exertions was the considerable degree of independence gained by the new rulers from the 'local influence'. Moreover, their 'incorruptibility' also helped them in this direction. Pamela Nightengale has shown that prior to Jonathan Duncan's governorship the Bombay Presidency was infested with corruption, as the Company employees had their own private trade to promote.¹⁶ A sea change had occurred with the appointment of Major Walker : "The military had never had private trading interest to the same extent as the civil servants, and when one of their number, Major Walker, became the resident at Baroda with influence over the whole of Gujarat it was difficult to introduce corruption in that province on any large scale".¹⁷ Specially noteworthy is the relentless drive of William Steadman

13. Resolution of Governor-in-Council, Consultations 26.1.1805, R.D., 44, 1805, folios 426-33.

14. Ibid.

15. Broach Revenue Commission Report dated 25th August 1805, R.D., 48-A, 1805, para 1.

16. Pamela Nightingale, Trade and Empire in Western India 1784-1806, Cambridge 1970, pp. 26-28.

17. Ibid., pp. 219-20; "Walkers ability and integrity contrasted strongly with the shady careers of the majority of Bombay establishment." p. 178.

to cleanse the set - up at Broach which earned him the recognition of his superiors, particularly Walker.¹⁸

a. Investigations into claims and resources of land

Shortly after Broach fell to the British in 1803, the Resident at Baroda, Alexander Walker, who received the charge of looking after the affairs of the conquered territories, started a campaign to gather information from all possible sources. Desais, majmudars and patels were summoned to furnish information about the resources of pargana.¹⁹ In Walker's instructions to Parbhuram Asaram (who was appointed to manage the civil affairs of the Company at Broach) the latter is asked to 'report at length the local usages' and condition of the place for the last twenty years. It is also impressed about him to gain a correct knowledge and communicate to Walker everything the pargana produced, its state of cultivation, rate of assessment, mode of collection, etc.²⁰ Equally noteworthy was the role of the governor himself who assisted in the undertaking by collecting information from one of the patels of Broach pargana and communicating it to Walker.²¹ The early correspondence shows the diligence with which the British applied themselves to tapping local sources of

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18. Concluding his exhaustive report of April 8, 1804, Alexander Walker wrote to Bombay Government : " I beg leave to bear my testimony to the uniform zeal, ability & good sense Mr. Steadman has displayed from the period of his Appointment to the Management of Broach to the present time. His attention to the interest of the Company & to promote the welfare of its subjects has been invariable; & the honour & integrity with which he has discharged the duties of a responsible charge qualify him, I am persuaded, for any situation which he may be called to fill in the course of the Public service". R.D., 44, 1805, para 58 (emphasis added)
19. letter to J.A.Grant, Secretary to Government, 6.10.1803, R.D., 39, 1803.
20. Alexander Walker to Parbhuram Asaram, 30.9.1803, R.D., 39, 1803.
21. Governor-in-Council to Walker, 30.11.1803, R.D., 39. 1803.

knowledge. The following has been excerpted from the instructions of William Steadman (1804), in charge of Broach pargana, to the amin patels :

You are directed immediately to proceed to every village in the pergunnah & there to Collect correct Statements of the past & present appropriators of lands, belonging to each more particularly such as are under the denomination of Grassia Vanta, Passaita, Veechanee, Granees & Vullidanees, distinguishing & describing particularly the different sorts quantities. Names of the holder & how & when such cessions or usurpations, sales, Mortgages & Cases happened, with the time of expirations & remarks on the best Method bringing to the original stock, as also, the Number of Inhabitants prevailing Casts, & produce specifying Quantity & quality as well as Waste land What quota may be brought into cultivation & the most Advisable plan for this purpose -

It is also strongly recommended to the Parties to note down the distance & direction from Village & from the Capital, as likewise the Number of Gardens, wells, Carts, & Cattle in the Village.- Should they remark any oppression thro' the influence of the Manoteedars or others they will inform me when the parties shall be summoned & redress afforded to the injured.22

One also gets the impression that the information supplied by local sources was often cross-checked and verified with the help of other sources.

Of similar import is this preface to a detailed report on investigations submitted in 1805 :

altho' we cannot flatter ourselves that the information thus respectfully offered is in every respect strictly correct and accurate, we still trust it will be found that no pains have been spared by us to render it so, or to overcome the repugnance which the Patells, principal mazoomadar and Desy have ever shown to investigations of this kind for there is every reason to suppose they all partake of the advantages, Secured and withheld by them from government, the most effectual mode of ascertaining the truth of which, as well as to prevent it in future, and at the same time to place in the hands of the Collector himself a Complete check upon these parties and their malpractices, we conceive to be a general Survey of the Purgunnah as respectfully recommended in the Subsequent part of this report.23

22. Dated 23 March 1804, R.D., 44, 1805.

23. Report, 25.8.1805, R.D., 48-A, 1806, para 1 (emphasis added)

The nature and value of the Various description of soil, the different tenures in Land, the rights of the Patels, and others in the Cultivation of the Government grounds, are clearly and decidedly, ascertained, as is the internal System of Revenue, down to the rules and manners on which the Heads of Villages collect the rents and Revenues - The Government portion of the produce of the land in right of rulership, and as Lord as Proprietors of the soil as well as the Shares of the Ryots or cultivators, is exactly defined by the old established law of the Country, as to leave no doubt on the subject...26

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It was now time for the knowledge to be exchanged.

27. Vide 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, dated 22.12.1908, P.D.
60. 1808.

systematized and put to account. A substantial source of revenue enhancement as conceived by the administrators was to come from the alienated lands. With no small part of the agricultural land alienated under different grants and arrangements, some of which undoubtedly originated in the period of anarchy and lax administration preceeding colonial rule, the British thought that if the claims to such lands were scrutinized the excess lands 'unlawfully' held by the parties could be resumed. The strongest voice in support of this came from the collectors. We have seen that around 1776 George Perrott had advocated a thorough investigation into all claims on land within the framework of a general survey during the first British administration at Broach. Early in the nineteenth century the revenue commissioners of Broach, consisting of the collector and the judge & magistrate, took this up with vigour and strongly recommended a survey of the district.

The government appointed Monier Williams as the revenue surveyor with the task of conducting a revenue, statistical, and topographical survey of the district. Williams began his work in 1811. By 1812 twenty two villages had been surveyed and, the Revenue Committee, comprising of the surveyor and the collector, had "gone through the investigation of Claims and effected a settlement" in these villages. The lands were measured and whoever the holders were found to be in possession of anything in excess of the 'real' claim, it was resumed. Lands classified as wanta, véchania (sold), giranía & vallatadina (mortgaged) were specially examined. Most of the lands sold and mortgaged were resumed after compensating the holder if anything was required to be paid to him. In the words of the surveyors "the whole of their Papers underwent a strict examination and the manner in which each was obtained was minutely enquired into - . . . The land was resumed on the ground of its being the property of the Sirkar, and the Patels and cultivators having no right to sell or mortgage it..."²⁸

28. Broach Revenue Committee to Bombay, 26.6.1812, R.D., 82, 1812, paras 2 - 5 (emphasis added).

In addition to the above, passaita land belonging to gossains and bairagis and most of bhats and brahmins was resumed too. The Committee had "made it a rule generally to resume the Pussautia of Bhants, Brahmins and others who render no service whatever to the community or the village in which this pussautia lays, when they reside at distant places, as they often do, even Purgunnahs which do not belong to the Company".²⁹

In Broach pargana alone the survey resulted initially in the resumption of 68,362 bighas. This figure finally came down to 49,126 bighas after accommodating objections and counter-claims made by the patels.³⁰ Similarly, 74,776 bighas of land was resumed in Ankleshwar and Hansot parganas, of which 60,000 bighas were brought under full assessment.³¹

The annexation of beer or grass land followed in 1817. The beer ought to be distinguished from the gouchar or pasture in that the former only grew grass which was used commonly as fodder by all the peasants. In earlier times the beer was treated as non-taxable and by custom it was apportioned among the cultivators on the principle of 10 wiswassas (half a wassa or 40th part of a bigha) of beer to every bigha cultivated.³² But the revenue surveyor averred that the grass land was as good as the other cultivated land. In 1807 the extent of beer land in Broach pargana was reported at 26,396 bighas. The surveyor brought this down to 12,888 bighas,³³ declaring that at least 10,000 bighas of even this was "doubtless fit and available for cultivation" and, by extention of the logic, fit for assessment.³⁴ In all the three parganas viz. Broach,

29. Ibid, para 8.

30. Broach Revenue Committee to Bombay, 21.3.1814, R.D., 92, 1814, paras 2-6; Memoir, p. 62

31. Monier Williams to Bombay, 29.3.1817, Survey No. 17, 1814-15, para 2; Memoir, p. 63

32. 'Rejoinder' by the patels of Raveedra village to a petition filed by the Broach collector, as an enclosure with Broach Judge & Magistrate's letter to Bombay, 6.5.1817, R.D., 116, 1817; Monier Williams to Bombay 19.3.1817, R.D., 114, 1817, para 3.

33. Williams to Bombay, 19.3.1817, R.D., 114, 1817, para 4.

34. Memoir, p. 62.

Ankleshwar and Hansot beer land deemed fit for cultivation by the surveyors was thus brought under regular assessment.

Still another source of revenue enhancement was created by levying salami or quit rent on wanta lands which hitherto were held revenue free. After consulting the judge, the revenue committee wrote that respecting "the Character and Circumstances of the Holders of this description of land no doubt remains in our minds of the expediency of the measures".³⁵ Accordingly they fixed half a rupee per bigha to be levied on such lands. The revenue free wanta in Broach pargana amounted to bighas 18,726 and the sum to be levied henceforth from it, they wrote, would "augment the revenue of the Purganna (by) at least 12 thousands Rs. annually".³⁶ Similarly 14,554 bighas of totally free wanta lands in Ankleshwar and Hansot parganas were made to yield quit rent at par with other salami paying wanta lands.³⁷

c. Reduction of local revenue functionaries

There was nothing unusual about the attitude or behaviour of the traditional revenue functionaries of Broach whose middle order positioning between a vast peasantry and an elite governing class, coupled with the historically determined role of canalising the surplus produce from one end to the other, allowed them no ordinary leverage to manipulate power relations at the local level. In the Madras Presidency this local factor had succeeded in³⁸ frustrating the attempts of the district administration so much so that in Burton Stein's account the British officials emerge as "helplessly ignorant about the people

35. Williams to Bombay, 19.3.1817, R.D., 114, 1817, paras 11-14.

36. Ibid.

37. Williams to Bombay 29.3.1817, R.D., 115, 1817 para 9-10.

38. See R.E. Frykenberg, Guntur District, 1788-1848 : A History of local Influence and Central Authority in South India, Oxford, 1983.

they were supposed to be ruling".³⁹ What Stein perhaps does not fully account for is the very complex nature of task colonialism was confronted with. Local assistants were vitally necessary and yet the latter's self-interest predisposed them to perpetuate the ignorance of the collectors.⁴⁰ However, the history of Broach provides us a counter-point to the situation in Madras Presidency. Here, as we shall see, the district administrators were able to thwart the designs of native revenue functionaries and ultimately reducing them into non-entities.

The Bombay cadre of the Company service seems to have been aware of the hazards posed by the local factor. There is a clean reflection of this in the reports of Broach officials in the eighteenth century. In the course of their early investigations the problems had already surfaced and a survey had to be conducted to check the authenticity of the information fed to officials by desais and majmudars. Communicating his findings to the Government, George Perrott, the Collector of Broach, wrote in 1776 :

I have since my return from the Survey gone through the Calculate of each Village a Second Time, and in order to try the utmost abilities of each, I particularly listened to whatever Lulloobhoy and his party had to propose, and Discontentanced the opposite one, of the Dessoys, and having now I believe a very Sufficient knowledge of all of them and each of them individually, I may with safety draw my observation on them into small compass and assure you, that the more we can proceed upon our own knowledge and Observation, and the less power or Influence is continued to any of them, so much the better.⁴¹

George Perrott goes on to recommend imposition of curbs on their powers and privileges. Though these recommendations were approved by the Bombay Government,⁴² little headway seems to have been made in their implementation due to the uncertainties of British

39. "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India" in R.E. Frykenberg (ed), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, Madison 1969, p.197.

40. L.S.S. O'Malley, The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930, London 1965, pp. 161-62; Neill Rabinoy, "British Administration in Western India", Chapter VI.

41. Letter dated 16th May 1776, BFD, 262, 1776 (emphasis added).

42. Vide letter from Bombay, 6.8.1776, BFD, 262, 1776-77.

political control over the district. Even when they returned to power finally for the second time in 1803, Alexander Walker (the English Resident at Baroda) continued to rely on the pargana revenue functionaries and be considerate towards them. But realization came fast, for in 1805 the Revenue Commissioners emphatically wrote to Bombay that they were "decidedly of opinion that it is neither necessary or advisable the principal Musomoodar and Dessy should be allowed any longer to maintain the influence they have so long possessed and made use of, certainly more to the advancement of their own private emoluments and revenging their family quarrels, than to the true Interest of their employers."⁴³

The proposition was met with approval and the government sanctioned the discontinuation of some of the allowances of majmudars and desais.⁴⁴ In the year which followed (1806), the Collector withheld some customary claims of the majmudar like his palanquin allowances, diwali and dushehra fee and some other collections amounting to over Rs. 5000. Similarly the desai's palanquin allowance of Rs.1352 was also withheld.⁴⁵ By abolishing these privileges once and for all the government had placed its seal to the measures adopted by the commissioner and dealt a severe blow to the rural elite of the district.⁴⁶ In turn the desais and majmudars embarked on a course of non-co-operation with the British officials which even included the technique of serving them disinformation. The revenue Commissioners' disgust with the situation can be seen in the following report sent to higher officials :

Whatever Statements we have had from them whether in Conversation or writing, they appear designedly

43. 25.8.1805, R.D.L. 48-A, 1806, para 21.

44. Warden to G.L. Prendergast and William Steadman, 19.2.1806, R.D.L. 48-a, 1806, paras 21-22 & 29.

45. W. Steadman to Warden, the secretary to Government, 29.1.1806, R.D.L. 48-A, 1806.

46. Resolution, 25.2.1806, R.D.L. 48-A, 1806.

to overboard and perplex with explanation and details foreign to the subject under enquiry, their Statements are generally at variance with each other and all contain internal evidence of their incorrectness; the disappointment we have experienced from this quarter from whence we might naturally have expected the best information has been one very principal case of the delay which has occurred.⁴⁷

But in spite of the obstacles thrown by the revenue functionaries, the commission was able to push its investigations further and complete a valuable report on revenue matters (supported by actual documents exemplifying the realities on ground. Incidentally these papers belonged to one village, namely Parkhet). Integral to the report were the commissioners' recommendations to further reduce "all the perquisites and emoluments attached to the offices of Desaees & mujmoodars, such as Huck Dustoor, Lavazim, ghee, soot-chamra, Grass; Jo;jowaree Straw, fees, Nuzrana, sookrees &ca".⁴⁸ The Bombay government was once again prompt in accepting the recommendations and ordering the discontinuation of perquisites mentioned above.⁴⁹

From this point onward the district administration did not have to look back and its assertions of the Company's sovereignty were put forth boldly. William Steadman was succeeded by J.H.Bellasis as the collector, who was equally opposed to the local influence. He wrote to Bombay in the most clear words :

that I have nothing to look to from the head Native Revenue officers, the Desaees and Moojmoodars, as they are of no assistance to me in Collecting the Revenues, Settling the Jumabundy or in the Current business of the office - Since my appointment to this Collectorship in November 1810 - I have but seldom employed them and have Conducted the duties without their assistance much more to my Satisfaction... the intriguing dispositions which have shewn themselves on more occasions than one induced me to dispense with their services, and in consequence my not being able to repose sufficient Confidence in them the duties have been transacted by me with the assistance of the Establishment allowed by Government.⁵⁰

47. 31..5.1807, R.D., 59, 1808, para 3.

48. Ibid, para 31.

49. R.J.Goodwin, Secretary to Government, to Broach Revenue Commission, 21.2.1808, R.D., 59, 1808, para 14-15.

50. Letter to Francis Warden, Chief Secretary, 27.3.1812, R.D., 78, 1812 (emphasis added)

The Revenue Committee consisting of the Collector and the Surveyor stated in 1812 that "howsoever important these Services [of desais and majmudars] might have been under native Governments, they are now necessarily and advantageously dispensed with".⁵¹ Nonetheless the desais and majmudars were given a chance to assist in the revenue settlement of the year which they wasted - in their frenzy to impress the district administration with excessive zeal and fidelity - by quoting a much higher assessment than the village were capable of paying. Unfortunately for them this produced an opposite reaction. The collector, wrote that he had "detected the error" he was "likely to be led in from accepting their Statements". He was forced to arrive at the conclusion that this was "their wish to Cause Confusion and to harass" him "by fixing a heavier assessment than the Purgunnah was able to bear in order to realize their own exactions [hoping] their agency might be restored to [them]".⁵²

Thus within a decade of the establishment of colonial government the native revenue functionaries in broach were shorn off their earlier glory. No longer was any assistance sought from them and in 1814 it was reported that they did not "possess the smallest influence in the purganna, or the means... [of] forwarding any plans of improvement that government may think advisable to adopt".⁵³ The collector's harsh and resolute attitude towards them can be seen from the passage below which we here quote at length because of the light it throws on the strength attained by British administration by that time and its policy :

they [native revenue officials] have now become mere ciphers and have not been called on by me to assist actively since 1811, when from finding that they attempted to assume more Consequence & engross more management in the Concerns of the Purgunnah than it became proper to entrust to them under a British Government, anxious to clear away from the System Clogs which collected under the native Governments and do away, as much as possible, all intermediate agency between the Collector and the Cultivators... I have

51. Letter to Francis Warden, Chief Secretary, 26.6.1812, R.D., 82, 1812, para 10.

52. Letter 27.3.1812, R.D., 78, 1812.

53. Broach Revenue Committee to Francis Warden, Chief Secretary to Government, 21.3.1814, R.D., 92, 1814, para 16.

never since called for their services and they have remained until this day unemployed... they have little to expect from Government that never under the present organization employ them to perform those duties which were originally assigned to their appointments... After mature deliberations, I therefore recommend that the Desaees and muzmoodars be struck off from among the Revenue Officers of this Collectorship, with the exception of one of each... that they be considered under the British Government more as Record Keeper... The services of the above officers are less than ever requiredness (sic), since the Survey of this Purgunnah has laid open a knowledge of it to the fullest possible extent....⁵⁴

The next Collector of Broach, Charles Shubrick (1815-1820) continued the policy of his predecessors. During his tours through the villages in 1816-17 he noticed that the 'native revenue officers' had lost their influence following the diminution of their emoluments. He also reported not having received any assistance from them in any respect.⁵⁵ Under him the policy was extended to Jambusar, Amod, and Dahej parganas upon their annexation, with Shubrick strongly recommending abolition of the emoluments and allowances of desais, majmudars, and amin patels as had been done in Broach.⁵⁶ The bewildered desais and majmudars of Dahej petitioned the Governor saying that "the Collector has sent an order to the Kamavisdar to promulgate to the Inhabitants of the Purgunnah, that the Dessoys and mujmoodars have been dismissed from their situations... we are in consequence at a loss to discover by what untoward circumstances, a change has taken place".⁵⁷ Shubrick explained that his drastic action was in response to the violation of the order prohibiting collection of emoluments and perquisites by the desais and majmudars.⁵⁸

54. J.H. Bellasis, letter 20.3.1814, R.D., 92, 1814, paras 2,3,4 & 6. (emphasis added).

55. Letter to Warden, 27.12.1816, R.D., 111, 1817, paras 5-7

56. The Bombay government was equally enthusiastic to do the same and it accordingly sanctioned the abolition of such perquisites. C. Shubrick to Bombay, 22.6.1818, R.D., 130, 1818. folios 2953-2964; Broach Revenue Committee to Bombay, 20.11.1818, & 26.11.1818, R.D., 143, 1819.

57. Petition dated 12 Assoo Sud 1875 or 1.10.1819, R.D., 146, 1819.

58. Letter 18.12.1819, R.D., 149, 1820; Even J.H. Farquharson, the Collector of Broach reported in 1826 that desais and majmudars did not perform any duty and thought that they could not be employed with any advantage. His letter No. 5, 3.1.1826, R.D., 11/143, 1826 and another letter No. 27, dated 28th January 1826, R.D., 15/147, 1826.

After 1820, the appearances of the traditional revenue functionaries in the increasingly voluminous official reports are sparse, reference to them being few and far between. Whenever they do figure, it is only in the pitiable role of humble petitioners seeking small favours. In a petition of 1829 the desais of Jambusar collectively pleaded that during Maratha government their main source of livelihood and 'profit' was the manoti practice. But they were deprived of it when the present government abolished that system. Now even their daily allowance called bhatta had been taken away, making it so difficult for them to maintain themselves.⁵⁹

Similar petitions were jointly filed by the erstwhile revenue-functionaries of Jambusar and Ankleshwar, but to no avail.⁶⁰ In the colonial scheme of things they had ceased to have a place. Successive codes and regulations had stamped them out. No longer could they collect directly whatever residual perquisites were still left to them from the villages; all payments henceforth were made through the government exchequer. The desais and majmudars of Broach pargana who had been 'dreaded' alike by former government and the peasantry were humbled to write to the Governor in 1829 :

We beg to state that several new regulations by which our respectability is diminished have been imposed upon us by Government from which we hope to be relieved.... It perplexes us much to discover how the patels & Royts of the Villages will be able to recognize our children to be the Desaees & mujmoodars of their villages if the payment (of our perquisites) is made from the Government Treasury.... If this system is continued for any length of time succeeding generation will suppose that there is no wuttundar in the village.⁶¹

59. Substance of a petition from Asaram Jadowji, Bapu Bhulanath Dayashankar Uttarmram and Banu Uttamram for Naronjee Ramkisan; desais of Jambusar to the Governor, 30.5.1829, R.D., 19/266, 1829.

60. Petition by majmudars of Jambusar, dated 7.1.1830; and of desais and majmudars of Ankleshwar dated 25.12.1829, R.D., 18/299, 1830.

61. Petition dated 23rd August, 1829, R.D., 5/285, 1830.

By the close of the third decade of the nineteenth century, the reverse in the fortunes of deasis and majmudars had become a spectacle. Many of them were living a hard life and were under debts. Nathubhai Navneedrai Desai of Broach wrote to the Bombay Government that he was "much in debt, and the interest of Sowkars has been much increased".⁶² Many were reported to have lost track of their original calling "from the want of knowledge in accounts".⁶³ While the number of desais and majmudars still in occupation sharply declined the few that were kept in harness received a salary of only a 150 rupees per annum.⁶⁴

Yet another category of pargana level revenue functionaries to meet the same fate was of amin patels : the traditional revenue assessors and surveyors, who also acted as arbitrators in the settlement of disputes over land holdings and village boundaries.⁶⁵ Additionally they had the responsibility of seeing that no peasant absconded and the ones who had were brought back. They were remunerated through cash allowances as well as through exemptions of land-tax.⁶⁶ The amin patels' claims to hereditary rights in their office were rejected by the British government and the appointment of new patels, found to be more efficient, as amins was not unusual.⁶⁷ If found guilty of bribery or corruption, they were instantly dismissed. On one occasion, the Bombay government

62. Petition dated 3rd September 1831, R.D., 57/385, 1831.

63. Nugent, Kirkland, the Sub-Collector J.Vibart, the principal Collector of Broach; No. 727, 20.12.1835, R.D., 63/685, 1835.

64. J.Vibart to Thomas Williamson, the Revenue Commissioner, No.278, 18.6.1835; Williamson to L.R.Reid, Secretary to Government, No. 1422, 4.9.1835; and letter from Bombay to Revenue Commissioner, No. 2235, 26.9.1835, R.D., 63/685, 1835.

65. cf. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp.275-82. Though Professor Habib does not refer to what section of the society they were recruited from, at least in Gujarat they came from bhaddars patels and they were widely known as amin patels. Alexander Walker, 8.4.1804, R.D., 44, 1805, para 52-43.

66. Alexander Walker letter dated 14.12.1803 and its enclosure, R.D., 39; 1803.

67. For instance repeated lengthy petitions of Makhanjee Bhaijee for inheritance to amin patelship were rejected by the Bombay government. Cf. his petitions dated 17th January 1816, 4th June 1816, R.D., 107, 1816, folios 936-954; and Minutes of Governor in Council, 14.6.1816, R.D., 107, 1816.

authorized the collector to dismiss three amin patels of Jambusar with the instructions that the "orders [are] to be carried into effect in the most public and disgraceful manner towards the above delinquents; under a hope that the punishment though inadequate to the offence they have committed, will operate as a salutary check to the commission of acts of a similar nature, by others".⁶⁸ In other words every possible method was deployed in checking and counteracting the writ of the traditional agrarian regime.

d. Appointment of Talatis

In 1814 the appointment of village talati or revenue accountant as permanent stipendiary servant of the government was conceived as another measure that would centralize administration as well as act as a counterpoise to the influence of patels. In the same year the Bombay government passed a Regulation bringing the talatis under the direct control of the collector. They could be dismissed for disobeying his orders, for incapacity, or for falsification of accounts. In conformity with the Regulation all the villages of the district were provided with talatis.⁶⁹

However, there seems to have been a great deal of confusion in administrative circles on this issue. When Jambusar, Amod, and Dahej parganas were incorporated into Broach district in 1817, the collector expressed the view that during the Maratha rule talatis were not employed by the government. Instead the manotidars used to employ their own mehtas to keep village accounts. Moreover, the mehtas resided in the towns and went to the villages, for a few months between October and June.⁷⁰

68. Broach Criminal Judge T. Barnard to Bombay, 12.7.1819; and "Minutes" of the Government, 12.8.1819, R.D., 142, 1819.

69. Letter of 10.7.1815, R.D., 101, 1815.

70. C. Shubrick to Bombay, 21.7.1818 & 24.7.1818, R.D., 133, 1818.

Notwithstanding past customs, the collector was instructed to reestablish talatis in every village wherever the office had fallen into disuse and to pay them according to a sliding scale ranging from Rs. 50 to Rs.300 per annum, proportionate to the revenue returns of each village.⁷¹ The collector reported that in Broach pargana 159 talatis were appointed to 162 villages. In Ankleshwar 45 in 51 villages. He issued a circular to all the talatis to maintain complete and uniform village records. They were forbidden to make any unauthorized collection or entertain such entries in their books.⁷²

On the position of talatis there occurred a continuous correspondence between Charles Shubrick, the collector of Broach, and the Bombay government which turned out to be a war of attrition between the two. Whereas the former reported that he had been dismissing talatis frequently and appointing new ones on his own, the Bombay government held that the power of dismissal and appointment of talatis was vested only with the government,⁷³ reprimanding each such act committed by Shubrick. On one occasion the Bombay government reprobated his act of dismissing and appointing the new talatis and wrote to him saying "it would appear that the removal of Tullatees were an almost everyday occurrence within your collectorship; whatever your own opinion may be upon the subject you ought not to have deviated as you have in this instance done from the orders of Government". It went on to declare that the talati was hereditary servant of the patels rather than of the collector or the government⁷⁴ - a position which, in substance, contradicted the government's own stand. The irrepressible Shubrick replied that it was not so in principle, apart from the fact that seeking the government's approval every time a talati was dismissed or appointed would result in

71. Bombay to Broach, 23.9.1818, R.D., 133, 1818.

72. Broach to Bombay, 7.1.1819, R.D., 1238, 1819.

73. Shubrick's letter 19.11.1819 & A reply from Bombay 6.12.1819, R.D., 146, 1819; Shubrick's further letter 20.12.1819 & 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, 30.12.1819, R.D., 147, 1819; Shubrick to Bombay, 21.12.1819 & the Minutes of Governor-in-Council, 3.1.1820, R.D., 149, 1820.

74. Bombay to Broach Collector, 18.1.1820, R.D., 149, 1820.

unnecessary delay and hence procrastination when fast remedies were the answer. He also questioned the government's contention that talatis were stationed permanently in villages and were part and parcel of rural society.⁷⁵ But Shubrick only invited the displeasure of the Governor-in-Council and secretary : "Your conduct in disclaiming all responsibility if required to conform to the Regulation is considered to be disrespectful, and a repetition of it will expose you to the displeasure of Government".⁷⁶

On an enquiry from different collectors, which of course had been inspired by Shubrick's tough, unwavering posture, the Bombay government gathered that even the collectors of Kaira and Surat had acted similarly, the difference being that they were diplomatic in their dealings whereas Shubrick was blunt and forthright. This finally persuaded the government to modify its position *vis-a-vis* the talatis. It proclaimed talatis' "appointments ... distinctly be made independent of the Patells one generation that family is not be disposed (sic) unless in case of General and total incapability but another member of it appointed when one is removed".⁷⁷ On the whole this adequately answered the demands of colonialism. The talati, pulled out of the orbit of patels, became an instrument in the revenue enhancing schemes of the British government. He kept a vigil over the village resources, recorded them and reported the same to the government. It was in this role that he exercised a great check on the concealments of patels though it would be unrealistic to also presume that he was less susceptible to fraud and double-dealing (especially if one considers the vantage point the talati occupied in the land revenue system).

75. Shubrick to Bombay, 7.1.1820, R.D., 150, 1820.

76. Bombay letter to Shubrick at Broach, R.D., 150, 1820.

77. 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, 19.11.1820, R.D., 163, 1820; See also K. Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, London 1957, pp. 176-183.

4. STANDARDIZATION OF REVENUE ACCOUNTS

In 1804 a move was initiated to streamline the mode of revenue assessment by removing certain existing anomalies. In Chapter I we had referred to the widely prevalent practise among revenue functionaries of submitting inflated assessment figures in revenue statements (dangur tauji) in order to artificially create arrears on which the manotidar extracted an interest from the peasant. It was in this context that William Steadman suggested reduction in the scale of the dangur tauji (the assessment on the kharif crops) such that it corresponded to the actual produce, rather than being pitched at an arbitrarily high scale as the practice was. He argued, the measure spare the peasants from having to pay a heavy interest on the arrears of dangur tauji to the manotidars.⁷⁸ Alexander Walker while appreciating Steadman's suggestions as 'judicious' cautioned him of the alarm this was likely to cause to the revenue functionaries and advised him to postpone its implementation.⁷⁹ There was an element of realism in Walker's advice because a few months later when the manoti fee was reduced from three to one and a half percent, the revenue functionaries reportedly attempted to instigate the patels to turn down the manoti arrangements proposed by the government.⁸⁰

In 1806 the sukdi (a small remunerative payment made by the cultivators to the revenue functionaries) and manoti collections from the villages were abolished by a 'proclamation', which also declared that the government was pleased "to free the villages from all and every part of Contingent expenses of provisioning Peons Passing through them to whomsoever such persons may belong".⁸¹

78. Letter to Walker, 26.10.1804, R.D., 45, 1805.

79. Letter to Steadman, 1.11.1804, R.D., 45, 1805.

80. G.L.Prendergast to Jonathan Duncan, 5.3.1805, R.D., 48, 1805.

81. 'Proclamation' issued by Prendergast and Steadman, 11.3.1806. R.D., 50, 1806.

The standardizing or rather rationalizing trend in the administration came to terms with a variety of cesses called veras which under past governments (at least under the Marathas) were collected at fixed percentages of the land revenue assessment (See Table VI). The Revenue Commissioners of Broach recommended that "the names of all the Veras be abolished and Established P. centage Calculated on the Juma of the Lands @ 25 P.cent or some other appropriate Head, be fixed upon without any reduction being made in the amount".⁸² Evidently then the intention was not to free the villages from these obnoxious extortions. On the contrary, the cesses were increased upward of 10% compared with their incidence during the last decade of the eighteenth century. The Company government had conveniently appropriated to itself what earlier was collected by the Marathas and their revenue agents. What caused them anxiety was the denomination of these cesses since most of them, collected as they were under 'exotic' pretexts, bore the nomenclature of Maratha personages and/or offices. And, like all words do, these came stuck to real-time situations. Hence, collection of cesses under old denominations could be quite embarrassing, if only etymologically !

The foregoing discussion indicates that by 1820 the Bombay government made considerable headway in carving out a rationalized system of administration with all the trappings of a modern bureaucracy. In the denouement of this drama, a central place ought to be given to the mortal blow which the British government delivered the traditional revenue functionaries, *desais* and *majmudars* - the rural props of past agrarian regimes. The new administrative structure was to be characterised by adherence to rules and regulations. Tradition or custom bound practices were to be replaced with legal ones.

82. Letter to Bombay, 27.3.1806, R.D., 50, 1806, para 9.

It also emerges that the push towards change and modernization came from the civil services. We have observed how successive collectors and judges at Broach urged for innovations and they enjoyed sufficient liberty and encouragement to execute their plans. Despite the conservatism of Duncan and Walker, the district officers at Broach were unhindered enough to introduce administrative change. Under Napier as Governor after 1812 the change was more deliberate and conscious.⁸³ Though Elphinstone was conservative, particularly in the Deccan, he could not turn back the wheels in Gujarat.⁸⁴ His compromise with the changed structure in Gujarat can be seen from his very statement: "There seems nothing to regret in this alteration".⁸⁵ More than anything else the system won acceptance because it had yielded results - the profit motive was paramount over the political.⁸⁶

The increase in land revenues can be thus placed in the broader context of the centralizing tendency inherent in colonial administration.

5. COTTON MONOPOLY AND PRICES

With the exercise of sovereignty the Company had established its monopoly in the purchase of cotton, the major exportable produce of Broach in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In June 1803 the court of directors ordered the Bombay government to buy cotton on the Company's account.⁸⁷ The government in turn asked Walker to secure all the cotton grown in Broach pargana for the Company's exclusive benefits. The orders were carried down the line and Walker instructed

83. cf. Neil Rabinoy, "The British Administration in Western India", chapter VI; and his "Administrative Modernization and the Bhats of Gujarat, 1800-1820", *IESHR*, VI, 1, pp. 46-73.

84. See Ravinder Kumar, Western India in the Nineteenth Century, London 1968, Ch. II; Ballhatchet, op.cit., p. 181.

85. 'Minute' dated 6.4.1821, reproduced in George W. Forrest (ed), Selections from the Minutes and other Official Writings of the Honorable Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, London 1884, p. 490.

86. cf. Rabinoy, "British Administration", ch. VI.

87. 'Minute' of Jonathan Duncan 25.5.1804, Secret and Political Department, 46, 1804.

Parbhuram Assaram, the Company's agent at Broach, that "the Cotton produce of this year is to be reserved entirely for the Company... You will prohibit the sale of cotton to the Private Agents or Contractors of the Merchants and permit no part of this article to disposed of without my orders".⁸⁸ The Company made a two-fold profit, benefiting in terms of weight as well as prices fixed by it.

Steadman reported that while the advantage in prices was a fluctuating one, the one in weight was permanent. Cotton, he held, "is bought here [Broach] at our own weight & sold at the Surat one which is favorable to us at the rate of a Maund in each Candy-"⁸⁹ That is, at a given price level, the Company was buying more and selling less.

According to Robert Rickards (a one time member of the Bombay Council), testifying before the parliamentary committee of 1812-13, the government's cotton purchase price was 10 to 12 percent lower than what the cultivators received in the Maratha districts and that it had been thrust upon "a Slavish, patient, and forbearing people" by "the judge, the Commercial resident who exercise the whole civil authority of the district...."⁹⁰

Contrary to the established practice of collecting revenues in cash the British took to collection in kind, but only in the case of cotton because of the obvious advantages it yielded to the Company. Cotton was purchased by the Department of Commerce at Broach and the amount credited to the account of cultivators so that the government could deduct the land-tax before it passed into the hands of the peasant. The Revenue Commission's report

88. Letter of 30.9.1803, R.D., 39, 1803, para 5 (emphasis added).

89. Steadman to Walker, 9.3.1804, R.D., 44, 1805, para 7.

90. Cited in Pamela Nightengale, op.cit., p. 234.

dated 27.3.1806 on the jamabandi settlement for 1805-06 states that "the quantity of Broach Cotton delivered to the Commercial Resident up to 26th instant was 11162 Bhars for which account he passed his receipts and which at the price 44 Rs.p. Bhar amounts to Rs. 4,91,128".⁹¹ Grown on one third of the cultivated land of Broach cotton accounted for more than half of the total revenue demand on cultivators.

The government's monopoly over cotton came under attack early in a pamphlet The Present System of Our East India Government and Commerce Considered published in 1813. Its author Robert Rickards attacked the whole system by which the Company combined commerce with political power.

Another anonymous pamphlet on Gujarat cotton declared that "the practice of taking the Revenues of Cotton districts in kind, which in some cases amounts to about half of the whole produce... is a serious bar to industry and improvement". It further stated : "if the company were to relinquish the practice of taking their cotton revenue in kind, and were content to receive a fair equivalent in money, the grower would soon find out that the best cotton would fetch the best price".⁹² Under such pressures the Board of control in 1815 prevailed upon the directors to abolish the system by which the Bombay government took revenue in cotton or exercised any form of compulsion over the cultivators.⁹³ But the orders of the Court were altogether ignored in the Bombay Presidency until 1819 when the issue was taken up with a certain amount of seriousness. Francis Warden in his

91. R.D., 50, 1806, para 8.

92. Some Remarks on the Cotton of the Province of Guzerat in the East Indies, London 1822, pp. 5-7 (emphasis added)

93. Pamela Nightingale, op.cit., pp. 234-35.

minute laid down that :

The principle of demanding a money payment from the Ryotts in proportion to the value of the crops carries with it every appearance of reason and justice, but I do not consider it conducive to the permanent interests of the Company especially in reference to an article, which is not only the staple of the Country, but is also a commodity the supply of which to the United Kingdom from India in supercession of all foreign market is an object of such national importance.⁹⁴

And in order to protect the 'interests of the Company', if the cultivator was to have freedom to sell his cotton produce, he proposed that an enhanced rate of revenue be permanently fixed on cotton producing lands keeping the high price of the produce in mind.⁹⁵ Prendergast endorsed Warden's views and the reluctant Governor, who was ignorant of revenue matters left the subject vague as under :

The principle of demanding a money payment from the Ryotts in proportion to the value of the crop instead of receiving the Hon'able Company's Revenue from the Cultivators of Cotton in kind, is so reasonable, that whether the Ryotts are disposed to accede to the proposition or not, I am of opinion we ought to enforce a compliance; I mean, that, in the event of a refusal we should acquire the Hon'able Company portion of the produced as formerly. In the orders of the Court to us in this important subject, I conceive they did not contemplate any sacrifice of their interests of the ryots, but only to place themselves and the Merchants on an equal footing with each other in Market.⁹⁶

Whether the directors in London were ready 'to sacrifice their interests to the Ryots' or not, the Bombay servants were not keen if this meant continuation of injudicious and oppressive practices contrary to proclaimed principles.

94. 'Minute' of 21.8.1819, R.D.L., 143, 1819 para 10. (Emphasis added)

95. *Ibid*, paras 12-13.

96. Governor's 'Minute', Consultations 29.9.1819, R.D.L., 143, 1819 (emphasis added).

A significant aspect of the earlier phase of colonial revenue history of Broach is the near total realization of the assessed land revenue. This can be seen in the general statement submitted by the Revenue Accountant of the Bombay government on the revenues of Broach, Ankleshwar and Hansot parganas for 18 years from 1804 to 1821. While the assessment in the three parganas amounted to Rs. 2,30,86,343 for the entire period, collections were made to the tune of Rs. 2,29,93,221. Furthermore over a period of 18 years remissions of land tax added up to a paltry sum of Rs. 4,101, while the unpaid revenue balance as of 30th April 1821 stood at Rs. 89,021.⁹⁷ The near total approximation of tax assessments with tax returns became possible, apart from administrative reasons by a favourable level of prices. The prices of agricultural products were quite high in the first two decades of 19th century (See Table VII).

TABLE VIII

PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES :

BROACH DISTRICT
1806 - 1820 (in rupees)

Year	Cotton (Per Bhar= 960 Sers)	Jowar (Per Kalsi = 16 Maunds or 640 Sers)	Wheat	Rice	Bajri	Tuver
1806	44	-	-	-	-	-
1807	42-46	-	-	-	-	-
1808	41-47	-	-	-	-	-
1809	44-48	-	-	-	-	-
1810	46-50	9	11	11	15	18
1811	41-47	13	13	11.5	14	18
1812	42-48	18.5	21	13	16.5	16
1813	45-51	32	38	30	48	42
1814	44-50	26	37	24	36	34
1815	42-48	15.25	18	14	18.25	19
1816	53-59	13	18	15	16	19
1817	56-62	16	17	13.5	16	17
1818	67-73	15.25	15.5	13	15.5	17
1819	70-76	18	18	14.25	16	20
1820	74-80	28	39	19	39	26

Source : Memoir of Broach, p.67; Broach Collector's letter to Bombay, No. 57, 17.5.1824, R.D., 17/101, 1824.

97. Letter of 12.4.1822, R.D., 14/38, 1822.

PRICE OF COTTON :

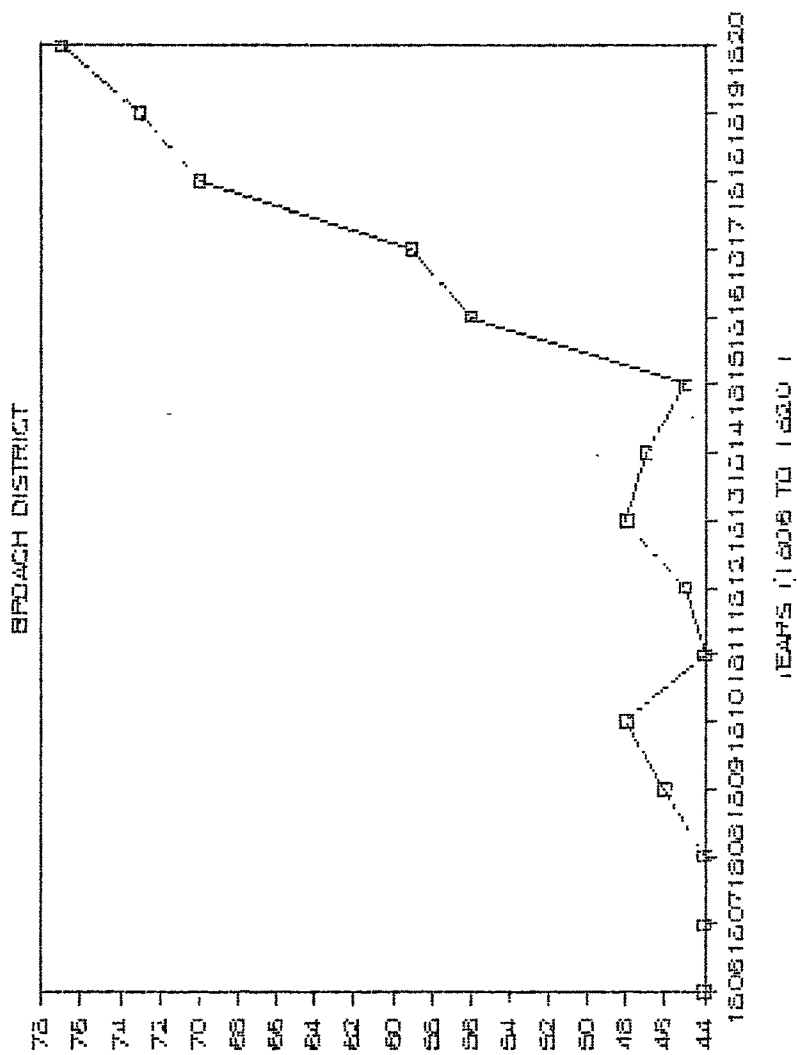


FIGURE 3a

PRICES : COTTON & FOODGRAINS

BROACH DISTRICT

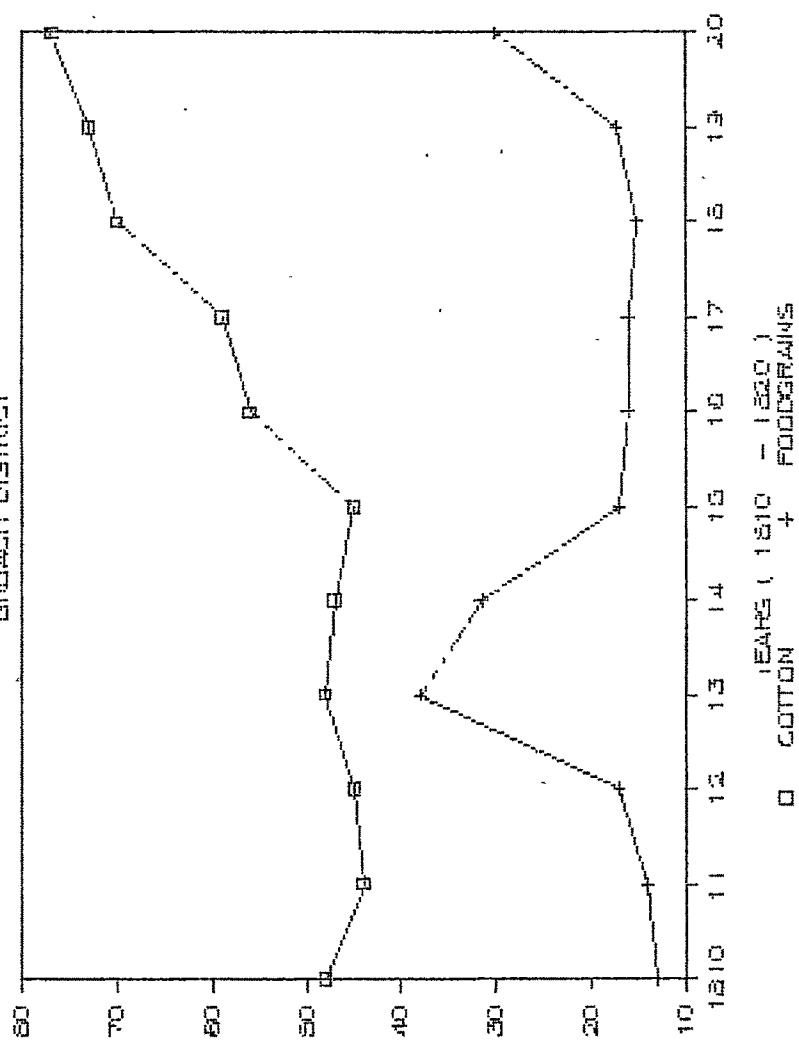


FIGURE 3b

In the price behaviour depicted in Table VIII two distinct trends are available. The first relating to cotton is one of constant rise in prices from 1806 till 1820. The second relating to food grains, shows small but steady spurts in prices punctuated by two periods when the prices rise rather sharply : 1812-14; 1819-20. As we saw in Chapter II, 1812 to 1814 were years of famine and although Broach was not as badly hit by it as northern and central Gujarat,⁹⁸ foodgrain prices in general responded to the acute shortage of food supplies in the region. In 1819-20 cultivation was again adversely affected but this time by excessive rains causing floods and eventually price rise. These two phases of price inflation lean agricultural seasons are matched by heavier revenue demands of the government.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE ETHOS AND REVENUES

The colonial government's drive at maximizing its profits had put the collectors under pressure to increase the land revenue from year to year. Burton Stein's remarks on Madras Presidency equally apply to the Bombay Presidency :

basic objectives of the Company's agents in the field, the Collectors, were the same in all of the districts : maximum extraction of the agrarian surplus... Each collector was under the most profound pressure to transmit the largest possible money revenue... and his performance (hence his career) was measured on this criterion alone.⁹⁹

98. Memoir, p. 68.

99. Burton Stein, "Agrarian Integration", op.cit., p. 204.

While the collectors were appreciated whenever the revenue increased they were as much liable to rebuke and censure when a decrease occurred. We have the very instructive example in J.H. Bellasis, the collector of Broach. In 1811 he reported the government that he had "anticipated a considerable increase in the revenue", but his hopes had been belied by crop failure. Despite this Bellasis did manage to show some increase in the revenues of Ankleshwar and Hansot parganas at least, where he could persuade the patels to cultivate a bit of waste land.¹⁰⁰ The Bombay government appreciated this and wrote to Bellasis that his proceedings were "satisfactory to Governor in Council as much as they shew a small increase in the amount of the Gross assessment of the Current year which under due attention it is reasonably expected may be annually progressive".¹⁰¹ Unfortunately for the collector, the final revenue receipts showed a marginal diminution over the previous year's returns about which Bellasis expressed his regrets. The government, however, was not to be placated and it ordered the Revenue Accountant to prepare a statement on the land revenue of Broach for last five years. Hence a comprehensive statement of the jambandi of Broach from 1807 to 1812 was submitted by the Accountant, confirming a fall of about 2% in the revenues of 1812 compared with previous years.¹⁰² A government that had applauded the collector for a small increase three months earlier could now upbraid his conduct in disparaging terms :

The Board observes with deep concern the diminution thus evinced to have taken place in revenues of Broach during the last two years, without (as far as it is at present known) any sufficient reason for it - In forwarding the Statement for the notice of the Collector, the causes of this alarming defalcation, so materially affecting the conduct of Mr. Bellasis, under whom during this latter period has been the management of the Purgunnah -103

100. Letter to Bombay, 11.2.1812, R.D., 77, 1812.

101. 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, 20.3.1812, R.D., 77, 1812 (emphasis added).

102. Bellasis to Bombay, 27.3.1812; 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, 5.5.1812; J. Kaye to Bombay Government, 19.6.1812, R.D., 78, 1812. The Land revenue assessment on Broach pargana for 1811-12 was settled at Rs. 9,44,016. In the preceding year it was Rs. 9,64,338, i.e. a decrease of Rs. 20,322. Bellasis to Bombay, 11.2.1812, R.D., 77, 1812.

103. Governor-in-Council's 'Consultations' of 1.7.1812, R.D., 78, 1812 (emphasis added)

Hence a fall in revenue by howsoever 'small a margin constituted in the reckoning of a colonial government 'alarming defalcation' causing it 'deep concern' and providing it sufficient reason to drastically revise its opinion about an officer. The government's expression of surprise, and ignorance of this expected decrease, is difficult to account for because the collector had already apprized it of the circumstances in which it had happened - the bad season and the crop failure.¹⁰⁴ This inevitably produced the effect of pressurizing the collectors to extract revenues to the full no matter what the conditions or circumstances; and, better still, if they could be instrumental in enhancing them. The phenomenon seems to have lasted a century. B.M.Malbari in the last quarter of the nineteenth century observed that "Subordinate officials are afraid of telling unpleasant truth to their superiors.... To show small expenditure and large receipts is the easiest way of securing promotion and titles".¹⁰⁵

The Company's greed for money was carried far enough to be perceived as a weakness, susceptible of manipulation, by the district administration. Collectors were prone to using it as a shield in order to ward off adverse reports and actions against themselves. A case in point is of Charles Shubrick, the collector of Broach, whose defiance of government landed him in trouble. In 1819 the government issued an order transferring him to an inferior station as the collector of Bombay.¹⁰⁶ A shocked and humiliated Shubrick made an appeal to the Bombay government seeking an opportunity to "be allowed the means of deprecating it [the government's displeasure at his conduct], previous to the

104. Bellasis to Bombay, 11.2.1812, R.D., 77, 1812.

105. Gujarat and Gujaratis, Bombay 1889, p.32.

106. Vide 'Minute' of the Governor in 'Revenue Consultations' of 20.9.1820, R.D., 160, 1820.

Execution of a measure so afflicting to my feelings as well as prejudicial to my interests".¹⁰⁷ The appeal was met with silence and the government neither conceded Shubrick the means of defending himself nor withdrew his transfer orders.¹⁰⁸ In sheer desperation the besieged collector attempted to rehabilitate himself by employing the bate of galloping revenue figures. The settlement on the kharif crop alone, the dangur tauji for 1820-21, was fixed at Rs.5,16,078 which exceeded the previous year's amount by Rs.1,24,205, albeit revenue returns were yet incomplete. Shubrick's attempt to commend his own efforts to the government are telling. He wrote that "my Solicitude to promote the interests of my Hon'able Employers will be exemplified by an increase of Revenues of upwards of two (2) Lacs of Rupees more than in the former year".¹⁰⁹

It is another story that even this did not bring him the reprieve he was looking for and his transfer orders came into effect soon after. The final revenue statement of Broach district for 1820-21 had to be submitted by his successor who reported the jamabandi (i.e tax on gross produce : rabi + kharif) at Rs. 23,01,532, with the triumphant note : "the total amount to be realizable on the lands exceeds that of the year 1819/20 by Rs. 4,47,040".¹¹⁰

The assessment of 1820-21 is indeed one of the harshest in revenue history and for years to come it remained the subject of even official criticism. In fact every evil of the succeeding years was traced back to this 'unimaginative' assessment.

107. Shubrick to Bombay, 29.9.1820, R.D., 161, 1820.

108 'Minutes' of Governor-in-Council, 13.10.1820, R.D., 161, 1820.

109. Letter to Bombay, 31.10.1820, R.D., 163, 1820, paras 1 & 3.

110. Acting Coll. to Bombay, No. 79, 8.5.1821, R.D., 19/19, 1821.

Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of the Presidency observed on one of his tours of the district in 1821 :

An increase of four lacs and a half has taken place this year : a circumstance that I can not contemplated with pleasure, while the sources of the revenue and the principles of increase are so completely in the dark.¹¹¹

Elphinstone's comments acquire a sharper edge if we remember that he was himself under considerable pressure to augment government resource. Lord Hastings having written to him a letter chiding him : "after all our successes the Presidency of Bombay is to remain a dead loss to the Company... the court will never tolerate such a prospect".¹¹²

The exorbitant revenue demand of 1820-21 continued to exercise the minds of successive collectors, leaving them at a loss as to the rationale of the sudden enhancement. Remarking on the jamabandi of Tankaria village, the assistant collector of Broach noted in 1822 that it "was greater last year, by two thousand Rupees, than it had been, for 17 years back in the height of the Maharattah power" - After some thought he prognosticated "the downfall of the present system of assessment" since "the voice of opposition seems to awaken every year with increased vehemence and resolution, and only stands in need of a little more knowledge to render it triumphant".¹¹³

111. 'Minute' of 25.4.1821 at Camp Velacha, in George W. Forrest, op.cit., p. 462.

112. Quoted in S. Varma, Mountstuart Elphinstone in Maharashtra (1801-1827), Calcutta 1981, p.183.

113. W.Gordon to Andrew Burnett, 8.3.1822, R.D., 14/38, 1822.

Still later another collector recommended the abatement of Rs. 39,974, the outstanding balances against the cultivators for 1820-21, extending his reason for such a course :

Without entering into any minute inquiry with the intention to ascertain with precision the exact point at which the burthens of 1820/21 exceeded the means of the People, reflection and thought incline me to feel extremely apprehensive that the imposts of that year were infinitely above the available resources of the Country,....¹¹⁴

But the government, unwilling to give up such a large sum of money, instructed the collector to realize it in two or three instalments.¹¹⁵

7. LAND REVENUE : 1821 - 52

For all the hardships and consequences emanating from the revenue settlement of 1820-21 it may well serve as a critical moment between two phases in the revenue history of Broach district during the first half of the century. The days of hesitations, uncertainties, of learning through trial and error, seem to have given way to bolder, more reckless, aggrandizing ventures - an index that colonial hold over Gujarat territories was consolidated. The new administrative structure which had been able to dispense with the services of traditional revenue personnel felt confident coping with any situation that obstructed the smooth transmission of agrarian surplus. Among

114. Letter to Bombay, No. 10.7.1824, R.D., 17/101, 1824, para 3 (emphasis added)

115. Bombay to Broach, No. 1263, 2.8.1824, R.D., 17/101, 1824.

other things, prices during the first two decades proved quite favorable to the scheme of revenue enhancement and the nurturing of the illusion of prosperity. However, what followed after 1820 turned out to be quite problematic as colonial exploitation began to take a toll of agrarian life in a markedly intense and visible form.

A dramatic fall in prices (specially that of cotton) continuing well into the 50's, outstanding balances against peasants whose poverty and indebtedness mounted with each year, diminution in cultivation leading inevitably to a decline in revenues; piecemeal remissions reluctantly granted by the government, and neutralized through attachments of peasant property - these constitute the profile of the decades that followed c. 1820.

Table IX below shows the revenue settlement of the district from 1823 to 1852. How does it compare with the preceding decade? The corresponding revenue graphs of the two periods provide the clue, (Figs. 2b & 4). While it is apparent that the general drift in both periods is toward progressively larger exactions, the figures of 1823-52 embody more rapid and regular alternations between the peaks and dips of the graph - as if within the agrarian order a primary tension operated between the escalating nature of revenue demand and the actual capacity to sustain it. This valuable inference is of a piece with the larger picture.

TABLE IX

LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT ON BROACH DISTRICT :
1823/24 TO 1851/52

Year	Assessment in Rupees
1823-24	16,87,490
1824-25	8,69,583 *
1825-26	14,57,050
1826-27	14,82,652
1827-28	16,59,157
1828-29	14,80,635
1829-30	15,70,608
1830-31	19,39,251
1831-32	14,17,025 *
1832-33	16,17,432
1833-34	17,95,786
1834-35	15,31,820
1835-36	24,35,583
1836-37	21,81,094
1837-38	22,20,234
1838-39	11,47,233
1839-40	20,77,490
1840-41	18,81,421
1841-42	18,77,970
1842-43	19,38,429
1843-44	17,46,123
1844-45	18,40,138
1845-46	17,50,815
1846-47	17,80,046
1847-48	18,23,703
1848-49	18,39,540
1849-50	16,07,256
1850-51	16,26,572
1851-52	16,62,117

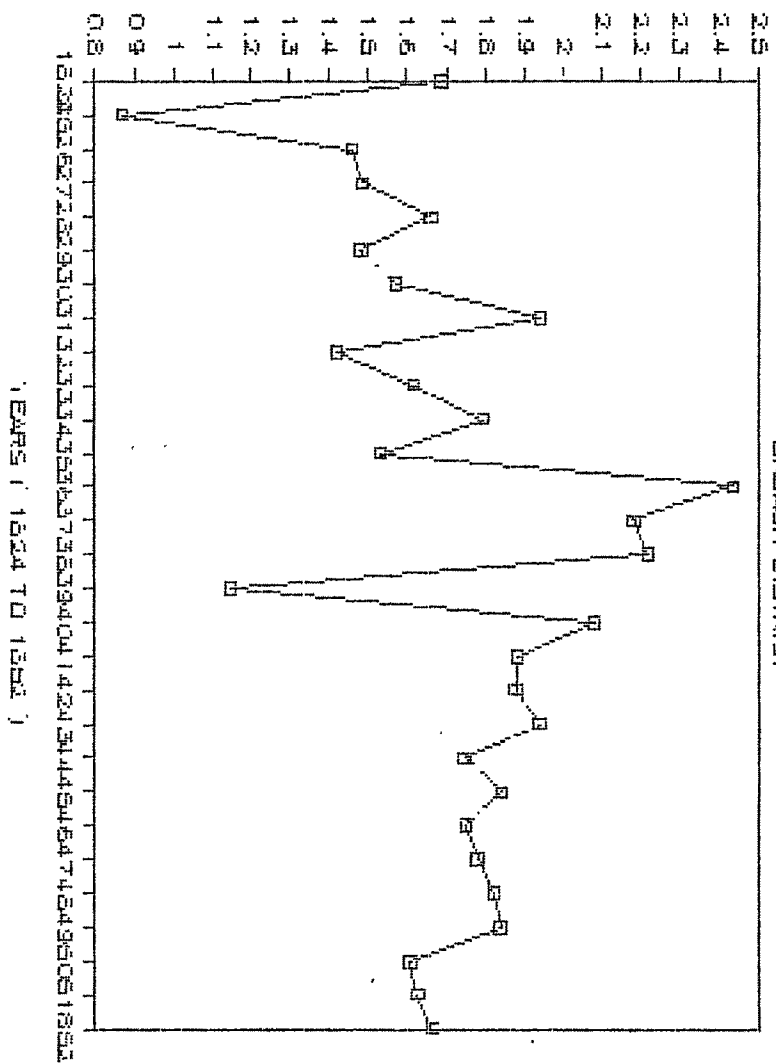
Source : Annual Reports of Collectors of Broach and Revenue Commissioners in R.D. Nos. 5/137 of 1826; 29/182 of 1827; 5/208 of 1828; 20/267 of 1829; 37/318 of 1830 2/406 of 1832; 16/484 of 1833; 7/629 of 1835; 8/695 of 1836; 15/773 of 1837; 13/976 of 1839; 17/1101 of 1840; 13/1242 of 1841; 14/1347 of 1842; 14/1456 of 1843; 14 of 1845; 12 of 1846; 13 of 1847; 13 of 1848; 16 of 1849; 16 of 1851; 17 of 1851; 14 of 1852; 10 of 1856.

* Figures for 1824-25 & 1831-32 taken from the Broach Gazetteer (1877) due to the non traceability of revenue reports for these years. The figure for 1824-25 is curiously low and gives rise to some doubt.

Unlike the first period when revenue realisation almost completely matched with assessments, in the post 1821 phase it became increasingly difficult for the government machinery to realize settled revenue. Hence 'outstanding balances' the official jargon for arrears (or unpaid revenue of previous years), became a regular phenomenon. On the testimony of the collector, in 1836 arrears

LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT : BROUGH DISTRICT

FIGURE 4
(Millions)



originating from the year 1820-21 had accumulated over the years to Rs. 2,82,264 though every year some collection was made.¹¹⁶ Year after year the collectors furnished updated statements of the arrears, writing off small fractions deemed irrecoverable as cultivators fled, died or rendered hopelessly poor. Reproduced below is one such statement belonging to the year 1839. Section 'A' of the statement, specifying the 'Recoverable' part of the arrears, indicates the government's tenacity in pursuing arrears of nearly ten years standing. Section 'B' serves as commentary on the condition of the tillers of the soil, and section 'C' represents what the government was half willing to concede.

**A STATEMENT OF ARREARS IN BROACH DISTRICT
STANDING ON 31.7.1839**

A. RECOVERABLE
RS. 2,85,786

B. IRRECOVERABLE

1. RS. 6,674 DUE FROM CULTIVATORS WHO DESERTED.
2. RS. 12,521 DUE FROM THE CULTIVATORS WHO DIED.
3. RS. 46,024 DUE FROM INSOLVENTS.
4. RS. 389 AGAINST CERTAIN VILLAGES WHERE BHAGDARS HAD EXCEEDED THE VILLAGE EXPENSES.
5. RS. 29,655 RECORDS MISSING.
6. RS. 155 DUE FROM JAMAITRAM, THE KAMAVISDAR WHO WAS IMPRISONED FOR EMBEZZLEMENT.

C. DOUBTFUL OR DISPUTED.

1. RS. 307 DUE FROM RYOTS WHO HELD THAT THEY WERE OVER-ASSESSED.
2. RS. 1,836 DUE ON ACCOUNT OF FROST IN 1834-35.
3. RS. 1,556 DUE FROM THOSE WHO REFUSED TO PAY ON THE GROUND THAT ASSESSMENT WAS ON WASTE LAND.
4. RS. 729 BALANCE DISPUTED BY THE CULTIVATORS.

(NOTE : UNDER THIS CATEGORY SOME OTHER SMALL AMOUNTS, DISPUTED BY THE PEASANTS ARE LISTED BUT HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT HERE.)

SOURCE : BROACH COLL'S LETTER NO.221, 28.9.1839, R.D., 17/1101 OF 1840.

116. Sub-Collector to Principal Collector of Broach, No.245, 1.8.1835 R.D., 8-695, 1836.

In 1844 it was reported that in Broach and Wagra Talukas (formerly one pargana) there were arrears of Rs. 19,359 against 480 cultivators who had died; Rs. 6,297 due from 272 cultivators who had deserted the district; and Rs. 79,373 against 2,487 insolvent peasants.¹¹⁷ In spite of some arrears being written off and remissions granted from time to time, these features recurred unceasingly because the peasants had been reduced to abysmal penury and the agrarian system was in the throes of all-embracing crisis. Table X furnishes statistical demonstration of this phenomenon in Jambusar and Amod parganas.

TABLE X

JAMABANDI, REMISSIONS AND BALANCE IN JAMBUSAR AND AMOD PARGANAS
1840 - 1847 (In Rupees)

Year	Jamabandi	Remissions	Balances Written off	Balance of Curr- ent Yr.	Balance of For- mer Yr.	Total Bal- ance on 1st Aug
JAMBUSAR						
1840-41	305909	-	70088	131812	11622	143454
1841-42	427124	-	126409	-	1179	1179
1842-43	435109	-	-	581	303	884
1843-44	406745	-	507	29047	261	29308
1844-45	435983	423029	-	17842	24865	42707
1845-46	426165	262535	-	2956	33285	36241
1846-47	434200	91842	-	93	31117	31210
AMOD						
1840-41	160557	8038	155	22298	45723	68021
1841-42	162286	2306	828	1785	51997	53782
1842-43	163790	-	-	4179	49387	53566
1843-44	162574	6094	41886	15739	8579	24318
1844-45	163947	5627	-	24169	20866	45035
1845-46	157227	69293	190	-	35063	35063
1846-47	159433	55623	-	18	32949	32967

Source : J.M.Davies, Broach Collector, to D.A.Blane, Revenue Commissioner, No. 276, 19.8.1848, R.D., 36 of 1849, paras 7 & 32.

It was against this background that remissions were allowed, becoming a recurrent feature of the 1840's (See Table XI). But they were made after detailed enquiries and only in cases where the peasants appeared utterly incapable of paying the revenue.

117. A.Richardson to A.W.Ravenscroft, 1.8.1844, R.D., 20, 1845.

TABLE XI

REMISSIONS ON ASSESSED LAND REVENUE IN BRADCH DISTRICT

Year	Assessment Rs.	Remission Rs.	Realizable Rs.
1840-41	18,81,421	2,92,164	15,89,256
1841-42	18,77,970	446	18,75,524
1842-43	19,38,429	-	19,38,429
1843-44	17,46,123	455	17,39,668
1844-45	18,40,138	51,617	17,88,521
1845-46	17,50,815	4,40,328	13,10,487
1846-47	17,84,046	4,01,442	13,82,603
1847-48	18,23,703	2,99,552	15,24,150
1848-49	18,39,540	5,78,426	12,16,114
1849-50	16,07,256	72,894	15,33,781
1850-51	16,26,572	67,973	15,58,598

Source : The annual reports on the district submitted by Collectors and Revenue Commissioners to the Bombay Government.

The oppressive and unrealistic nature of assessments is evident from the fact that at times 25%-30% of the revenue had to be remitted. This happened in 1845-46, 1846-47 and 1848-49.

8. PRICE DECLINE : 1821 - 52

The crisis afflicting revenue realisation was intensified by a fall in prices of both cotton and foodgrains - though cotton commands a primacy since it accounted for a major portion of the land tax. The government's monopoly over cotton, its low procurement price, the heavy rate of taxation, and finally price decline all combined over the decades to act as a disincentive to cotton cultivation.

Immediately after the crushing assessment of 1820 - 21 a precipitious fall in prices commenced lasting well into the middle of the nineteenth century. Cotton which was sold in Broach pargana at Rs. 74 to 80 per bhar in 1819-20 collapsed to Rs. 50 in 1820-21, further to Rs.39 in 1821-23. The trend in the other parganas was the same. A bhar of cotton did not fetch the cultivators of Ankleshwar and Hansot more than 40 rupees in 1820-21 which declined to Rs. 33 in the following year. Fall in grain prices was also general (See fig.5)

Regular data on prices of agricultural commodities in Broach during the 1820's are not available, though in the event of a fall the fact does not go unrecorded. From 1833 down to 1853 (the close of our study) we get price series for all the major crops grown in the district (See Table XII). Comparision of the average prices of these crops in three periods, viz. 1810-1820, 1833-1842 and 1843-1852, reveals a fairly sharp decline (See Table XIII). In the second period cotton was cheaper by nearly 22%, wheat by 25% and jowar by more than 34% in relation to the first. In the third period prices went down further : Cotton by 30%, wheat 19% and jowar almost 35%.

TABLE XII
PRICES OF MAJOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS,
BROACH DISTRICT

Year	Cotton Rs. per Bhar = 960 Sers	Wheat Rs. per Kalsi = 640 Sers	Jowar	Rice	Tuver
1833-34	51	22	13	15	18
1834-35	56	18	15	15	15
1835-36	47	18	15	09	15
1836-37	51	14	13	12	11
1837-38	37	13	08	08	11
1838-39	51	20	18	-	15
1839-40	32	17	13	12	12
1840-41	43	16	09	12	12
1841-42	26	13	08	10	11
1842-43	30	11	07	09	11
1843-44	32	09	09	08	12
1844-45	29	10	07	07	11
1845-46	28	20	10	10	14
1846-47	28	20	10	10	13
1847-48	-	-	-	-	-
1848-49	29	14	7.5	13	-
1849-50	32	15	09	12.5	-
1850-51	40	12	07.5	12.5	-
1851-52	30.5	13	07.5	12	-
1852-53	34.5	11.5	09.5	11.5	-

Source: J.M.Davies, Broach Coll, to D.A. Blane, Rev. Comm. No. 202, 30.9.1847, R.D., 16, 1849, para 32; E.L.Jenkins to E.G.Fawcett, Rev. Comm. No.1144, 15.9.1854, R.D., 52, 1856, para 14.

PRICES : COTTON & FOODGRAINS

BROAD DISTRICT

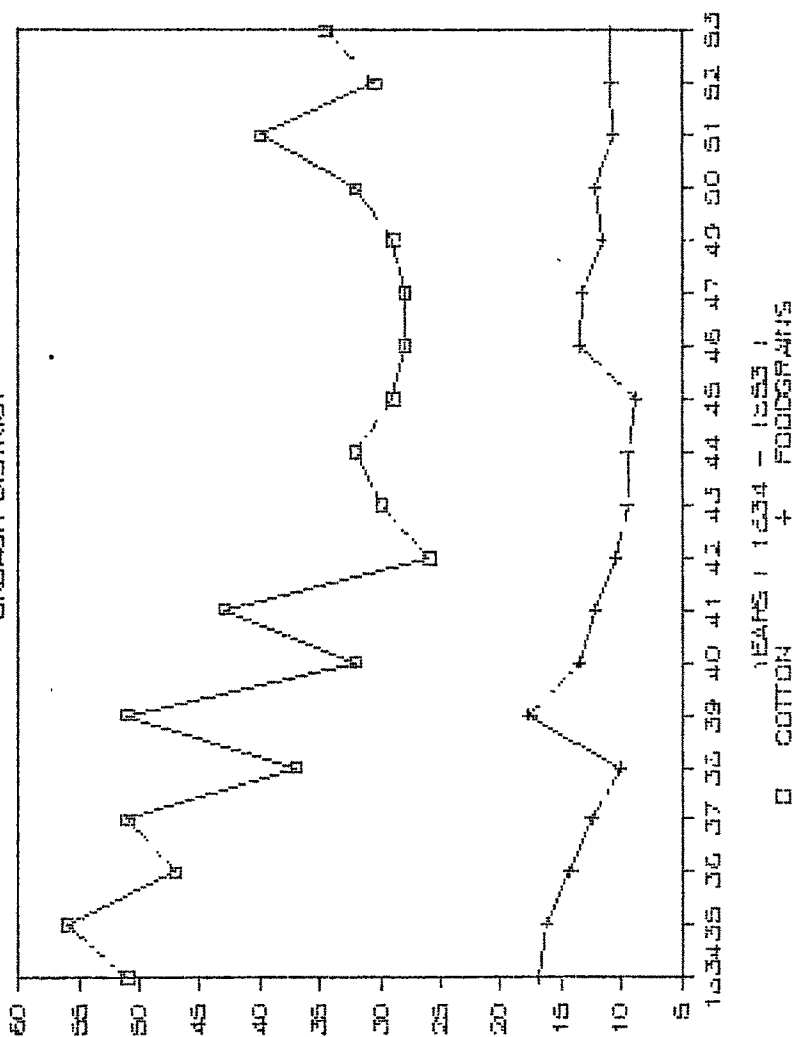


FIGURE 5

TABLE XIII
AVERAGE PRICE OF SELECTED AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES
BROACH DISTRICT

Period	Cotton (Rs. Per Bhar= 960 Sers)	Wheat (Rs. Per Kalsi = 640 Sers.)	Jowar	Rice	Tuver
I 1810 - 1820	55	22.25	18.75	16	22
II 1833 - 1842	43.75	16.75	12.50	11.50	13.50
III 1842 - 1852	30.75	13.75	08.25	10	12

Source : Averages based on statistics in Memoir, p.67; J.M.Davies letter No. 202, 30.9.1847, R.D., 16.1849; Jenkins' letter No. 1144, 15.9.1854 R.D., 52, 1856.

'Alarmed at the prospect, in 1822 the government proposed to the collector to reduce assessment as a preventive against a possible fall in cotton cultivation. But the collector replied that this will "materially injure" the Company's revenue, and assured the government that its anxiety about reduced cotton supply (due to fall in cotton prices) was misplaced. He reasoned that "altho" low assessment may induce the people to cultivate more of the article, [i.e.cotton] grain of all kinds is at present so cheap, throughout the whole of this Province that they would probably grow merely enough of the latter to support their families and appropriate the remainder of their shares, for the production of cotton, instead of tilling the arable waste; of which there is now a considerable quantity in these Purgunnas"¹¹⁸

Contrary to the collector's happy speculation, wherein low grain prices provided a surety against dwindling cotton cultivation (inspite of the warning in the form of arable wastes which he refers to himself), a larger acreage was devoted to food-grains as cotton returns proved uneconomical.

118. Andrew Burnett to Bombay, No. 86, 22.7.1822, R.D., 28/52, 1822, para, 2.

An opposite explanation, postulating a connection between "very low grain prices" and shortfalls in revenues emerged at the close of the 20's.¹¹⁹ In 1831 the commercial resident of the northern factories pointed out that the slump in grain prices basically was the outcome of an undiversified agricultural production that has led to a "vast redundancy" in foodgrains. So long as this state of affairs will last "Land revenue must, as a natural consequence, continue to be seriously affected". The way out of the impasse, he argued is "to substitute as far as is practicable the cultivation of other products and thus both diminish the growth of grain ... and at the same time create consumers who are not producers of it".¹²⁰

Notwithstanding the limitations of a colonial view of things the validity of this analysis is partially confirmed by data on the acreage under different crops of which a regular series becomes available 1834 onwards. Throughout the 30's and the greater part of the 40's until 1847, an appreciably larger acreage was under foodgrains - the exception being the years 1868-40 when the relative position altered completely; less of foodgrains, more of cotton. Strictly speaking this was only the culmination of a process that had begun in circa 1835 when the acreage under cotton progressively increased at the expense of foodgrains reaching a climax in 1839 (cf. Fig. 6).¹²¹

A glance at the revenue statistics (Table IX) shows that these were precisely the years of exceptionally high assessment, figures

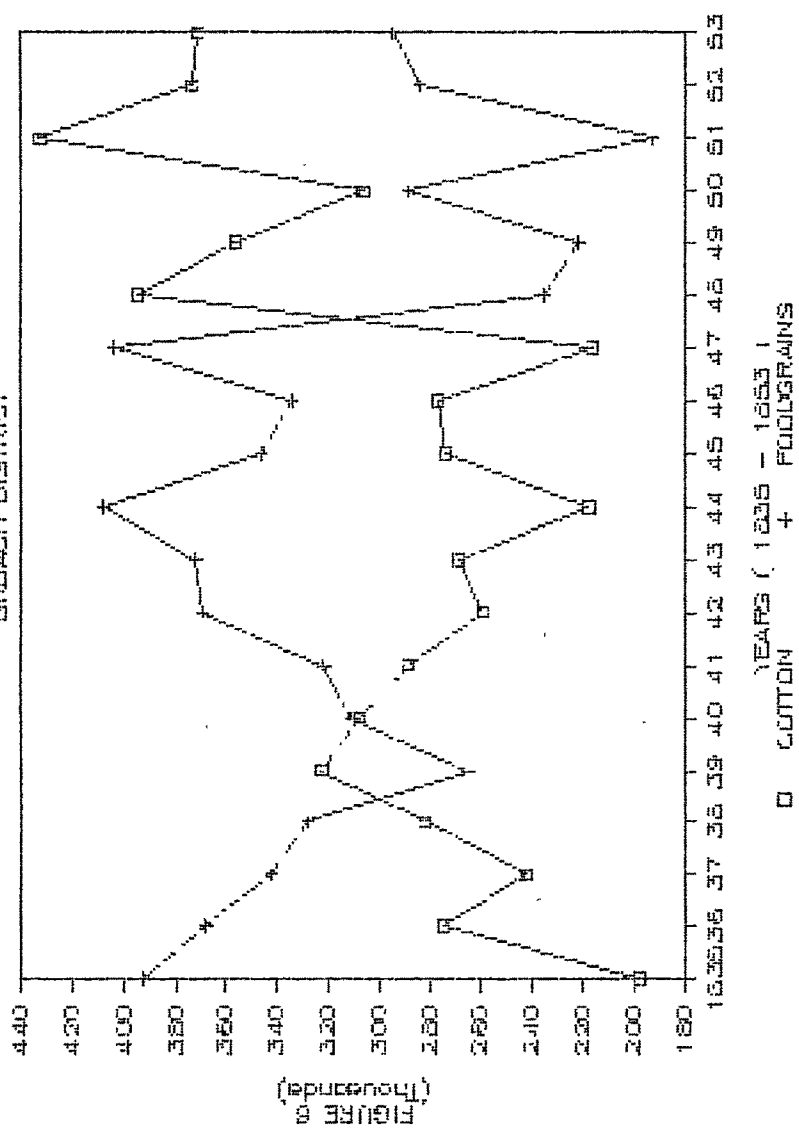
119. Broach Coll. to Bombay, No. 123, 7.5.1829, R.D., 20/267, 1829, para 4.

120. J.H. Pelly to Bombay, 21.7.1831, R.D., 22/350, 1831, para 6.

121. Of course no attempt is being made here to check the analysis further by estimating the levels of per capita production and consumption of foodgrains - which alone can prove if there actually existed a "vast redundancy in foodgrains"

ACREAGE : COTTON & FOODGRAINS

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once again scaling the heights set by 1820-21. In the circumstances recourse to cotton cultivation must have been the desperate answer the peasant sought to his difficulties. There is more distressing evidence in the form of breakup of land holdings, impoverishment, suggesting that the years were particularly harsh on rural society, especially the poorer folk.

The original relationship of cotton vis-a-vis foodgrain was restored soon after 1840 and remained so till 1847 when a sudden reversal occurred with 50% - 70% of the gross cultivated area devoted to the cotton (Fig. 6). This outlasts our period of study. Around this time the price curve for cotton begins to take an upward turn. Compared with the earlier phase it is also more stable.

Significantly grain prices, despite the upheavals remain consistently low, moving at a more or less even rhythm through a period of twenty years (See Fig. 5). This is problematic since the "vast redundancy" explanation for low grain prices presumably does not apply in the post 1847 years when foodgrain cultivation gave way to cotton in a major way. Perhaps one had also to think in terms of a decline in consumer's buying power as a fallout of colonial drain.

9. CONSEQUENCES

The rack and ruin of the peasantry is the most stunning evidence for the reckless severity with which colonial revenue policy was pursued. In 1823 more than 250 petitions were submitted by the peasants of Broach decrying the oppression caused by the heavy assessment. The petitioners stated that they were deprived of their livestock and means of subsistence; large patches of land were thrown out of cultivation; and revenue officials inflicted upon them corporal punishments. The patels of Obha village complained that the "accountant of the village, having caused them to be beaten., and to hold their toes and to have stones upon them; and to suffer oppression has taken [more] money than is proper".¹²² Example of this nature can be multiplied. Failure to pay the revenues generally exposed the peasant to punishments, torture, and imprisonment.¹²³

In 1838, 215 patels from different parganas in a petition strongly protested against increased assessment. They stated that even the shirda pala lands (pathways between the fields) were measured and assessed declaring that this was "Calculated to swell the amount of Jumabundey, which however can not be made good by the sale of the whole of the produce. Consequently balances remain due in many Villages, and the whole of Ryots have been reduced to a state of insolvency".¹²⁴ The plight of village Panoli in Ankleshwar pargana is a typical example of the methods used to increase assessments. The average land revenue of Panoli village was Rs. 3,000 till 1832-33 when it was leased to its

122. Petitions enclosed with a letter from Broach Collector, No. 41, 2.4.1824, R.D., 12/96, 1824.

123. See for example the case of Mawsing Kesodas of Utali village, Dahej taluka who was imprisoned by the orders of the assistant collector, Richardson, in 1843 for failure to pay a sum of eight rupees six anas and four pies. There are several instances of such oppression perpetrated not only by the collector but his subordinate staff including talatis, havalदारs, clerks etc. Judge at Surat to Bombay, No. 18, 18.10.1843, R.D., 95/1537, 1843 enclosure.

124. Substance of a Petition by 215 Patells, S.3.1838, R.D., 10/870, 1838.

bhagdars for ten years at an enhanced amount of Rs. 5,108. In 1842-43, when the lease was renewed this was stepped up to Rs. 5,984. Under the terms of the new lease 852 bighas of waste land was to be brought under cultivation and from 1845-46 till the expiry of the lease in 1851-52, the bhagdars were to pay Rs. 6,834 annually to the sirkar.¹²⁵

With an increase of more than 125% in the revenue demand compounded by a fall in prices by about 30% the bhagdars proved unequal to the task and appealed for the dissolution of their lease. But it was rejected. An inquiry made in 1847, revealed that although the bhagdars had succeeded in bringing only 7 out of 852 bighas of waste land under cultivation, they were paying revenues for the entire land. J.M.Davies reported that "the present state of the village of Panolee is highly unsatisfactory. Out of 7 shares into which was originally divided amongst 10 Bhagdars in 1852-43 no less than 5 1/4 shares have become bankrupt owing to deaths and insolvency amongst the sharers Desertion and high rates of assessment have completed the ruin of the Lessees ... The Lessees, besides praying for the abrogation of their lease have petitioned to be allowed to dissolve the bhagdaree tenure or Coparceny of the Village, being content to occupy until more fortunate times the place of tenants, where they had been Landlords."¹²⁶

The severity with which the revenues were collected came to be officially recognised in the late 1840's. Davies wrote to his superiors that "throughout the entire zilla the collection of

125. J.M.Davies to Revenue Commissioner, N.D., No. 168, 11.8.1847, R.D., 91, 1847.

126. Ibid, paras 13-14

the revenue has for the last few years undeniably been made with severity ... the whole produce of the country stands hypothecated to the Revenue. ever since the revised rates of assessment have been introduced". He added that the recovery of outstanding balances from "improvised people" entailed "demoralization generally attendant upon compulsory process ... But where those arrears have resulted after every endeavour has been made to realize them, backed by a recourse to the severest legal measures their after realization must inevitably tell upon the prosperity of the District".

The 'severest legal measure' Davies alludes to refers to the attachment and distraint sales of peasant holding. In circumstances where the peasants failed to clear government dues after trying all they could their properties, which included dwellings, livestock, household goods, and even lands, were confiscated and auctioned to satisfy the state demand. In 1840's as the crisis deepened such transactions assumed alarming proportion (See Table XIV).

ATTACHMENTS AND DISTRAINT SALES IN BROACH DISTRICT
1840-41 TO 1846-47

Year	No. of Attachments	Value in Rs.	No. of Distraint Sales	Value in Rs.	Realization in Rs.
1840-41	371	32,512	-	-	-
1841-42	237	1,05,977	-	-	-
1842-43	213	24,828	33	3,638	528
1843-44	578	48,648	65	3,522	969
1844-45	428	23,651	61	5,415	1,010
1845-46	791	33,006	89	4,708	2,511
1846-47	17	1,960	10	558	229
Total	2,635	2,70,655	258	17,843	5,249

Source : J.M.Davies to D.A.Blane, No. 202, 30.9.1847, R.D., 16, 1849, para 29.

127. J.M.Davies to Rev. Comm.N.D. No. 202, 30.9.1847, R.D., 16, 1849, para 27-29 (emphasis added)

The immediate response of the hard-pressed peasant, on the brink of ruin, was to look for loans - in the first instance from relatively more prosperous fellow cultivators. An apt illustration is provided by the story of Bapu Mala, a peasant (patel) of Manubar village who owed debts to three parties : To the government he owed Rs. 81, to one Veniram Kuberram Kherawal Rs. 95, and Rs.51 to Javeri Panja. Not finding a way out, Bapu took to heels. Since Ahmed Bhika (a resident of the same village) had stood surety for Bapu's payment to the government the responsibility to clear the latter's debts devolved on him. Ahmed Bhika now sought permission for the seizure of Bapu's property following which the latter's house and two buffaloes were attached. Meanwhile the two other creditors of Bapu Mala filed cases in the court against the collector, contending that the attachments were illegal : Bapu Patel's two buffaloes were already mortgaged to Veniram. Furthermore he possessed a bond to prove that even the third buffalo had been mortgaged to him but was fraudulently sold, by Bapu to another person and Veniram planned to file a suit against its purchaser. The second creditor, Javeri Panja, produced a bond whereby Bapu Mala's house and appurtenances were mortgaged to him.

This then was the world of an average peasant under the hegemony of colonialism - harried by multiple debts, auction and attachment of properties, indigence, and the extreme 'option' of fleeing the land as the only escape from the vicious cycle. But by and large the peasants attachment to the land was bondage from which could be no real escape in the conditions of the early nineteenth century.

128. Sub. Collector at Broach to the Principal Collector at Surat, No. 423, 5.12.1836, R.D., 56/743, 1836 with enclosures.

Growing apace with the deepening crisis was the intervention of the sahukar in agrarian life. What this meant in actual terms is described, almost poetically, in a joint petition made by the patels of Broach parganas in 1843. They wrote :

We owe debts to certain sahookars and as they get our lands sold auction in order to recover their debts, we are unable to work in the fields... As the materials of our creditor, we are left without shelter.... Our Creditors take away the grinding stones, bedsteads bedding &c from our houses. They place us in confinement; we cannot cultivate the Government lands.

We breed calves in the hope of their being useful in the cultivation of our fields but our Creditors get them attached and deprive us from them. The Cows which we keep for breeding are also taken away.

Our Creditors strip us and our women even of the clothes which we wear & we are reduced to great distress.¹²⁹

The courts offered no respite either and were viewed with apprehension as places where the interests of the government and men of substance received protection. J.M.Davies found the cultivators repeating to him "The Law should protect us instead of ruining us. Government should limit our responsibility for ancestral debts to our proved participation in our ancestors' property, and should [extend us] exemption from sale of our agricultural stock and implements to our houses, our women's ornaments, and in fact to all our effects".¹³⁰

Within a few decades of the establishment of British rule, the effects of colonial pillage - backwardness and poverty - were

129. Dated 20.11.1843, R.D., 36/1593, 1844.

130. J.M.Davies to A.N.Shaw, Rev. Comm. N.D., No. 130, 31.3.1849, R.D., 16, 1851, para 8.

in evidence everywhere in Gujarat. Alexander Mackay after closely studying the 'oppressive' economic system, particularly the government's taxation policy in mid - nineteenth century, made a devastating comment which serves well as a summary of the net result of colonialism :

Such is a specimen of our dealings with Guzerat, which whilst universally recognised as the garden, is frequently spoken of as the milch cow of Western India. But there is a policy in keeping a milch cow in good order. Our course, however, has been to starve and reduce her to the lowest point compatible with existence; rescuing her, every now and then, by dribblets of her own milk, from death by inanition.¹³¹

131. Western India, pp. 134-35.