



Title	Lands and Peasants in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Kingdom
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Citation	Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics, 6(1): 32-61
Issue Date	1965-06
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Text Version	publisher
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10086/8082">http://hdl.handle.net/10086/8082</a>
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# LANDS AND PEASANTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY MARĀTHĀ KINGDOM\*

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## I. Introduction

### 1. Modern Theories on Land-Systems in Medieval Deccan

Regarding the land-systems in the medieval Deccan from the early fourteenth to the early nineteenth century, there have been expressed broadly three different theories. The first theory is represented by Mr. B. H. Baden-Powell and regards the ordinary agricultural lands (as distinct from *inām* lands) as practically owned by the State. In his work, «The Indian Village Community» (1896), Mr. Baden-Powell refers to the land-systems of the medieval Deccan and states, "The land-holder had theoretically no ownership-rights at all... In the Dekkan and in the South, the raiyat was not allowed to sell his lands;.... Ownership was only acknowledged in land granted revenue-free by the State, and apparently in lands held on the privileged tenure of *watan* (land held in virtue of office in a village or district—Baden-Powell)".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he calls 'the raiyat-wāri villagers' 'Crown tenants'.<sup>2</sup> Against this theory of State ownership of ordinary agricultural lands apart from the 'land granted revenue-free by the State' (*inām* land) and the 'lands held on the privileged tenure of *watan*' (he calls this 'watan' lands),<sup>3</sup> Professor A. S. Altekar emphasizes a theory of peasant ownership of all the agricultural lands. He states in his work «A History of Village Communities in Western India» (1927) that there was neither idea of any communal ownership nor idea of the crown being the owner of the land in the Deccan,<sup>4</sup> and he concludes, "the ownership of lands occupied by our village communities in Western India was vested in the peasant proprietors".<sup>5</sup> According to him, even "the Inamdars have got the right to receive merely the revenue; usually they have no proprietary rights in the soil".<sup>6</sup>

Between two theories mentioned above, Professor S. N. Sen expresses an intermediate

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\* I wish to take this opportunity to express my specific gratitude to my Indian *guru*, Shri G. H. Khare of Bhārat Itihās Sanshodhak Mandal of Poona, and to my Japanese teacher, Professor Y. Muramatsu of Hitotsubashi University, both of whom have continuously guided and encouraged my work. Further, Monday Research Seminar on Asia and Saturday Research Seminar on History at Hitotsubashi University as well as the Society for the Study of Indian History in Japan are also due to my thanks for their valuable suggestions and advices.

<sup>1</sup> B. H. Baden-Powell: *The Indian Village Community*, London, 1896; rep. New Haven, 1957, pp. 423-24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426.

<sup>3</sup> B. H. Baden-Powell: *Land-Systems of British India*, London, 1892; Vol. III, pp. 373-74.

<sup>4</sup> A. S. Altekar: *A History of Village Communities in Western India*, Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

theory. In Chapter Two of Part II of his work «Administrative System of the Marathas» (1923), he discusses the 'Village Communities' of the eighteenth century Deccan, and writes that excepting *inām* lands held by hereditary officers and servants of the village, "the village land was divided among the Mirasdars and Uparis. The Mirasdars were residents of the village who had permanent proprietary right in their land, and could not be ejected or dispossessed so long as they paid their rent.... The property of Mirasdars was hereditary and saleable, and even when ejected for non-payment of land tax, the Mirasdars did not lose the right of recovering their ancestral farm land for a long period.... The Uparis, on the other hand, were tenants-at-will, and generally strangers holding Government land under the management of Mamlatdars".<sup>7</sup> In other words, he distinguishes three kinds of lands (viz. *inām* lands, *mirās* lands and Government lands) and two classes of peasants (viz. *mirās-dārs* and *uparis*).

Of the three scholars each representing a modern theory Mr. B. H. Baden-Powell was, as well known, a specialist in the land-systems of Northern India in the later nineteenth century, and was neither an expert on Medieval India nor an original enquirer in the land-systems of the Deccan.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly some mistakes may be found in his statements on the land-systems of the Deccan. For example, the lands held on the privileged tenure attached to the *watan* of the hereditary officers of the village and the district were as a rule not called '*watan*' lands but *inām* lands in the Medieval Deccan. On the other hand, Professor A. S. Altekar was a specialist in ancient India, so that his statements on medieval Deccan are often founded on the ancient Indian evidences. In contrast with these scholars, Professor S. N. Sen was a specialist in Marāthā history in his youth and has written (or translated) several books on the subject, chief one of which is «Administrative System of the Marathas» referred to above. Therefore his statement on the land-systems of the medieval Deccan seems to be the most reliable of the three theories.

But there may be some doubts even in his statement. For instance, what does he exactly mean when he states that the *uparis* held Government land? It is also not very clear whether there were no other lands than *inām* lands, *mirās* lands and Government lands.

## 2. Reports of the Early British Administrators

On the other hand, we have at least three following reports on the fiscal, judicial and land-systems of the Deccan written by British administrators not long after the British conquest of Marāthā Kingdom in 1818. (1) M. Elphinstone: «Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa» Submitted to the Supreme Government of British India, 1st ed., 1819; 2nd ed., 1820; 3rd ed., 1838, Bombay, pp. 112+lxx. (2) W. Chaplin: «A Report exhibiting A View of the Fiscal and Judicial System of Administration introduced into the Conquered Territory above the Guts, under the Authority of the Commissioner in the Dekhan», 1824, reprinted in 1877, Bombay, pp. 189. (3) W. H. Sykes: «Report of the Land Tenures of the Dekkan», 1830; printed by the order of the House of Commons in 1866 as East India (Dekkan), pp. 32.

Of the three reports, that of M. Elphinstone is the best known: Professor S. N. Sen depends on it whenever indigeneous evidences are not available and Professor A. S. Altekar

<sup>7</sup> S. N. Sen: *Administrative System of the Marathas*, Calcutta, 1st ed., 1923, pp. 204-205; 2nd ed., 1925, pp. 237-39.

<sup>8</sup> On Baden-Powell's works, Professor T. Matsui of Japan has written a fine article. Vide T. Matsui: "B. H. Baden-Powell's Works, A Study", in *The Aoyama Journal of Economics*, vol. 14, Nos. 1 & 3.

also occasionally refers to it, while both of them seem to have not seen other two reports. Mr. Baden-Powell mentions that while he saw a note on the Deccan villages by W. H. Sykes, he was unable to refer to three reports.<sup>9</sup>

At any rate, these reports were so written for administrative purposes of the East India Company that there are certain limitations in their contents. For example, while much attention is paid to the organization for revenue collection and to the rights in such lands that paid revenue to the Government, enough attention is hardly focused on the lands that had carried no (or almost no) revenue burdens for the Government (namely *inām* lands)<sup>10</sup> or on the state of actual cultivators of the soil. Despite the limitations, however, these reports are important for the study of administrative, judicial and economic institutions of the Deccan; they explain what British administrators found there immediately after the conquest. Especially the reports of M. Elphinstone and W. H. Sykes are significant for a study of medieval Deccan, as they treat mainly the institutions of the pre-British period rather than those of the British period.

Now, there can be found a remarkable difference of opinion between Elphinstone and Sykes regarding the land-systems of the pre-British and immediate post-British Deccan.

M. Elphinstone, after explaining the functions and remunerations of the hereditary officers of a village,<sup>11</sup> states, "With the few exceptions already mentioned (*viz.* village officers), all the villagers are cultivators, and these, as there are few labourers, are distinguished by their tenures into two classes, that of Meerassees or landed proprietors, and that of Ooprees, or farmers.

"...The result of these reports (of Collectors) and of my own enquiries is, that a large portion of the ryots are the proprietors of their estates, subject to the payment of a fixed land-tax to Government; that their property is hereditary and saleable, and they are never dispossessed, while they pay their tax, and even then they have for a long period, (at least 30 years—Elphinstone) the right of reclaiming their estate, on paying the dues of Government. Their land tax is fixed, but the late Marratta Government loaded it with other impositions, which reduced that advantage to a mere name; so far however was this from destroying the value of their estates, that, although the Government took advantage of their attachment to make them pay considerably more than an Oopree, and though all the Meerassdars were in ordinary cases obliged to make up for failures in the payment of each of their body, yet their lands were saleable and generally at 10 years' purchase. This fact might lead us to suppose, that even with all the exactions of the late Marratta Government the share of the ryot must have amounted to more than half the produce of the land; but experience shews that men will keep their estates, even after becoming a losing concern, until they are obliged to part with them from absolute want, or until oppression has lasted so long, that the advantages of proprietorship, in better times, have been forgotten. The Meerassdars are perhaps more numerous than the Ooprees all over the Marratta country. In the Carnatic, I am informed by Mr. Chaplin, that they do not exist at all. Besides Meerassadar, they are called Thulkuree about Poona.

<sup>9</sup> B. H. Baden-Powell: *The Land-Systems of British India*, London, 1892, vol. III, p. 257, Note 1.

<sup>10</sup> It was only in 1843 that the Bombay Government started a serious enquiry into the *ināms* of the Deccan. *Vide* A. T. Etheridge: *Narrative of the Bombay Inam Commission and Supplementary Settlements*, Bombay, 1874, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> M. Elphinstone: *Report on the Territories Conquered from the Paishwa*, pp. 21-23.

“ An opinion prevails throughout the Marratta country, that under the old Hindoo government all the land was held by Meerassees, and that Ooprees were introduced as the old proprietors sunk under the tyranny of the Mohammedans. This opinion is supported by the fact, that the greater part of the fields, now cultivated by Ooprees, are recorded in the village books as belonging to absent proprietors; and affords, when combined with circumstances observed in other parts of the Peninsula, and with the light land-tax authorized by Menu, a strong presumption, that the Revenue system under the Hindoos...was founded on private property in the soil.

“ All the land which does not belong to the Meerassees belongs to Government, or those to whom Government has assigned it. The property of the zemindars in the soil has not been introduced, or even heard of, in the Marratta country.

“ The cultivated land belonging to Government, except some parts which it keeps in its own hands to be managed by the Mumludars, was always let out to Ooprees, who had a lease, with the expiration of which their claim and duties expired.

“ These are all the tenures on which land was held as far as regards the property of the soil. The assignments by government of its own revenue or share of the produce will be mentioned hereafter. It need only be observed, that in making these grants it could not transfer the share of a Meerassdar. Even Bajee Row (the last Peshwa), when he had occasion for Meerassees land, paid the price of it.”<sup>12</sup> (Brackets are mine.)

In the above quotation, two points should be particularly noted here. First, there were two classes of peasants: landed proprietors called *mirāsīs*, *mirāsdārs*, or *thalkaris*; and farmers or tenants called *uparis*. Second, there were three kinds of agricultural lands: *misrās* lands owned by *mirāsdārs*, ‘Government lands’ or lands belonging to Government, and lands assigned or granted by Government. There is no doubt that the ‘lands assigned by Government’ mean the revenue-free *inām* lands held by the hereditary officers of village and district as well as by the temples, priests and other various persons.<sup>13</sup>

When we keep in mind Elphinstone’s theory that there were three kinds of agricultural lands, however, we find one point in his report not very understandable. That is, he says in other part without explanation, “ Every village has a portion of ground attached to it, which is committed to the management of the inhabitants ”: thus he suggests the holding of lands by the village as a group.<sup>14</sup> He also writes in connection with village expenses that when the expense was beyond the means of a village to defray at once, “ the Village contracted a public debt, which was gradually paid by an annual assessment included in the *saudir warrid puttee* (extra assessment on the villagers), and sometimes provided for by mortgages or *grants of land on the part of the villagers*. These grants were called *gaum nisbut enaums* (*gānva nisbat ināms*; *ināms* in charge of the village); if they were so small as to be admitted, or be likely to be admitted by the Government, no rent was charged on them; but if they were too large to be agreed to or to escape observation, the revenue was paid by all the other ryots, the creditor still enjoying them rent free: small grants were also made for temples, or to Brahmins, which were always acquiesced in by the Government; but *the Villagers have never pretended to any property in the soil beyond the estates of the Meerassdars*.”<sup>15</sup> (Brackets and

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

italics are mine.) Here, too, he states to the effect that villagers as a group granted the lands of their village on the one hand, and that they 'never pretended to any property in the soil beyond the estates of the Meerassdars'. This statement seems to be a sort of contradiction.

The characteristic feature of W. H. Sykes' theory lies in his emphasis on the holding of lands by the village and in his apparent objection to the theory of land-holding by the Government or State. To be sure, he also recognizes the existence of two classes of peasants: one is that of proprietors of land called *mirāsi* or *mirāsdār* in Arabic terms, or *thalkari* or *thlwāhi* in indigenous ones; and another is that of tenants called *uṣari*,<sup>16</sup> an indigenous term meaning 'strangers'. However, whereas Elphinstone considers that the lands which were recorded in the village books as belonging to absent proprietors (such lands being called *gatkūl jamīn* in Marāthī as will be discussed later) reverted to the Government and were let out to *uṣaris* as quoted above, W. H. Sykes first points out that a greater part of the agricultural lands of the villages enquired into by himself were *gatkūl jamīn* (lands of extinct families), and even such a land had usually a specific name, that was probably the surname of its original owner, (this point will be demonstrated with examples in this article later),<sup>17</sup> and then he states, "Even the hereditary lands of extinct families became the property of the Pateel (headman of the village), together with all waste lands, excepting in some villages where such lands were appropriated by the village corporation; *the Government distinctly sanctioning the exercise of such powers, whether by the Pateel or the village authorities*"<sup>18</sup> (brackets being mine and italics Sykes') during the Maratha period. He next criticizes the theory of State ownership of lands by saying as follows: "The assumption that the lordship of the soil is in the Government has occasioned the monstrous injustice of the dispossession of all the landholders of the Dekkan of their franchise. Happily, from the paternal character of the Government, it has had few practical consequences, beyond the abrogation of the rights of the Pateel, and his degradation to the level of other cultivators. It has dispossessed also the village authorities, and the Pateel, of the power of appropriating or selling the lands of extinct families, together with waste lands, similar to the common lands of an English village, the right to which is so tenaciously held by our peasantry; from our ignorance, also, of the details of the tenures and duties of the several hereditary officers, it has occasioned some untoward modifications of the relations of these parties to each other, and to the Government."<sup>19</sup> And as the evidences of his theory of communal appropriation and disposition of waste lands as well as lands of extinct families, W. H. Sykes has translated and included in his report two Marathī records, one of which indicates that Patils appropriated the lands of an extinct family and manifests that they disposed of the house-site of an extinct family in their village; and another record demonstrates the village assembly having sold waste lands of the village. These two records will be utilized later in this article of mine.

At any rate, when we keep in our mind his theory of communal ownership of waste lands and lands of extinct families and his criticism of the theory of State ownership of lands, we find a point in his report rather contradictory to his theory. Namely, he refers in Chapter VI of his report to the *jāgīr*, *inām*, *saranjām* and so on, and states, "Jāgīr, which is a Persian word in its origin, is applied to *lands given by Government* for personal support, or

<sup>16</sup> W. H. Sykes: *Report of the Land Tenures of the Dekkan*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

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

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

as a fief for the maintenance of troops for the service for the State". (Italics are mine.)<sup>20</sup> Here he suggests State ownership of lands or at least State disposition of lands, while he does not explain who gave *inām* lands.

In short, these reports of British administrators agree with each other on two points: (1) there were two classes of peasants; (2) *mirās* lands were the lands owned by individual *mirās*dārs and loaded with ordinary land tax. But they differ as to the rights in the lands of extinct families or the waste lands. They also do not clarify what kind of tenure was held in (revenue free) *inām* lands. Besides, it is not very clear in these reports whether there were at all the lands distinctly designated in indigenous terms as 'State lands' or 'Government lands'.

### 3. Problems of This Article

Accordingly, this article of mine will discuss following two problems. Firstly, what kinds of agricultural lands did exist in the 18th century Deccan, and what kind of right was recognized in each of them? Secondly, which class of peasants, *mirās*dārs or *uṣāris*, actually cultivated each kind of lands, and on what conditions?

An examination of these problems must be very important for the study of economic history of the medieval Deccan as well as for that of social and economic changes that may have taken place during the subsequent British period, which topic I will treat separately in a future occasion.

### 4. Material Sources

A few words must be mentioned regarding the material sources upon which this article is grounded. They are about ninety Marāthī records of the 18th century, which are collected mostly from the following source-books.

(1) G. C. Vad prep.: *Selections from the Satara Raja's and the Peshwa's Diaries*, nine volumes, Poona, 1906-1911, edited by the Orders of the Deccan Vernacular Translation Society, Poona, and published by the Society with the permission of the Government of Bombay. (These volumes will be abbreviated as *Diaries* in the text and as *SSRPD* in the footnotes of this article).<sup>21</sup>

(2) R. V. Oturkar ed.: *Peshvekālin Sāmājik va Ārthik Patravyavahār*, Poona, 1950. (This book will be abbreviated as *Oturkar* in footnotes).<sup>22</sup>

(3) Bhārat Itihās Sanshodhak Mandal ed.: *Aitihāsik Sankirna Sāhitya*, ten volumes, Poona, 1932-57. (abbreviated as *ASS* in footnotes).<sup>23</sup>

Beside the above source-books, two Marāthī records translated into English and included in the Sykes' report will be also used.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Regarding these nine volumes of *Diaries*, vide M. G. Ranade: "Introduction to the Peshwa's Diaries", *Journal of Bombay Branch of the Asiatic Society*, vol. XX, 1900; reprinted in *Shivaji and the Rise of the Mahrattas*, ed. by Susil Gupta Ltd., Calcutta, 1953, pp. 53-86. G. S. Sardesai: *Hand Book to the Records in the Alienation Office, Poona*, Bombay Government, 1933.

<sup>22</sup> This book contains two hundred and eighteen Marāthī records mostly of the eighteenth century collected from the Sāsvad region and edited by Professor R. V. Oturkar with collaboration of Shri K. V. Purandare of B. I. S. Mandal of Poona.

<sup>23</sup> These ten volumes contain nine hundred and twenty-three Marāthī records mostly of the eighteenth century collected from the Deccan regions and examined, selected and edited by B. I. S. Mandal of Poona.

## II. Agricultural Lands

Village in the medieval Deccan was called by the terms *gāṇva* (corrupt form of Sanskrit *grāma*), *mauje* (corrupt form of Arabic *mauza*), or Persian *deh*. While these three terms were used interchangeably, formally *mauje* was prefixed to the proper name of the village. A bigger village that included a market place (*bājār*) was called *kasbe* (town—Arabic *qasbah*).

It appears that the village in the eighteenth century Deccan as a rule took the collective form of inhabitation. There, the 'inhabited area' was called *pāṇḍhari*, and the 'cultivated area' *kāli*.<sup>24</sup> These two terms being indigenous, the former originally meant 'white'; the latter 'black'. It is said that the people originally inhabited on the white soil unfit for cultivation, and turned the black soil widely found in the Deccan into their agricultural fields.<sup>25</sup> At any rate, the 'inhabited area' was divided into house-sites (*gharthānā* or *gharthikānā*), each of which was owned by families of Pātil (village-headman) and other village-officers, peasants, and village-servants. Each family built a house (*ghar* or *vāḍā*) upon it to live in. The family that had gone out of the village or passed away was called *gatkūl* (a corrupt compound of Sanskrit *gata*=gone or passed away; and *kula*=lineage or family), and the house-site and house that had been owned by an extinct family were called *gatkūl gharthānā* and *gatkūl vāḍā* respectively.

On the other hand, 'cultivated area' (*kāli*) was divided into perhaps twenty to forty blocks called *thal* (←Sanskrit *sthala*=land), and each *thal* often had a name that was perhaps the surname of original proprietor or clearer. This point will be demonstrated later. Now, each block was composed of fields variously called *shet* or *set* (←Sanskrit *kshetra*=field), or *jamīn* (←Persian *zamin*=land). Occasionally Sanskrit *bhūmi* (land) was also used to mean the fields.

Around the 'cultivated area', there was usually a meadow (*kuran* or *gayerān*). The meadow meant for common use of the villagers was called 'people's meadow' (*lokāchā kuran*) and that meant for the fodder and wood used by the Government was termed 'Government's meadow' (*sarkārchā kuran*).<sup>26</sup> Villagers had to supply free labour (*veṭh begār*) to cut the fodder and wood in nearby Government's meadow and carry them to a local office.<sup>27</sup> But we are not concerned with meadows here.

Even in the territories directly administered by the King or his hereditary Peshwa (Prime Minister), namely in the territories called *svarājya*, there were scattered the fiefs (*jāgīr*, *saranjām*, or *mokāsā*) temporarily assigned to Bureaucrats. But this fief-system should be a topic to be discussed separately in connection with the general administrative system of this Kingdom, and shall not be treated here.

The subject that concerns us in this section is limited to the 'cultivated area' in the village. So far as the material sources demonstrate, the 'cultivated area' of a village was divided into:

- (1) *mirās* lands (*mirās jamīn* or *mirās set*),

<sup>24</sup> For example, ASS, vol. IV, No. 94 "...tyās kālīvar set nāhi pāṇḍharīvar ghar nāhi..." (he has neither field in *kāli* nor house in *pāṇḍhari*).

<sup>25</sup> T. N. Atre: *Gāṇva-Gāḍā*, Poona, 1915, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Vide SSRPD, vol. VI, No. 751.

<sup>27</sup> My Japanese article: "On the Forced Labour (*veṭhbegār*) in the 18th Century Marāthā Kingdom", in *The Hitotsubashi Review*, vol. 48, No. 3, Sept. 1962, pp. 128-30.



- (2) *inām* lands (*inām jamin* or *inām set*),  
 (3) State lands variously called 'demesne of the Government' (*sarkārchi sheri*), 'demesne fields' (*sherichen shet*) 'demesne' (*sheri*), or 'treasury lands' (*khālisā jamin*), and  
 (4) lands of extinct families (*gatkūl jamin*) or waste lands (*paḍ jamin*).

Now we shall enquire into the rights in these kinds of lands one by one.

### 1. *Mirās* Lands

*Mirās* is an Arabic word which originally meant 'patrimony' or 'hereditary property'.

Now, we shall examine an important record on the *mirās* tenure. In *Diaries* dated February 6, 1772 A. D. it is written that the Secretariat (Chitnisī) of the Peshwa's Government gave the following document (*patra*) to a man named V. K. Durve, 'now residing' (*halliṅ vasti*) in Village Kothale, Tarf Karepathār, Pargane Supe :

"You came to the *Hujūr* (Peshwa) at the camp of Poona and petitioned, 'Mālji bin Jebāji Nhālave, peasant *thalkari mirāsdār* (*kuṅbi thalkari mirāsdār*) of Village Dhālevāḍī, Tarf Karepathār, Prānt Poona, has lands of 3 *ruke* (about 9 hectares) in the block named Tanapuri (*Tanapurīyāche thal*) of the above village. On 7 *bighas* (about 2.1 hectares) out of the lands, he dug wells and turned them into an orchard (*malā*). Above Mālji, however, incurred so much debt and was so unable to repay it that he took Rs. 250 from me and self-willingly (*ātmasantoshe*) gave me, by defining four corners, the lands of 7 *bighas* out of the Tanapuri block along with the wells and trees upon them for my hereditary enjoyment (*vaṅshparanpareneṅ anabhavāvvyās*). And it was agreed that I should pay the revenue of the Government (*divān deṅeṅ*) as it had been paid since old, and (he) wrote and gave me (a sales-deed) attested by the witnesses (*sākshi*) of the Pātil and Kulkarni (village accountant) of the above village as well as the *vatandārs* (hereditary office-holders) of the neighbouring villages. According to that I am enjoying. Then, the Lord (*svāmī*), please take the sales-deed (*khariḍkhat*) into consideration and grant a favour to make and give a document of the Government for enjoyment (of the lands)'. Requesting like this, (you) brought and showed an authentic sales-deed (*bajinas khariḍkhat*). Taking it into consideration, (it is evident that) Mālji bin Jebāji Nhālava, *kuṅbi thalkari mirāsdār* of the above village, self-willingly gave you the lands of 7 *bighas* as *vatani mirās* with wells and trees, out of 3 *rukās* of the Tanapuri block. Accordingly, Government also has agreed (*karār*) (with the deed), and made and given this document for (thy) enjoyment. Then, thou, (enjoy) the lands of 7 *bighas* out of the Tanapuri block along with wells and trees upon them, dig more wells, pay the revenue of the Government (*divāṅ mahasūl*), cultivate the orchard and make it prosperous, enjoy (it) by heredity unto (thy) sons and grandsons, and live happily".<sup>28</sup> (In a separate line, the following is written: "On this matter a similar document has been sent to Deshmukh (hereditary chief of a district) and Deshpande (hereditary accountant of a district) of Prānt Poona".)

To make a few comments on the above record, *thalkari* is an indigenous term, *mirāsdār* is a Muslim word, and both mean a land-owning peasant, as was shown in the reports of British administrators (see pp. 34~36 of this article). *Vatani* is adjective of *vatan* (patrimony) which is often used in records as a synonym of *mirās*.<sup>29</sup> So the term *vatani* here is

<sup>28</sup> SSRPD, vol. VII, No. 433, pp. 22-23.

<sup>29</sup> cf. M. T. Patvardhan: *Fārsi-Marāthi-Kosh*, Poona, 1925, p. 195. "mirās; mirāsi....mirāsdār, thalkari, vatandār mhant".

not more than an adjective synonymous with and emphasizing the *mirās*.

Now above record demonstrates six important points regarding the *mirās* tenure. First, *mirās*dār could sell his lands or a part of them according to his need. Second, the purchaser could be a resident of other village. In such a case, the purchaser might continue to live in his village and frequent the bought lands for cultivation (so-called *pāi kāshṭā*) or some members of his family might shift to the village where the lands were bought. Third, selling and buying of *mirās* lands were required to be attested by village officers and the neighbours. But this attestation was not a 'permission' but rather a 'recognition' by the local people. Fourth, selling and buying of *mirās* lands were *not* required to get permission or recognition of the Government beforehand. This means that the Government had nothing of the sort of proprietary right in the *mirās* lands. Fifth, however, the purchaser was necessarily obliged to pay the revenue assessed on the bought *mirās* lands to the Government. And sixth, the purchaser subject to the payment of revenue was assured and protected by the Government to enjoy the bought lands. On granting a document of recognition and assurance, however, the Government used to levy an amount of money from the grantee which was usually equivalent to one-fourth of the price,<sup>30</sup> though this record shown above does do manifest such an exaction.

In short, it may be said that the *mirās*dār held fairly complete private proprietary right in his *mirās* lands. Nobody, even not the Government could arbitrarily infringe upon the *mirās* right. For example, when a *mirās*dār of a village got his *mirās* right infringed upon by headman and villagers of the village, and appealed the matter to the Government, Government ordered its bureaucrats of the locality to stop the infringement of right.<sup>31</sup> Further, when the population of another village so increased as to cause the shortage of house-sites, Government commanded bureaucrats, Deshmukh and Deshpande of the district and Pāṭil of the village to convert 'the lands of *mirās*dār's' situated near the 'inhabited area' into house-sites on the one hand, and to 'give them (*mirās*dār's) the lands of extinct families (*gātkūl set*) (of the village) in lieu of the (converted) lands' on the other.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the lands of extinct families in general as well as the new creation of *mirās* lands, we shall discuss in sub-section 4 of this section.

## 2. *Inām* Lands

The Arabic word *inām* originally meant 'gift' or 'present'.

*Inām* in its widest sense in the Deccan terminology included three kinds of privileges. (1) The '*inām* village', all or most of the revenues of which were held hereditarily by particular persons or institutions. (2) Mere '*inām*', which was a hereditary grant to particular persons of a fixed amount or quantity out of the revenue from a certain village. And (3) '*inām* lands'.

According to an enquiry of the Bombay Inam Commission into the *ināms* of the Deccan carried out from 1843 to 1863, the income from *ināms* of all kinds in the regions almost equal to the former *svarājya* of the Marāṭhā Kingdom amounted to sixteen per cent of the land revenue of the same regions, about half of which was held by the hereditary officers of

<sup>30</sup> For example, see *SSRPD*, vol. I, No. 283.

<sup>31</sup> *ASS*, vol. VIII, No. 52.

<sup>32</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. VI, No. 748.

the villages and the districts.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the land revenue may have considerably increased since the British conquest due to the increase in population and in cultivation of waste lands, new *ināms* were not created as a matter of principle, so that the proportion of *inām* income to the total land revenue in the 18th century Deccan must have been considerably more than sixteen per cent. At any rate we may safely say that *ināms* of all kinds were fairly big during the period under consideration.

Of the three kinds of *ināms*, we shall discuss only the tenure in *inām* lands.

The tenure in *inām* lands was a privileged one either entirely free from tax or occasionally levied with *inām*-tax (*inām patti*) at much lower rate than the ordinary revenue imposed upon such as *mirās* lands.

Now, Deshmukh, Deshpande, Pātīl,<sup>34</sup> Kulkarnī, Chaugulā (assistant of the Pātīl),<sup>35</sup> village-watchmen,<sup>36</sup> village-astrologer (Joshi),<sup>37</sup> temples,<sup>38</sup> priests,<sup>39</sup> distinguished servants of the Government,<sup>40</sup> and other miscellaneous persons and institutions held *inām* lands of various size. Such examples found in our sources are too many to enumerate.

There is no doubt that the holder of *inām* lands, *viz. ināmdār* was entitled to enjoy them 'hereditarily unto the sons and grandsons' (putrapautrādi vañshparañpareṇ).<sup>41</sup> And there is also no doubt that at least such *inām* lands that were attached to a certain hereditary office (*vatan*) could be sold or disposed of by the holder along with the office. Examples to that effect are also too many to quote all. Only one instance shall be demonstrated as follows:

When the Kulkarnī (village-accountant) and Jotīsh (astrologer) of a village in Junnar region, a Brahmin by caste, died in 1740, he had left behind neither sons nor male relatives (*vañsh*) to succeed to the two hereditary offices (*vatan*). So, his widow divided each of two offices into two equal shares, offered (*dān*) half share of Kulkarnī *vatan* and Jotīsh *vatan* to his son-in-law (daughter's husband, *jāvai*), and sold (*vikat*) another half of each of two offices to a Brahmin perhaps of the same village at the price of Rs. 2,000. The seller gave a sales-deed (*khavedīkhat*) to the buyer, local assembly (*gota*) also gave a letter of attestation (*mahaajar*) to the buyer, and the Government, on receipt of a request from the buyer, took the two documents submitted by him into account, and granted him an official document called *vatan-patra* while levying a fee of Rs. 500 from him. This *vatan-patra* (document of confirming the hereditary offices) as shown in *Diaries* demonstrates that there were thirteen items of privileges (*mān*) attached to the Kulkarnīship and three items of rights (*hakk*) attached to the Jotīshship, and that one of the three rights for Jotīshship was 'inām lands of 25 *bighas* (about 8 hectares) (which would produce the net income?) of 12.5 *man* (probably about 157 kilograms) of grains'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup> A. T. Etheridge: *Narrative of the Bombay Inam Commission and Supplementary Settlements*, Bombay, 1874, p. 90.

<sup>34</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. I, Nos. 296, 298; vol. III, Nos. 521, 522.

<sup>35</sup> *Oturkar*: No. 56.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 46.

<sup>37</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. I, No. 283.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, Nos. 171, 181.

<sup>39</sup> *ASS*, vol. I, No. 126.

<sup>40</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. VIII, No. 711.

<sup>41</sup> e.g., *ASS*, vol. I, No. 126; vol. VIII, No. 46.

<sup>42</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. I, No. 283, p. 137. Similarly, examples of the sales or transfer of *inām* lands attached to the village-headmanship can be found in *SSRPD*, vol. III, Nos. 521 and 522.

In short, it is entirely evident that *inām* lands attached to a certain hereditary office could be sold or transferred along with the office by the holder according to his need. It is, however, not yet clear if such *inām* lands could be separated from the office to which they were attached and be sold or transferred separately.

It is also not clear whether *inām* lands that were attached to no hereditary offices (e.g. *inām* lands held by temples, tombs, monasteries, distinguished servants of the Government and so on)<sup>43</sup> could be disposed of by their holders without any restrictions.

New creation of *inām* lands will be demonstrated in sub-sections 3 and 4 of this section.

### 3. State Lands

As pointed out before, what are called here collectively 'State lands' are those designated in the sources variously as *sarkārchi sheri* (demesne of Government), *sherichē shet* (demesne lands), *sheri* (demesne), or *khālisā jamin* (treasury lands or Crown lands). Of these terms, *sheri* and *shet* (or *set*) are indigenous<sup>44</sup> while others are all Muslim words.

At any rate, there may have been a distinction between the lands owned or managed by the Government as a corporation and those owned personally by the King or the Peshwa himself among the lands so variously designated as shown above. But as I cannot confirm such a distinction at present, these kinds of lands will provisionally be all treated as 'State lands'.

Now, though it is not clear if there were lands defined and demarkated as 'State lands' in each and every village, it is evident that at least in many villages scattered over the Deccan, there were lands designated as 'State lands'. It is also evident that such lands were managed by local bureaucrats and could be disposed of by them on receipt of an order from the central Government.

Only two examples will be demonstrated here.

On July 1, 1717, the first Peshwa, Bālāji Visvanāth, sent the following letter to the Governor (Sarsubhedār) and the Clerks (Kārkūn) of District Poona:

"(Greetings, name and title of the addressees, name and title of the sender, and the year) Rājshī—Swāmī (King Shāhū) has favoured Mr. Lakhmoji bin Godaji Garūda and granted upon him State waste lands (*khālisā paḍ jamin*) of 2 *chāvārs* (two hundred and forty *bighas*) of the first, second and third classes (*avaldūmsim tin pratichī*) as follows:

1 *chāvar* in Village Belsar of Region Sāsavad.

0.5 *chāvar* in Village Najhare of Region Karepathār.

0.5 *chāvar* in Village Dhālevaḍī of Region Karepathār of the above District.

Total 2 *chāvārs* of waste lands have been granted in *inām* hereditarily unto the sons and grandsons. The royal document (*hujrātchī sanad*) has been sent separately (to the grantee). Then, you, specify (*nemūn*) the lands of 2 *chāvārs* in the above villages for him and let them go on as *inām*. (date). In the blocks (*thal*) of the above villages there would be lands of extinct families (*gatkul set*) where no peasants (*kuṇbi*) are present. Specify and give these lands. (concluding remarks)"<sup>45</sup>

The grantee of the *inām* lands, Mr. Garūda, was the headman of Village Belsar<sup>46</sup> that

<sup>43</sup> See p. 48 of this article.

<sup>44</sup> H. H. Wilson: *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms and of Useful Words...of British India*, new ed., Calcutta, 1940, pp. 760-61.

<sup>45</sup> ASS, vol. VIII, No. 46.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, Nos. 30-45.

appears in the above letter. Further, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was a custom widely prevalent in the Deccan and perhaps introduced by the Mughals to classify the agricultural lands into three classes according to quality of the soil, but we should not enter into the details of the custom here.

Another example on the State lands may be found in *Diaries* of the year 1783. It is written in the *Diaries* that the Peshwa's Government dispatched following order (*sanad*) to a local bureaucrat of Region Karyāt-Māval:

“‘As the villagers (*gōṇvakari*) residing in Village Gorhe-Budrukh (of the above Region) increased in number, Government is requested to allow the lands of 3 *bighas* (about 0.9 hectares) out of the Government demesne (*sarkārchi sheri*) existing in the above village to be used as inhabited sites (*vasāhatī*), by levying rent (*sarkārdast*) from the villagers', the headman (*Pātīl*)...(name)...of the above village has petitioned to the Government (*Hujūr*) in that way. Then, it is agreed that lands of 3 *bighas* out of the Government demesne existing in the above village be allowed to be used as inhabited sites of the villagers and the rent (*sarkārdast*) of Rs. 4.5 be collected from the villagers at the rate of Rs. 1.5 per *bigha*. Accordingly, make an enquiry, specify the above mentioned 3 *bighas* of lands and give them for inhabited sites. And collect Rs. 4.5 from villagers per year”.<sup>47</sup>

In short it is evident that there were lands designated as 'State lands' in many villages and managed by the local bureaucrats of the Government. It should not be imagined, however, that all the State lands were granted in *inām* or allowed as house-sites as demonstrated above. Many of the State lands appear to have been cultivated in such a manner as we shall discuss in the next section.

#### 4. Lands of Extinct Families or Waste Lands

Whereas the rights in *mirās* lands, *inām* lands, and 'State lands' were at least *de jure* clearly recognized, those in lands of extinct families (*gatkūl jamīn*) and waste lands (*paḍ jamīn*) are not so evident. The village-headman, the village-assembly (or local assembly) and the State all could and in fact did dispose of such lands. Accordingly, our next topic should be concerned with this question: by whom and under what conditions could lands of extinct families and waste lands be disposed of?

Before entering discussion, a few words must be mentioned regarding the indigenous terminology. As pointed out before, *gatkūl jamīn* means lands of the families that have gone away or passed away: viz. lands of extinct families. On the other hand, *paḍ jamīn* means lands which are left waste due to non-cultivation for a long period of time. Accordingly there could be and in fact were *paḍ jamīn* even among such lands as *mirās jamīn* the rights in which were clearly recognized.<sup>48</sup> But here we are not concerned with such waste lands. The *paḍ jamīn* which interest us here are the lands left waste because of the extinction of their proprietary families.

Such waste lands were called either specifically '*gatkūl jamīn*', or more generally '*paḍ jamīn*'. That both the terms meant the same lands is evident from a record translated before (see p. 42) in which 'the State waste lands' (*khālisā paḍ jamīn*) of two *chāvvars* granted in *inām* to a village headman by King Shahū are recapitulated as 'lands of extinct families'

<sup>47</sup> SSRPD, vol. VI, No. 749.

<sup>48</sup> A village headman had 10 *bighas* of *paḍ jamīn* out of his *mirās* lands converted into *inām* lands by the Government. Vide SSRPD, vol. I, No. 366.

(*gatkul set*).

Here the term 'State waste lands' has appeared by chance. But this does not mean that all the waste lands were institutionalized as 'State lands'. Usually waste lands or lands of extinct families seem to have been left simply as 'waste lands' or 'lands of extinct families'. And the headman of village, the local or village assembly and the State could dispose of them as will be discussed below.

#### (A) Appropriation by Village-Headman

Our sources include seven records which show that headman of the village or local (village) assembly could dispose of lands of extinct families or waste lands of the village. Out of the seven records, two are concerned with headman's appropriation and the rest five with disposal by local assembly. Here we shall examine the first two cases.

*Record No. 1. Diaries* dated December 17, 1741, shows a lengthy (covering 5 pages) *vatan-patra* (official document confirming a hereditary office) which was granted by Royal Secretariat (Chitnishi) of King Shahu to Mr. Harpalā, half-headman (*nime mokadam, viz.* holder of half the office of village headmanship), of Village Fursangī near Poona. According to it, a dispute took place between Harpalā family and Kāmāth family regarding the succession to headmanship of the village, so that both the disputants appealed to King Shahu. The King summoned to his court Deshmukh and Deshpande of the region, headmen of the neighbouring villages, and 'all the inhabitants' (*samākūl pāñdharī*) of the village, held a justice-assembly and decided the division of the office of headmanship into two shares. What should be noted here is that the Kāmāths and the Harpalās were allowed a privilege "to take half and half the lands of extinct families if there are any in the village, ...and to take half and half the vacant houses of extinct families if there are any in the village".<sup>49</sup>

Here the headmen were officially privileged 'to take' (*gheñēñ*) the lands of extinct families in the village. Then what is exactly meant by 'to take'? Were the lands that were thus taken by the headmen made revenue-free as *inām*? No, it seems such lands were treated as *mirās* lands as is evident in the next record.

*Record No. 2.* As pointed out before, two Marāthī records are translated into English and included in the report of W. H. Sykes. One of them is a *mahajarnāma* (document granted by a local assembly) and covers eight pages, that was written in connection with the division of headman's office of Village Kowta, north of Sirvar, into three shares in the year 1725. Apart from the complicated circumstances of the case, there were initially two headmen in this village, abbreviated as A and B. They sold a third share of their office to C, headman of Village Multun, south of Village Kowta, in order to pay up the tax imposed on their village. But they did not actually transfer the share of the office to C, who accordingly appealed to the Peshwa. The Peshwa ordered Deshmukh and Deshpande of the region to hold a local assembly and settle the dispute. And Deshmukh, Deshpande, headmen and accountants of neighbouring twenty-five villages gathered together in Village Kowta, held an assembly and decided to divide the office into three parties. There are two points to be noted in this record. First, as all the privileges, remunerations and land properties hitherto owned both by A and B were divided into three shares, all the *mirās* lands owned by A and

<sup>49</sup> SSRPD, vol. I, No. 298, p. 169. "mauje majkurin gatkulāchin sheten astil tin Kāmāthiyānīn va tuhmin nīnmenim ghyāveñ...Gāñvānt gatkulāche vāde bakhal asel te Kāmāthiyānīn va tuhmin nīnmenim ghyāve."

B were also shared into three. And there were 35.25 *take* (a land unit) of *mirās* lands until then owned by A which included 18.75 *take* of 'lands of an extinct family named Udar' (Oodar Shait Gutkool, viz. *Udar shet gatkūl*). In the same way, *mirās* lands of 28.75 *take* so far owned by B also included 18.75 *take* of 'lands of an extinct family named Udar' (Oodar Shait Gutkool).<sup>50</sup> To be sure, it is not mentioned how and when A and B acquired lands of this extinct family. But, in comparison with the Record No. 1 shown above, we have no doubt that here too, A and B had 'taken' the lands of the extinct family half and half at a certain former time as one of the privileges of village-headmen. And it is evident that the lands thus 'taken' by headmen were not recognized as revenue-free *inām* lands but *mirās* lands loaded with ordinary land revenue.

The second point to be noted is that when the assembly demanded both A and B to give a third share of their respective house to C, A and B complained of the inconvenience, and appealed by saying; "we give instead thereof the site of the neighbouring house of the deceased, and Gutkool Neemba Tamboolee (pan-leaf seller), in length 60 cubits, and in width 60 cubits...": this appeal was admitted by the assembly.<sup>51</sup> That is, headmen could appropriate the houses of extinct families (as stated in Record No. 1) or dispose of the house-sites of extinct families of the village (as is shown in Record No. 2).<sup>52</sup>

In short, headman of village had a privilege to appropriate for himself waste lands in his village. But when he exercised this privilege, the lands thus appropriated were imposed with rather heavy land-revenue. Accordingly, it may be presumed that for him to do so and enlarge his *mirās* lands was a risky business, even if he got the lands cultivated by 'tenants' (*uṣaris*) by share-cropping agreement as he probably did at least in the first half of the 18th century (this point shall be discussed later), because, though enlargement of his *mirās* lands certainly increased his social prestige, he had to pay a certain fixed land revenue imposed on the *mirās* lands irrespective of the state of harvest, unless specially remitted in case of failure of crops. It seems, therefore, that he did not often exercise this privilege and the waste lands in many villages were left unappropriated. And it also appears that when he gave up this privilege or did not exercise it for himself, he could no longer arbitrarily sell or give away the waste lands of his village. For them to be so disposed of, an agreement of the village assembly or at least of the local representatives seems to have been necessary, as will be demonstrated below.

#### (B) Disposal by Local Assembly

We have five records that demonstrate the disposal of waste lands by local assembly. Of the five, three are concerned with disposal of waste lands as *mirās* lands, and two others show disposals as *inām* lands. We shall examine the conditions of these disposals one by one.

*Record No. 1.* We have a 'copy based on the original' (*nakal asal bamojib*) of a *vatan-patra* dated May 9, 1752. This shows that Deshmukh and Deshpande of Region (Karyāt) Sāsavad and headman (Mokadam) of Town (Kasbe) Sāsavad jointly received a petition from two peasant brothers surnamed Sinde who were 'now residing' (*halī vastī*) in the town for a long period of time (*bahut divas*), and awarded to them permanently (*putrapautrādi vañsh-paranṣareṇēn*) 'lands (*jamīn*) of 1.5 *khandī* (30 *bighas*) in the block (*thal*) named Ambā' as

<sup>50</sup> W. H. Sykes: *Report of the Land Tenures of the Dekkan*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>52</sup> Similar instance can be found in *SSRPD*, vol. I, No. 289, p. 150.

'*mirās lands*' (*set thal mirāsichen*). The condition of getting them granted was 'to pay the land tax to Government that will be imposed according to rules' (*divāñāchā sārā vāhati pramāñen jo paḍal to deūn*).<sup>53</sup>

In this case it is not evident whether the granting party received a money from the peasant brothers. At any rate, this record demonstrates that it was not the headman of the town (Mokadam) himself but the Deshmukh, Deshpande and Mokadam, three representative persons of the place, that gave the lands of 1.5 *khandi* in Town Sāsavad. This was a case that took place in a fairly large town, where the Deshmukh and the Deshpande of the region usually resided. In such a place, it appears, only the representative personages of the place could dispose of the waste lands of the town, without consulting ordinary people of the place. But, when the disposal took place in a village (distinct from 'town') where the Deshmukh and the Deshpande of the region often did not reside, a number of ordinary villagers also took part in the disposal as shown below.

*Record No. 2.* Mr. K. V. Purandare of Sāsavad has introduced the copy of a lengthy *vatan patra* dated May 22, 1731. This record displays that a peasant belonging to the headman's lineage (surnamed Jagdale) of Village Garāde, Tarf Karhepathār, Pragane (Pargane) Poona was conferred upon with one *chavār* of lands in 'a block named Bhāgaḍik' as *mirās* by 'village assembly' (*majālsi samākūl pāñdhar*) of above village. Those who were present (*hājir*) in the assembly were: an agent (Kamāvisdār) in service of a man called Rājshri Son Thākūrbābā *ināmdār* (who must have held *inām* lands in the village), three headmen (Pātīl) surnamed Jagdale; seven peasants also surnamed Jagdale, one washerman (Parīt), one carpenter (Sutār), one gardener (Māli), one blacksmith (Lohār), one guest-bard (Bhat mehmān), two astrologer-accountants (Joshī Kulkarnī), one assistant headman (Chaugulā), one barber (Nhāvi), one Mahār (untouchable), one Gurav (keeper of temple) all perhaps of the village concerned, as well as an agent of Deshpande of the region and other thirteen persons from neighbouring villages and hamlets (*majeri*), total being thirty-four persons. And the duty of the grantee imposed by the assembly was 'to pay (the revenue) according to rules' (*vāhati-pramāñen ugavñi karñen*).<sup>54</sup>

*Record No. 3.* One of the two Marāthi records translated into English and included in the Sykes' report has been already discussed. Another record is a *mirās patra* which was granted by 'the Mokuddum, chief sharers in the Pateel's office and authority, and all the principal persons of the villages (village?) of Multun, Pergunnah, Kurdeh, Surkar, Joonur,' to a son of headman of a nearby village, when the assembly sold 'a chowar, namely, 12 rookas of land, from the two chowars of the thul or estate, called Sandus' as well as 'a site for a house' in the village by defining four corners at the price of Rs. 100. Persons attending this assembly were: four headmen, one assistant headman (Choughleh), five (perhaps) peasants, one chief of shop-keepers, one gardener, one Gurao (temple-keeper) of the village as well as one gardener of other village and one person named Ballajee Bajee Rao Bhaweh (total being fifteen). The buyer is commanded by the assembly to observe the following obligation:

<sup>53</sup> ASS, vol. V, No. 72. "...*vatanpatra Rājshri Deshmūkh va Mokadam va Dhondo Malhār Purandhare Karyāt Sāsavad tahā Baburāo va Tukoji bin Bhikāji Sinde hāli vasti Kasbe majkūr...*(year)...*tumhī yeūn ārj kelā je Kasbe majkuri āpna bahut divas rāhāto vāḍā tumhī dilhā āhe parantu set thal mirāsichen asāve tyājvarūn barāye ārj khātres āñūn Anbethalpaiki jamin khandi diḍ dilhe āse tyās chahū tarafes tivadhekari dakshñes Mauje Supe yethil siva va pashchmes Jākhoji Jagthāp utares Sakrāji Pātīl...."*

<sup>54</sup> ASS, vol. III, No. 306 (in B. I. S. Mandal: *Quarterly*, vol. XVIII, No. 3, Jan., 1938).



"Including the well, the permanent assessment is 50 rupees yearly, and upon this there will be no other charge beyond the rights of hukdars (persons having trifling hereditary fees, or rights on the village lands) and the pay of the koolkurnee (village accountant), agreeably to the usage and practice of the village". (Bracketed explanations are of Sykes'.) And this deed was attested by other fourteen persons of the village and handwritten by the astrologer-accountant thereof.<sup>55</sup>

Of the three records referred to above, No. 1 and No. 2 do not show if the grantees of lands paid money to the assembly, while in No. 3 the grantee paid Rs. 100. This may be explained in this way: in No. 1 the grantees were residing in the town, and in No. 2 he was of headman's lineage of the village; viz. in both cases the grantees were residents of the place, whereas in No. 3 grantee, though a son of a village-headman, was of other village, hence he had to pay a price of the land. In any case, even in No. 3, the price of *mirās* land was rather very cheap compared with the assessment upon it.

The three records quoted above are concerned with the disposal of lands as *mirās* by the local assembly. But local assembly could dispose of lands in the village as *inām* as well. Such cases will be shown in the following two records.

*Record No. 4.* Following story is narrated in *Diaries* of the year 1760. Headman (surnamed Povale) of Village Kolās, Tarf Chākan, Prānt Junnar, borrowed Rs. 17,000 from a man surnamed Gāykvāḍ probably in order to pay up the taxes imposed on his village, and he transferred half of his headmanship to the creditor in lieu of Rs. 7,000. But he was unable to repay the remaining Rs. 10,000, so that "all the villagers and Povale Pātil discussed the matter and agreed to give an *inām* of 2.25 *khañḍi* (45 *bighas*, viz. about 13.5 hectares) to Gāykvāḍ for (Rs.) 10,000, to liquidate (the debt), and to bear the land-tax (*sārā*) imposed upon it for themselves".<sup>56</sup> And they gave him a sales-deed (*kharedikhat*) to that effect. Government, after examining the deed, granted a *vatanpatra* to Gāykvāḍ and commanded a local bureaucrat as follows: "His land-tax will be properly imposed, that shall be paid by Povale Pātil and villagers. Take it into Government item with acknowledgement. Gāykvāḍ is to have no connection with the land-tax due from the *inām* of 2.25 *khañḍi* mentioned above".<sup>57</sup>

Above record clearly demonstrates that a village as a group could dispose of or sell out the waste lands thereof as *inām* lands according to its need, that the receiver of such *inām* lands was necessarily exempt from the duty of paying tax assessed upon the lands, but that Government imposed the duty upon the village as a whole.

*Record No. 5.* Similarly, when 'the headman and all the villagers' (*mokadam va samast pāñḍhari*) gathered together and granted 72 *bighas* (about 21.6 hectares) of lands in the village to a Brahmin family as *inām*, Government decided it to be '*inām* in charge of the village' (*gāñva niḷbat inām*) and ordered the headman and villagers 'to pay the land-tax (*sāryā*) and other impositions (*paṭyā*)'.<sup>58</sup>

To be sure, even the *inām* lands granted by the village may have often been exempt from tax by the Government, if their size was small, as pointed out by M. Elphinstone. But

<sup>55</sup> W. H. Sykes: *Report of the Land Tenures of the Dekkan, op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>56</sup> SSRPD, vol. III, No. 487. "samast kāli, pāñḍhari va Povale Pātil yāññin vichār kelā kin, savā don khāñḍi inām, dāhā hajārāns Gāykvāḍ yās deūn mukt vhañēn. tyāchā sārā āṇṇa dyāvā."

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* "tyāchā sārā vāḷvī hoil to Povale Pātil va gañvakari det jātil. to sarkār rakment majurā ghet jāñēn. Gāykvāḍ yājkades sadarhu savā don khañḍi ināmāchyā sāryāchā tālkā nase."

<sup>58</sup> SSRPD, vol. VI, No. 710, p. 216. 'ekūñ ardhā chāvar bārā bighe jamin sāryā va paṭyā tuhmī dyāvayāchyā karūn gāñva niḷbat jamin inām...'

in case of large *inām* lands granted by the village, it seems to have been a rule of the Government to impose the tax due from the lands upon the village as a whole.

In short, the village as a group also could dispose of waste lands thereof. But if they are disposed of as *mirās* lands, the grantee (new *mirās-dār*) had to bear a heavy land-tax upon himself, and if as *inām* lands, the village as a whole were obliged to pay the land-tax on behalf of the grantee (new *inām-dār*) if the *inām* was of a fairly large scale. Accordingly waste lands of many villages appear to have been left 'waste' without being disposed of even by the village. And such waste lands were made use of by the Government at its pleasure as will be demonstrated below.

### (C) Disposal by Government

As pointed out before, Government, on receipt of a petition from the headman of village, allowed some *mirās* lands situated near the inhabited area thereof to be used as house-sites and gave instead thereof the lands of extinct families or waste lands of the village to *mirās-dārs*.<sup>59</sup> Excepting such an instance, there seem to have been mainly two ways for the Government to make use of waste lands. One is to promote their cultivation through local bureaucrats and hereditary officers of the place. Another way is to confer waste lands upon particular individuals and institutions as *inām* lands. The former way will be discussed in the next section. Examples to the effect that Government in the name of King or his Peshwa granted waste lands are found too many to be enumerated. Only some cases may be shown below.

King Shahu gave 5 *bighas* (about 1.5 hectares) of waste lands of Village Vadū of Prānt Junnar as *inām* to a sweeper of the tomb (*vṛindāvan*) of the late King Sambhājī situated therein for his maintenance.<sup>60</sup> The third Peshwa granted 1 *chāvar* and 0.5 *chāvar* of waste lands respectively as *inām* to the bereaved families of two horsemen (*shilledār*) of the Government who died in battle.<sup>61</sup> He also donated 5 *bighas* of waste lands as *inām* to a mosque built in a town in Salsette region,<sup>62</sup> 1.5 *bighas* of waste lands as *inām* for the maintenance of a Hindu temple of a village,<sup>63</sup> and about 14 *bighas* of waste lands as *inām* in Ratnagiri region to a Portuguese gunner (*Firangī golandāj*) who distinguished himself in the service to the Marāthā Government.<sup>64</sup> And the seventh Peshwa also donated 1.5 *chāvar* of waste lands as *inām* to a Saivite monastery near Aurangabad.<sup>65</sup>

In short, those waste lands or lands of extinct families which were neither appropriated by the headmen of villages as their *mirās* nor disposed of by the local assembly, reverted *de facto*, if not *de jure*, to the State. Government often granted them as *inām* (exempt from tax) to such various persons and institutions as hereditary officers, priests, distinguished servants of the State as well as temples and mosques. And by making them self-supporting with an income from the *inām*, Government may have aimed at economizing the State expenditure otherwise to be spent for their maintenance, and at the same time creating the landed interests

<sup>59</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. VI, No. 748. See p. 40 of this article.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, No. 88. As to the circumstance of the death of Sambhājī, see G.S. Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, 2nd imp., Bombay, 1957, vol. I, p. 326.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, No. 146.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, No. 171.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, No. 181.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, No. 192.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, No. 1038.

faithful to the ruling power.

Thus we may conclude this section as follows :

Both the theory of Mr. Baden-Powell who regarded the agricultural lands excepting those held in *inām* as practically owned by the State, and the theory of Professor A. S. Altekar who emphasized the peasant ownership of all the agricultural lands may be said to have over-simplified the reality. Against these theories, Professor S. N. Sen was far more close to the actual situation in that he pointed out the existence of three kinds of lands, *viz.* *inām* lands, *mirās* lands, and Government lands. But he should have made it clear that there were many waste lands or lands of extinct families the legal right in which was not always clear, and that such lands could be disposed of by the village-headmen and the local (village) assemblies as well as by the State. The same comment may broadly apply to the report of M. Elphinstone. On the other hand, the report of W. H. Sykes is not clear regarding *inām* lands and State lands. But he has left an instructive suggestion in that he pointed out the waste lands of extinct families having existed in many of the villages, and emphasized the 'headmen or village authorities' having disposed of them during the Marāthā period. He should, however, have stressed that the waste lands appropriated by village-headman were treated as *mirās* lands loaded with a heavy land-tax, and in case of waste lands disposed of by the local assembly as *mirās* lands, the receiver was necessarily imposed with land-tax, while those disposed of as *inām* lands were often converted into '*inām* in charge of village' and the village as a whole had to bear tax assessed upon them.

At any rate, it may be said that the owner of *mirās* lands (*mirāsḍār*) held a fairly well-established private proprietary right in the lands. As regards *inām* lands, too, at least when they were attached to a certain hereditary office, the owner could dispose of them along with the office according to his need. On the other hand, waste lands or lands of extinct families could be appropriated by the village-headmen as his *mirās* lands or disposed of by the local assemblies, as well as by the State.

So far we have discussed the rights in various kinds of agricultural lands that appear in our sources. Now we shall turn our attention to the next problem and enquire into what kind of persons actually cultivated the lands, and under what conditions?

### III. Peasants

First we shall indicate some common features of the peasants in the early 19th century Deccan as described by British administrators.

At the beginning of this article we have quoted a lengthy statement from the report of M. Elphinstone (see pp. 34~36 of this article). From that quotation, we can point out three remarkable features of the peasants. Firstly, there were two classes of peasants: that of landed proprietors called *mirāsī*, *mirāsḍār*, or *thalkari*; and that of farmers called *uṡari*. Secondly, Marāthā Government made a *mirāsḍār* pay more than an *uṡari*, so that there existed generally no landlord-tenant relationship between the two classes. To be sure, Elphinstone has made no distinct statement about the matter. But, that he calls *mirāsḍār*s 'cultivators' indicates that he found no such relationship between the classes. And thirdly, *uṡari*s cultivated 'lands belonging to Government' on lease.

W. Chaplin also recognizes two classes of peasants throughout the Maratha country:

'free-holder' (*mirās-dār*) and 'tenant-at-will' (*uparī*). And he mentions that the approximate proportion of families of the two classes around the year 1820 was three to one in Poona region, two to one in Satara region, and one to one in Ahmadnagar region.<sup>66</sup> Further, he states that though *mirās-dār* occasionally let out his lands to his 'co-partners or relations', "a mirasdar may usually be considered both landlord and farmer, for as the land tax is commonly so high as to absorb all the landlord's rent, little surplus of profit is left, unless the cultivation of the land be undertaken by the mirasdar himself."<sup>67</sup> Chaplin, then, points out that whereas *mirās-dār* may normally have paid fifty per cent of his gross produce, an *uparī* actually paid much less, "for the *uparī* having but a precarious interest, must be compensated by a higher immediate profit. The profits of *uparis* in some places have indeed been found so large as to tempt mirasdars to throw up their watans (*viz.* *mirās* lands) and to cultivate waste land on Cowle (Kaul, assurance of Government). This of course is not allowed, except on condition of their continuing to pay the public revenue due from their Miras (lands)". (Brackets are mine.)<sup>68</sup>

Above statement of W. Chaplin is mainly based on the situation found about 1820, just two years after the British conquest of the Deccan. At any rate, it shows: (1) there were two classes of peasants; (2) a *mirās-dār* paid more than an *uparī*, and accordingly the former was usually a landed cultivator rather than a landlord, and (3) *uparis* cultivated waste lands.

As quoted before (see p. 36 of this article), W.H. Sykes also admits two classes of peasants: land-proprietors (*mirās-dār*, *thalkari*, or *thalwāhi*) and renter (*uparī*). He further states in 1830, "Although *Mirās*, or hereditary land, was assessed permanently, yet it was at a higher rate than any other land, at least if we judge from the difficulty discoverable in village papers for the last half century of letting waste land at the *Mirās* rate".<sup>69</sup> He then mentions, "great part of the land in the country is without proprietors; in consequence, a very numerous class of occupiers is the *Uparī*. The proper meaning of this term is a stranger, or one who cultivates land in a village in which he has not any corporate rights. In practice he holds land on the *Uktī* tenure, which is a land-lease by a verbal agreement for one year. In this tenure the rates are not fixed; the parties make the best terms they can;..."<sup>70</sup>

Here, although it is evident in his statement that *mirās-dārs* so paid more than *uparis* as to be unable to be landlords of the latter, he is very vague as to whose lands *uparis* cultivated. But it is indicated that waste lands or lands without proprietors were let out to *uparis* on lease.

From the above quotations from the reports written by the early British administrators, at least three questions may arise in connection with the land-systems discussed in the foregoing section.

Firstly, nothing is mentioned in these reports as to who cultivated the *inām* lands: *viz.*

<sup>66</sup> W. Chaplin: *A Report exhibiting A View of the Fiscal and Judicial System of Administration introduced into the Conquered Territory above the Guts, under the Authority of the Commissioner in the Dekhan*, 1824, rep. 1877, Bombay, pp. 41-43. I am thankful to Mr. T. Yamazaki of the Tokyo University for showing me this report.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>69</sup> W.H. Sykes: *Report of the Land Tenures of the Dekkan*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

their owners or *uparis*? Secondly, even if the *mirās*dārs were landed cultivators or cultivated their *mirās* lands by themselves in the early decades of the 19th century as described by British administrators, was this a general situation throughout the 18th century? Was there no tendency for *mirās* lands to be cultivated by *uparis* and for *mirās*dārs to become landlords? And thirdly, in connection with the above question, was it a general situation throughout the 18th century that *uparis* were tenants of State lands or waste lands? Was it not the case that the cultivation or reclamation of State lands or waste lands was promoted and encouraged politically at a certain period with a result that *uparis* were mobilized for the purpose and became the cultivators of such lands?

This section shall enquire in these questions.

Before entering into discussion, a few words should be mentioned about a limitation inherent in material sources. For this section, we shall make use of about sixty Marāthī records collected from the source-books (see p. 37 of this article). Of them, what may be called private records are only seven,<sup>71</sup> all of the rest being official records. Probably due to this official character of the records, peasants are called with such general terms as *rayat* (or *rayet*), *loka*, *prajā* (or *praja*), *kuḷa*, or *kuṅbī*. In a very few cases, they are called either *mirās*dārs or *uparis*. Of the general terms shown above, *rayat* is the corrupt form of Arabic *rayyat*, while *loka* and *prajā* are Sanskrit words; the three terms mean 'people' in general and 'peasants' in particular. The word *kuḷa* arised from Sanskrit *kula* (=family, lineage) and meant 'people' in general and 'peasants' in particular as well as 'family'. On the other hand, *kuṅbī* is an indigenous term and meant 'peasants', more especially a caste whose traditional occupation was agriculture.<sup>72</sup> These terms are used interchangeably in our sources.<sup>73</sup> At any rate, it should be apologized that when such a general term is used, it is often difficult to judge whether *mirās*dārs or *uparis* were meant by it.

One more apology must be added here. I shall try to clarify in this section how heavy revenue burden (or rent) a peasant had to bear in the period under review. But the revenue system in the Marāthā Kingdom was by no means simple. As will be illustrated in this section, occasionally a certain proportion of the gross produce was collected in kind, but this method seems to have been rather an exception: more general method was that Government measurers (*amin* or *pāhaṇidār*) were sent to villages now and then to measure the fields and the assessment was made for different crops in cash per *bigha* (unit of land-measurement).<sup>74</sup> In such a case it is very difficult to estimate the rate at which the assessed amount of money occupied in the gross produce of a peasant. Accordingly, a detailed enquiry into the revenue-systems of this kingdom will be made in a future occasion, and we may simply show in the footnote an old work done on this topic by Professor S. N. Sen.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> These seven records are found as follows: *Oturkar*, Nos. 37, 48, 49, 70, 87. *ASS*, vol. V. No. 57. *Bhārat Itihās Sanshodhak Mandal* ed.: *Shiva Charitra Sāhitya*, vol. V, No. 802 (in B. I. S. Mandal, *Quarterly*, vol. 18, No. 1, July 1937).

<sup>72</sup> H. H. Wilson: *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms...of British India*, new ed., Calcutta, 1940, p. 474.

<sup>73</sup> *rayat=loka=kuḷa* (*SSRPD*, vol. III, No. 339); *rayat=kuḷa* (*Ibid.*, vol. VI, No. 716); *rayat=loka* (*Ibid.*, vol. VI, No. 817, vol. III, No. 339).

<sup>74</sup> e. g. *SSRPD*, vol. III, No. 328; vol. No. 189; vol. VI, Nos. 718, 721.

<sup>75</sup> Vide S. N. Sen: *Administrative System of the Marathas*, University of Calcutta, 1st ed., 1923, pp. 245 ff; 2nd ed., 1925, pp. 277 ff.

### 1. Cultivation of *Inām* Lands

As stated before, the reports of British administrators did not mention how the *inām* lands were cultivated. So we shall begin with this topic.

The size of *inām* land as well as its holder was so various in the Marāthā Kingdom that the mode of its cultivation was by no means uniform. Some examples will be demonstrated in this regard. In 1738, Deshmukh and Deshpande of Lalgūn Buddha Panchgānva region enquired into the duties and rights of the Mahārs (an untouchable caste) of their region and informed the result to their counterparts of Sāsvad region by a letter. This letter enumerates 17 items of duties and rights of the Mahārs, two of which were: "1. (Mahārs) should be engaged in miscellaneous labour for Pātīl while eating the *harāṭī* land. 1. (Mahārs) should be engaged in miscellaneous labour for Government (*divān*) while eating *māhārik* land".<sup>76</sup> There is no doubt that the *harāṭī* land shown above means a kind of *inām* land given by the village as a reward to performing miscellaneous labour for the village-headman. Similarly the *māhārik* land is a sort of *inām* land given by Government to Mahārs as a compensation for labour service such as carrying the luggages of local bureaucrats on their occasional visits to the village as well as running as messengers for official purposes. 'To eat' (*khāūn*) such a land may mean that Mahārs cultivated it for themselves.

In a similar way, mosques and Hindu temples had small *inām* land (e.g. 1.5 *bighas* or about 45 ares), and a sweeper attached to the tomb of a late King held an *inām* land of 5 *bighas* (about 1.5 hectares).<sup>77</sup> There may be no doubt that such a small *inām* land was cultivated by the keeper of the mosque (Mulānā), that of the temple (Gurav) or by the sweeper himself.

There were, however, large *inām* lands as well that were held, for example, by Deshmukh and Deshpande of the region, headman of the village, distinguished servants of the State and their families as well as noted temples, monasteries and mosques, and they were often of the size of, for instance, 0.5 *chāvar* (about 18 hectares), 1 *chāvar* (about 36 hectares), 1.5 *chāvārs* (about 54 hectares), 2 *chāvārs* (about 72 hectares) and so forth.<sup>78</sup> It may be presumed that such a large *inām* land was, as a rule, cultivated by tenants. We may show some examples.

In a town called Ambejogāī, perhaps about eighty miles north-west of Poona, there was a Jain temple (*devaghar*) since old, which held 1 *chāvar* of *inām* land in the town as well as several '*inām* villages' thereabout.<sup>79</sup> Regarding the cultivation of this *inām* land, two peasants who were 'now residing in Kasbe Ambejogāī' submitted the following agreement (*kabūl katbā*) dated October 2, 1701, to the temple:

"(We), Rāyājī Roghe and Māvji Motlaskar, peasants (*mujeri*),<sup>80</sup> now residing in Town Ambejogāī, write and submit following agreement to you (*swāmi*)...(year)... You have 1 *chāvar* of *inām* land in the town, which lay waste due to a disturbance (*dhāmdhūm*). We came and voluntarily requested you (to allow us to cultivate) the land by share-cropping (*batāi*) on the promise (*bole*) of ten years. You have put the *inām* land of 1 *chāvar* in our charge

<sup>76</sup> *Oturkar*, No. 46, p. 32. "1. *Harāṭī jamin khāūn pātīlāchenṭhe rābāve kalm. 1. Māhārik jamin khāūn divānche rābānūk karāvi kalm*".

<sup>77</sup> See p. 48 of this article.

<sup>78</sup> See pp. 42, 48 of this article.

<sup>79</sup> See *Shiva Charitra Sāhitya, op. cit.*, vol. V, Nos. 790-802 (in B. I. S. Mandal: *Quarterly*, vol. 18, No. 1.)

<sup>80</sup> M. T. Patvardhan: *Fārsi-Marāthi-Kosh*, Poona, 1925, p. 198 (*mujeri=kheḍūt, kuṇbi*).

(*hāvālā*) by share-cropping (*batāi*); (We shall) cultivate (the land), and submit to you a half (*nīme*) of the produce (*upaj*) of the land including grains (*galā*), stems (*kaḍbā*), fodders (*gavat*), greens (*bhūs*) and so on. And we shall take another half. We shall conceal (*tanākhori*) nothing of them. This is our...(a few words are missed)... This agreement (*katbā*) is written by the pen of accountant (Kulkarnī) Rāmāji Narasīva. Signature (date and greeting)”.<sup>81</sup>

The above record evinces two important points regarding the tenancy of *inām* land. Firstly condition of tenancy was fifty-fifty sharing of gross produce between the *ināmdār* and the tenants. Secondly, the two tenant-peasants are stated as ‘now residing’ (*hālī vasti*) in the town. This shows that they were not *mirāsdār* peasants living permanently in the town but *upari* peasants who had migrated thereto from some other place and temporarily settled there.

To be sure, it is not certain if most of the tenants on *inām* lands were *upari* peasants. There might be *mirāsdār* peasants who were tenants of *inām* lands, as well.

At any rate it appears that the tenancy on *inām* lands was usually arranged through share-cropping system. For instance, *Diaries* of the year 1752 states that in a village of Karhād region ‘there is a share-cropper (*vāṭekari*) of Sardeshmukh, and robbers broke his (share-cropper’s) house, and stole away three oxen, four cows, and one male-buffalo; viz. total eight cattles...’<sup>82</sup> The indigenous term *vāṭekari* means a tenant who cultivates land by sharing (*vāṭni*) the produce. At any rate above record suggests that there was *inām* land of Sardeshmukh in this village and it was cultivated by a share-cropper.

Two instances shown above that evince the share-cropping arrangement between *ināmdārs* and tenants are cases where the former resided in the village or thereabout. But all the *ināmdārs* did not reside in the place. Especially the distinguished servants of the State or their families who were awarded with *inām* lands would often stay in the capital or other important cities and were, as it were, absentee landlords of the *inām* lands. In such a case, the *ināmdār* would appoint an agent and have him stay in the village.<sup>83</sup> Otherwise the *ināmdār* would entrust the cultivation of his *inām* land to the headman of the village and request him to send the rent that was fixed in cash. Such an arrangement might be made directly between the *ināmdār* and the headman or indirectly through a third person as will be clear in the following record.

A gentleman named Sadāshivrām Guṇe Kālekar, who may be supposed to have been an eminent bureaucrat, had an *inām* land of 1 *chāvar* in Town Birvādī near Miraj. Regarding the cultivation of this *inām* land, another gentleman, Pareshrām Rāmchandra by name, who

<sup>81</sup> *Shiva Charitra Sāhitya, op. cit.*, vol. V, No. 802. “Rājman Rājeshri Devāji Gosāvi. *Kabul katbā svāmiche sevasi Rāyāji Roghe va Māvji Moilaskar mujeri hālī vasti Kasbe Ābejogāi suhur sana 1111 mahārājāche sevasi katbā lihūn dilhā yesā je tumche ināmche set chāvar 1 Kasbe majkuri āhe to dhām-dhumeakaritān paḍilā hotā te set āṇe yeūn āple khushineñ tumhās varsā 10 che bole baṭāneñ māgūleñ tumhī ināmāche set chāvar 1 āple hāvālā baṭāne kele ase kirdi karūn jo upaj galā va kaḍbā va gavat va bhūs vagaire tyā setānt hoil te nīme svāmīs deūn nīme āṇa gheūn yās kāhi tanākhori na karūn he āple +++ sudūr ase hā katbā sahi bakalm Rāmāji Narasīva Kulkarnī. Tārikh 10 roj mahe Jamadilāval, gohī, ghāsmī mortab”.*

<sup>82</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. I, No. 235. “*Mauje Rethareñ harṇākshācheñ Prānt Karhād yānsi tākid Mauje Hmasolī Prānt majkūr yethēñ Sardeshmukhākaḍil vāṭekari yācheñ ghar choraneñ foḍūn bail 3 tin, hmāshi 4 chār va reḍā 1 ekūñ 8 gureñ nelīñ tyāñchā māg Mauje majkurās ālā....”*

<sup>83</sup> See p. 46 of this article.

is presumed by the editor of the record, Mr. S. L. Atār, to have been the famous Parāshrām Bhāu Patvardhan, influential general of the Peshwa's Government, wrote the following letter dated October 5, 1779, to a man who may have been the headman of the town.

“(Greetings, addressee's name and sender's name) Mr. Sadāshivrām Gune Kālekar owns *inām* land of 120 *bighas* (*viz.* 1 *chāvar*) (of the profit) of Rs. 700 in the town. He is conducting through me the cultivation (*rāvāṇi*) of 20 *bighas* out of it with (the rent of) Rs. 100. 100 *bighas* of land (of the rent) of Rs. 600 are still left. Please appoint (tenants for the cultivation of) the land of the first, second and third classes according to the rent (*dhārā*) prevalent in Miraj region. (date and greetings)”<sup>84</sup>

While the two records shown before as illustrating the rent in kind are of the years 1701 and 1752 respectively, this record evincing the rent in cash is of 1779. Accordingly it may be imagined that the rent was transformed from kind to cash during that period. But I think it is not the case; the difference is due to the fact that while the former two cases are concerned with resident *ināmdārs*, the latter one is about an absentee *ināmdār*.

At any rate, it is not clear what proportion ‘the rent prevalent in Miraj region’ occupied in the gross produce of land. The rent of Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 per *bigha* seems to be too heavy for dry land (*jirāyat*) and too light for wet land (*bāgāyat*) (*Vide* p. 58 of this article). It may be that this *inām* land was of wet land, tenants on it in fact had to pay more rent than shown in the record, and the difference was meant to be the income of the man who is supposed to be the headman of the town. Otherwise, even if this was wet land, enough number of tenants were available only at such low rates of rent, for tenants may have been rather scarce in the second half of the 18th century due mainly to the expanded cultivation of waste lands on more favourable terms as will be discussed later.

## 2. Cultivation of *Mirās* Lands

As discussed before, *mirās* lands were owned by individual peasants including hereditary officers of the village and imposed with ordinary land-revenue. The owner of *mirās* land was called *mirāsdār* or *mirāsī* in Muslim words and *thalkari* or *thalvāi* in indigenous terms.

We can find at least sixteen records that refer to *mirāsdār* or owner of *mirās* land. They include five records from Poona region,<sup>85</sup> six from Sāsvad region,<sup>86</sup> three from Junnar region,<sup>87</sup> one from Satara region,<sup>88</sup> and one from Ratnagiri region.<sup>89</sup> They evince very little of the mode of cultivation of *mirās* land. Out of them, however, there are two records, one of which indicates *mirās* land being let out to *uparī* peasants, while another shows that

<sup>84</sup> ASS, vol. V, No. 57. “*Shri gaṇavatī assal. Rājshriyā virājit rājmanya Rājshri Lakshmaṇ Ghonḍ-dev Kasbe Bhilvāḍī svāmī gosāvi yānsi. Sevak Pareshrām Rāmchandra namaskār vinantī uparī yethil kushal janūn svakiye lihit jāṇe vishesh Rājshri Sadāshiv Rām Gune Kālekar yās Kasbe majkuri yekse vis bighe jamīn sātse rupyechī inām āhe tyājpaiki vis bighe jamīnichiñ lāvāṇi shanbhar rupayāchī ma-shārnilhe āple mārfatīne karit āstāt bāki shabhar bighe jamīn sāhāse rupayāchī rāhili ti āval dūm sim Miraj Prāntātīl dhāryāpramāṇe nemūn deṇe jāniḇe chh 24 Ramjān Suhūrsana samānin mayā va ālaf bahut kāya līhiṇe he vinantī*”.

<sup>85</sup> SSRPD, vol. I, No. 296 (*thalkari*), No. 298 (*thalvāik kuṇbi*); vol. III, No. 397 (*vatandār kuṇbi*); vol. VII, No. 433 (*kuṇbi thalkari mirāsdār*). *Oturkar*, No. 70 (*thalkari*).

<sup>86</sup> SSRPD, vol. III, No. 521 (*mirāshiche sheten*). *Oturkar*, No. 37 (*thalvāik kuṇbi*), No. 48 (*thalvāi*), No. 49 (*thalvāi*), No. 56 (*mirāshichi sete*), No. 139 (*thalkari*).

<sup>87</sup> SSRPD, vol. III, No. 327 (*mirāsdār kuṇbi*), No. 522 (*mirāshichi sheten*); vol. VI, No. 748 (*mirāsdār*).

<sup>88</sup> SSRPD, vol. I, No. 303 (*thalvāik*).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VII, No. 546 (*vatani shet*).



*mirās* land was cultivated by its owner. We shall examine these two records.

*Record No. 1.* In the first half of the 18th century, unstable peace was maintained between the Marāthās and the Mughals on the border regions such as Junnar and Ahmadnagar by sharing equally the revenue of the areas between the two Governments. And parts of such regions were also assigned to bureaucrats in *jāgir* (fief).<sup>90</sup> In such a situation, the following record may be found in the *Diaries* dated January 1, 1742. A clerk under a *jāgirdār* assigned with three villages in Junnar region petitioned to the third Peshwa, "Headman and *mirāsdār* peasants (of the three villages) have absconded due to the shortage of rainfalls and to the oppression by the Mughals. (But) *upari* peasants are in the villages. If an assurance for share-cropping (*batāi*) be kindly granted to them (*upari* peasants), (they) will carry out the cultivation for the next year".<sup>91</sup> Then Peshwa's Government sent the following assurance-letter (*abhaya-patra*) to each of the three villages as well as a similar order (*tākīd*) to the clerk: "Collect the produce (*māl*) of the winter-crops (*rabi*), deduct the seeds (*bij*) (used for the winter-crops), divide the remaining produce as well as the produce (*māl*) of the summer-crops (*kharif*) into three shares (*tin hisse*), and (distribute) one share to the rayat, one of the remaining two to our Government (*svarājya*, here the *jāgirdār*), and another one to the Mughals. Besides, if there are any income (*ākār*) of extra cash-impositions (*nakībāb*), tax on fig-trees (*unbar-patti*), business-tax (*mohatarfā-bāb*), mango-tax (*ānbānbalī*) and *kamāvis*-tax (fines and other miscellaneous dues), pay half of them to *svarājya* and another half to the Mughals. Rest assured and carry out cultivations according to rules".<sup>92</sup>

To be sure, this record does not explain what the *upari* peasants had been doing in the villages till headmen and *mirāsdār* peasants absconded. It may, however, be supposed that the former had been cultivating the *mirās* lands of the latter, for we can draw two inferences from the fact that when headmen and *mirāsdār*s ran away from the villages, *uparis* remained there. Firstly, whereas the fact that the former absconded from the villages because of the shortage of rains and the oppression of the Mughals no doubt indicates that they were obliged to pay a fixed amount of land-revenue straight to the administrations, the fact that *uparis* did not run away suggests that they were under no obligation of that kind. In other words, this fact infers that *uparis* did not cultivate State lands or waste lands with the duty to pay a certain amount of revenue direct to the administrations, but cultivated some privately owned lands, *viz.* *mirās* lands, as share-cropping tenants. Hence they were not necessitated to abscond. Secondly, the date of this record (January 1) evinces that the winter-cultivation was already over and winter-harvest was soon to begin. This means that *uparis* were not only not necessitated to run away, but also had to be present there to do harvesting and to receive their own shares of produce. But the prospect of crops was so bad that headmen and *mirāsdār*s resorted to temporary absconding without waiting for the

<sup>90</sup> Vide SSRPD, vol. III, No. 334.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 327. "...sadarhu tin gāvin pāuspāṇi nāhin va Moṅgalāche kasāle bhāri yājkaritān pāṭil va mirāsdār kunbi parāgaṇḍā jāle. upari kunbi gānvūvar āhet tyāns baṭāichā kaul dilīyāneṅ pestar sālchi kird hoṅn yeil hmaṅon Mir Mahamūd Khān jāhāgirdār yānchkaḍil Govind Yashvant karkūn Hujūr yeṅn vidit kelen".

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 327. "tyāvarūn māmuriṅvar najar deṅn baṭāichā kaul sādār kelā rabiche mālācheṅ bij ubhe rāsīs kādhūn, rāhilā māl va kharifāchā māl jaisā jo hoil tyāche tin hisse paikiṅ ek hissā rayates; don hisse rāhile tyās ek hissā svarājya va ek hissā Moṅgalāi yeṅeṅpramāṅeṅ. va nakībāb unbarpatti va mohatarfā bāb va ānbā ānbalī va kamāvis yāchā jo ākār hoil to nimeṅ svarājya va nimeṅ Moṅgalāi yeṅeṅpramāṅeṅ deṅn sukh rūp rāhūn kird māmuliṅpramāṅeṅ karṅeṅ hmaṅon...."

harvest. Accordingly *uparis* felt uneasy as to whom to pay the rent, how much, and how to undertake the cultivation for the next season, so that they appealed to the *jāgirdār's* clerk present there for an assurance. The clerk requested the Government for the same, and the Government assured the *uparis* that they were required to pay to the administrations neither more nor less than the shares (*viz.* two-thirds of gross produce) 'according to rules', which were otherwise due to the *mirāsḍār* landlords.

The above record seems to make sense only when interpreted in that way. The provision that *uparis* were allowed to deduct the seeds only from the winter-crops may be a special concession because of the bad prospect of winter-harvest.

Now it should be borne in mind that the above record indicating landlord-tenant relationship between *mirāsḍārs* and *uparis* is of the year 1742, and that British administrators found *mirāsḍārs* generally as cultivating their *mirās* lands and *uparis* as tenants of State lands or waste lands in the early nineteenth century. This suggests: (1) during the *second* half of the eighteenth century, the cultivation of State lands and waste lands was promoted, and *uparis* were mobilized for the purpose, and (2) accordingly, *mirāsḍārs* came to cultivate their *mirās* land themselves. The first suggestion pointed above will be discussed in the next subsection. Here we may show an interesting record in connection with the second suggestion.

*Record No. 2.* On October 7, 1764, Police Office of the Centrally Administered Area of Koregāū District (Divāṇ Thāṇe Māhāl Khālsā Sarkār Koregāū) sent the following letter to a man, Jānāpā Vāṇī by name, who was assistant headman (Chaugulā) of Village Taḍvale of the above District, but was 'now residing' in Village Hāsūchivāḍī:

"(a seal, name of office, name of the addressee, his present residence, year) The headman of the above (Village Taḍvale) has informed that thou, being the *vatandār chaugulā*, hast absconded from the village. What is the reason for absconding? Now this letter is sent (to thee). Then you should come back to the village and *cultivate your mirās land*, and perform the work of assistant headmanship. Do have no fear on any matter and come back with peace of mind. The land attached to thy *vatandārship* (*viz.* *inām* land for assistant headmanship) shall also be given to thee. Therefore come back (date)".<sup>93</sup> (Brackets and italics are mine.)

This record demonstrates that in 1764 even assistant headman of the village did, or at least should, cultivate his *mirās* land for himself. Moreover, if we judge by his own name, this assistant headman did not belong to peasant caste but to merchant caste (*viz.* *vāṇī*).

### 3. Cultivation of State Lands and Waste Lands

As is well known, the Marāthā Kingdom reached its heyday during the reign of the second Peshwa Bājīrāo I (1720-1740 in office). During his reign, the power of the Marāthās expanded upto the northern India, and the Marāthā feudatory states were firmly established in Gujarat, Malwa, central and northern India.<sup>94</sup> This expansion of territories, however, re-

<sup>93</sup> *Oturkar*, No. 56. "(*Haibatrāo Bhavānīshankarāchā āshtakoni aspashta Marāthi 6 olinchā shikkā*) *Ajdivāṇ Thāṇe Māhāl Khālsā Sarkār Koregāū tahā Jānāpā Vāṇī chaugulā Mauje Taḍvale Sarkār majkūr hāli vasti Mauje Hāsūchivāḍī suhūrsana khamas sitain mayā alaf tu vatandār chaugulā gāvātūn parāgadā jāhālā āhes mhañūn pāḍil majkūr yāni vidit kele tari parāgadā hovayāsi karṇe kāye hāli patra sādār kele āhe tari tumhī gāvāvāri yeūn āḍli mirāsichī sete karṇe va chaugulikichā kārbhār karṇe konhāvisi vasvasā na dharitā sukhṛūp yeṇe tujhe vatandāriche sete tujlā deū tari yeṇe chh 11 Ravilākhar mortab sud*".

<sup>94</sup> *Vide* V. G. Dighe: *Peshwa Bajirao I & Maratha Expansion*, Bombay, 1944.

sulted in an increased expenditure for administrative and military purposes by the Peshwa's Government at Poona rather than an inflow of wealth thereto, so that when the third Peshwa Bālājī Bājirāo (1740-1761 in office) succeeded to the Peshwship in 1740, there is said to have been accumulated a debt of the order of Rs. 1.45 millions at the Government of Poona.<sup>95</sup> In order to liquidate this debt the third Peshwa resorted to predatory expeditions to the Hindu Kingdoms in the south India as well as Rajasthan. But the expeditions invited counter-expeditions, so that the financial condition of Poona Government became worse. Moreover, luxurious tendency also had become more conspicuous among the nobles and high-class bureaucrats of the Government. Accordingly when the third Peshwa died in 1761, the debt accumulated at the Government of Poona is estimated variously to have come around Rs. 1.7 millions, Rs. 5 millions or Rs. 10 millions.<sup>96</sup>

In order to mitigate the financial stringency, the third Peshwa not only resorted to the predatory expeditions, but also appears to have paid much attention to the increase in agricultural production. A significant fact in this connection is that during the reign of the third Peshwa the majority of soldiers under his direct control were recruited from the north and south Indians as well as Pathāns and Arabs as mercenaries. This resulted in the demoralization of the Marāthā army and was to become an important military factor for the decline of the Kingdom. As the reason for this 'denationalization' of soldiers, Professor S.N. Sen says, "The Marathas were not very eager to spend whole year away from their home provinces and Balaji (the third Peshwa) enlisted mercenaries from all parts of India and outside India".<sup>97</sup> But this explanation appears to be incorrect, if we remember that before this time a large number of Marāthās had marched to other provinces as bureaucrats and soldiers, established many feudatory states and settled there. A more adequate explanation may be that the third Peshwa as a measure of his agrarian policies sent back home or at least discouraged recruiting the indigenous soldiers most of whom were peasants by origin, and enlisted instead thereof the foreign mercenaries.

At any rate, so far as our sources indicate, the cultivation of State lands and waste lands appears to have been suddenly promoted and encouraged during and after the reign of the third Peshwa.

Bālājī Bājirāo became the third Peshwa in June of 1740, and five months after that, *Diaries* dated November 15, 1740 mentions that Government sent a letter to headmen of five villages in Konkan region, informing them that there were 'Government demesne' (*sarkārchī sheri*) in the villages and 'half-and-half share-croppers of Government' (*sarkārche ardhelī*) were cultivating it, and ordering them that as there were, besides, 'Government sugar-cane land of 2.5 *bighas*' (*sarkārchā ūs jamin bighe 2.5*) in the villages, they should be cultivated on the condition that the outer husk of the cane (*tūs*) and the expenditure of cultivation be given by the Government.<sup>98</sup> Then on October 24, 1744, Government ordered hereditary officer of Village Vaḍajhiren of Tarf Karde (about ninety miles north-east of Poona), "There is demesne land (*sheriche shet*) (in the above village), which is put in charge of Government. You have been ordered to get it cultivated. Then appoint share-croppers (*sarik*) and have (them) cultivate that demesne land. Of the produce (*ākār*) therefrom, give (half) to share-

<sup>95</sup> H. N. Sinha: *Rise of the Peshwas*, 2nd ed., Allahabad, 1954, p. 217.

<sup>96</sup> G. S. Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, 1st imp., Bombay, 1948, vol. II, p. 459.

<sup>97</sup> S. N. Sen: *The Military System of the Marathas*, new ed., Oriental Longmans, 1958, p. 62.

<sup>98</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. III, No. 405.

croppers and send the cash of remaining half (*bāki urlā nime aivaj*) to Government”<sup>99</sup>

The term *sarik* is the corrupt form of Arabic *sharik* and means a ‘sharer’ as the indigenous term *vātekarī* shown before. At any rate it may hardly be doubted that the cultivation of State lands was promoted in many places on fifty-fifty share-cropping basis during 1740’s.

Next, it seems that cultivation of waste lands was greatly encouraged after 1750. For instance *Diaries* dated February 15, 1750 mentions that Government gave an assurance (*abhaya*) of seven items to Pargana Pinpalgāva Basavañt and Pargana Chāñdvāḍ of Junnar region, which included the following three items :

- (1) “When waste land is brought under new cultivation, the rule of getting revenue (*ugavṇi*) per *bigha* for that land is defined as follows :

A. rupees per *bigha* of dry black soil (*kāḷe jamin*).

Rs. 0.25 in the first year, Rs. 0.5 in the second year, Rs. 1 in the third year, Rs. 1.5 in the fourth year, Rs. 2 in the fifth year. (the standard rent—*dhārā*—of the already cultivated dry black soil being Rs. 2 per *bigha* per year)

B. rupees per *bigha* of hillside sandy soil (*baraḍ māḷ jamin*).

Rs. 0.125 in the first year, Rs. 0.25 in the second year, Rs. 0.5 in the third year, Rs. 0.75 in the fourth year, Rs. 1 in the fifth year. (the standard rent of the already cultivated hillside sandy soil being Rs. 1 per *bigha* per year)”<sup>100</sup>

- (2) “When water-canal (*āḍavyā pāṭ*) is constructed on waste land, to turn it into wet land (*bāgāyāt*), the rule of revenue per *bigha* of the land is: Rs. 5 per *bigha* in the first year, Rs. 6 per *bigha* in the second year, Rs. 7 per *bigha* in the third year, Rs. 8 per *bigha* in the fourth year, Rs. 10 per *bigha* in the fifth year. (the standard rent of the already cultivated wet land being Rs. 10 per *bigha* per year)”<sup>101</sup>

- (3) “The business people (*udmi loka*) who are now in the villages should pay the revenue (*mahasul*) according to rule. If new families (of business people) are brought with an assurance, they shall be exempt (*pāl*) from tax for three years, and from the fourth year, they ought to pay according to rule”<sup>102</sup>

Here the first two items are important. They show that those who reclaim the waste lands were levied with ‘annually increasing rent’ (*viz. istāvā* rent) for the first four years, and standard rent after the fifth.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 333. “*Mauje Vaḍajhireñ Tarf Karde yethil shericheñ shet āhe; teñ sarkārāñt thevileñ āhe. tyāchī lāvāñi karāvṇyāsī tuhmāñs āññā kelī ase. tari te sheriche shetāchī lāvñi sarik theñ karñen. tethil ākār hoil to sarikās deñ bāki urlā nime aivaj sarkārāñt pāvṭā karñen. hmañon Rāmāñi Nārāyañ ajhat kulkarñi Mauje majkūr yās patra*”.

<sup>100</sup> *SSRPD*, vol. III, No. 339, p. 211. “*navi lāvñi paḍjaminnichī hoil, te jaminis dar bighā ugavṇi karāvṇyāchā shirastā yeñēñpramāñen karār karñun dilhā ase:*

*kāle jaminis dar bighā rūpaye.*

*0.25 pahile sālin.*

*0.5 dusre sālin. 1.5 chauthē sālin.*

*1 tisre sālin. 2 pāñchve sālin.*

*baraḍ māḷ jaminis dar bighā rūpaye*

*0.125 pahile sālin.*

*0.25 dusre sālin. 0.75 chauthē sālin.*

*0.5 tisre sālin. 1 pāñchve sālin.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 339, p. 211. “*paḍjamin asel tyās dar bighiyās ugavṇi shirastā āḍavyā pāṭāche jaminis rūpaye pahile sālin dar bighā rūpaye 5, dusre sālin dar bighā rūpaye 6, tisre sālin dar bighā rūpaye 7, chauthē sālin dar bighā rūpaye 8, pāñchve sālin dar bighā rūpaye 10*”.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 339, p. 212. “*udmi loka halliñ gāñvāñt āhet tyāñjpāsūñ shirastepramāñen mahasul ghyāvā. navin kuḷeñ kaul deñ āñāvñ, tyāñs tin sāleñ pālāveñ, chauthē sāḷpāsūñ mahasul shirastepramāñen ghyāvā*”.

At this point of time, Government seems to have only passively received the petition from the hereditary officers of the region for assurance and confirmed and granted it. But soon, Government came to make it a duty of the local revenue collectors to promote the cultivation of waste land.

For example, on February 17, 1760 when Government appointed a collector (Kamāvisdār) to Puntambe region of Sangamner District, it specified eighteen items of his duties, which included such items as: "if waste land lies waste, undertake its cultivation by giving assurance of two years, three years, four years. Do not leave waste land" (*paḍjāmin paḍli āhe, tichi lāvṇi dusālā, tisālā, chausālā, kaul deūn karāvi paḍjāmin rāhūn na dyāvi*), and "if the cultivation of waste land is not performed, (your) office shall not last long" (*paḍjāmin lāvṇi na jāli tar māmlā parichchhinna rāhnār nāhiṇ*).<sup>103</sup> Further, on December 13 of the same year when Government appointed another collector (Kamāvisdār) to Pargana Vaṇ and Pargana Diṇḍorī to the north of Nāsik, he was commanded by the Government as follows: "if there is waste land in villages of the above Parganas, undertake its cultivation. Undertake the cultivation in two or three years from this year. If the cultivation of waste land is not performed, (your) office shall not last long" (*Pargane majkuriṇ gānvaganna paḍ jāmin asel tichi lāvṇi karāvi. sālmajkurāpāsūn do ti salā lāvṇi karāvi. paḍ jāminichi lāvṇi na jāli tari parichchhinna māmlā rāhnār nāhiṇ*).<sup>104</sup>

Although the cultivation of waste land was promoted in that way, the financial situation of Poona Government did not improve. And after the short reigns of the fourth, the fifth and the sixth Peshwas, the seventh Peshwa Mādhavrāo Nārāyan (1774-1796 in office) encouraged creating 'new fields' (*nūtan jāmin* or *nūtan shet*) by reclamation at least in Ratnagiri region (narrow belt-like region between the Western Ghāts and the Arabian Sea). For instance, on January 4, 1775 Government issued the following assurance to the local bureaucrats, the headmen of villages and the peasants (*rāyāni*) of Anjanvel area of Ratnagiri region: 1. "Those peasants (*rayat*) who create new fields (*nūtan jāmin*) out of rocky land (*dagaḍ saḍā*) with neither trees nor grass growing by bringing earth from other places and filling it up therewith, or those peasants who create new fields (*nūtan shet*) by breaking rocky hills and filling them up with earth",<sup>105</sup> shall have half of the new fields in *inām*, while another half shall be exempt (*māfi*) from rent for twenty years, levied with light rent (*kamdhārā*) for the next five years, and thereafter assessed according to the standard rule. 2. "Those peasants (*rayat*) who create new fields (*nūtan shet*) by constructing dams (*bāndhbāndist*) on the drained land along sea-coast"<sup>106</sup> shall have one-fourth of the new fields in *inām*, while the periods of exemption and of light rent shall be decided after considering the expenditure and the labour spent for the purpose.

And after forty days, on February 13, 1775, a similar assurance was given to Svarnadurg area of the same region, too.<sup>107</sup>

It is not clear if those peasants who brought State land, waste land, or 'rocky land' into

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 425, pp. 280-281.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, No. 431, p. 293.

<sup>105</sup> SSRPD, Vol. VI, No. 737, pp. 243-245. "dagaḍ saḍā āhe tye jāgā jhādeṇ va gavāt kānhinich hot nāhiṇ, tetheṇ bāherūn māti ānūn ghālūn, nūtan jāmin shet hoye; va doṅgarāntil dagaḍ phoḍūn voḍhā nālā asel tyās māti ghālūn nūtan shet hoy aiseṇ karāvūyās rayat umedvār āhe".

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243. "daryāgark khājṇi jāminis bāndh bāndist karūn nūtan shet hoy aiseṇ karāvūyās rayat umedvār āhe".

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VI, No. 738.

cultivation were awarded with the *mirās* right in the land excepting the land specially granted in *inām*. It may be presumed that they were not, for the early British administrators found the cultivators of Government lands and the like to be tenants, but not to be *mirās*dārs. At any rate, the foregoing discussion may have made it clear that the cultivation of State land, waste land and so forth was promoted and encouraged on certain favourable terms since the time of the third Peshwa.

Now the problem is: what kind of peasants were mobilized for the cultivation, and from where?

At present, we cannot be definite about the matter. But it seems improbable that a large number of peasants were brought into *svarājya* of the Marāthā Kingdom from other provinces of India during the second half of the eighteenth century. Nor does it appear presumable that a great number of *upari* peasants were suddenly generated during the same period inside the *svarājya*. Rather we must suppose that fairly great number of *upari* peasants did already exist in the *svarājya* before the middle of the eighteenth century as illustrated in two examples shown before (see pp. 53 & 55 of this article). Accordingly it may hardly be doubted that *upari* peasants scattered in the *svarājya* were mobilized for the cultivation through the following three methods. Firstly, there were cases where *upari* peasants were cultivating the *mirās* lands of *mirās*dārs of the village on the condition of paying perhaps two-thirds of gross produce to the landowners as indicated before (see p. 55 of this article). In such a case, these *upari* peasants would be mobilized for the cultivation of State lands, waste lands and so forth on more favourable terms. Secondly, in the year 1765, for instance, when an epidemic took place in a village of Kalyān region and many of the villagers died or absconded, Government is said to have ordered a bureaucrat of the region as follows: "There may be closely neighbouring villages. Make them cultivate the lands (of the vacated village) by visiting cultivation (*pāyīnkastā*)".<sup>108</sup> Accordingly, when there were not enough number of *upari* peasants in a certain village, those who were by chance residing in the neighbouring villages would be mobilized also for the cultivation of State lands and so on of the village by visiting cultivation. And thirdly, as shown before, two Parganas of Junnar region were assured by the Government that 'if new families (of business people) are brought with an assurance, they shall be exempt from tax for three years'. (See p. 58 of this article). Similar measure was resorted to regarding peasants also. For example, in the year 1814 when a man, probably a hereditary officer, of Bassein region, wished to reclaim, by constructing a dam, a land in a village of the region, which had been exposed to the sea-water and lain waste for many decades, and he petitioned to the Government for granting an exemption from rent, the last Peshwa assured him of the exemption for twenty-five years through the governor (Subhedār) of the region. At the end of this assurance-letter, the following words are stated, "If peasants of other areas are brought for the cultivation of the land, they will build their houses on the border of the village, chain up their cattle, and live. They shall be exempt from house-tax and forced labour. Rest assured, construct the dam, and undertake agriculture. This is assured".<sup>109</sup> This means that when enough number of peasants were not available in the village

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VII, No. 709. "tar āspās gānva lagte astil tyānnin pāyīnkastā sheten karūn lāgvad karāvi".

<sup>109</sup> ASS, vol. V, No. 32, pp. 36-37. "setāche kasalikes digar mājālchi kule āṇāl ti kule gāvacheṅ sivarāt ghare va gurās beḍi bādhon rāhātīl tyās ghardene va veḥbegār māf keli ase sukhrūp badist bādhon lāgvad karṇe kaul ase...."

or neighbouring ones, local bureaucrats or hereditary officers of the place went to 'other areas', showed some favourable terms to the peasants thereof, and brought them back for the cultivation of waste lands and so forth. And those peasants who responded to the favourable terms and were thus brought to the new place would be usually *uparis* rather than *mirāsdārs*.

#### IV. *Concluding Remarks*

We may conclude our study as follows.

In the eighteenth century Marāthā Kingdom, the mode of cultivation of *inām* land was by no means uniform. Small *inām* land would be cultivated by its owner himself, while that of larger size was as a rule let out to tenants. The tenants would be usually *upari* peasants. The rent was paid either in kind or in cash. At any rate, the rent would normally amount to a half of gross produce. It may, however, be presumed that the proportion of *inām*-rent was gradually decreased in the second half of the eighteenth century as the cultivation of State land or waste land was promoted and expanded.

On the other hand, many of *mirāsdārs* seem to have let out their *mirās* lands to *uparis* by share-cropping arrangement, rent being probably two-thirds of gross produce, before the middle of the eighteenth century.

But since the reign of the third Peshwa, Government of Poona appears to have promoted the cultivation of State land in order to mitigate the financial difficulty on the fifty-fifty share-cropping basis. And after 1750 onward, the cultivation of waste lands and even rocky lands was encouraged on more favourable terms. The peasants who responded to such promotion and encouragement seem to have usually been *uparis* who had been tenants of *ināms* lands and more especially of *mirās* lands.

As a result, *mirāsdār* peasants would come to cultivate their *mirās* lands by themselves during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Hence, British administrators generally observed the *mirāsdārs* as landed cultivators and *uparis* as tenants of State lands or waste lands in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

At any rate it appears that some remarkable changes took place in the agrarian economy of the Marāthā Kingdom in the second half of the eighteenth century.

(March 15, 1965)