

Rural Power and Debt in Sindh in the late Nineteenth Century 1865-1901

David Cheesman (1980)



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RURAL POWER AND DEBT IN SINDH IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY 1865 - 1901

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Abstract

The thesis investigates the exercise and distribution of power in rural Sindh in the late nineteenth century.

Waderos (great Muslim landholders) dominated the countryside. Their strength derived partly from their landed wealth and partly from their hold over the landless laborers who worked their estates. The *Waderos* cooperated with the British authorities and their influence over the agricultural population was crucial to the smooth functioning of the local administration. In the second half of the century, however, British officials reported that many *Waderos* were seriously in debt to Hindu *banias* (traders and moneylenders); they feared that their estates might pass to their creditors. *Banias* could not replace *Waderos* as the leaders of rural society because, being Hindus, they could not command the respect of the predominantly Muslim agriculturists. Government therefore took steps to protect the landed magnates of Sindh and preserve the traditional social hierarchy. The available evidence does not in fact confirm that *Waderos'* estates were disintegrating on a large scale. Smallholders were as seriously affected by indebtedness but, until 1901, it was only the *Waderos* who received help from Government. The new century began with the *Waderos* firmly entrenched in power, openly championed by the British.

The first chapter sets the scene by describing the country, the people and their means of subsistence. The next two chapters look at the organization of the great estates and the rural power structure: Chapter 2 concentrates on the *haris*, the landless laborers who cultivated the *Waderos'* lands, while Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which *Waderos'* wielded their authority, and considers their importance to the administration. Chapter 4 questions whether or not the great estates were breaking up and examines the significance of the British settlement system. Chapters 5 and 6 are concerned with debt: its causes, its effects and the attempts made to relieve it; Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the *bania's* operations.

Introduction

Sindh was conquered by Sir Charles Napier in 1843, in the aftermath of the First Afghan War. The conquest was achieved at the cost of broken treaty obligations and false accusations of bad faith against the Talpur Mirs who ruled Sindh. It reflected great credit on Napier's generalship, but little on his principles, and it aroused widespread indignation in England. The Court of Directors of the East India Company censured Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General, over his Sindh policy, and eventually dismissed him: but after much debate in Parliament, the conquest of Sindh was accepted as a *fait accompli*, and Napier was confirmed as its Governor.¹

Napier administered Sindh under martial law for four years. In 1847, he left India and Sindh was annexed to the Bombay Presidency. It was put under civilian rule, R. K. Pringle, a senior civil servant, replacing Napier, with the title of Commissioner in Sindh. With the departure of its controversial conqueror, the province's brief period of fame was over. It settled down to obscurity as a peaceful, remote and frequently misunderstood outpost of the Bombay Presidency.

Contemporary historians of Sindh have concentrated their research on the British conquest and the early years of British rule. The exception is Herbert Feldman, who used the history of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce as a vehicle to explore Sindh's economic development in *Karachi Through a Hundred Years* (Karachi, 1960). Dr. R.A. Huttenback has looked at the background to the conquest in *British Relations with Sindh 1799-1843: An Anatomy of Imperialism* (University of California Press, 1962), while Dr. Adrian Duarte published a more impressionistic account in *A History of British Relations with Sindh, 1613-1843* (Karachi, 1976). Dr. H. T. Lambrick, the doyen of Sindh scholars, has produced the major work on the conquest, *Sir Charles Napier and Sindh* (Oxford, 1952), which he supplemented with *John Jacob of Jacobabad* (London, 1960); the latter discusses frontier policy and the assertion of British authority over the border tribes. Dr. Hamida Khuhro's book, *The Making of Modern Sindh: British Policy and Social Change in the Nineteenth Century* (Karachi, 1978) deals with the formulation of British policy from 1843 to 1865.

Recently, there has been a tendency to focus on more modern history. Dr. Lambrick's *The Terrorist* (London, 1972) is a semi-historical impression of the 1942 Hur Rebellion. A.K. Jones, at Duke University, is preparing a thesis on the Muslim League and the last days of British rule in Sindh. Nothing, however, has been written on the intervening period and, most seriously, scant attention has been paid to the social history of Sindh.

¹ See H. T. Lambrick, *Sir Charles Napier and Sindh* (Oxford, 1952), 239 - 252.

The present study takes the Survey and Settlement Act of 1865 as its starting point, concluding with the extension of the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act to Sindh in 1901. The dates are arbitrary and are intended only to be convenient reference points. The introduction of a regular settlement marked the moment when British administrators started actively to mould society according to their own, frequently contradictory, principles. The establishment of civil courts in Sindh the following year gave further impetus to this development: colonial rule began to affect the lives of Sindhis of all classes. Over the next few decades, Sindhi society came to terms with colonial rule. It was a period of political tranquility, but social changes were taking place which laid the foundations for the communally-based power struggles which were to bedevil twentieth century politics, leading to demands for the separation of Muslim Sindh from Hindu Bombay and, eventually, to the Pakistan movement.

The main theme of this thesis is power - the nature of power in rural Sindh: how it was exercised and modified. In particular, it is concerned with the balance of power. British rule rested on an equation between the traditional 'feudal' authority of the great Muslim *zamindars* (landholders) and the economic strength of the Hindu *banias* (traders and moneylenders). Agricultural indebtedness, the perennial evil of nineteenth century India, increased under the British regime, upsetting the equation. Land - and consequently wealth and power - appeared to be slipping away from indebted *zamindars* to their Hindu creditors. The effects of this imbalance and the efforts made to restore the *status quo* form the subject of the thesis.

This study is based on research into Government archives at the India Office Records, London, and the Commissioner's Record Office, Karachi. Settlement Reports were, perhaps, the most important single source of information. Sindh settlements were revised every ten years, the normal period for a settlement in the Bombay Presidency being thirty years. They therefore contain a wealth of evidence, covering agricultural techniques, tenancy rights, indebtedness and even, on occasions, character sketches of prominent *zamindars*. In addition, a year's stay in Sindh in 1976-1977 gave me an opportunity not merely to study records, but to gain practical experience of rural Sindh and to develop a broader perspective on Sindhi history.

Finally, I should like to express my gratitude to the Social Science Research Council, who financed me during my research. It would have been impossible for me to complete the thesis without their backing.

SELECT GLOSSARY

<i>Afrinama</i>	Letter of recommendation given by a Government official in recognition of services rendered.
<i>Akhund</i>	Teacher.
<i>Amil</i>	Revenue officer; used in Sindh to signify a non- <i>Bania</i> , upper-class Hindu.
<i>Autaq</i>	Guest house.
<i>Bajri</i>	Spiked millet.
<i>Bania</i>	Hindu trader.
<i>Barani land</i>	Land watered by rainfall.
<i>Batai</i>	Division of the crop at harvest-time.
<i>Bhang</i>	Intoxicating drink made from hemp.
<i>Bigah</i>	A measure of land (2,500 square yards in Sindh).
<i>Bund</i>	Earthen embankment.
<i>Charkhi land</i>	See 'lift' land.
<i>Darbar</i>	Public audience given by a senior person to invited notables.
<i>Deh</i>	Village.
<i>Faqir</i>	Religious mendicant.
<i>'Flow' land</i>	Land watered by overflow froth a canal.
<i>Ghee</i>	Clarified butter.
<i>Hakabo</i>	Water-rate.
<i>Hari</i>	Ploughman, landless laborer.

<i>Hurlo</i>	Area irrigated by a Persian wheel.
<i>Izzat</i>	Status, prestige.
<i>Jagir</i>	Land given free of Government assessment.
<i>Jagirdar</i>	Holder of a <i>jagir</i> .
<i>Jirga</i>	Council of elders of a Baluch tribe.
<i>Juari</i>	Great millet.
<i>Jungle</i>	Scrub, wild plants.
<i>Kacho land</i>	Land newly created by the river, which is submerged at each inundation.
<i>Kalar</i>	Salt-impregnated land.
<i>Karia</i>	Water-course.
<i>Kasa</i>	One-sixtieth of a <i>kharar</i> .
<i>Kharar</i>	291 bushels; equivalent to 20 maunds of paddy (rice in husk) or 24 maunds of <i>juari</i> , <i>bajri</i> , husked rice.
<i>Kharif</i>	Hot-weather cultivating season (May or June to October).
<i>Khaskheli</i>	Hereditary servant.
<i>Lakh</i>	One hundred thousand (written 1,00,000).
<i>Lapo</i>	<i>Zamindari</i> fee.
'Lift' land	Land watered by means of a Persian wheel.
<i>Lungi</i>	Piece of decorated cloth, worn as a scarf in Sindh.
<i>Maund</i>	40 sers (82 $\frac{2}{7}$ pounds).
<i>Mir</i>	High-ranking Muslim, chief.
<i>Moki land</i>	See 'flow' land.

<i>Mukhtiarkar</i>	Government official in charge of a <i>taluka</i> .
<i>Munshi</i>	Government official, below a <i>Mukhtiarkar</i> .
<i>Murid</i>	Disciple.
<i>Nar</i>	See Persian wheel.
<i>Patel</i>	Village headman (Deccan).
<i>Persian wheel</i>	Device, worked by cattle or a camel, used to raise water from canals or wells.
<i>Pir</i>	Hereditary saint.
<i>Rabi</i>	Cold-weather cultivating season (September or October to March or April).
<i>Raj,</i>	Community.
<i>Ryot</i>	Peasant.
<i>Ryotwari settlement</i>	Settlement under which revenue is collected from individual ryots.
<i>Sailabi land</i>	Land watered by river flooding.
<i>Sanad</i>	Title-deed.
<i>Sardar</i>	Chief of a tribe.
<i>Sayed</i>	Descendant of the Prophet.
<i>Ser</i>	One-fortieth of a maund (approximately two pounds).
<i>Seri grant.</i>	Small grant of rent-free land.
<i>Shaikh</i>	Recent convert to Islam.
<i>Taluka</i>	Administrative unit.
<i>Tagavi</i>	Loan given for agricultural purposes at the beginning of the cultivating season.

Wadero Title of respect given by the rural community to a powerful Muslim landholder.

Zamidar Landholder.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Actg.	Acting
Admin.	Administration
Agri.	Agriculture
App.	Appendix
Asst.	Assistant
B.N.S.	Selections from the Records of the Government of Bombay, New Series
Collr.	Collector
Coln.	Colonization
Compn.	Compilation of correspondence
Conn.	Confidential
Cttee.	Committee
Dept.	Department
Depy.	Deputy
Educ.	Educational
Encd.	Encumbered
Encl.	Enclosure
C.D.	General Department
Govr.	Governor
Govt.	Government
Hbad.	Hyderabad
H.D.	Home Department
Inspr.	Inspector
I.O.R.	India Office Records, London
Irrig.	Irrigational
J.D.	Judicial Department
Jud.	Judicial
Memo.	Memorandum
Misc.	Miscellaneous
N. d.	No date
Offg.	Officiating
Offr.	Officer
Par.	Paragraph
P.G.B.	Proceedings of the Government of Bombay, at the India Office Records, London
Pol.	Political
Pr.	Proceeding
P.S.C.	Proceedings of the Sindh Commission, at the Commissioner's Record. Office, Karachi
R.D.	Revenue Department

R.D.L.	Revenue Department (Lands)
Resn.	Resolution
Rev.	Revenue
Secy.	Secretary
Settlt.	Settlement
Shpur.	Shikarpur
S.R.	Settlement Report
Sup.	Superintendent
T. & P.	Thar and Parkar District
U.S.F.	Upper Sindh Frontier District

Chapter 1

The Setting: Sindh and the Sindhis

I

Nineteenth century Sindh was an enclave of British territory on the north-western frontier of India (see Fig. I). It was cut off from British India by the Arabian Sea in the south and by a clutch of quasi-independent native states along its eastern border - Kutch in the south-east, the Rajputana states of Marwar and Jaisalmir in the east and the Punjab state of Bahawalpur in the north-east. To the north and west was Baluchistan, a turbulent region under the nominal suzerainty of the Khan of Kalat, which until 1876 was beyond the sphere of British influence. Only in the north-east was Sindh touched by a fragment of the British Punjab. Sindh's annexation to the faraway Presidency of Bombay was an historical accident. If it had been conquered a few-years later, after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, then it might have been administered as part of the Punjab - which would have been more reasonable as the territories were adjacent. This was urged by various officials on several occasions, but no action was taken until 1936, when Sindh emerged as a separate Governor's Province.

Sindh enjoyed considerable internal autonomy. The Commissioner in Sindh wielded powers far greater than those exercised by Commissioners of Divisions in the 'Presidency proper.'¹ Although he could not initiate major policies without the sanction of the Governor of Bombay, he was allowed freedom of action with regard to local administration. Until 1890, Sindh had its own cadre of service - the 'Sindh Commission' of military and uncovenanted civil officers who usually spent their entire careers in Sindh. Most of the Collectors and other district officers were drawn from the Sindh Commission, although junior covenanted officers from the Bombay Civil Service did a tour of duty in Sindh occasionally. In many respects, therefore, Sindh was treated as a separate province, subordinate to Bombay in the same sense that Bombay was subordinate to Calcutta.²

The province was divided for administrative purposes into three Collectorates, with their headquarters at Karachi (which was also the administrative capital), Hyderabad and Shikarpur (see Fig. II for administrative divisions of Sindh). The Collectorates were broken up into Sub-divisions, presided over by Deputy Collectors, consisting of groups of *taluqas*. Each *taluqa* was put in hare of a Mukhtiarkar, a non-European revenue officer; they were further subdivided into *dehs*, or villages, which were roughly

² E.H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* (Karachi, 1907), 496.

equivalent to English parishes. The border regions of Upper Sindh Frontier and Thar and Parkar were administered under special Frontier Regulations, by military Political Superintendents until 1881, thereafter by civilian Deputy Commissioners; they had the same internal administrative structure as the Collectorates.³

Sindh occupied an area of 52,994 square miles, of which British Sindh comprised 46,944 square miles. The remainder formed the independent state of Khairpur, still in the possession of the Talpurs, the former ruling family of Sindh.⁴ The province, according to Major-General M.R. Haig, who had served there for nearly quarter of a century, between 1859-1881, was 'one of the poorest, and in its outward aspect the least lovely in India.'⁵ Nearly half of it was desert: Baluchistan in the west and the Great Indian Desert to the east (see Fig. IV for physiographic divisions of Sindh). Much of the border with Baluchistan was marked by the Khirthar range, a grim line of hills running about 150 miles north-south. It spread into a less elevated region known as the Sindh Kohistan, a barren area of sand, scrub and cactus which covered about 8,500 square miles of south-western Sindh. The Great Indian Desert covered 13,100 square miles in the east of Sindh. It was divided into two parts - the *Thar* in the south and the *Pat* in the north. To the south, the desert disappeared into the salt marshes of the Rann of Kutch. Near here, the water-table was only a matter of a few feet beneath the surface: but further north it was as much as three hundred feet down. Sandwiched between these regions of desert was the productive portion of the province - the alluvial plain of the Indus and the Indus Delta. They accounted for about 31,000 square miles, rather more than half of Sindh's total area.⁶

For climatic purposes, Sindh was divided into three regions. The *Lar*, or Lower Sindh, comprised the Indus Delta and the country below Hyderabad. The *Vicholo*, or Middle Sindh, extended about a hundred miles north of Hyderabad, and the last division was the *Siro*, or Upper Sindh. The climate of Upper Sindh was especially harsh. It was crossed by the thermal equator, making it one of the hottest places on earth, and the temperature rarely fell below 100°F between May and July (see Appendix I).⁷ On the other hand, the winter could be extremely cold, with even the occasional frost. Conditions in Lower Sindh were milder, due to the moderating influence of the sea. The temperature at Karachi seldom went above 90°F in summer, although it could be fairly cold in winter.

The rainfall throughout Sindh was scanty and unpredictable. The monsoon had little effect except in the Thar, which caught its last drops: somewhat perversely, Nagar

³ *Ibid.*, 496-500.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵ M.R. Haig, *The Indus Delta Country* (London, 1894; reprinted Karachi, 1972), 5.

⁶ M.B. Pithawalla, *A Physical and Economic Geography of Sindh* (Hyderabad, 1959), 28-29, 51-54; Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 2-4.

⁷ Pithawalla, *An Introduction to Sindh* (Karachi, 1951), 20.

Parkar, in the heart of the desert, averaged the highest rainfall in Sindh, although in some years there was hardly any rain at all (see Appendix II). Kohistan also enjoyed a relatively high rainfall, thanks to the orographic influence of the Khirthar mountains, though on some occasions a negligible quantity fell. Elsewhere in Sindh, the rainfall was even less dependable, as a glance at Appendix II will confirm. It was unusual for any part of Sindh to receive more than ten inches of rain per year, while in 1899 not so much as one inch of rain was recorded.

Even in good years, therefore, the rainfall in Sindh was insufficient to support substantial agricultural activities. *Barani* cultivation, based on direct rainfall, was regularly practised only in the Thar and Kohistan. The Thar, in fact, was remarkably fertile and after the rains many of the *bhitis* (sandhills) were covered with low shrub and cactus which provided excellent fodder for cattle. It was, as an observer commented in 1870, 'one large grazing ground.'⁸ The monsoon also made cultivation possible, on a limited scale, in talis, level areas between sandhills where water collected. In Kohistan, *barani* cultivation took place at the foot of the Khirthar hills. *Nais* (dry-courses) had carved themselves into the hillsides. When there was rain, they swelled into torrents which inundated the plains below; fields were surrounded by low *bunds* (embankments), ready to catch the water from the *nais*. When there was insufficient rain, as happened every two or three years, the fields lay barren.⁹

What gave Sindh life was the river Indus. Every year, the Indus overflowed its banks, freeing the surrounding countryside from dependence on the rains, and making large scale cultivation possible. Without the Indus, Sindh would have been part of the Indian Desert, just as Egypt, without the Nile, would merely be an eastern extension of the Libyar Desert. The Indus even gave the province its name, for the Sanskrit word, 'Sindhu,' meaning 'ocean,' has come to denote both the river and the region.¹⁰ Sir Bartle Frere, Commissioner of Sindh, was not exaggerating when he remarked in 1854 that:

What the monsoon is to the rest of India, the inundation of the Indus and the Canals which distribute its waters are to Sindh.¹¹

In 1904-1905, no less than 91% of the cultivated area of Sindh was irrigated from canals and the river (28,02,962 acres from canals and 2,53,457 acres from the river). This was, however, only a fifth of the potentially cultivable area of the province: the remainder

⁸ G.B. Tyrwhitt, Pol. Sup., T. & P., 1 May 1870 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1870, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 21).

⁹ Pithawalla, *Geography of Sindh*, 28-29; J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 10 June 1886 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kohistan S.R., 4).

¹⁰ Although the Persian word, 'darya,' also meaning 'sea,' is generally used by modern Sindhis to distinguish the river.

¹¹ H.B.E. Frere, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 March 1854 (P.G.B., R.D., 10 June 1854, Pr.-5706, par. 2).

lay barren, lacking the irrigational facilities to make it fertile.¹² Irrigation was the key to Sindh's existence.

Most of the desert was beyond the reach of the Indus floodwaters and Kohistan, because of its slight elevation, was left high and dry. The area affected by the inundation consisted of the alluvial plain of the Indus, the western fringe of the Pat and the Delta. This was 'Sindh proper,' the region which Sindhis still refer to as, simply, 'Sindh,' to distinguish it from the Thar, Kohistan and other areas which happen to be included within the political boundaries of the province. It is the region with which the present study is concerned. The following section will look at the irrigational system of Sindh - after that, the inhabitants will be discussed.

II

The Indus rose in the unexplored area of Tibet, within a hundred miles of the sources of the Sutlej and the Brahmaputra. It flowed for some 1200 miles before it reached Sindh, where it completed the final 590 miles of its course. Altogether, it had a catchment area of 372,000 square miles.¹³ During the cold season, it was an unspectacular, sluggish stream, with a depth of less than a foot in some places and not much over six feet at its deepest. In spring, the ice melted in the Himalayan mountains and hill torrents surged into the Indus and its tributaries. All five rivers of the Punjab poured into the Indus before it reached Sindh, helping to swell it into a powerful flood which raced towards the sea at a rate of ten feet per second. Prolonged rainfall over its catchment area above Sindh in July and August added to the volume of water. It reached its maximum flow in August, when it was seventeen or eighteen feet deep in places.¹⁴

As well as water, the Indus brought an enormous quantity of silt to Sindh. Many of the lands through which the Indus flowed were arid; grass only flourished after the rains, and so the soil was particularly susceptible to river erosion. The rest of the silt was derived from the soft rock of the Himalayas.¹⁵ Between 1902-1930, an average of 8,299 million cubic feet of silt passed Kotri every year, enough to cover an area of 9,100 square miles with one foot of silt.¹⁶ The heavier particles of silt tended to sink to the bottom of the stream, while the finer ones were spread over the countryside by floodwater. In this way, the river created the alluvial flood plain, raising the level by about seven inches each century, until at present the plain is approximately 2,000 feet deep. This process constantly renewed the topsoil, making it extremely fertile.¹⁷

¹² Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 220-221.

¹³ M. Rahman, *A Geography of Sindh Province, Pakistan* (Karachi, 1975), 12.

¹⁴ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 10-13; Govt. of Sindh, *Bund Manual* (Karachi, 1954), 166.

¹⁵ A.K. Snelgrove, *Geohydrology of the Indus River West Pakistan* (University of Sindh, 1967), 120-121.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁷ Rahman, *Geography of Sindh*, 10.

At the same time, sedimentary deposits choked the river, forming mud-banks and sand-flats. As the gradient of the river was very slight (it descended no more than three inches per mile in Sindh), the Indus followed a tortuous route. As the channel silted up, it cut a new course through the unresisting sedimentary soils surrounding it. In consequence, the river had an alarming propensity to change direction. This was compounded by a trend for it to move westward. The river-profile reproduced in Fig. V illustrates the point. The channel was deeper on the right bank (west), where the maximum erosion was taking place. Meanwhile, as the river abandoned the left bank, it left behind an extensive tract of *kacho* lands (those newly formed by sedimentary deposits) to the east. Westward erosion by the river reduced the area of *taluqa* Larkana, on the right bank, by nearly fifty square miles over the twenty years before 1881.¹⁸ No generally accepted explanation for this phenomenon has yet been propounded.¹⁹

The Indus, however, was not so consistent as to move westwards only. When Alexander Burnes visited Sehwan in 1831, he reported that the river, which used to flow close to the city, had moved east, leaving a two-mile stretch of swamp between it and the town.²⁰ By 1853 it had moved back. It ran close under the city walls and river steamers used to lie alongside the bank, opposite the Government offices. By 1883, the river was again three miles east of the town.²¹

Cultivation in Sindh depended on controlling the river and its annual inundations. As a result of the heavy silting, it had built up its bed, the country on either side sloping down away from it in a series of terraces which marked abandoned beds.²² In the natural course of events, the river, in overflowing its banks, would have swamped large areas of the alluvial plain. Nineteenth century Sindhis were given a disquieting glimpse of the prehistoric inundation after the river changed its course near Kashmore in the mid-1860's, such of the water was diverted into the Sindh Dhoru, - an old river bed, from which it spilled onto the plain, devastating the country from Kashmore to the Manchar Lake. Not only did the floodwaters destroy habitations, but they put a stop to cultivation over a wide area. In 1874, the floods were exceptionally destructive, sweeping away eighty towns and villages. The Sindh Government decided it was time to take action to protect the region and it set about building a *bund* (embankment) from the head of the Begari Canal to Kashmore, to shut out the floods. The Kashmore *Bund*, which eventually reinforced 73 miles of the Indus bank, was completed in 1878-1879.²³

¹⁸ From 291 square miles to 245 square miles (Bombay Govt. Resn. 2845, 20 May 1881, B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R.), A more dramatic change occurred in 1758, when the river took a gigantic step to the west, transferring the city of Hyderabad from the right bank to the left (Haig, *The Indus Delta Country*, 4-5).

¹⁹ Snelgrove, *Geohydrology*, 120-121.

²⁰ A. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara together with a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus* (London, 1834; reprinted Karachi, 1973), vol. III, 265.

²¹ Sup. Engineer, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 20 Dec. 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1884, vol. II, compn. 18, 626).

²² H.B.E. Frere, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 March 1854 (P.G.B., R.D., 10 June 1854, pr. 5706, par. 4).

²³ M.P. Haig, Settl. Offr., to Collr., Shpuri, 1 Aug. 1872 (B.N.S. CCI, Shpur. S.R., 3); H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 25 July 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmore S.P., 2); Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 18 July 1904

The effects of the floods, and of the bund, may be gauged with reference to *taluqa* Shikarpur. Its cultivated area was reduced from 57,000 acres in 1861-1862 to 16,841 acres in 1877-1878: but by 1896-1897, cultivation had surpassed its former level, reaching 64,632 acres.²⁴

In ancient Sindh, uncontrolled floods like these must have been the only source of irrigation, and a very precarious one.²⁵ Even in the nineteenth century, *sailabi* cultivation (from natural overflow of the river) was fairly common, especially along the river banks on the newly formed *kacho* lands. Such cultivation was cheap and easy. The flood churned up the land, in effect ploughing it, while the silt fertilized it. All the cultivator had to do was to wait for the waters to subside, then sow his seeds. *Sailabi* lands produced *rabi* (cold season) crops, such as oil-seeds, pulses and wheat. Cultivation in some *talaqas*, notably Ghotki, Kambar and Rohri, was almost entirely dependent on river floods which gave good irrigation in some years.²⁶ Even the destructive floods from the Sindh Dhoro, while causing much damage in Naushahro Abro, also gave the *taluqa* the benefit of some accidental *sailabi* cultivation; the acreage under rice increased nearly three-fold during the 1860s. At last, though, the floodwaters deposited so much silt that the land became choked with tough grasses before the waters subsided, making it impossible for seed to be sown in time.²⁷ This was a common side effect of heavy flooding. An additional hazard was that the overabundance of water caused the ground to become waterlogged, preventing natural salts in the water from leaching away; this created widespread tracts of *kalar* (salt-impregnated soil), which was unfit for cultivation. Water logging was a perennial evil in Sindh, as in all irrigated countries, and uncontrolled flooding increased the risk.²⁸

The other danger of *sailabi* irrigation was that the waters might not recede in time for crops to be sown. This ruined the lands around Lake Manchar, the greatest region of *sailabi* cultivation, in the 1860's. The lake was fed by the Western Nara, from the north, and the Aral, from the east (see Fig. VI). As the river rose, water escaped down those channels into the Manchar, whose area increased from 14 square miles in the cold season to as much as 200 square miles at the height of the inundation. When the flood

(B.N.S. CCCV, Kashmore S.R., 3); Bund Manual, 186. See also Haig to Colir., Shpur., Sept. 1873 (B.N.S. CCI., Sukkur S.R., 37); James to Govr., 11 July 1892 (B.N.S. CCCIV, Kakar S.R., 2); S. Ali, Depy. Collr., to Actg. Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1898 (B.N.S. CCCXVIII, Sukkur S.R., 1).

²⁴ R. Giles, Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 17 Feb. 1898 (B.N.S. CCCXVIII, Shpur., S.R., 2).

²⁵ See H.T. Lambrick, *Sindh: A General Introduction* (Hyderabad, 1964), 75-76, and *Sindh Before the Muslim Conquest* (Hyderabad, 1973), 41-43.

²⁶ E.L. Taverner, Settlr. Offr., to Actg. Collr., Shpur., 31 Aug. 1867 (B.N.S. CCII, Ghotki S.R., 3); James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 7 Aug. 1893 (B.N.S. CCCCLVI, Kambar S.R., 2); Haig, 2 July 1877 (B.N.S. CGII, Rohri S.R., 31). See also Anderson, 29 March 1886 (B.N.S. CCII, Ubauro S.R., 7).

²⁷ Haig to Collr., Shpur., 22 June 1872 (B.N.S. CCI, Naushahro Abro S.R., 12); Giles, Depy. Colir., Shpur., to Collr., 21 Nov. 1872. (*ibid.*, 30).

²⁸ Haig to Collr., Shpur., 22 June 1872 (B.N.S. CXIX, Tiger Z.R., 2); G.E. Chatfield, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 23 Aug. 1904 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1904 (July Dec.), 2485). See also E. Whitcombe, *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*, vol. I, *The United Provinces under British Rule, 1860-1900* (University of California, 1972), 76-77.

subsided, water drained out of the Manchar, back along the Aral, into the river, exposing thousands of acres of fertile ground.²⁹ When the river changed its course in the 1860's (cf. above, 16), it left in its old bed a bank of silt several miles wide, through which the Aral had to pass. This interfered with the Aral's twin functions of filling and draining the Manchar, with the result that some lands were no longer submerged at all, while others emerged too late for sowing; up to 15,000 acres of cultivable land were lost each year.³⁰ The same problem attended the cultivation of *kacho* land along the river bank. Provided the waters fell in time, an extremely good crop could be obtained but, as Fig. IV makes clear, *kacho* lands were liable to remain under water for a long time if the flood was particularly high. Natural flooding, then, was a risky source of irrigation.

Most cultivation was carried out from canal irrigation. The pattern of irrigation in Sindh has been completely changed in recent years by the construction of barrages across the Indus. The Sukkur Barrage, opened in 1932, irrigated over half of the cultivable land in Sindh, while the Kotri and Gudu Barrages, opened in 1955 and 1962 respectively, controlled irrigation in the rest of the alluvial plain. The barrages, by blocking the river at strategic points, control its flow and put irrigation on a scientific basis. The water is distributed throughout the province by a coordinated network of canals, freeing agriculturists from dependence on the luck of the inundation. They have given agriculture a security it never before enjoyed in Sindh.³¹

Before the barrages were built, irrigation was provided by 'inundation' canals which were fed by overspill from the Indus during the inundation and were dry for the rest of the year. A typical inundation canal system consisted of a main canal (sometimes described as a 'feeder') which 'took off' (i.e. received its supply directly from) the river, and distributed its waters into a number of branch canals (often referred to as 'distributaries'). The point at which a canal took off its feeder was known as its head; the other end was called the tail. Most main feeders were owned and maintained by Government. Branch canals were often privately owned. Private canals had generally been 'cut' (i.e. dug) according to the needs of their owners, without reference to the requirements of the surrounding areas. In the early days of British rule, it was common to find two or three branch canals running parallel to each other where one would have sufficed.³² Because this was a waste of water, the Government took over branch canals,

²⁹ Pithawalla, *Geography of Sindh*, 42; Snelgrove, *Geohydrology*, 11. Nowadays, the former Manchar lands are irrigated by canals and the Manchar is contained within a *bund*. *Sailabi* cultivation is only practiced on a large scale when the Manchar breaches the bund during exceptionally high floods, as happened most recently in 1976.

³⁰ Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 and 13 Dec. 1878 (I.O.R. no. (9) 2015, Sehwan S.R., 2, 84); G. Berrie, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 19 Sept. 1889 (B.N.S. CCCCLV, Sihwan S.R., 11-12).

³¹ For details of Barrage system, see H.T. Sorley, *The Gazetteer of West Pakistan: The Former Province of Sindh* (n.d.), 458-463, 468-512; Rahman, *A Geography of Sindh*, 91-98; Pithawalla, *Geography of Sindh*, 196-210.

³² *Economic Condition of Sind: State of Roads, Canals and Forests in 1846* (Selections from the Records of the Commissioner in Sindh, compn. 7 of 1844-1847) 54; R.F. Barton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (London, 1851; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 41.

as far as possible. Water was brought from the branches to the fields by *karias* (watercourses) which were cut and maintained by the agriculturists themselves.

There were two methods of cultivating from canals: *moki* (known officially as 'flow') cultivation, through natural overflow from a canal, and *charkhi* ('lift') cultivation, where water had to be lifted onto the field by means of a Persian wheel drawn by a camel or bullocks.

'Lift' cultivation was expensive and troublesome, but more common. It was practiced where the water lay too low in the canal or the land was too high. Water was raised twelve to sixteen feet on average, though sometimes it was necessary to raise it as much as forty-five feet.³³ 'Lift' lands were generally situated towards the tails of canals, where the water-supply petered out. *Taluqa* Mirpurkhas, for instance, suffered from a scanty and unreliable water-supply because it was at the tails of several canals, a long way from the Indus. 'Flow' cultivation was almost unknown there.³⁴

Few parts of Sindh had a guaranteed capacity for 'flow' cultivation. If the inundation was exceptionally low, lands which were normally irrigated by 'flow' might have to be converted to 'lift,' farmers being obliged to construct Persian wheels before they could water their lands. If this happened, lands towards the tail of the canal system, irrigated by 'lift' would suffer even more, as they would be left high, dry and uncultivable. For example, in the late 1870's, river erosion at the head of the Ghar Canal, reduced its efficiency and hence its water-supply. A good deal of 'flow' land was converted to 'lift.' An engineer commented that anyone walking along the banks of the Ghar could see at a glance:

that the difference of a few inches in the level of the land has made all the difference between a very good crop and a few withered stems of grass.³⁵

Similarly, the inundation might fall early one season, and then 'flow' crops would suddenly be deprived of their water. By the same token, if the inundation was especially high, some 'lift' lands might be converted to 'flow.' In consequence, much of the land in Sindh was irrigated by both 'lift' and 'flow.' Farmers started cultivation under 'lift,' then, as the inundation reached its peak in July and August, they were able to stop using Persian wheels and fill their watercourses by natural overflow from the canals.

Meanwhile, a high inundation might drown 'flow' lands. This was a constant danger. Cultivators had to keep watch over the canal banks and protective *bunds* and be ready to turn out *en masse* to reinforce any weak spots. If the worst happened and the lands

³³ H.B.E. Frere, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 March 1854 (P.G.B., R.D., 10 June 1854, pr. 5706, par. 9).

³⁴ E.L. Taverner, Settl. Offr., to Colir., Karachi, 13 Aug. 1869 (B.N.S. CCCVIII, Mirpurkhas S.R., 2).

³⁵ Sup. Engineer, Sindh, 23 Nov. 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1884, vol. I, pt. II, compn. a, par. 5).

were flooded, the crops would be destroyed, but the agriculturists might be able to recoup their losses by sowing *rabi* (cold weather) crops after the water had drained away. On the other hand, as with *sailabi* cultivation, the flood might not subside in time - in which case the cultivators lost everything.³⁶ This frequently happened in *taluqa* Kakar, where the Western Nara had the habit of submerging the crops just as they were reaching maturity, turning the farms into a huge swamp. The cultivators of Kakar, frustrated by their failures with agriculture, often gave it up altogether, turning to raising and stealing cattle instead.³⁷

Cultivation in Sindh was therefore a hazardous business; everything depended on the working of canals. Several factors affected their performance. The positioning of the heads of main canals was of prime importance. Ideally, they had to be in places where the river bank was permanent and where the canal mouths were neither blocked with silt because the stream was sluggish, nor eroded away because it was too swift. Such conditions were not easy to fulfill, and these problems recurred as the 'set' (alignment of the current) of the river changed. In the late 1880's, a change in the set of the Indus caused the head of the Begari Canal to silt up (see Fig. VI for principal canals in Sindh)³⁸ while over the same period the entire irrigational system of *taluqa* Dadu suffered from the erosion of its canal heads.³⁹ By contrast, a change in the set of the river in the 1870's improved the Western Nara by scouring away deposits of silt which were choking it up: but the same change so eroded the mouth of the Ghar Canal that its very existence was threatened.⁴⁰ Many canals also suffered from the disadvantage of being abandoned river beds; they followed tortuous courses which reduced their rates of flow, preventing water from reaching the tails in good time for the crops to be sown.⁴¹ The Fuleli, the Ghar and the Western Nara were all former river beds.

One insoluble problem was caused by the heavy silt content of the Indus water. Massive canal clearances were required at the end of each inundation, in order to remove the sediment which was choking the channels. As a result of the confusion which prevailed around the time of the British conquest in 1843, the Talpur Government had neglected its obligation to clear the main canals. When the first British engineers examined the irrigational system, they found that many of '*the fairest streams in Scinde*' were '*totally ruined*' for want of clearance, cultivation virtually being reduced to the area around their headwaters.⁴² Mismanagement of the canal administration by

³⁶ See Haig, 1 Sept. 1869 (B.N.S. CXCIX, Nasirabad S.R., 9) and 2 July 1877 (B.N.S. CCII, Rohri S.R., 27).

³⁷ R.R. Wallace, ctg. Settlit. Offr., to Collr., Shpur., 6 Apr. 1867 B.N.S. CXCIX, Kakar S.R., 4).

³⁸ H.C. Mules, Depy. Commr., U.S.F. to Commr., Sindh, 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXIV, Jacobabad S.R., 13).

³⁹ G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 July 1892 (B.N.S. CCCCLIT0.Dadu, S.R., 7).

⁴⁰ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 27 Apr. 1882 (B.N.S. CXCIX, Nasirabad S.R., 32). For discussion of principles guiding the choice of sites for canals in Sindh, see Aitken; *Gazetteer*, 259-262.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 259. Burton believed the bends were often put in deliberately by *zamindars*, to trap water after the inundation had subsided (*Economic Condition of Sindh*, 54).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 10, 53. See also Burton, *Sindh*, 40-41; T. Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh* (London, 1840; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 85.

the Collector of Hyderabad in the 1840's and 1850's produced the same result in the Hyderabad Collectorate.⁴³ This annual obligation made the canal system expensive to maintain. Over the decade 1860-1870, 16% of the revenue earned by cultivation from Sindh's canals had to be spent each year on maintaining them;⁴⁴ this expenditure could be regarded as a capital investment without which there would have been no return.⁴⁵

As with the Government, so for the agriculturist - unless he cleared and maintained his watercourses, he could not cultivate: he would have no income. Agriculture was consequently expensive. It was also risky. Many unpredictable factors, over which an individual cultivator had no control, made the difference between no water at all and too much.

Nothing illustrates the precarious nature of agriculture in Sindh so clearly as the recent history of *taluqa* Umarmkot. The eastern part of the *taluqa* was irrigated by the Dhoro Naro, while the western part was irrigated by the Thar Wah. After 1900, the water supply to the Dhoro Naro was greatly reduced, so as to maintain supplies to the newly opened Jamrao Canal which, being an ambitious project, was given priority.⁴⁶ By 1915, cultivation from the Dhoro Naro was almost impossible; the Dhoro Naro tract, which formerly had been well irrigated and fertile, had become:

a barren and desolate country. The *zamindars*, who were prosperous fifteen years ago, have been reduced to the verge of poverty.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, the Thar Wah was working extremely well, benefitting, to some extent, from the shutting off of the Dhoro Naro water; the cultivated area had increased, and the *zamindars* (landholders) prospered.⁴⁸ The opening of the Sukkur Barrage in 1932 restored the fortunes of the Dhoro Naro *zamindars*. Since then, however, the Thar Wah has silted up and today the area which used to be watered from it and which, forty years ago, was rich rice land, abounding in water fowl, is completely uninhabited. The soil has turned to *paki* - soil which, after a period of continuous inundation, has been exposed to prolonged drought: it is baked rock hard and is soon incapable of supporting any vegetation. The Thar Wah tract in 1977 presented a flat and depressing

⁴³ H.B.E. Frere, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 19 Apr. 1852 and 29 June 1853 (P.G.B., R.D., May 1852, pr. 6179A, par. 9, & June 1853, pr. 7252, pars. 2-6).

⁴⁴ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 5163, 26 Sept. 1874 (P.G.B., R.D.L. 1874, 647). Average revenue was Rs 30,08,108; average expenditure on canals was Rs 4,79,457.

⁴⁵ A.D. Robinson, Offg. Chief Secy., Govt. of Bombay, explained: 'Persons at a distance. not practically acquainted with Sindh, are apt to forget that the cost of canal clearances in Sindh is, in fact, the price paid for the land revenue, and that unless it were paid, the Government would generally get no land revenue at all' (to Secy., Govt. of India, 4 Nov. 1863, P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 915).

⁴⁶ Cf. below, 25.

⁴⁷ M. Hussain, Asst. Settlt. Offr., to Collr., T. & P., 15 June 1915 (B.N.S. D, Umarmkot S.R., 4).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

scene of utter desolation. The adjacent Dhoro Naro tract was a fertile expanse of mango groves and other cultivation. Only a ruined bund separated the two tracts.⁴⁹

Such painful contrasts were frequently to be observed in the early days of British rule in Sindh. At the time of the conquest, the Fuleli Canal was choked with sediment and drifting sands. Unable to flow freely, the water collected in large pools where it was of little use during the cultivating season:

on each side of the channel we see a strip of most luxurious cultivation at a season of the year, when the whole inland country is one wide plain of silt or gravel, tufted here and there with the acacia and other trees of spontaneous growth.⁵⁰

This was typical of the condition of many of Sindh's canals. It was clear to the engineers who first examined the Fuleli that it could be made into an important perennial stream, thereby converting hundreds of square miles of land:

from a howling waste of *babool* brushwood and fire plants into a fertile and populous tract of country.⁵¹

A relatively simple operation effected the transformation. The trouble originated in the Fuleli head, which had been gravely affected by changes in the river's course. In 1858, a new supply channel, five miles long, was cut from Jamshoro, where the Indus seemed stable, eighteen miles downstream of the old head. The new cut gave the Fuleli all-the-year-round access to river waters. Over the following decades, the main channel was remodeled and straightened and the distributaries were also improved. By the end of the century, over three lakhs of acres were irrigated from the Fuleli Canals system every year.⁵²

Similar action revitalized the Eastern Nara. This, like the Fuleli, was an ancient water course, but it had never been used for large scale irrigation. For 120 miles, the dry bed of the Nara Passed through the sandy desert of Khairpur State, until it reached the Makhi Dhandh. From here it wound along the foot of the sandhills, with the alluvial plain to the west, to the Rann of Kutch. During the inundation, floods swept down from the Indus, some of the water being trapped in *dhandhs* (hollows) between the sandhills where it provided the means for some small scale *rabi* cultivation. In 1852, Bartle Frere,

⁴⁹ Visit to estate of Mir Ahmed Khan Talpur, *taluqa* Umarmkot, Apr. 1977. Similarly, *taluqa* Nasirabad was, in the nineteenth century, poor and thinly populated, for its fine soil lacked the irrigational facilities necessary to render it fertile, while the adjoining *taluqa* of Larkana was, because of its excellent water-supply, one of the richest in Sindh. (Anderson, 27 Apr. 1882 B.N.S. CXCIX, Nasirabad S.R., 29).

⁵⁰ *Economic Condition of Sindh*, 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 312.

the Commissioner in Sindh, ordered a curve of the Nara Valley. This revealed that more water escaped from the Indus than had previously been suspected, but it was wasted in the porous sands of the desert, and the deep *dhandhs*. A series of *bunds* was therefore constructed across the channels feeding the main *dhandhs*, confining the water to the Nara channel so that more water was available for the fertile plain further south. After that, a thirteen-mile long supply channel was cut from the Indus at Rohri to give the Nara a perennial water supply however low the inundation might be. These two operations virtually created a new canal system for the barren *talukas* of Sanghar, Khipro and Umarmot. Not only were about 30,000 acres of former desert brought under cultivation, but two-thirds of the area was irrigated by 'flow,' a remarkable bonus for the cultivators. Unfortunately, the excellent water-supply had an unforeseen side effect. The Nara Valley became infested with mosquitoes and it grew to be dreaded as a malarial swamp.⁵³

Cutting the Eastern Nara Supply Channel was only the beginning of a vast project for bringing perennial irrigation to the eastern desert, so far as Lieutenant Fife, the officer in charge, was concerned. The first step in his plan was taken in 1879, when the Mithrao Canal was opened. This took off from the Makhi Dhandh and 'commanded' (i.e. brought irrigation to) one and a half lakhs of acres.⁵⁴

The culmination of Fife's proposals was the Jamrao Canal system, which was not however opened until 1899-1900. It was the greatest irrigational work undertaken in Sindh before the Sukkur Barrage. It was an extension to, and immense improvement on, the Eastern Nara system. It took off the Nara in the north-eastern corner of *taluka* Sanghar, upstream of the Makhi Dhandh, and tailed into it again in the extreme south of *taluka* Samara. The Jamrao tract had a total length of 130 miles, with an average breadth of ten mile. The canal commanded 9,34,309 acres, of which about a third was actually cultivated every year. It provided perennial irrigation, but the use of water was severely limited. Water was given to villages in strict rotation,⁵⁵ to ensure that it was spread over as wide an area as possible; the cultivation of rice was restricted because it was wasteful of water.⁵⁶

⁵³ Frere, Commr., Sindh, memo., 12 Feb. 1855 (P.G.B., R.D., 16 May 1855, pr. 4221-4226, pars. 2-13, 37-45); W. Lane, Rev. Surveyor, 31 Oct. 1861, *ibid.*, Jan. 1862, 107-110); H.E.M. James, Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 4 July 1892 (B.N.S. CCCVII, Nara Valley S.R., 1-2); Aitken, Gazetteer, 322-325).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁵⁵ 'Regulators' were built at strategic points along most Govt. canals. They were, in effect, mini-barrages which could be used to regulate the supply of water to a canal, reducing it or, if necessary, cutting it off altogether. If water was cut off from one canal, it could be diverted to another for a fixed period (e.g. a fortnight), before being switched back to the original canal. That is to say, the water was 'rotated' between the two canals, so that they shared their water supply.

⁵⁶ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, 12 Apr. 1899 13.(4.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), 812); Annual Administration Reports of Coin. Offrs., Jamrao Canal, 1898 - 1904 (*ibid.*, 1901 (July - Dec.), 2183 ff.; 1902 (Jan-July), 56 ff.; 1903 (Aug-Dec.), 11-10 ff.; 1904 (July-Dec), 2477 ff.).

The Jamrao Canal system differed from previous irrigational works executed in Sindh, in that it was more ambitious in its scope and systematic in its implementation. Before the project was started, Evan James, the Commissioner in Sindh, visited the canal Colonies of the Punjab. He was greatly impressed by their efficiency and recommended that the Jamrao tract should be modeled on them. Each village was given its own watercourse, to make rotation easier. The land was broken into sixteen-acre squares, each consisting of one-acre plots. Watercourses ran around the edges of the plots, so that boundary marks were unnecessary, while roads and paths ran alongside of distributaries and water courses to save space.⁵⁷

James explained enthusiastically:

There will be the same difference between the Jamrao area and an area watered by the old Indus canals as between an American Town built in regular blocks and squares, and the native Town of Karachi.⁵⁸

It was a perceptive remark, for the Jamrao did herald the beginning of a new era in Sindh. It marked a great step forward, away from the jumbled farms of the nineteenth century and towards the planned efficiency of the twentieth.

Unfortunately, the Jamrao never fully lived up to the expectations held of it - which is another feature it shares with modern achievements. It had a deleterious effect on the working of the other canals of the Nara Valley, taking water away from the Mithrao and Nara. A system of rotation between the Mithrao and the Jamrao had to be adopted for the *rabi* season and on occasions also for the *kiarif*. Cultivation from both canals was on the decline before the Sukkur Barrage came to their rescue in 1932.⁵⁹ In addition, the Nara Supply Channel, situated among sandhills, was liable to silt up, increasing the difficulties.⁶⁰ However, the setbacks should not detract from the General achievement. The irrigation of the Nara Valley may have been disappointing in some respects - but without the canals, the whole tract would have remained pure desert.

The other irrigational schemes of the nineteenth century included the reclamation of the wastes of Upper Sindh Frontier through the Begari and Desert Canals, the construction of the Fordwah, and the extension of the Dad and Nasrat Canals. The Begari Canal was extended and remodeled during the 1850's, while the Desert Canal was constructed

⁵⁷ James, 21 Aug. 1897 (P.S.C., R.D., file 69A, 1896-1899, vol. I, 195); L. Robertson, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, Admin. Report, 1898-1901 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1901 (July-Dec.), 2186-2187). At the same time that it was being broken into squares, the land was also consolidated. *Zamindars* already holding land in the Jamrao Tract were asked to resign their estates and were given in exchange squared holdings of equal area, but in a continuous tract, instead of being scattered in fragments as was the traditional pattern of holdings.

⁵⁸ James to Colir., Karachi, 16 Jan. 1899 (P.S.C., R.D., file 69A, 1896-1899, vol. III, 922).

⁵⁹ A.C. Green, Asst. Settl. Offr., to Collr., T. & P., 13 Apr. 1920 (B.N.S. DXXXIX, Khipro S.R., 1-2); N. Khubchand, Asst. Settl. Offr., 30 Apr. 1930 (B.N.S. DCLVI, Khipro S.R., 1-2).

⁶⁰ Khubchand, 29 Apr. 1929 (B.N.S. DCLV, Mirpurkhas S.R., 4-5).

between 1857 and 1872. Together, they irrigated nearly four lakhs of acres, though their efficiency was impaired in the sixties and seventies by the destructive floods from the Sindh Dhoru. In the nineties, the lands irrigated from them were still recovering from the legacy of the floods, which had left extensive tracts of *kalar* (salt-impregnated) soil.⁶¹ The Fordwah, cut between 1855-1858, linked the Ghar Canal directly to the Indus, giving it a perennial water-supply, to the immense benefit of *taluqa* Larkana.⁶² During the seventies, though, the Fordwah mouth silted up, converting it into a mere inundation canal, its supply becoming almost non-existent in places.⁶³ In 1890, the whole canal was thoroughly cleared and deepened and it resumed its original fine functioning as a perennial canal.⁶⁴ The Dad and Nasrat Canals were extended between 1902 and 1904; they brought canal irrigation to parts of the eastern plain which had formerly been dependent on rainfall, but they were liable to silt up.⁶⁵

This sketch of Sindh's irrigational system has illustrated two features of Sindhi agrarian life. In the first place, the soil of Sindh, deposited by the river, was potentially fertile. A large amount of barren land was waiting only for water to bring it to life. Secondly, few of the canals lived up to the expectations of the engineers who planned and cut them. Silting, erosion or destructive floods weakened their performance eventually. Once a canal system had been created, there followed a struggle to maintain it. It was a Problem faced by Government on a large scale and by individual cultivators on a small scale. Constant vigilance and energy were required to preserve the watercourses: for without them, even the most productive fields would, like the Thar Wah tract today, be transformed into a bleak wasteland.

It is this eternal competition between water and wilderness which gives an otherwise nondescript province its extraordinary charm. Few sights are so striking as a tree-lined canal cutting through the dusty plain of Sindh like a green and fertile road. Sir Richard Temple, (Governor of Bombay, from 1877-1880), who was appalled by the awful climate and countryside of Sindh, was astonished to find that.

Nevertheless, the European officers who serve there love the province; nowhere in the Empire is local attachment more intense than in Sindh.

⁶¹ W.H. Bolton, Pol. Sup., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 25 Jan. 1879 (P.S.C., R.D., file. 58, compn. 1, pars. 4-5); J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 25 March 1884 (B.N.S. CCCXXIV, Jacobabad S.R., 17); James, 25 July 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmore S.R., 2); Aitken, Gazetteer, 265-269.

⁶² St. Clair Ford, Depy. Collr., Larkann, to Collr., Shpur., 20 Feb. 1855 (B.N.S. XXXVI, Official Correspondence regarding the Ford Wah, in the Shikarpour Collectorate, Sindh, 1855-1856 (Bombay, 1856), 14); M.R..Haig, Settlt. Offr., to Collr., Shpur., 27 July 1869 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 4-6).

⁶³ Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (ibid., 40); H.N.B. Erskine, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 29 Feb. 1884 (ibid., 113).

⁶⁴ G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 42).

⁶⁵ G.E. Chatfield, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 1 Dec. 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXIII, Nasrat S.R., 1-2).

He could offer only one explanation for this seemingly unaccountable eccentricity - there was something about the spectacle of the Indus, descending from the Himalayas to irrigate the desert, which affects the imagination of educated men.⁶⁶

III

The nineteenth century engineers transformed Sindh's agricultural life. As a result of their irrigational improvements, the cultivated area of Sindh increased by nearly 60% between 1872-1901, from 23,97,369 acres to 36,06,611 acres.⁶⁷ Over the same period, the population, swelled by immigration to newly irrigated areas, leapt by 46%, from 21,92,415 to 32,10,910 (see Appendix IV). However, the province remained thinly populated. The population density, which was 47 per square mile in 1872, was still only 68 per square mile in 1901. There was, in consequence, a permanent labor shortage and the province's capacity to take full advantage of irrigational improvements was often limited by the difficulty of finding enough people to work the land.

Despite the extension of cultivation and the low population, Sindh remained unable adequately to feed its people. Figures presented in 1904 indicated that if the entire population was living around subsistence level,⁶⁸ then the outturn of food crops would fall some 50,000 tons short of the province's requirements (see Appendix III). One is forced to the conclusion that a large number of Sindhis must actually have been living well below subsistence level. The wants of the average Sindhi were necessarily simple. His staple food was rice, or bread made from *bajri* (spiked millet) or *juari* (great millet), supplemented with whey or lentils and, when possible, fish or meat. Sindhis were extremely fond of fish, but it was generally available during the inundation only; it was expensive for the rest of the year, and the poorer classes often had to be content with eating stale fish as they could not afford fresh. Meat was even more scarce, but cultivators occasionally treated themselves to the flesh of camels or cattle which were likely to die of old age, killing off the animals before their time. Milk was indispensable to the diet of the poorer Sindhis who usually kept cattle as their main means of support; they sold butter and ghee (clarified butter), keeping the whey for their own consumption.⁶⁹

Although food was in short supply, it was, at least, always available: Sindhis never had to endure the horrors of famine. For several years after 1896, the monsoon failed in the

⁶⁶ R. Temple, *Men and Events of my Time in India* (London, 1882), 483-484.

⁶⁷ S. Ali, Depy., Collr., 'to Commr., Sindh, 30 Apr. 1903, (P.G.B., R.D.L. 1905 (Jan-June), 1330). Over the same period, the total length of Govt. canals increased by 15%, from 5,691 miles to 6,454 miles (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ The Famine Commission of 1898 adopted the following rations of grain as the minimum necessary 'to maintain able-bodied laborers' in health and strength: 1 lb. per day for adult men, 14 lb. for adult women and 1 lb. for children (Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1898 (London, 1898; Cmd. 9178), 49, 260).

⁶⁹ K. Young, *Scinde in the Forties*, ed. by A.F. Scott (London, 1912), 114, 85, 113; S. Ali, *A Short Sketch Historical and Traditional of the Musulman Races found in Sindh, Baluchistan and Afghanistan* (Karachi, 1901; reprinted Govt. of Sindh, 1954), 32-33; Sorley, *Gazetteer*, 236-239.

Presidency proper and Rajnutana, provoking a terrible famine. The Indus, however, saved Sindh from dependence on the monsoon. Its inundation might be erratic, and was frequently destructive, but it never failed altogether, and so only Thar and Parkar District was affected by the famine. During this period, Sindh was a land of plenty and starving refugees poured into the province in search of food and employment.⁷⁰ It was a familiar situation. Lying between two tracts of inhospitable desert, Sindh's fertility had always acted as a magnet. It had attracted so many different races that E.H. Aitken, compiler of the 1907 *Gazetteer of Sindh*, suggested that no other part of India had such a mixed population.⁷¹

The original inhabitants of Sindh were Rajputs.⁷² At the time of the Arab conquest of 711, they were Hindus, but a steady process of conversion had continued since then until, by the nineteenth century, all of the indigenous Sindhi tribes were Muslims. When the first Census was taken in 1872, three-quarters of Sindh's population were Muslims (see Appendix IV).

The main Sindhi tribes were the Samos, the Sumros, the Abros, the Unars, the Dahars, the Mahars, the Jokhios and the Numrios. Most of them had long been settled on the alluvial plain, where they earned their livings as agriculturists. Their tribal differences were nominal. The tribal institutions had withered away, the chiefs had become figureheads and the members of the tribes were scattered over wide areas. All that remained in the nineteenth century was a certain sentimental attachment to the tribe. Sindhi society was not organized around tribal *Sardars* (chiefs), but around *Waderos* (big landholders), and they seldom had any tribal connections with the cultivators who paid them allegiance (see Chapter 3 for a full discussion of *Waderos* and their functions).⁷³ The exceptions were the Jokhios and the Numrios. They lived a nomadic, pastoral existence in the harsh uplands of Kohistan, often supplementing their fortunes by plundering caravans.⁷⁴ They were tightly knit tribes who were, one might say, properly 'tribal' in character, dominated by patriarchal chiefs.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ H.S. Lawrence, Actg. Director, Land Records & Agri., 'Memorandum on the Material Condition of the People of the Bombay Presidency, 1892-1902,' 1 Aug. 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1.902 (Aug. - Dec.), 1267, 1270-1271). For details of the influx of refugees into Sindh, see S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., to Depy. Commr., T. & P., 31 March 1905 (B.N.S. CCCCLX, Pithoro S.R., 2, 15), 23 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXIII, Sangliar S.R., 3), 23 July 1.906, (B.N.S. CCCCLXIX, Khipro S.2., 2).

⁷¹ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 155.

⁷² It is not known when the Rajputs arrived in Sindh, nor who lived there before them, but as they probably intermarried with the local inhabitants, it is reasonable to regard the Rajputs as the native Sindhi population. See Sorley, *Gazetteer*, 337-338.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 236-239; Ali, *Musulman Races found in Sindh*, 32-33; Collr., Sukkur, 21 Apr. 1903, Collr., Karachi, 29 Apr. 1903, Depy. Commr., T. & P., 15 Aug. 1903 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1903, vol. VIII, compn. 22, 20, 23, 35).

⁷⁴ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 174-175, 178.

⁷⁵ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 10 June 1886 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kohistan S.R., 6-9); 'Notes on the places visited during the Commr's tour to the Hills', n.d., (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1888-1889, vol. I, compn. 2, 281-305).

The oldest groups of immigrants into Sindh were the Mohanos and the Jats. The Mohanos were an obscure race who had lived in Sindh since ancient times. They were boatmen and were to be found along the Indus and around Lake Manchar, many of them living in their boats. They called themselves '*Mir bahar*,' or 'lords of the sea,' and could almost be described as an aquatic race. They came into their element during the inundation, when they plied a good trade as ferrymen, besides catching fish over the flooded fields.⁷⁶ The Jats may have been of Scythian origin. Their chief lived in *taluqa* Jati, although his tribesmen were dispersed throughout the province. In Baluchistan, the word, 'jat,' signifies a camel man, and this was the original occupation of the Sindhi Jats, but many were also farm laborers and menials.⁷⁷

Among the most important and influential of Sindh's immigrants were saints. Sindhis, like other Indians, were deeply religious. Sufism from Persia had taken root in the Indus soil and had spawned a unique brand of Islam, based on the veneration of Sufi saints. The cultural heart of Sindh was at Bhitshah, near Hala, where Sindh's greatest Sufi poet, Shah Abdul Latif, had spent the last years of his life. His tomb had become a place of pilgrimage and he had acquired an extraordinary and pervasive influence throughout Sindh. Sindhis of all classes had some knowledge of his poems and could recite from them even if they could not read. Bhitshah was one of the most sacred spots in Sindh, but there were other holy places all over the province. The shrine of Qalandar Lal Shahbaz, in Sehwan, for instance, nearly rivaled Bhitshah in its popularity and the town of Sehwan itself, commonly known as 'Sehwan Sharif' ('Holy Sehwan'), was reputed to shelter hundreds of saints, alive and dead. Other important places of pilgrimage included the shrine of Zinda Pir, on an island in the Indus opposite Rohri, the shrine of Shaikh Tahir at Uderolal, and the shrine of Mangho Pir near Karachi. As one devotee exclaimed:

There is not a sub-division of a district, but it is blessed with a place of pilgrimage.⁷⁸

Anyone with a claim to sanctity could be sure of an honored place in Sindh. It was a favorite resort of holy men and *faqirs* (religious mendicants) from all over India and Central Asia. Many performed prodigies as mystics. After they died, their graves became shrines, watched over by their descendants, on whom the mantle of holiness had supposedly fallen. Many of these hereditary *Airs* (saints) had a reputation for godliness and learning. The Pirs of Lohari, for example, lived as hermits, praying over the shrine and only emerging from their retreats to go on pilgrimages to Mecca; their *murids* (disciples) were to be found in places as far away as Bombay, Calcutta, Arabia,

⁷⁶ Postana, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 58-60; Ali, *Musulman Races found in Sindh*, 61-63, 81; Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 177-178.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 174; Ali, *Musulman Races found in Sindh*, 54; Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 40.

⁷⁸ D.K. Thadani, 'Materials for Sindhi Drama,' *Sindhian World*, vol. I, no. 1 (1939), 16.

Zanzibar and South Africa.⁷⁹ However, knowing that their inherited saintliness could not be removed as a result of any unsaintly behavior, many of the less scrupulous Aïrs gave themselves over to hedonistic pursuits. The boundless charity of the faithful gave them the means and the leisure to indulge themselves, and the shrines of the saints often acquired the reputation of being 'the rendezvous of the lax and dissipated.'⁸⁰ Sehwan Sharif, for instance, was famous both for its saints and its prostitutes.⁸¹ Other holy men wandered the countryside, spreading the benefit of their sanctity far and wide, and enabling people to earn merit through their largesse:

The country is literally pestered with travelling religious mendicants of all degrees, from the halt and blind to the sturdy and armed fakir: it is by no means unusual to be accosted by one of these latter, well mounted and fully equipped, who demands from the peasant a portion of his hard-earned meal with a tone and gesture plainly indicating that resistance would be in vain.⁸²

Sindhis were particularly reverent of anyone who could claim some connection with the Prophet's family. It was well known that a Sayed (claiming descent through Fatima, daughter of the Prophet) 'may commit any crime with impunity.'⁸³ Dr. James Burnes, who visited Sindh in 1831, was shocked to see that 'the meanest wretch, who can boast his origin from the holy stock,' enjoyed greater respect than worldly rank could bestow.⁸⁴ Indeed, the Kalhoros, who ruled Sindh before Talpurs, had claimed Hazrat Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, as their ancestor, taking advantage of their pretensions to holiness to enhance their authority.⁸⁵ A large number of Sayeds had settled in Sindh. They were most numerous around Sehwan, Thatta, Matiari and Rohri, where they enjoyed rich lands at discretionary rates of revenue before the British conquest. The British took away their benefits, but this did nothing to diminish their influence. The most famous Sayed in Sindh was Pir Pagarro, the Pir of Kingri, whose followers, known as Hurs, launched bitter, though localized, rebellion against the British Government in 1896 and 1942. The Hurs were concentrated in the Nara Valley. They were renowned for their devotion to the Pirs of Kingri and were willing, often eager, to give them all they possessed, including their lives.⁸⁶ In 1898, the current Pir of Kingri held only 37

⁷⁹ J. Pollen, Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 27 Sept. 1887 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1887, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 74, par. 2).

⁸⁰ C. Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab* (London, 1842; reprinted Karachi, 1974), vol. I, 380. Burton described the *faqir* as: 'a sturdy, irretrievable beggar, unfit for any useful occupation in life, sure of Heaven, and, meanwhile, permitted to make earth as pleasant a place as he can, by the liberal use of hemp or spirits and the pursuit of the most degrading sensuality' (*Sindh*, 209).

⁸¹ Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸³ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. I, 379.

⁸⁴ J. Burnes, *Narrative of a Visit to the Court of Sindh* (London, 1829; reprinted Karachi, 1974), 81.

⁸⁵ Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 168.

⁸⁶ For discussion of origin and background of Hur movement, see M. Hussain, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Conn. Report, 16 May 1917 (P.G.B., J.D., 1918, 1040-1045). For an impressionistic and vivid account of the Hur Rebellion of 1942, see H.T. Lambrick, *The Terrorist* (London, 1972).

acres of land, yet he was an extremely wealthy and powerful man, living off the charity of his followers.⁸⁷ Sayeds, therefore, were as integral a feature of Sindhi life as the annual inundation of the Indus.⁸⁸

The most recent immigrants to Sindh, before the twentieth century, included Memons, Khojahs and, in the Shikarpur region, Pathans.⁸⁹ The most numerous of the non-Sindhi races in Sindh were the Baluchis, who formed about a fifth of its Muslim population (see Appendix V). They first entered Sindh on a large scale in the eighteenth century. They had been invited by the Kalhoros princes who ruled Sindh at the time, and who wished to employ them as soldiers. Among the tribes who responded to the invitation were the Talpurs who, in 1783, after much provocation from the Kalhoros, seized power for themselves. The Talpur chiefs ruled Sindh until the British conquest of 1843.⁹⁰ Naturally, they relied on their fellow-Baluchis to assist their government; in particular, the Talpurs' army was entirely composed of Baluchis and many of the most important landholders were, in consequence, Baluchi warlords. For this reason, Baluchis had an importance in Sindh, even after the British conquest, which was out of proportion to their numbers.

Those Baluchis who settled on the alluvial plain devoted themselves to agriculture. In the process, as had happened to the Sindhi tribes before them, their tribal structure decayed and they lost much of the culture which marked them off as Baluchis, including their language. Only their tribal names distinguished them from the Sindhis among whom they lived.⁹¹ By 1904, a British officer was able to say of Dost Muhammad, a leading figure of the Jatoi tribe:

in manner, dress, language and in every other respect he is as perfect a Sindhi as anyone can be - I think the mere fact that he belongs to a tribe which is a subdivision of the Baluch tribe does not make him a Baluch like the Chandias or other real Baluchis of Upper Sindh. There are any number of Jatois, Lasharis, Kerais, Chandias, Jamalis &c scattered all over the Karachi, Hyderabad & other Districts of the Province - No one would think of saying that these men - although belonging to Baluch tribes - are Baluchis in the same way that the Frontier Baluchis are - They have no more of that sensitiveness about honor &c which characterizes the Frontier Baluch, than any ordinary Sindhi.⁹²

⁸⁷ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 21 July 1898, App. C (P.S.C., R.D., file 69A, 1896-1899, vol. I, 98).

⁸⁸ For a full account of Sufism in Sindh, see A. Schimmel, *Pain and Grace: A Study of two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth Century Muslim India* (Leiden, 1976); some impression of the place occupied by *pirs* in modern Sindh may be obtained from P. Mayne, *Saints of Sindh* (London, 1956).

⁸⁹ Shikarpur had been under Afghan rule until 1824.

⁹⁰ Strictly speaking, the Talpurs are Brahuis, a race who inhabit Baluchistan but whose language, Brahuiki, is Dravidian in origin, while the Baluchi dialects are Indo-Aryan (A.W. Hughes, *The Country of Balochistan* (London, 1877; reprinted Karachi, 1977), 29-30). The Talpurs, however, have always regarded themselves as Baluchis.

⁹¹ Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 18 May 1901 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1901, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 6, 778).

⁹² Note for Commr., Sindh, 23 June 1904, signed N.A.C. (*ibid.*, 1904, vol. IX, compn. 13, 317).

These remarks could be applied with equal justice to the Talpurs and other 'Sindhi' Baluchis.

The 'real' Baluchis were concentrated in the north and west of Sindh where, in the early days of British rule, they constituted a threat to the stability of the province. They had an intense sense of honor and a violent disposition which, coming together, were incompatible with a modern, ordered society. They felt an obligation to wipe out insults with blood, and if a Baluchi did not take steps to uphold his honor, he was put to shame. In 1901, for example, two Brahui brothers killed a man from the Mochi tribe who had cut off a plait of their neice's hair: insults connected with the hair being considered particularly gross.⁹³ The *jirga* (council of elders) which tried the case said that the brothers had no choice but to avenge the insult unless they wished to be 'held up to universal scorn and execration by all their fellow tribes men.'⁹⁴ On another occasion, Dhani Bakhsh Dombki tried to avoid killing his wife, Bhaiti, in punishment for her infidelity, but he was eventually driven to it by the taunts of his neighbors.⁹⁵

This style of justice frequently led to bad feeling and to blood feuds which, starting as local affairs, could spread and endanger the general peace. In 1883, a Banglani man who was engaged in killing someone in connection with a blood feud, accidentally killed a Rind passerby at the same time. He was hanged, but that did not satisfy the relations of the dead Rind: the hanging atoned for the death of the intended victim, but they believed the Baluch principle of 'a life for a life' had not been satisfied, so they murdered a Banglani to even out the score. The Banglanis, not accepting this interpretation of Baluchi custom, sent an armed party into Rind territory. They killed two Rinds, losing one of their own men. Far from ending the blood feud, this incident extended it. Relations between the two tribes became so inflamed that there was a danger of a large-scale tribal war, and a *jirga* had to intervene to arrange a compromise.⁹⁶

Unregulated violence of this kind had been endemic in the past, and at the time of the British conquest the northern parts of Sindh were in a state of complete lawlessness. What made matters worse was that tribesmen living around the Sindh border looked upon the fertile plains in much the same way that locusts might regard a field of wheat. Living 'upon plunder as their legitimate profession,' they made continual cattle raids,⁹⁷ while the area around Shikarpur, which was regularly crossed by caravans from Central Asia, was notorious for the murders and robberies committed in it the

⁹³ Actg. Judge, Sadar Court, Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 10 June 1901 (ibid., 1901, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 13, 89 - 91).

⁹⁴ Proceedings of *jirga* at Sukkur, 3 Sept. 1901 (ibid., 108).

⁹⁵ Proceedings of *jirga* at Jacobabad, 24 Dec. 1900 (ibid., 242-243).

⁹⁶ R. Giles, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 10 June 1887 (ibid., 1887, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 41, par. 21).

⁹⁷ Ali, *Musulman Races found in Sindh*, 77.

inhabitants of the city could not venture outside the walls in broad daylight without running the risk of being waylaid and robbed.⁹⁸

Once Napier had conquered Sindh, he set about restoring peace to this region. He led an important expedition against the Bugtis in 1845,⁹⁹ but his most significant step in the long term was the appointment of Captain John Jacob as Superintendent of the Upper Sindh Frontier. Jacob was put in charge of an area which, though part of British Sindh, was really a buffer zone between the British territory of Shikarpur Collectorate and the tribal lands of Kalat State. Jacob patrolled the Upper Sindh Frontier District with detachments of the Scinde Irregular Horse, and used draconian measures to instil into the tribesmen 'a wholesome dread of the gallows'¹⁰⁰ and, presumably, of British concepts of Order.

However, Jacob's notion of order went further than a rope's end. It was his intention, not only to subdue the unruly tribesmen, but to convert them into law-abiding citizens. Agriculture was to effect this remarkable transformation. Jacob appreciated that the discipline of cultivation could bring stability to men's lives. After ruthlessly putting down their blood feuds and their plundering activities, he proceeded to settle the tribesmen on the land. Jacob improved and extended the Begari Canal and started construction of the Desert Canal. The land on either side was then given out on favorable terms to Baluchi tribesmen - on condition that they helped to dig the canal. This gave them a stake in the land. The Desert Canal also performed a strategic function. It ran close to the border and much of the land was given to tribesmen whose permanent homes were in the hills of Kalat State, in the belief that they would not wish to devastate their own possessions. Jacob's policy was entirely successful. By 1887, the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Sindh Frontier felt that the settlers 'have permanently abandoned the sword for the plough share.'¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, old habits die hard, and till the end of the century the fear remained that the Baluchis might revert to their former lawless ways. Instability in the State of Kalat, over the border, intensified the danger. The ruler, the Khan of Kalat, was unable to impose his authority over the tribal *Sardars* (chiefs), and from 1857 to 1876, he was engaged in series of struggles with them, tantamount to an intermittent civil war.¹⁰² During this period, border raids from Baluchistan were a regular feature of Sindhi life

⁹⁸ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. I, 359; see also 350 and vol. II, 155.

⁹⁹ See H.T. Lambrick, *Sir Charles Napier and Sindh*, (Oxford, 1952), 277-295.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Lambrick, *John Jacob of Jacobabad* (London, 1960), 148.

¹⁰¹ Giles to Commr., Sindh, 28 Feb. 1887 (P.S.C., R.D., file 58, 1877-1886, compn. Ia, par. 18). Jacob had declared enthusiastically when work on the Becari Canal commenced: 'Not a hand save those of the reformed Belooche Robbers has been put to the work which presents an example alike encouraging to us and them' (to Commr., Sindh, 24 Dec. 1852, P.G.B., P.D., Apr. 1853, Pr. 4237). For full discussion of Jacob's attitude towards frontier tribes, see Lambrick, *John Jacob*, 165-171.

¹⁰² For details of this period in Baluchistan's history, see Hughes, *Balochistan*, 219-236; T.H. Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on our Indian Frontier* (London, 1893; reprinted Quetta, 1977), 47-81.

and the perpetrators were seldom punished. One Zarur Brohi, a Kalati subject, entered British territory with twenty men in 1874 and carried off a woman and four children. When he heard that a British-employed police constable had been sent after him, he threatened to kill him and scoffed at the authority of the *Sarkar* (British Government):

what can the Surkar do? Last year the Luss Beyla wallah went into the Surkars-territory and brought off loot by force having killed two men. What have they suffered? Nothing. And in like manner it will be with me, so I care not and have no fear.¹⁰³

He was right. The British often appealed to the Khan of Kalat to return men like Zarur Brohi who were wanted by the British police, but the Khan could not exercise power he did not have. If the British took the initiative of pursuing such men across the border, they found they were equally powerless, unless they wished to risk the consequences of mounting large scale punitive expeditions. The British police force was held in open contempt by the Kalatis who regularly took up arms against police patrols.¹⁰⁴

This state of affairs had alarming implications for the Preservation of order in Sindh. The Baluchis in British territory would only remain Peaceful if they were convinced that justice could safely be left to the authorities, rather than following the Baluchi way, whereby every man was a law unto himself. Baluchis were not the men to turn the other cheek. If Kalatis could rob and beat British subjects with impunity, then the time would come when British subjects would take revenge and the border would revert to its previous anarchy.¹⁰⁵ By the 1870's, there was a great deal of discontent on the British side of the frontier. Bhawal Khan, a Baluchi living near Sehwan, where border raids were particularly commonplace, complained:

times are not good when these people oppress my tribe like this. Formerly if they took a tooth from one of my people we took five teeth in return, but now under the Sirkar rule we get no redress and we are not allowed to help ourselves. If we rob them and they complain they have every assistance from the Sirkar, but if they take our property nothing is done and we have to keep quiet.¹⁰⁶

The problem was solved in 1876, when Major Robert Sandeman, an officer from the Punjab, managed to achieve the impossible: he negotiated a compromise between the Khan of Kalat and the tribal *Sardars*. A treaty was signed by the two warring sides and the Imperial Government, by which the latter was made the final arbiter in any future disputes. British troops were to be permanently quartered in Kalat and Sandeman was

¹⁰³ Quoted in District Sup., Police, Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, n.d., translation of report from Chief Constable, Tando Rahim Khan (P.S.C., J. D., file 1, 1874, vol. I, compn. 2, par. 1).

¹⁰⁴ See District Sup., 13 May 1874, 1 July 1874, 7 Nov. 1874 (ibid.).

¹⁰⁵ H.W. Green, Pol. Sup., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 20 Apr. 1867 (ibid., 1867, vol. I, compn. 7, pars. 2-3).

¹⁰⁶ Quoted. in. District Sup., Police, Karachi, 7 Nov. 1874 (ibid., 1874, vol. I, compn. 2, par. 2).

appointed British Resident at Kalat, in charge of a newly created Baluchistan Agency. Although Kalat remained nominally independent, the supreme control of its affairs was now vested in the British Government.¹⁰⁷

The implications for Sindh were tremendous. It ceased to be a frontier province, for the country over the border was practically under British administration. Offenders from Kalat were liable to be hunted down by British officers, with British troops in the background if necessary. Raiders into Sindh could no longer be certain of escaping unpunished, and so the danger of border tension receded. The Sindh Government was able to relax its hold on the border, and in 1881, Upper Sindh Frontier was put under civilian rule.¹⁰⁸

The difficulties still did not disappear altogether. Jacob had allocated lands in Upper Sindh Frontier on especially favorable terms, as has been mentioned above, to encourage the Baluchis to settle down. In 1883, plans to bring the Desert Canal *zamindars* into line with the rest of Sindh by placing them under a regular settlement, were postponed. The Deputy Commissioner was afraid that if land was auctioned for arrears of land revenue, as was prescribed in the Bombay Land Revenue Code, the tribesmen might give up their new careers as agriculturists and revert to their more congenial plundering traditions.¹⁰⁹ Ten years later, the Baluchis were reported still to be 'hankering after their former freedom,' complaining that:

restraint is irksome, and that the trouble and uncertainties of agriculture, as a livelihood, are distasteful.¹¹⁰

As late as 1902, fifty sabres of the Scinde Horse had to be dispatched to disarm a *lashkar* (raiding party) of Bugtis who had invaded British territory and seized lands belonging to some Jakhranis.¹¹¹ This, and similar incidents, illustrates that the old predatory instincts of the hill tribes were not far beneath the surface, and that even at the end of the century, prompt action was needed to prevent disturbances from flaring up.¹¹²

Sindh's eastern border was also inhabited by wild tribes, mainly Hindu Rajputs. The chiefs of the Sodho tribe, of Umarmkot, had maintained considerable independence

¹⁰⁷ Thornton, *Sandeman*, 63-69, 80-83, 91-92.

¹⁰⁸ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 3198, 22 May 1882 (P.S.C., J.D., file 2, 1883, vol. V, compn. 45, 59).

¹⁰⁹ H.E. Watson, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 16 March 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 58, 1877-1886, compn. 1).

¹¹⁰ L.W. Seymour, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 27 March 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmore S.P., 20).

¹¹¹ Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 4 Aug. 1902 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1902, vol. V, pt. II, compn. 63, 67-71). The Jakhranis, in Jacob's time, had the reputation of being among the most fierce of the 'predatory tribes, but, under British rule, they were forbidden to carry arms. By 1902, they were poorly armed and unable to defend themselves against the Bugtis, who were Kalati subjects; they had to rely on Government intervention.

¹¹² See Collr., Larkana, to Commr., Sindh, 26 Nov. 1904 (*ibid.*, 1905, vol. V, compn. 14, 107).

under the Talpurs. They had been granted rent-free lands and had the special privilege of levying a cess on Hindu marriages. This they prized not as a source of income, but as a relic of ancient feudal perquisites. The Talpurs had not made these concessions out of goodwill, but because the Sodhos' desert strongholds were too remote for them to assert their authority. The Talpurs had made concessions to Baluchi border chiefs in Upper Sindh for similar reasons. After conquering Sindh, Napier cancelled these privileges. His measures generated a great deal of discontent and in 1846 the most influential chiefs, led by Rattan Sodho, rebelled. The outbreak was short-lived and ended in 1847. Both sides compromised; Rattan Sodho gave himself up and was promptly pardoned, while the chiefs' privileges were restored to them.¹¹³

The Hindu Rajputs played no other important role in the history of nineteenth century Sindh. The largest group of Hindus in this region had no tribal affiliations with, and hence no loyalty towards, the Rajputs. They were outcaste tribes - Bhils and Kolis - who formed a nomadic population of landless laborers' in the cultivated parts of Sindh which skirted the desert.¹¹⁴ Like the Upper Sindh Frontier District, Thar and Parkar was administered under special military regulations until 1881. However, the desert was not so sensitive an area as Upper Sindh Frontier. Events on the Baluchi frontier might have repercussions in Sindh itself. There were plenty of Baluchis all over the province who might feel free to throw off the irksome restraints of British rule if chaos returned to the borderlands, or who might cast envious eyes at the freedom to feud and plunder enjoyed by their brethren in Kalat. But there were no Hindu Rajputs in, Sindh in whose breasts the deeds of the Sodhos might strike a responsive chord: the Hindus of Sindh had nothing in common with the Hindus of the desert.

The majority of Hindus in Sindh were known as Lohanos. They had emigrated from the Punjab sometime in the distant past and may have been descended from the people known as Lohanos who were driven out of Sindh after the Arab conquest of 711.¹¹⁵ They were generally reckoned to belong to the Vaishya (trader) caste, although they themselves often claimed Kshatriya (warrior) status, by descent from Lar, the son of Sri Ramchander, the hero of the, Ramayan.¹¹⁶ Whatever their caste may have been, they were extremely heterodox in their beliefs and practices. Most of them were followers of *Guru Nanak*, and there was some doubt as to whether they should properly call themselves Hindus or Sikhs - which caused much confusion among census enumerators.¹¹⁷ They also held in reverence many of the same shrines as the Muslims: Qalandar Lal Shahbaz, for instance, was Raja Bharat-Hari to the Hindus; Shaikh Tahir

¹¹³ H.B.E. Frere, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 12 Feb. 1855 (B.N.S. XXI, Official Correspondence Relative to the Assessment of the Omercote and Narra District in Sindh (Bombay, 1855), 3-4).

¹¹⁴ Burton, *Sindh*, 323-324; Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 182, 185.

¹¹⁵ Burton, *Sindh*, 309-310; R.E. Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (Bombay, 1920), vol. II, 382.

¹¹⁶ T.S. Thadani, 'The Lohanos,' *The Journal of the Sindh Historical Society*, vol. VIII, no. 3 (Jan. 1948), 166; Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes*, vol. II, 381; Burton, *Sindh*, 313.

¹¹⁷ See J.A. Baines, *Imperial Census of 1881. Operations and Results in the Presidency of Bombay, including Sindh* (Bombay, 1882), vol. I, 46; R.E. Enthoven, *Census of India, 1901: Bombay* (Bombay, 1902), vol. IX-B, pt. I, 59.

was Uderolal and Zinda Pir was the river god, the focus of the Indus cult which was the most popular form of worship among them.¹¹⁸ They wore the thread of the twice-born, but Brahmins were few, the *shastras* (scriptures) almost unknown, and the Lohanos had few taboos about mixing with non-Hindus or about travelling by sea. They ate meat, except for beef, and had no objection to alcohol; their most common beast of burden was the donkey, which was regarded as unclean in Hindustan.¹¹⁹ As one British visitor to Sindh exclaimed, the Lohanos' neglect of caste and religion would have horrified Hindus elsewhere in India.¹²⁰

Lohanos were divided into two groups, the As (revenue officers) and the traders, the latter being generally referred to as *banias*. 'Amil' is merely the designation of a profession but, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, Lohano Amils held the highest offices under their Muslim rulers,¹²¹ and they came to form the elite of the Hindu community; in time, the professional title was used proudly to designate the upper class of Hindus. The circumstances of their profession in the pre-British days gave *Amils* a thick veneer of Muslim culture. They often grew beards and wore Muslim dress, although to distinguish themselves from Muslims they favored shirts which opened on the left breast, the Muslims' shirts opening on the right, and they kept the *tilak* (caste-mark) on their foreheads.¹²² *Amils* were fluent in Persian, a language which they needed for their administrative duties under the Kalhoros and Talpurs, but which they also admired for its literary qualities; they were usually educated by Muslim teachers.¹²³ After the British conquest, Amils switched from Persian to English education, and continued to provide most of the locally recruited Government servants.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ C.L. Mariwalla 'Sehwan Through the Centuries,' *Sindhian World*, vol. I, No. 5 (1940), 256; U.T. Thakur, *Sindhi Culture* (Bombay, n.d.), 129-134; Burton, *Sindh*, 326-333.

¹¹⁹ Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes*, vol. II, 383-384; J. Parsram, *Sindh and its Sufis* (1924), 75-80; D. Gidumal, *Hiranand - The Soul of Sindh* (1903; revised and enlarged 1932), 25, 29, 43. Burton, in the nineteenth - century, asserted that Lohanos would drink water given to them by their inferiors in caste (*Sindh*, 315) and G. Rewachand, in the twentieth century, has said that they are also prepared to drink from Muslim-owned water-skins ('The Socio-Cultural Pattern of the Sindhi Hindu Communities settled in Balochi areas,' *The Sindhi University Journal of Education*, vol. VIII (Jan. 1963), 90).

¹²⁰ Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 65.

¹²¹ Parsram, *Sindh and its Sufi's*, 52-54. According to Burton, the Hindu community in Sindh was so influential that the Talpurs exempted it from payment of the *Jeziat-el-unud*, a tax levied on all infidels; instead, male Hindus paid an annual *peshkash* of five to ten rupees per head: but great merchants and all civil servants were exempt even from this small levy (*Sindh*, 50).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 338-339; 341; Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 186, 193.

¹²³ Burton, *Sindh*, 149, 335; Collr., Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, 16 Aug. 1880 (P.S.C., G.D., file 4, 1880-1881, compn. 14, par. 12).

¹²⁴ Dayaram Gidumal, one of the most distinguished. *Amils* of the nineteenth century and a judge under the British, wrote caustically: 'It did not take very long for the Sindhi Hindu *intelligentsia* to transfer their allegiance from the Mir Raj to the British officials' (*Hiranand*, 279). In 1882, only 40% of Govt. employees drawing salaries of over Rs. 30 per month were Muslims (Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 2 Aug. 1882, P.S.C., G.D., file 4, 1882-1883, vol. II, compn. 8, par. 17); see also Educ. Inspr., Sindh, to Commr., 4 March 1886 (*ibid.*, 1884-1886, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 27,

Banias were less integrated with the Muslims than the *Amils* were. They preserved their Hindu dress, most noticeably the *dhoti* (loin-cloth), and they were not, generally, conversant with Persian. While *Amils* traditionally dominated the administration, the *banias* virtually monopolized trade. They also achieved prominence, and often notoriety, as moneylenders.¹²⁵

Sindh's trade had long been in the hands of Hindu *banias*. Sindhi traders were famous throughout Asia, both for the vastness of their commercial network and for the honesty of their dealings. Thomas Postans, who visited Sindh before the British conquest, declared:

It is proverbial and a great proof of the honor of the Sindhian Soucars that their bills are always considered as cash in every part of the vast counties to the north-west and are recognized as such all over India.¹²⁶

Charles Masson appreciated their reputation for integrity when he travelled through Sindh in the 1830's. He told the story of how Khalikdad, a companion of his, sold some raisins to a *bania* who lived near Sehwan, accepting as payment a draft on another town. The draft, however, turned out to be valueless. After a few days, the *bania* arrived with the cash, explaining that he had given a false draft because he feared that Khalikdad would not have given him the raisins without it. At no time had Khalikdad been concerned, as he believed no Sindhi *bania* would ever dishonor a draft.¹²⁷ No doubt their name for honest dealing contributed greatly towards the Sindhi *banias'* commercial success.

Shikarpur was the great centre of trade in Sindh. Postans asserted that it could be compared to the bazaars of Cairo because of the variety of goods on sale and the diversity of people thronging its streets.¹²⁸ Prosperous merchants from Shikarpur were scattered all over Central Asia, and one of the gates of Kabul was named after it. Alexander Burnes found Shikarpuri merchants in all the main towns through which he passed on his way to Bokhara in the early 1830's. The Government of India had furnished him with a letter of credit for Rs. 5,000, payable on the public treasuries of Ludhiana or Delhi. There were about ten Shikarpuri houses of agency in Kabul, all of whom were willing to cash his letter for gold on the spot, or else offered him bills payable on places as diverse as Nijney Novgorod, Astrakhan and Bokhara. Burnes found about 300 Hindus in Bokhara, most of whom were from Shikarpur; they were

134-136); H. Khuhro, 'Language and Education in Sindh during the British Period,' *The Sindh University Journal of Education*, vol. XII (Sept. 1967), 104-105.

¹²⁵ Burton, *Sindh*, 316-317; Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 193.

¹²⁶ Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 68.

¹²⁷ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. II, 137-140.

¹²⁸ Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh*, 35.

trading in English fabrics as well as Indian goods such as Dacca muslin, Benares brocade and shawls.¹²⁹

Until 1824, Shikarpur was under Afghan rule and its prosperity had risen with the Durrani monarchy in Afghanistan; its merchants were believed to have financed the Durrani invasions of India. Its fortunes, however, declined with those of the Durrani kings,¹³⁰ and the process was accelerated with the advent of British rule. In 1839, a British cantonment was established in the deserted town of Sukkur, and gradually Sukkur replaced Shikarpur as the economic focus of Upper Sindh. The conquest of the Punjab in 1849 altered the pattern of Sindh's trade by throwing open the markets and granaries of the Punjab to Sindh merchants. Sukkur, situated at a crossing-point on the Indus, was better placed to take advantage of the Punjab trade. The intermittent civil war in Kalat between 1857 to 1876 dealt a further blow to Shikarpur as its caravans to and from Central Asia were frequently looted by uncontrollable hill tribes. Many Shikarpur merchants transferred their business to Sukkur and as early as 1862, George Bease wrote, with some exaggeration, in *The Sindh Directory*, that all the trade of Shikarpur had shifted there.¹³¹ The Indus State Railway, completed in 1878, bypassed Shikarpur altogether, making Sukkur the main link between Karachi and the Punjab.¹³² (See Fig. III). This further enhanced the pre-eminence of Sukkur, although Shikarpur continued to keep its hold on the trade in silks and precious stones.¹³³

Sukkur replaced Shikarpur as the chief trading mart of Upper Sindh, but the real boost to trade came from the phenomenal development of the port of Karachi. From being a relatively insignificant fishing port when Napier conquered Sindh in 1843,¹³⁴ Karachi had grown into India's fourth major seaport by the end of the century, its volume of trade nearly equaling that of Madras.¹³⁵ In 1862, George Bease had described it as 'the gate of Central Asia,' adding enthusiastically that it was 'likely to become to India what Liverpool is to England.'¹³⁶ His grandiose expectations were never quite fulfilled, though in 1878-1879, Karachi did overtake Calcutta as India's premier wheat exporter.¹³⁷ Karachi's trade figures give a vivid impression of its dramatic growth. Its

¹²⁹ A. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara*, vol. I, 168-170, 286; vol. II, 424-435.

¹³⁰ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. I, 353-354

¹³¹ G. Bease, *The Sindh Directory*, (Bombay 1862), 58.

¹³² H. Feldman, *Karachi Through a Hundred Years* (Karachi, 1970, 2nd edition), 28.

¹³³ J.W. Smyth, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh*, B vol. III, Sukkur District (Bombay 1919), 19-20.

¹³⁴ One should beware of overstressing Karachi's lack of importance at the time of the British conquest. Though small, it was not a negligible trading centre. The firm of Seth Hotchand, based at Karachi, had agents in Bombay, Kutch, Calcutta and elsewhere. In 1832, the manager of the Calcutta firm purchased a European ship and put it under an English captain, with a salary of Rs 400 per month, and an English mate, with a salary of Rs. 250 per month. The ship plied between China and Java, as well as Bombay and other parts of the Malabar coast (N. Hotchand, *A Forgotten Chapter of Indian History* as described in the Memoirs of Seth Naomal Hotchand, C.S.I., of Karachi, ed. by H.E.M. James (Exeter, 1915), 69-71).

¹³⁵ Jud. Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 24 Feb. 1902, J.D., file 1, pt. II, 1901-1905, vol. II, compa. 2, 237.

¹³⁶ Bease, *The Sindh Directory*, 47.

¹³⁷ Feldman, *Karachi Through a Hundred Years*, 56.

external trade was valued at Rs. 12,21,600 in 1843; by 1858 it amounted to Rs. 1,42,01,879 and by 1901 it had reached the staggering total of Rs. 13,58,07,107.¹³⁸

Karachi was essentially a clearing-house for foreign goods. Its development did not reflect the economic advance of the province as a whole. Industrial activity was negligible. In 1907, there were only 39 factories in the province which employed more than fifty hands. Thirty of these were cotton-ginning, cleaning and pressing plants, of which twenty-three were in the Hyderabad Collectorate, six were in Karachi and one was in Thar and Parkar. The remaining factories comprised railway workshops in Karachi and Sukkur and, concentrated in Karachi, two bone-crushing mills, two metal foundries, one tin works, the Government arsenal and the Government printing press. There were in addition various small flour mills, rice-husking machines and soda-water machines, all employing less than fifty workers. For the rest, there were merely artisans' shops scattered over the country, providing services to their local communities; they included blacksmiths, carpenters, potters and jewellers.¹³⁹ That little industry there was in Sindh was mainly involved in processing agricultural products or serving the agrarian population.

The economy of Sindh rested wholly on agriculture. However, most of its exports originated outside the province. In 1862, wool was the chief component of Sindh's export trade, to the value of nearly 33 *lakhs* of rupees, but the best supplies came from Afghanistan and Baluchistan, not from Sindh.¹⁴⁰ Cotton, the second most valuable export, came mostly from the Punjab as Sindhi cotton was regarded as inferior.¹⁴¹ By the turn of the century, wheat had replaced wool as Sindh's main export, followed by cotton and oilseeds. Wool now came fourth, with hides and skins as the fifth most valuable export. Two-thirds of the wheat and half the cotton were produced in the Punjab and the United Provinces, but Sindhi products were beginning to figure more prominently. Almost all the oilseeds were grown inside the province, and most of the hides and skins were of Sindhi origin.¹⁴²

Between a fifth and a quarter of Sindh's cultivated area was given over to wheat and oilseeds, both of which were grown almost exclusively for export; the acreage under oilseeds, in particular, increased sharply towards the end of the century (see Appendix III for crops grown in Sindh). The cultivation of cotton and other cash crops, though, was never able to make any headway in nineteenth century Sindh. Most of the cultivated area remained under food crops grown for internal subsistence; two-thirds to three-quarters of Sindh's cultivation was devoted to *juari*, *bajri*, rice and pulses, the

¹³⁸ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 368-369; 'The Sindh Kossid,' 26 Jan. 1858.

¹³⁹ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 388-389.

¹⁴⁰ Bease, *The Sindh Directory*, 92.

¹⁴¹ Feldman, *Karachi Through a Hundred Years*, 5-6; A.F. Baillie, *Kurrachee: Past: Present and Future* (Calcutta, 1890), 241.

¹⁴² Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 376-384.

mainstays of the Sindhi's diet - although some of the rice was exported to Kutch and Kathiawar.

Nine-tenths of the population lived in the countryside¹⁴³ and they did not participate in the expansion of Sindh's external trade. They were only concerned with the extension of the cultivable area and the state of the internal grain market. The growth of trade, however, had an indirect effect on the countryside. As merchants' profits increased, more of their capital became available for investment. Many traders took the opportunity to broaden their business interests by investing in the land. They found an additional outlet for their money in money-lending—The mechanical problems of bringing water to crops ensured that Sindhi agriculture required a high level of capital investment. A large number of businessmen financed the men who wished to bring newly available land under the plough, advancing them capital at high rates of interest. It was an extra source of income to the traders, but it meant that the expansion of agriculture was accompanied by the growth of indebtedness among agriculturists.

Though many poor men did establish themselves as smallholders, they found it impossible to make a success of their enterprises without running further into debt. Lieutenant Fife, the architect of Sindh's nineteenth century irrigational system, once compared cultivation from inundation canals to 'a species of lottery.' The cultivators, he wrote:

are successful one season and bankrupt the next. No one who sows can tell what he will reap. Too little or too much water, the supply coming too early or too late, and the blight arising from sowing at the wrong time, combine to render speculation on the result of the cultivation a riddle which none can solve.¹⁴⁴

Like any other gamble, only men with substantial capital could afford to play the stakes regularly and prosper. On the whole, it was the Hindu *banias* and big Muslim *zamindars* who competed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the irrigational improvements of the Victorian engineers. In the last decades of the century it seemed that the big *zamindars* were getting the worst of the bargain. They were floundering in a mesh of debt and accumulating interest; there were fears that their estates would break up and that the traditional power structure of rural Sindh would disintegrate.

¹⁴³ According to the 1872 Census, 186,431 people (8% of the total population) lived in towns of 5,000 inhabitants or more; in 1901, the figure was 397,355 (12% of the total).

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 261. For further accounts of the difficulties facing agriculturists in Sindh, see M.R. Haig, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 22 Oct. 1872 (*B.N.S. CC, Labdaria S.R.*, 24) and H.E.M. James, Under-Secy., Govt. of Bombay, memo., 21 July 1873 (Papers relating to the *Revenue Survey in Sindh* (Bombay, 1875), 485-486).

Chapter 2

Rural Power: 1. *Haris* and the Great Estates

I

Power in the rural areas of Sindh was exercised by Muslim *jagirdars* and big *zamindars*, and by Hindu *baniyas*. The big *zamindars*, who were often known as *Waderos*, were landholders. Their dominant position depended on the profits of their estates and was enhanced by personal prestige and traditional authority. Their power over the landless *haris* (cultivators) who worked their lands and the petty *zamindars* who were their *neighbours* was visible and immediate: a word from the *Wadero* would be sufficient to bring out all the able-bodied men in a village to repair a bund (embankment) or to pursue dacoits.

Jagirdars had higher status than *zamindars*. Government had granted them a share of the land revenue, so that *zamindars* holding land within a *jagir* paid revenue to the *jagirdar* instead of to Government. *Jagirdars*, therefore, like *zamindars*, obtained their incomes from agriculture, although their connection with the land was less direct.

Baniyas were traders. Though many were wealthy, they were unable, as Hindus, to command respect from the Muslim population. Their influence was less apparent than that of *jagirdars* and *Waderos*; they had to operate in the background. They lent money to agriculturists, usually receiving a share of the produce as interest. As the nineteenth century progressed, many of the great estates were mortgaged, and some sold up, to *baniyas*. In this way, *baniyas* competed with *Waderos* for the produce of the estates and, in the process, threatened to undermine the economic foundation of *Waderos'* power, This was a challenge to the social system of rural Sindh.

Baniyas lent money to petty holders as well and even to *haris*. But, as these people did not 'count' socially, their indebtedness did not have such striking social implications. The great estates were the roots of the rural power structure. *Jagirdars*, *Waderos* and *baniyas* all depended on them. Before one looks at the way in which power was exercised and the rivalry between *Waderos* and *baniyas*, one should look at the origins of their wealth - the great estates, the *haris* and the division of the produce.

All landholders in Sindh were known as *zamindars*. They held their land directly from Government or a *jagirdar*, without any intermediaries, paying land revenue on it. Literally, the word '*zamindar*' simply means 'land-holder,' but it is more commonly

applied to petty chiefs and superior holders or landlords than to mere peasants or smallholders.¹⁴⁵ Under this definition, only *Waderos* would qualify to be called *zamindars*. This can lead to some confusion, for nineteenth century writers on Sindh frequently used the word in both senses; if an author mentions '*zamindars*,' he always has large holders in mind, but sometimes it is not clear from the context whether I smallholders are also included in his remarks.¹⁴⁶ In the following discussion, '*zamindar*' will be used as an all-embracing term, with peasants, smallholders and large holders being specified as the need arises.

The terms large and smallholders are, naturally, relative. In Kotri, for example, holdings were small by Sindhi standards and 598 acres enabled Abdul Rahman Thebo to be regarded as the reading *zamindar*, in the 1870's.¹⁴⁷ In Larkana, by contrast, holdings were larger and the leading *zamindar*, Tharo Khan Lahori, had 2,210 acres in 1881,¹⁴⁸ while in Upper Sindh Frontier anyone with less than a thousand acres would scarcely be noticed - the largest holder was Dodo Khan Bhutto, in Jacobabad, who held 10,714 acres in 1885-1886 and 18,102 acres by 1893-1894.¹⁴⁹ Allowing for these regional variations, it is reasonable, as a general rule for the whole province, to regard those holding over 500 acres as large holders. Certainly, whether one is speaking of Kotri or Jacobabad, anyone with less than a hundred acres was very small fry so far as Sindhis were concerned.¹⁵⁰

Estates in Sindh were unwieldy and fragmented. They were not usually held by individuals, but were divided among four or five cosharers whose stakes were often represented by arena shares. In an estate in *taluqa* Sehwan, for instance, Tubjaram and Jashanmal held shares of six annas each, while Jan Muhammad held four annas, making the total sixteen annas, or one rupee. In 1892, Khemchand was brought into the partnership, by Jashanmal transferring two of his shares to him; Jashanmal therefore reduced his commitment to four annas, while the total investment remained the same,

¹⁴⁵ Cf. I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556 1707)* (Aligarh, 1963), 136-141.

¹⁴⁶ H.E.M. James, *Commr., Sindh*, wrote: 'The word "*zamindar*" means a landholder, and in Sindh, when used by authors or European officers, is generally applied to the Musulman landed gentry, or holders of large estates, one or more of whom are to be found in every village, though it also applies nowadays to peasant proprietors who have occupancy rights side by side with them' (to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note A - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), *Confl. Pr.*, 795).

¹⁴⁷ M.R. Haig, *Settlt. Offr.*, 6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCV, Kotri S.R., 37).

¹⁴⁸ G.F. Mathieson, *Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh*, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana.S.R., 36).

¹⁴⁹ H.C. Mules, *Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Comar., Sind*, 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXIV, Jadobabad S.R., App. XXII, 84).

¹⁵⁰ James reckoned that anyone paying less than Rs 300 per year as land revenue (i.e., holding less than 300 acres) is considered a small and insignificant person' in Sindh (to Govr., Bombay, 11 Dec. 1899, P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (Jan-July), 222). See also Mules, who regarded anyone holding under 100 acres as a petty holder and took 300 acres as the minimum a man could hold if he was to remain solvent (to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 1902, P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 112).

at sixteen annas.¹⁵¹ A cosharer could not simply withdraw his money, as that would damage the other shareholders; he had to sell or transfer his shares to somebody else. The produce, profits and expenses were divided among the shareholders according to the interest held by each, and the estate was worked with a common stock of cattle and tools. Colonel Taverner, a Settlement Officer, compared the arrangement with an English joint-stock company.¹⁵²

Sometimes all the cosharers were entered together in the Land Register as joint holders, but more commonly, only one man would be recorded as the *khatedar* (registered occupant) for each. Survey Number (field), and he was made responsible for paying the land revenue on behalf of his cosharers. He was not the *zamindar* as such, but was a partner; he was made *khatedar* as a matter of convenience, for the payment of land revenue only. Usually, cosharers managed to make their own arrangements for dividing up their liabilities, but the Land Revenue Code did contain provisions enabling Government to collect revenue directly from them should the *khatedar* have any difficulty.¹⁵³

Cosharing enabled agriculturists to pool their resources. In addition, cosharers were often related. Estates tended to break up as a result of the laws of inheritance; if they were held jointly, then everyone received the share to which he was entitled, but the property was not subdivided between the heirs. The estate of Dodo Khan Bhutto, for instance, was held jointly by himself and his two sons.¹⁵⁴ The combined Bhutto estate was particularly huge and so it is probable that the three partners were made responsible for their different shares in order to make management easier more commonly, an estate was kept in the name of the head of the family. G.M. Bhurgri was a great *zamindar* of the early twentieth century. As he spent much of his time in Hyderabad, he administered the estate through his two brothers, who stayed at the home village of Dangan Bhurgri; they did not have holdings of their own, but shared in the family property.¹⁵⁵ When one speaks of 'the' *zamindar*, then, one may not always mean an individual, but an undivided *zamindari* family.

Most estates were scattered over a wide area. As with cosharing, this feature was not peculiar to Sindh, but was common throughout India. It probably resulted from the subdivision of properties through inheritance and from *zamindars* buying up the best

¹⁵¹ Asst. Collr., Sehwan, to Collr., Karachi, 29 March 1892 P.S.C., P.D., file 1, 1889-1896, vol. III, compn. 22a, par. 5).

¹⁵² E.L. Taverner, Settl. Offr., to Collr., Hbad., 2 May 1872 (B.N.S. CXCVI, Hbad. S.R., 19).

¹⁵³ R.N. Joglekar, Annotated Edition of the Land Revenue Code, Bombay Act V of 1879 (Bombay, 1919), 447. See also Taverner's letter above (note 8) and M.R. Haig, Settl. Offr., 9 Aug. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kotri S.R., 68).

¹⁵⁴ Commr., Sindh, memo., 10 Apr. 1884 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1884 (Jan-June), 550).

¹⁵⁵ G.M. Bhurgri, oral evidence to Committee appointed by Government to enquire into Rasa., *Lapo* and *Chher* in Sindh (Karachi, 1919) thereafter referred to as Rasai Cttee. Report, vol. IV, pt. VII, 88. Settl. Reports seldom recorded joint holdings; an exception was the first report of Nasirabad (J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 27 Apr. 1882, B.N.S. CXCIX, Nasirabad S.R., 30). See also Haig, 12 Aug. 1880 (B.N.S. CXCVIII, Naushahro Feroz S.R., 42).

land, wherever it happened to be situated. In Sindh, since irrigation was so erratic, there may also have been a conscious desire on the part of those who could afford it to hedge their bets against bad inundations by spreading their estates as widely as possible. Dodo Khan Bhutto and his two sons held upwards of 30,000 acres in Upper Sindh in the 1830's. Their home village was in *talua* Ratodero, where they held 6,709 acres in 1882-1883;¹⁵⁶ in addition, they were known as great *zamindars* in Jacobabad, some thirty miles away, where they held 21,026 acres in 1885-1886,¹⁵⁷ and in Naushahro Abro, adjoining Ratodero, where they held 2,749 acres in 1894-1895.¹⁵⁸ During the 1870's, they bought their way into Larkana, where Khuda Bakhsh held 919 acres in 1881 - a modest holding by their standards.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Sayed Ghulam Rasul Shah, one of the leading *zamindars* of Sehwan, held 1,714 acres in *talua* Mehar, about fifty miles away, in 1892-1893,¹⁶⁰ while Shah Ali Khan Dombki held 15,735 acres in Kashmore in 1894-1895¹⁶¹ and 6,957 acres in Kandlikot;¹⁶² Rahim Khan Khoso held 441 acres in Sukkur in 1889-1890¹⁶³ and 5,082 acres in Jacobabad.¹⁶⁴

Even within a single *talua*, estates tended scattered in separate parcels of land. This is those few Settlement Reports which recorded in *dehs* to be revealed by which *dehs* (villages) large holders held their land. The map of *talua* Nasirabad reproduced in Appendix VI illustrates the point. There were seventeen large holders in Nasirabad in 1895-1896, but only one, with 588 acres held all his land in a single *deh*. Leh Bisharat Khuhawar contained lands belonging to four *zamindars*, while *dehs* Gaji Khuhawar, Ahun, Jalbani, Jogi, Mangio, Phekratho and Lakho each contained the lands of three big *zamindars*. In six of the *dehs* mentioned, it was the same three *zamindars* from the same tribe, who shared the land: Pahilwan Khan Khuhawar, Faiz Muhammad Khuhawar and Fateh Ali Khuhawar. In the previous Settlement Report, Pahilwan Khan's land was shown to be confined to *dehs* Jagi and Ahun, which were presumably his home villages. The land in these *dehs* was not good. Since then, he had inherited land from his father, as well as taking some up on his own account. Much of his new land was on the Wicholo Canal, where the irrigation was better, and some of it was up to ten miles from Ahun and Jogi, which is a fair distance on poor roads. Faiz Muhammad held 1,162 acres spread over no less than eleven *dehs*, as well as 428 acres in *talua* Labdarya,¹⁶⁵ a long way from the main body of his estate; his purchases included valuable land on the newly constructed Ganjrot Canal in *deh* Bothiro. The estate of Ali Muhammad Lakho is

¹⁵⁶ James. to Govr., Bombay, 7 Aug. 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXVII, Ratodero S.R., App. XXII, 138).

¹⁵⁷ Mules to Commr., Sindh, 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXIV, Jacobabad S.R., App. XXII, 84).

¹⁵⁸ S. Ali, Depy. Collr., Snnkur, to Actg. Commr., Sindh, 9 Feb. 18.99. (B.N.S. CCCXXV, Naushahro Abro S.R., App. XXII, 91).

¹⁵⁹ G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 36).

¹⁶⁰ Ali to Commr., Sindh, 15 Sept. 1902 (B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., App. XXII, 90).

¹⁶¹ H. Ali, Depy. Collr., to Commr., 18 July 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXV, Kashmore S.R., App. XXII, 187).

¹⁶² Ibid., Kandhkot. S.R., App. XXII, 159.

¹⁶³ S. Ali to Actg., Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1898 (B.N.S. COCXXVIII, Sukkur S.R., App. XXII, 85).

¹⁶⁴ Mules: to Comar., 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXIV, Jacobabad S.R., App. XXII, 84).

¹⁶⁵ Mathieson to Commr., 28 Apr. 1892 (B.N.S. CCCCVIII, Labdarya S.R., 14).

interesting. It was divided between three *dehs*. *Dehs* Potho and Khandu were adjacent and, since other Lakhsos held land there, they probably contained his home estate. They were among the poorest *dehs* in the *taluka*. The rest of his holding was in *deh* Yaru Dero, some twelve miles away, which was one of the best *dehs* in Nasirabad.¹⁶⁶ In the examples quoted, the *zamindars* had bought farms wherever there were better conditions for profitable cultivation, even if they were a long way from the main body of their estates. The result was that their estates were spread over a wide area.

The day-to-day administration of such estates could not be carried out from the base villages. Big *zamindaas* therefore used to appoint *kamdars* (overseers) to the different villages to act as their representatives. *Kamdars* supervised the cultivation, keeping the cultivators at their work and making sure that they did not pilfer the crop. They were not tenants or lessees of the *Wadero* but were his paid servants. Some *Waderos* used *khaskhelis* (hereditary servants) as *kamdars*; having been with the family for generations, their loyalty could be relied on.¹⁶⁷ Others promoted *kamdars* from the ranks of the cultivators.¹⁶⁸ They received wages from the *zamindars*. In 1900, Gianchand Chandumal paid his *kamdars* one *kasa* per *kharar* of the total crop (1 *kharar* = 60 *kasas* = 29½-bushels) which was worth about Rs 123 that year,¹⁶⁹ while G.M. Bhurgri, nearly twenty years later, claimed to pay his *kamdars* Rs 15 to Rs 20 each per month.¹⁷⁰

As in other parts of India, most big *zamindars* employed agents to help them run their estates, or even to manage them on their behalf. Many contemporary observers alleged that *Waderos* did not, on the whole, take much interest in their estates, but left everything to their agents - and that, consequently, their estates were inefficiently administered and they themselves defrauded. In 1892, the Commissioner in Sindh made a point of emphasizing that the big *zamindars* in *taluka* Larkana were beginning to manage their estates personally, instead of relying on their agents. He felt this was sufficiently unusual to be worthy of mention in a letter to the Governor of Bombay.¹⁷¹ *Waderos* delegated responsibility to agents because they did not wish to be burdened with the trouble of estate management. They preferred to indulge such pleasures as hunting, cock-fighting, drinking *bharg* (an intoxicating liquor based on hemp) and

¹⁶⁶ W.S. Cole, Actg. Sup., Land Records & Agri., to Commr., 28 Apr. 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXVIII, Nasirabad S.R., 4).

¹⁶⁷ Rukundin, Special Attorney to Sayed Pir Bakhsh Shah of Sehwan, claimed in an interview, 21 Nov. 1976, that his ancestors had migrated with the Sayed's family from Bokhara several centuries ago, and had served the Sayeds ever since. Also interview with Mir Mohammad Bux Khan Talpur, 17 Apr. 1977.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with P.K. Shahani, *zamindar*, Member, National Assembly of Pakistan, 29 Oct. 1976.

¹⁶⁹ L.J. Mountford, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 27 March 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (July-Dec.), 1235).

¹⁷⁰ G.M. Bhurgri, oral evidence (Rasai Cttee. Report, vol. IV, pt. VII, 88).

¹⁷¹ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 18 May 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 4).

bringing *nach girls* (singing girls) to perform at their homes.¹⁷² It was often alleged that their insouciance sped many *Waderos* along the primrose path to debt and dissolution.¹⁷³

Whether the books were being kept, or even cooked, by some agent, the emotional centre of an estate lay in the *Wadero* himself, at his home village. *Kamdars* and agents were nothing without his backing, and it was to his home *autaq* (guest house) that cultivators and *kamdars* came for help, rewards and reprimands. No great Muslim *zamindar* would ever receive non-family members into his private residence - and it was in his *autaq* that he entertained guests and held audience. The size of an *autaq* depended on the wealth or pretensions of the *Wadero*. Some were imposing, fortress-like edifices which dominated the countryside, some were large mansions, while others were little more than mud-huts. The *autaq* of a particularly great man might actually cover a larger area than the village itself, the cultivators' huts huddling outside the walls like a cluster of grass tents.¹⁷⁴

III

In other parts of India, great estates were parceled out to tenants - in Bengal, for example, there was often a long chain of sub-lessees in between the cultivator and the *zamindar*.¹⁷⁵ That did not happen in Sindh. The land was given out to *haris* who held it directly from the *zamindar*. This gave the latter a degree of economic and physical security which he would have lacked under a less direct form of tenure. *Haris* could be thrown off the land according to the *zamindar's* will, and so they were utterly dependent on him. It is not easy to establish what rights, if any, *haris* possessed. They are usually described as 'tenants-at-will,' but the literal translation of the word, '*hari*' is 'ploughman' and this is more appropriate for they resembled landless laborers rather than tenants. As late as 1926, the Collector of Nawabshah was still debating whether they should be defined for census purposes as farm servants, laborers or hired labor. They were engaged on a seasonal basis, sometimes scattered once the harvest was over, and did not necessarily work for the same *zamindar* in consecutive seasons.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² T. Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh* (London, 1843; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 49-50; R.F. Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (London, 1851; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 299-300.

¹⁷³ Cf. below, 196-97.

¹⁷⁴ *Personal impressions of Sindh, 1976-1977*.

¹⁷⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Sirajul Islam, of the University of Dacca, for impressing me with the complexity of the Bengali tenure system. In most parts of India, indeed, occupancy rights involved claims from many different groups, the entire rural community having some stake in the crop; proprietary rights, in the European sense, did not properly exist (see W.C. Neale, *Economic Change in Rural India: Land Tenure and Land Reform in Uttar Pradesh, 1800-1955* (Yale University, 1962), 19-20, 36-37; A.T. Embree, 'Landholding in India and British Institutions,' in R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History* (University of Wisconsin, 1969), 37-44).

¹⁷⁶ Collr., Nawabshah, to Commr., Sindh, 31 March 1926 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1926, 628).

Each season, *haris* engaged to work *zamindars'* lands. The different *haris*, or families of *haris*, were allocated fields of eight to twenty acres according to circumstances. Usually, all the costs and responsibilities of cultivation were borne by the *hari*. Apart from giving his labor, he had to find the seed, manure, tools, cattle, etc. However, few *haris* had the capital with which to acquire these necessities. Instead, the *zamindar* had to loan them the money, or else provide the equipment and recover its value from the *haris* later; or, at least, the *zamindar* had to arrange for the *haris* to get credit from local *banias*. Many *zamindars* automatically gave their *haris taqavi* loans (loans for agricultural purposes), which the *haris* either had to pay back over several years, or which they did not need to repay until they left the *zamindars'* employ. The value of *taqavi* loans varied.

Generally they ranged between Rs 10 to Rs 40, but rates as high as Rs 80 to Rs 100 were reported in *taluqa Jati* in 1899.¹⁷⁷

Haris paid their rent at harvest-time. Rent was collected in kind (the *batai* system) or in cash (the *danai* system). The *batai* system, whereby the produce was divided between the *hari* and the *zamindar* in fixed proportions was more common.

The *batai* (division of the crops) began after the *haris* had piled their produce into separate *kharios* where they threshed and cleaned it. A *khario* was a heap of grain, protected by a thorn fence to keep out thieves. The *batai* was made according to rates agreed between the *haris* and the *zamindar*. If the field was irrigated by 'lift' (requiring a Persian wheel to lift the water from the canal to the land), then a good deal of labor and maintenance was required, besides a team of cattle to work the wheel. The *zamindar* therefore took only two-fifths to a third of the produce, leaving the rest to the *hari*. In some places, the 'lift' rates were calculated by dividing the crop into three portions: the *hari* and the *zamindar* took one share each and the last share went to whoever provided the cattle: it was usually the *hari*, so this gave him his two-thirds share.¹⁷⁸ 'Plow' lands (watered by natural overflow from a canal) were less expensive to cultivate, so their crops were generally divided equally. In addition to the main division of crops, a small proportion of the produce - a twelfth or a thirteenth was set aside for the other people who had helped to make cultivation possible, such as the carpenter and blacksmith, who had manufactured the implements, the *kuhungai*, who scared away birds, the *surtan*, who protected the crop from swine, and the *lahayars*, or reapers; the *lahayars* were often the *haris* themselves. At the same time, the local *pirs*, and any *faqirs* who were in the vicinity, would attend at the *khario* for a share of the crop in return for the services they had rendered the community over the year. Once the claims of these people had been disposed off, the main *batai*, between the *zamindar* and his *haris*, could

¹⁷⁷ G. Berrie, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 19 Sept. 1899 (B.N.S. CCCCLV, Sehwan S.R., 15); L.W. Seymour, Sup., Land Records & Agri., Sindh, to Commr., 20 Apr. 1899 (B.N.S. CCCXXVI, Jati S.R., 16); C.G. Henderson, Asst. Collr., Larkana, to Commr., 13 Aug. 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXVIII, Labdarya S.R., 8).

¹⁷⁸ M. Hussain, Asst. Settlt. Offr., to Collr., T. & P., 15 June 1916 (B.N.S. D, Umarkot S.R., 11).

take place. The *zamindar* was always responsible for paying the Government assessment.¹⁷⁹

In the light of what has been said, it is worth looking at the examples of nineteenth century crop division which are reproduced in Appendix VII. The figures do not discuss the individual circumstances of the *hari* families involved, but they are useful as rough guidelines, giving an impression of the quantities of grain *haris* used to receive. Estates 1 and 2 were in the Delta region, while Estates 3 and 4 were in *taluka* Sukkur. It will be noticed that the Delta *zamindars* took two-thirds of the crop, whereas their counterparts in Sukkur took only half. It was customary for *zamindars* in the Delta to take two-thirds of the produce on 'flow' lands which elsewhere were divided equally. One explanation offered at the time was that the extra share was intended to cover the assessment.¹⁸⁰ If that was the case, it is clear from the examples in Appendix VII that the *zamindar* had the better side of the bargain. In both Delta estates, the assessment on ten acres was thirty rupees: but the difference in value between the *zamindar's* share and the *hari's* share was over eighty rupees.

The Appendix indicates how widely *haris'* portions at *batai* could vary; everything depended on the quality of the land and the tenancy agreements they had made with their *zamindars*. The land on Estate No. 3 was first class, and the outturn was exceptionally high.¹⁸¹ For every ten acres worked, a *hari* could expect to keep 126 *maunds* of grain (a *maund* is a little over 82 pounds). *Haris* on the other Sukkur farm, Estate No. 4, however, where the outturn was less remarkable, would only have received 89 *maunds*. The Delta *haris* were the poorest; a cultivator's share from ten acres would have amounted to 42 *maunds* on Estate No. 1 and to a mere 32½ *maunds* on Estate No. 2. To put these figures in context, one should consider that a report in 1873 showed that a family of peasants in Sukkur, consisting of ten people (two men, two women and six children) consumed 60 *maunds* of cereal per year¹⁸² - which is more or less the amount which the Indian Famine Commission, at the end of the century, estimated to be necessary for a family of this size.¹⁸³ On this basis, the Delta families could scarcely

¹⁷⁹ Local *batai* terms were discussed in all Settlr. Reports. See especially, J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 5 Dec. 1883 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 109); Seymour to Commr., 4 Apr. 1894 (B.N.S. CCCXXV, Naushahro Abro S.R., 17); C.M. Baker, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., 28 March 1905 (B.N.S. CCCCXLVIII, Jacobabad S.R., 2).

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, 24 July 1886 (I.O.R. (9)2207, Jati S.R., 6).

¹⁸¹ Crop experiments showed that the average outturn of rice per acre in *taluka* Sukkur was 13 to 17 *maunds*; yet on Estate no. 3 of Appendix VII, where the land was graded first class, the yield was no less than 27 *maunds* per acre. The outturns on the other estates were average - 17 *maunds* on Estate no. 1, 13 on Estate no. 2 and 18 on Estate no. 4. With double the average outturn, the fortunate *haris* of Estate no. 3 received about twice the average share at *batai* (for crop experiment see S. Ali, Depy Collr., Sukkur, to Actg. Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1898 (B.N.S. CCCXXVIII, Sukkur S.R., 23).

¹⁸² M.R. Haig, Settlr. Offr., to Collr. Shpur., Sept. 1873 (B.N.S. CCI, Sukkur S.R., 56).

¹⁸³ The minimum wage scale adopted by the Famine Commission of 1898 was 1¼ lb. of grain per day for adult men, 15/8 lb. for adult women and 1 lb. per day for children under twelve; this was recommended as 'sufficient to maintain able-bodied laborers in health and strength' (Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1898 (London,

subsist, but the Sukkur families had a surplus which they could feed to their animals, keep for seed or sell; the families on the wealthy Estate No. 3, indeed, had a large surplus.

However, the basic rates were not the whole story at *batai*. In none of the examples was any account taken of the *haris'* costs or expenses. Moreover, in practice, the *hari* seldom received the whole of his theoretical share at *batai*, for it was reduced by debts and by various deductions made by the *zamindar*.

An important charge was *deh kharch*, a contribution to a fund kept to meet the expenses incurred by the principal *zamindar* on village business - for example, his travelling expenses and the cost of entertaining and bribing junior Government officials.¹⁸⁴ Some *zamindars* also charged small *zamindari* fees and made deductions on other accounts, such as the wages of servants and *kamdars*. One British official condemned these practices as 'fleecing the *haris* under the excuse of "incidental expenses."¹⁸⁵ Another alleged that they recovered a great deal more than the expenses incurred; the average *zamindar*, he said, did not levy any fixed amount, but:

takes according to the practice of his ancestors or the extent to which he thinks he can squeeze his tenants.¹⁸⁶

The straw which remained after threshing was valuable fodder, and *haris* were usually entitled to keep it, apart from a couple of cart-loads taken as a *zamindari* fee; but many *zamindars* felt free to take it, and also butter and milk, from their *haris*, without payment, whenever they or their guests needed it.¹⁸⁷

The *hari's* share was further reduced by debt. It has already been mentioned that *zamindars* often gave *haris tagavi* loans. They were generally insufficient to cover the *hari's* ongoing expenses; and so *haris* required further loans throughout the season, obtaining them from the *zamindar* or a *bania* or both. These were repaid at betel. According to Captain Preedy, the Collector of Karachi, in 1847, the *hari's* debt, along with the other deductions made by the *zamindar*, was more than enough to swallow up his share of the grain. Consequently, part of his share was returned to him as subsistence and its value added to the 'already overwhelming accumulation of the debt against the unhappy wretch.' Preedy concluded that *zamindars*:

1898; Cmd. 9178), 49, 260). On this basis, the family described by Haig would have required 57 maunds (4,666 lbs.) of grain per year to keep it at subsistence level.

¹⁸⁴ Haig to Commr., Sindh, 17 Jan. 1878 (B.N.S. CC11, Rohri S.R., 64); G.M. Bhurgri, oral evidence, Rasai Cttee. Report, vol. IV, pt. VII, 88.

¹⁸⁵ S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., Nara Valley, to Depy. Commr., T. & P., 23 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXIX, Khipro S.R., 19).

¹⁸⁶ E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Tando, to Collr., Hbad., 28 Dec. 1908 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVIII, Guni S.R., 22).

¹⁸⁷ N.H. Hey, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 29 June 1918 (B.N.S. DXXXIII, Shpur. S.R., 19); Rasai Gttee. Report, vol. IV, pt. V, 74, 98.

under various pretences appropriate the greater part if not the whole of the produce to their own use. On the above system it is evident that the Ryot can never free himself from debt. The *zamindar* for his own interest affords him a scanty supply of food and clothing and he is nominally his tenant, but in reality the great majority of Sindh Ryots are nothing more or less than serfs of the soil.¹⁸⁸

A few years later, Arthur Young, a Deputy Collector who conducted an investigation into the *batai* system, reached the same conclusion. 'The bulk of cultivators,' who had no capital 'but the labor of their hands;' were generally so much in debt to the *banias* or *zamindars* that 'their share of A rain is insufficient to pay off their debts.'¹⁸⁹ Young discovered that many Muslim *zamindars* had devised an ingenious expedient for avoiding the odium of Gharging interest on loans given to *haris*, the levy of interest being strictly prohibited by their religion. When they advanced seed to their *haris*, they used a 'fictitious price' to make a profit out of the deal. Young alleged that if, for example, the selling price of *juari* in the open market was four *kasas* per rupee, the *zamindar* supplied it to the *hari* at three *kasas* to the rupee. At harvest-time, prices fell, so the *hari* repaid the loan at the current market rate, which might be five *kasas* of grain to the rupee. In this way, for every three *kasas* of seed which the *hari* borrowed, he paid back five - but the value of seed repaid was the same, in rupees, as that borrowed, and so the *zamindars*' consciences remained untroubled.¹⁹⁰

The *hari*'s share at *batai* being insufficient to pay his debts, he was obliged to ask for more credit, both to settle his account and for subsistence. This further increased the *hari*'s debt, so he applied to the *zamindar* for work, spending the slack season on whatever jobs the *zamindar* required; this included canal clearance, carting produce, acting as beaters for *shikar* (hunting) and being supplied to Government as labor for the construction of roads, canals and bunds. *Zamindars* also lent their *haris* to each other for similar purposes.¹⁹¹ Nominally, the *haris* worked for wages but in practice they were only given subsistence, the rest being credited to their current accounts against their debts. At the beginning of the cultivating season, the *hari* again had to borrow seed and so his debt swelled yet more.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Rev. queries by R.K. Pringle, Commr., Sindh, 1847: reply to query no. 9 by Capt. Preedy, Collr., Karachi (Selections from the pre-Mutiny Records of the Commissioner in Sindh (n.d.), hereafter referred to as pre-Mutiny Records, 86).

¹⁸⁹ A. Young, Depy. Collr., memo. on the *batai* system, 23 March 1851 (ibid., 486).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 482.

¹⁹¹ The practice of *zamindars* pooling their *haris*' labour was known as *wangar* (S. All, Depy. Collr., Mehar, to Commr., Sindh, 15 Sept. 1902, B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., 31).

¹⁹² A. Young, memo. on the *batal* system, 23 March 1851 (pre-Mutiny Records, 486).

Such forced labor, known as *beggar*, was officially abolished in 1846,¹⁹³ but the practice continued despite the legislation. In 1918, Abdullah Umar Khan, a big *zamindar*, confirmed to the *Rasai* Committee that *haris* were universally employed as *begaris*:

When they have cultivated the lands and got into debt they cannot leave the lands and consequently do all sorts of jobs on which the *zamindars* put them. They receive no payment from the *zamindars*.¹⁹⁴

Another *Wadero* Informed the Committee: Mostly *haris* are servants.¹⁹⁵ Mohammad Khan Pathan, who was also a big *zamindar*, explained that if a *hari* refused to do jobs for his *zamindar*, the latter was likely to take an extra share at *batai* or else publicly humiliate or beat him.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, these conditions persisted until after the end of British rule. In 1949, M. Masud, a senior Government officer, wrote a Note of Dissent to the Hari Committee Report; he said:

The produce of the land being insufficient to sustain him, the *hari* has to borrow and to labor from year to year to pay off the inextinguishable debt. Generations die in pursuit of the mirage of solvency.¹⁹⁷

It is clear that Masud was describing precisely the same world which Preedy and Young had criticized a hundred years previously; the inference, confirmed by the evidence given to the *Rasai* Committee, must be that the intervening century of foreign domination had made little difference, for better or worse, to the *hari*.

A trifling sum of money could suffice to entangle a *hari* hopelessly in debt. That is why many *zamindars* preferred not to collect their initial *taqavi* loans until the *haris* had left their service. The loans involved small sums by the *zamindars*' standards, but so far as the *haris* were concerned, they were vast debts which put them under permanent obligation to their masters. One can appreciate this if one looks at the accounts in Appendix VII. No details were given of the agreements between *zamindars* and *haris* on the first three estates, but it was recorded that the *haris* of Estate No. 2 received an initial *taqavi* loan of twenty to fifty rupees as 'a means of binding them to the estate;' it was to be repaid when they left or were dismissed.¹⁹⁸ It is hard to imagine *haris* on this estate repaying such sums. The details of their incomes given in Appendix VII suggest that,

¹⁹³ J. Jacob, Actg. Commr., Sindh, Notice, 25 Apr. 1856 (B.N.S. XXXIV, Official Correspondence on the Abolition of Statute or Forced Labor in Sindh (Bombay, 1856), 37).

¹⁹⁴ Abdullah Umar Khan, written evidence, *Rasai Cttee. Report*, vol. IV, pt. V, 73; see also evidence of Sayed Lal Shah, *ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹⁵ Shaikh Ibrahimjee, written evidence, *ibid.*, pt. VII, 124.

¹⁹⁶ Mohammad Khan Pathan, written evidence, *ibid.*, pt. V, 48; see also evidence of Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Hassan, Illahibux, *ibid.*, 45, 66, 83; Murad Ali Shah, Kirpaldas Lakhmal, *ibid.*, pt. VI, 55, 57.

¹⁹⁷ M. Masud, *Hari Committee Report Note of Dissent* (Karachi, 1949), 9.

¹⁹⁸ L.J. Mountford, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 27 March 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (July-Dec), 1235).

even if they managed to keep their whole share at *batai* to themselves, they had to borrow in order to live; no allowance was made in these figures for their expenses, debts or any other deductions made from their shares. The total value of a *hari's* share on ten acres was Rs 69-10-8. A debt of Rs 20 would therefore represent rather more than a quarter of his total income, while a debt of Rs 50 would virtually account for an entire season's work. Even the relatively prosperous *haris* of Estate No. 3 would have found it difficult to repay *taqavi* loans on this scale. The total value of their produce was Rs 110-3-0. If they required no more than 60 *maunds* of unthreshed grain per year for all their needs (including seed and fodder) then they could hope to sell their surplus for Rs 57-12-0. Assuming, which is unlikely, that they had no other debts and the *zamindar* had made no deductions from their share, then they would be able to repay a *taqavi* loan of Rs 20, but if it was nearer Rs 50, they would find themselves in straitened circumstances.

It was, then, an expensive business for a *hari* to leave his *zamindar* and seek employment with another. What is more, with burdensome *taqavi* loans hanging over their heads, the threat of dismissal must have conjured up frightening visions of impossible debts. It is small wonder that some *haris* went to great lengths to prove their loyalty. There is evidence that, in 1896, a *hari* was induced to commit murder on behalf of a *zamindar* because he owed Rs 20 to Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto, the *zamindar's* father.¹⁹⁹

Many *haris* kept their own cattle, and their dairy produce saved them from complete dependence on the grain allowed to them at *batai*. They sold the milk and butter, keeping the butter-milk for themselves - this, with bread made from *juari*, formed their staple diet.²⁰⁰ According to Masud, it was their cattle wealth which saved the *haris* from destitution.²⁰¹ Certainly, cattle enabled *haris* to stay above subsistence level and, under the right circumstances, could earn them a small degree of freedom²⁰² - provided they were not already indebted to the *zamindar* on account of money borrowed to purchase cattle in the first place. The *haris* of *talua* Guni, in particular, were consistently reported as being independent and reasonably prosperous as a result of their cattle breeding. In 1883, a British officer claimed that:

probably in the whole of Sindh there is no class of cultivators in such good circumstances. All own cattle generally buffaloes, from which they gain their chief support; this makes them independent of the *Zamindars*, and upon the least provocation they threaten to leave and cultivate the lands of others.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ D. Gidumal, Sessions Judge, Shpur., summing up, 20 Nov. 1896 (P.S.C., J.D., file 2, vol. III, pt. III, compn. 72, 726).

²⁰⁰ A. Young, sub-Collr., Mehar, to K. Young, c. 1848 (cited in K. Young, *Scinde in the Forties*, ed. A.F. Scott (London, 1912), 113). See also E.H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* (Karachi, 1907), 199.

²⁰¹ Masud, *Hari Committee Report Note of Dissent*, 10.

²⁰² Some modern *zamindars* refuse to take on *haris* if they have their own cattle as they are more likely to move elsewhere after a season or two; instead, they insist on *haris* using cattle from the *zamindar's* own herd to work the land (interview with Mir Ghulam Allah Khan Talpur, *zamindar* of Umarnot, 29 Apr. 1977).

²⁰³ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 24 Apr. 1883 (B.N.S. CXCV, Guni S.R., 8).

A few years later, the Commissioner in Sindh remarked, with more than a hint of sarcasm, that the *zamindars* of Guni were complaining that their *haris*:

are miserable lazy lot compared with those further north, and are apt to desert their employer if he tresses them to work.²⁰⁴

In 1908, the *haris* of Guni were still said to be 'generally comfortably off according to their standard,' although the Settlement Officer pointed out that their standard 'is a low one.'²⁰⁵ The *haris* of Guni were by all accounts exceptional but, as the last quotation reminds one, they still were not wealthy.

Moreover, it is not quite true that *haris* could have all the benefit of their dairy cattle. Many *zamindars* demanded milk and butter from their *haris* whenever they required it.²⁰⁶ In addition, *zamindars* often used the allocation of grazing rights on their land as a means of increasing their power over their workforce.²⁰⁷ Rearing cattle, then, might improve a *hari's* standard of living, but the benefits still had to be shared with his *zamindar*. The 1917 Cattle Theft Committee found that many *haris* did not feel cattle breeding alone was sufficient to compensate for the privations of their life, and so they turned to crime. Most of the country's large population of cattle thieves were *haris* who, so the Committee believed:

find a life of crime easier and - more profitable than the cultivation of land in which they have no proprietary right or security of tenure.²⁰⁸

However, the *haris* could not even keep the fruits of crime to themselves, for the Committee also found that the patrons of thieves were usually big *zamindars* who, apart from sharing the profits, employed the thieves to overawe the countryside and bully the other *haris*.²⁰⁹

It may have been as a result of the extortionate demands made upon them, that some *haris* learned to defraud the *zamindar*, in his turn, by pilfering part of the produce at *batai*. This was particularly true of the largest estates, where the *zamindar* was remote and his *kamdars* could be bribed to turn a blind eye when the *haris* wished to appropriate some of the produce before the *batai* started.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ H.N.B. Erskine, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 5 March 1886 (ibid., 42).

²⁰⁵ E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Tando, to Collr., Hbad., 28 Dec. 1908 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVIII, Zuni S.R., 23).

²⁰⁶ H.N.B. Erskine, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 5 March 1886 (ibid., 42).

²⁰⁷ A.M. Nagrani, Asst. Settl. Offr., Shahbandar, to Commr., Sindh, 16 March 1915 (B.N.S. CCCXC VII, Mirpur Bathoro S.R., 21).

²⁰⁸ Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the question of Cattle-lifting in Sindh (Karachi, 1926), 1.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.

²¹⁰ R. Giles, Asst. Colir., Larkana, to Colir., Shpur., 14 Apr. 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1884, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 2, par. 21); E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Tando, to Collr., Hbad., 28 Dec. 1908 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVIII, Guni S.R., 22).

Many *zamindars* claimed that it was in order to avoid the pilfering which went on at *batai* that they adopted the *danai* system, of giving out their lands for cash rents. *Zamindars* invariably favored this system when they were growing valuable cash crops, like oilseeds, cotton or vegetables where pilfering by the *haris* might prove too expensive.²¹¹

The *danai* system had another advantage, which led to it being widely applied to lands where the water supply was especially precarious: by taking a cash rent in advance, the *zamindar* could insure himself against loss if the crop failed: however bad the crop might be, he was at least certain he would be able to pay the Government assessment.²¹²

There was the additional attraction, for a *zamindar*, that there was no traditional guide to fixing the *danai* rates, as there was under the *batai* system. Rents were regulated, not by custom, but 'by the influence and power each *zamindar* wields.'²¹³

At first sight, the *zamindar* appears to have had the better side of the bargain, but actually the *danai* system was popular with *haris*. When *zamindars* in Upper Sindh Frontier wished to raise rents on lands given out on the *danai* system, they had only to threaten to revert to the *batai* system. This would provoke an outcry from the *haris* who eventually considered it a fair compromise when the *zamindars* agreed to continue with the cash rents provided the rates were raised.²¹⁴ Such evidence gives the lie to suggestions that the *batai* system gave *haris* an opportunity to profit at the *zamindars'* expense by pilfering produce.

The value of the *danai* system to the *hari* was that, however high the rent might be, it was fixed and so he could calculate his profits accordingly. It saved him from:

all the petty exactions which a mean and oppressive *zamindar* is apt to make at the time of division.²¹⁵

It also meant that if there was a high outturn in any season, the *hari* did not have to share it with his *zamindar*, but could keep the benefit for himself. In 1918, for example, the cotton crop was remarkably good in *talua* Sakrand and at the same time, prices reached record levels. The local *zamindars* were accustomed to let out their lands on

²¹¹ Moysey, 1908 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXIX, Dero Mohbat S.R., 12); A.O. Koreishi, Depy. Collr., Kobri, to Commr., Sindh, 14 Feb. 1919 (B.N.S. DXXXV, Manjhand S.R., 101); L.W. Seymour, Asst. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 14 Apr. 1892 (B.N.S. CCCVII, Sanghar, Khipro, Umakot S.R., 21).

²¹² Seymour to Collr., Karachi, 20 Jan. 1892 (B.N.S. CCCVIII, Mirpurkhas S.R., 34); Moysey to Commr., Sindh, 16 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXI, Tando Allahyar S.R., 14).

²¹³ M.H. Kalvani, Depy. Collr., Kandhkot, to Commr., Sindh, 7 Feb. 1918 (B.N.S. CCCXCIX, Kandhkot, Kashmore S.R., 5).

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Moysey to Commr., Sindh, 16 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXI, Tando Allahyar S.R., 14).

cash rents of, on average, Rs 12 per acre: that year they had to endure the galling sight of their *hari's* waxing rich on the high prices while they themselves had to rest content with their usual rent.²¹⁶ This is an excellent example of the way in which *hari's*, under the *danai* system, could make a profit which under the *batai* system would have been absorbed by their *zamindars*, moreover, it is unlikely that the *hari* was at much of a disadvantage if the crop failed, since he would also have had to stand a good part of the losses under the *batai* system.

This is not to say that, for the *hari*, *danai* was a wholly satisfactory system only that it was more satisfactory than the *batai*. Even under the *danai* system, the *zamindar* claimed his perquisites. Colonel Haig, an experienced Settlement Officer, quoted an example of cash rent in Kotri in 1873. Land was given out per *hurlo* (the area irrigated by a Persian wheel - usually nine acres). A typical rent, he said, would be Rs 24 per *hurlo*. This amounted to about Rs 2-10 per acre which, since the assessment was a rupee per acre, gave the *zamindar* a modest profit of Rs 1-10 per acre. But that was not the whole story. The *zamindar* also demanded 3 *maunds* of grain as *lapo* (a *zamindari* fee), as well as forty bundles of straw. Haig estimated the value of the grain and straw together at Rs 8, so that the real rent on the *hurlo* was Rs 32, or about Rs 3-9 per acre.²¹⁷ In reality, then, the *zamindar's* profit per acre would be Rs 2-9, and the *hari's* profit was reduced in proportion. This example was taken from ordinary *kharif* land. To give an idea of the range of rents charged, Haig quoted instances from different parts of Kotri. In two *dehs*, land was intensively cultivated with sugar cane and other valuable products, so the rents ranged from Rs 4 per acre to as much as Rs 8 per acre (the assessment being Rs 2 per acre); some *sailabi* (flooded) lands were let at Rs 4 per acre and *barani* lands (irrigated by rainfall), when they were cultivated, Paid Rs 2 to Rs 4 per acre. A *zamindar* in *deh* Raela, with 'magnificent' *barani* lands, was able to charge rent of Rs 4 per acre: according to Haig, the *zamindar's* share of straw alone was worth Rs 12 per acre on this land.²¹⁸ Several decades later, in 1918, rents in Kotri were said to vary from Rs 8 to Rs 13 per acre, plus two or two-and-a-half *maunds* of grain as *lapo* and fifty bundles of straw per *hurlo*.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ A.S.V. Ascott, Personal Asst. to Colir., Nawabshah, to Collr., 10 Apr. 1919 (B.N.S. DXXXVII, Sakrand S.R., 13).

²¹⁷ M.R. Haig, Settl. Offr., 6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXIV, Kotri S.R., 37).

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ A.O. Koreishi, Depy. Collr., Kotri, to Commr., Sindh, 12. Oct. 1918 (B.N.S. DXXXV, Kotri S.R., 23). Other examples of cash rents are Rs 70 per ten-acre Survey No. in *taluqa* Tando Allahyar in 1901, with an additional 10-20 bundles of straw and up to one *maund* of grain as *lapo* (J.C. Pringle, Asst., Collr., Tando, to Colir., Hbad., 8 Feb. 1901, B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., 36); Rs 4 Rs 7-4 per *hurlo* in *talnqa* Dero Mohbat in 1908, with an additional 10-20 bundles of straw and *lapo* of one or two *kasas* of threshed grain or a headload of unthreshed ears, (Moysey, n.d. (c. 1908), B.N.S. CCCCLXXXIX, Dero Mohbat S.R., 12). Twenty years later, the cash rent in Dero Mohbat was reported to be between Rs 5 - Rs 10 per *hurlo*, with the extra straw and grain valued at Re 1 per acre (i.e., about Rs 9 - Rs 10 per *hurlo* (A.C. Green, Asst. Rev. Offr., Lloyd Barrage and Canals Scheme, 23 Oct. 1930 - B.Y.S. DCLV, Dero Mohbat S.R., 10).

Apart from these regular charges, some *zamindars* claimed additional extras which sound suspiciously like the 'incidental expenses' of the *batai* system. *Zamindars* in Hala, for instance, charged an extra anna in the rupee on their rent, on the pretext that they needed it to cover the Local Cess Fund levied by Government. In fact, the average cess was only three annas per acre so, as rents ranged from Rs 5 to Rs 14 per acre, they were making a further two to eleven annas profit on every acre they let out.²²⁰

The *danai* system, then, was marginally more advantageous to the *hari* than the *batai* system but, through various pretexts, the amount of Produce which a *hari* could call his own was whittled down as surely under the former system as under the latter. Furthermore, his basic situation was unchanged whether he paid a cash rent or divided the crop. He still needed a *taqavi* loan to provide him with seed and he had to feed and clothe his family. He could not avoid contracting the same debts as *haris* who made *batai* and so much of his surplus crop, after he had paid his rent, was taken by the *zamindar* or a *bania* in satisfaction of those debts, with all the attendant evils which have been described previously.

What was more, the *hari* had to run up an account with a *bania* to acquire the cash to pay the *zamindar*. sometimes he arranged to repay the *bania* by making *batai* with him on much the same terms as he would otherwise, have made with the *zamindar*.²²¹ In these circumstances, the *danai* system appears only slightly different from the *batai* system. The explanation must be that *haris* found *banias* easier to deal with at *batai* than *zamindars*; possibly the *banias* did not cut down the *haris*' shares with so many additional expenses.

Whether they let their lands under the *batai* or *danai* systems, therefore, *zamindars* contrived to keep their *haris* indebted to them and tied into their service - through *taqavi* loans, subsistence allowances and claims for incidental expenses. *Haris* had no choice but to do their bidding, for they had no rights in the land other than those the *zamindars* chose to grant them. These were generally reduced to a seasonal right to retain for themselves a certain amount of the produce which they had cultivated - but, as has been shown above, even this minimal concession was often modified out of existence in practice, the *hari* being allowed to retain very little of the crop.

It is important to emphasize that *haris*' rights, such as they were extended no further than the produce. They could not make use of the land in which the crops grew without the *zamindar*'s express permission. Arthur Young stated the position bluntly in 1855:

²²⁰ E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Hala, to Commr., Sindh, 15 Apr. 1905 (B.N.S. CCCXXXVI, Hala S.R., 26).

²²¹ M.H. Kalvani, Depy. Collr., Kandhkot, to Commr., Sindh, 7 Feb. 1918 (B.N.S. CCCXCIX, Kandhkot, Kashmore S.R., 6).

There is no trace of anything like right of cultivation by the cultivators, or of any right except that of the *zamindar*.²²²

For this reason, it may be misleading to think of *haris* as tenants of the *zamindars*, although they were officially regarded as such: That was the view of Thomas Hart-Davies, Manager of Encumbered Estates in Sindh, who insisted in 1882 that *haris*:

are purely day laborers, getting a share of the produce as their pay.²²³

His opinion was echoed in 1928 by the non-official members of the Fallow Rules Committee, who were all big *zamindars*. They asserted that, in the early days of British rule in Sindh, *haris* were 'laborers, who were brought to work on the land by the *zamindars*,' and who:

received, as their wages, a share of, the produce from the *zamindars*.

They added that the situation had not changed since those days.²²⁴ The implication is clear. Like the land, the crops belonged not to the *hari* but to the *zamindar* who permitted the *hari* to retain a share in payment for his labor.

The best-defined tenancy rights can be overruled by powerful landholders under certain circumstances, but there was no need to overrule them in Sindh as they scarcely existed at all. *Haris* were more like laborers than tenants. They were:

subject to be ousted at any time, according to the caprice of the *Zamindars*.²²⁵

Sometimes they were dismissed in mid-season. One Settlement Officer, who wished to illustrate how tenuous was the *haris*, link with the land they cultivated, remarked that *zamindars* engaged *haris* in exactly the same way as canal-contractors engaged coolies.²²⁶ That is to say, they could be hired and fired as the *zamindars* pleased. He added that *zamindars* had no interest in their *haris* unless they happened to be united by tribal or family bonds.²²⁷ Even if a *hari* did work for the same *zamindar* over a period of years, he could not rely on being regularly allocated the same piece of land as it was a common practice for *zamindars* to rotate their *haris* around their estates. The custom may have

²²² A. Young, Depy. Collr., Note on Rev. Settl. in Sindh (1855) (B.N.S. XVIII, pt. 1, Official Correspondence relative to the Introduction of a Rough Survey and Settlement in the Province of Sindh (Bombay, 1855), 134).

²²³ T. Hart-Davies, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 1 Sept. 1882 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1881-1892, vol. I, compn. no. riot marked). In 1863, E.L. Taverner, Settl. Offr., Hbad., had also described *haris* as laborers hired from year to year, implying that they were not, properly speaking, tenants (to J.T. Francis, 17 Nov. 1863 - *ibid.*, 1863-1864, vol. I, compn. 15).

²²⁴ *Report of the Members of the Fallow Rules Committee*, Sindh (Karachi, 1926), 54.

²²⁵ T.M. Ward, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 12 March 1887 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Tando Bago S.R., 3).

²²⁶ Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 2 May 1901 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1901 (Jan-June), 1174).

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

originated in response to the vagaries of the inundation, *haris* being sent wherever water was available, but the 1945 Tenancy Legislation Committee reached the conclusion that it had developed into a deliberate policy, to forestall any claims which might arise for rights in particular plots of land.²²⁸ The conclusion which Masud drew in his Note of Dissent in 1949 applied to the whole of the preceding century:

The *hari*, who has cultivated a piece of land for several generations, does not know how long he will be allowed to stay on it. Fear reigns supreme in the life of the *hari* ... The *Zamindar* might, at any time, get annoyed with him and oust him.²²⁹

Naturally, *zamindars* did not exercise their powers indiscriminately. The threat of expulsion hanging over the *hari's* head was useful to enforce obedience, but cultivation would have been impossible if it had been used too often. Colonel Haig, the longest-serving Settlement Officer in Sindh, gave a judicious account of how the system operated in 1876:

though many of them pass their lives on the same estates yet "they" possess no right of occupancy and are subject to such conditions as the landholder may from time to time find himself able to impose on them. A prudent landholder however, knows it to be for his interest to keep on good terms with his tenants, and understands the benefit of maintaining in his service a body of cultivators who have grown up on his property: hence most of these tenants-at-will have almost as secure a footing on the land they cultivate as if they enjoyed a right of occupancy.²³⁰

A *hari* could therefore hope for continuity of tenure as a concession from his *zamindar* based upon the *zamindar's* perception of his self-interest. It was convenient and prudent to have a workforce which was ready to hand and familiar. But, at best, such a vague and one-sided arrangement cannot be dignified by the term 'tenancy right.' At worst, a *hari* had no protection against a capricious and imprudent *zamindar* who did not have an enlightened perception of his own best interests.

When one considers the inequitable division of crops at harvest-time and the insecurity of the *hari's* occupancy, one can appreciate that there was little love lost between *haris* and their *zamindars*. A Settlement Officer confessed in 1904 that:

²²⁸ *Report of the Tenancy Legislation Committee* (Karachi, 1945), 3.

²²⁹ Masud, *Hari Committee Report Note of Dissent*, 2.

²³⁰ Quoted in Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 410.

as far as I can see there are no sentimental ties between the land-owners and their tenants.²³¹

Another man put it more bluntly:

the *hari* who serves the *zamindar* out of sheer necessity seldom entertains any kindly feelings for his master who tyrannizes over him in various ways.²³²

It must have been particularly true of the widely scattered great estates, where there was little scope for *haris* to acquire loyalty towards a remote *zamindar*. Matters may have been different on the smaller estates whose *zamindars* were in a Position to achieve a more personal working relationship with their *haris*. Small *zamindars* were reported to take:

a keen interest in their own holdings, and "To be" infinitely preferable to large *zamindars*, who are much alike, whether Muhammadan or Hindu, in their indifference to the interests of their tenants.²³³

This state of affairs had serious economic consequences for the great estates: they were notoriously inefficient. The very power of the great *zamindars* retarded the development of agriculture in Sindh. Not knowing how much of the crop they would be allowed to keep, *haris* had no incentive to swell the profits of their *zamindars* and so they were often slovenly and careless cultivators. The attitude of some *haris* in *talua* Kandiaro in 1909 was typical. They explained that they never bothered to put down manure because they did not know if they would be able to cultivate the same piece of land next year: 'Why should I put manure in another man's land?' they demanded.²³⁴

Insecurity of tenure struck both ways. *Haris* could be ejected, but equally they could run away. Because of the low Population in Sindh, there was always a shortage of labor and *haris* could hope to find employment with someone else if they did not like their present master. If they were caught, the *zamindar* might sue them for debt on account of unpaid *taqavi* loans, but many of them took the risk, knowing it would be difficult to trace them

²³¹ W.F. Hudson, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 22 June 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Mirpur Sakro S.R., 14). On another occasion, Hudson commented that 'very little of the feudal spirit exists between the landowners and their tenants' (28 June 1904 B.N.S. CCCXXIII, Ghorabari S.R., 12).

²³² S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., Nara Valley, to Depy. Commr., T. & P., 23 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXIII, Sanghar S.R., 18).

²³³ E.L. Moysey, Actg. Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 27 June 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXII, Hbad. S.R., 21).

²³⁴ R.B. Milne, Settl. Offr., Naushahro, to Commr., Sindh, 31 May 1909 (B.N.S. CCCXCIII, Kandiaro S.R., 13). In 1893, L.W. Seymour, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, attributed the 'slovenly cultivation' in *talua* Kashmore to the fact that over a third of the cultivable area had fallen into the hands of fifteen individuals and so the rest of the population, reduced to being *haris*, had no incentive to exert themselves (to Commr., Sindh, 27 March 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmore S.R., 13). See also M.R. Haig, Settl. Offr., 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 10).

once they had moved on. The Manager of Encumbered Estates commented ruefully in 1882 that *haris*:

exhibit as I know to my cost a remarkable readiness to change masters if not treated as they think they should be.²³⁵

The Jamrao Colonization Officer made the same point twenty years later:

A *zamindar* must keep his cultivators in a good humor, or they will leave him ... These men are generally careless cultivators, and unless allowed to go their own way, they will leave their landlord, possibly without repaying his advances. The unfortunate *zamindar* is often fined for breach of irrigation rules by cultivators upon whom he dare not put pressure, lest they throw up their cultivation. For the same reason, he is obliged to put up with a great deal of bad cultivation of which he does not approve.²³⁶

This was a *zamindar*'s eye view of the problem, and he came to the odd conclusion that, 'the *zamindar* is entirely in the hands of his *haris*.' He did not concern himself with the reason why a *hari* might feel compelled to throw up his cultivation and damage his own livelihood; he seemed to regard it as willful perversity on the *haris*' part. Neither did the Colonization Officer reflect that poor cultivation was bound to hit the *hari*'s own stomach if he was given his rightful share of the produce. In fact, it made no difference how well the *hari* cultivated; he would still receive no more than his subsistence after *batai*.

Admittedly, some *haris* were nomadic. In the north and west, Baluch tribesmen came into Sindh for the *khariif* season, returning to the villages for the cold weather²³⁷ and in the east, pastoralists from the desert did some cultivation as a sideline while following their herds.²³⁸ Elsewhere in Sindh, though, *haris* were a settled population,²³⁹ although there were some reports of *haris* absconding from their *zamindars*' lands, either because they found the rates of *batai* too high or because the lands were unproductive.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ T. Hart-Davies, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 1 Sept. 1882 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1881-1892, vol. I, compn. no. not marked).

²³⁶ G.E. Chatfield, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 24 Oct. 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXIV, Jamrao Tract S.R., 19).

²³⁷ H.E. Watson, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 16 March 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 58, 1877-1886, compn. 1).

²³⁸ Discussions with Mir Ahmed Khan. Talpur, *zamindar* of Umarkot, Apr. 1977.

²³⁹ Ibid. Also discussions with Mr. Ghulam Rabbani Aggro, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Sindh, 1976-1977.

²⁴⁰ Eg. H.C. Mules, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXIII, Jacooabad S.R., 16); R. Giles, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 June 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., iii); S.H. Covernton, Settlt, Offr., Sehwan, to Commr., Sindh, 23 Apr. 1907 (Bv.NS. CCCCLXXXVIII, Dadu S.R., 10).

Similarly, *haris* were sometimes prepared to move to high quality lands where they could get a better reward for their labor - which did not necessarily mean more favorable rates at bated. In 1905, 'the somewhat cut-throat competition of the *haris*' for some rich *sailab* lands in *talua* Hala forced up the *danai* rates in one deh;²⁴¹ and Bahadur Khan Khoso of Kandhkot was able to charge high *batai* rates (two-thirds for 'flow' and half for 'lift' lands), because he spent a great deal on improving his estate. His outturn was therefore high, so *hari*'s kept more produce than would have been possible on poorly maintained fields which were given out at nominally better rates.²⁴²

Sometimes extensive flooding would make a good *rabi* crop possible in *talua* Kambar, and cultivators would flock in from neighboring *talukas* and from Kalat State to work as *haris*, returning home after the harvest.²⁴³ Since most cultivation in Sindh was conducted in the *kharif* season, this kind of small scale and temporary migration did not draw labor away from adjoining areas.

That was not always the case. Irrigational improvements in one place could have inconvenient side-effects elsewhere. They acted as magnets for labor, attracting *haris* from less fortunate areas. When the Desert Canal was opened in 1872-1873, hundreds of *haris* moved away from Sukkur and Rohri where the water-supply was undependable.²⁴⁴ The Desert Canal supply was so abundant that *haris* could pick and choose where they would work. Predictably, they went wherever they could hope for the greatest outturn from the least effort. They did not develop the region; on the contrary, after a few years, they had overwatered and exhausted the soil, and they moved on elsewhere. The same mentality was at work as those *haris* betrayed who did not use manure because the land did not belong to them: if the land was ruined, it was the owner's problem, not theirs, and they could go on to pastures new. Their lack of concern led to formerly productive lands being rendered waste, with villages deserted. Worst hit was the land in *talukas* Thul and Kashmore which, irrigated from the main canal, had received a particularly good water-supply; the cultivated area was reduced from 62,445 acres in 1881-1882 to 37,080 acres by 1885-1886.²⁴⁵ By this time, new canals had been opened further north; attracted by yet greater prospects, the *haris* moved on, to Bhawalpur State especially. A few years later, as the Desert Canal lands recovered, they began to make their way back again.²⁴⁶

A similar problem developed after the Jamrao Canal was opened in 1901. Most cultivation in Sindh was carried out by 'lift,' in the *kharif* season only - it was laborious,

²⁴¹ E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Hala, to Commr., Sindh, 15 Apr. 1905 (B.N.S. CCCXXXVI, Hala S.R., 27).

²⁴² C. Bulchand, Asst. Settlr. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 30 March 1916 (B.N.S. CCCXCVIII, Kandhkot S.R., 84).

²⁴³ L.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 7 Aug. 1893 (B.N.S. CCCCLVI, Kambar S.R., 2).

²⁴⁴ K. Khan, Actg. Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Pol. Sup., U.S.F., 9 Nov. 1882 (P.S.C., R.D., file 58, 1877-1886, compn. 1).

²⁴⁵ D. Parumal, Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Depy., Commr. U.S.F., 14 Feb. 1887 (ibid., compn. 1a).

²⁴⁶ R. Giles, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 28 Feb. 1887, & Y. Young, Executive Engineer, Begari Canals, to Giles, 23 Feb. 1887 (ibid.).

costly and insecure. The greater part of the Jamrao lands, on the other hand, were irrigated by direct overflow and the supply was guaranteed throughout the year. It was an enticing prospect, especially from the point of view of the *haris*. When Evan James, the Commissioner in Sindh, reported on how the Jamrao Tract was to be colonized he foresaw the danger that, because of the irrigational facilities, *haris* might desert the lands under their cultivation and migrate to the Jamrao area. To avoid this, he recommended that land grants and cultivation in the Jamrao Tract should be strictly Controlled. 85% of the available land was given to *zamindars* whose estates were in or adjacent to the Tract; this was standard practice. Most of the remainder (12% of the total) was given to settlers from outside Sindh, especially to Peasants from the overcrowded regions of the Punjab. They received small plots of 16 to 32 acres which they cultivated personally, without any need of *haris*. Only 2% of the cultivable area was given to *zamindars* from other parts of Sindh. They were carefully selected as reliable men who would run their farms efficiently. They had to settle in the Tract itself and they were not permitted to bring with them any *haris* who were already cultivating; from Government canals: they were obliged to recruit their *haris* locally, or else find non-Sindhis to do the job. The remaining one percent of the land was given to military pensioners, capitalists and to some men considered worthy on political grounds, on the same terms. These rules were framed to prevent the Jamrao from prospering at the expense of the rest of Sindh.²⁴⁷

Any Jamrao *zamindar* found to have imported *haris* from elsewhere in Sindh was liable to forfeit his grant if he did not send them back. The Jamrao Colonization Officer admitted in 1901 that those *haris* who formed a floating population, drifting from *zamindar* to *zamindar*, could not be kept out, but he was sure the precautions taken by Government would ensure that *haris* did not desert their *zamindars* in adjoining areas.²⁴⁸ He was proved wrong; it was impossible to exclude Sindhi *haris* altogether. From the outset, *haris* left the nearby Mithrao Tract, where irrigation was poor, and ran away to the Jamrao.²⁴⁹ Even the Punjabi peasants succumbed to temptation when they found so many *haris* offering their services and action had to be taken to prevent them employing Sindhi *haris*.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ James to Govr., Bombay, 11 Dec. 1899 (R.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (Jan-June), 217-222, 229-233). The main political grants included awards to Mohammad Yakub, a Depy. Collr., and to Nawab Shahbaz Khan, chief of the Bugti tribe, for their help in putting down the Hur Rebellion of 1896 (James, memo., 23 May 1898, *ibid.*, 1898, 489), and to Junior (non-royal family) Talpurs. By 1903 1904, a total of 5,78,396 acres had been given out in the Jamrao Tract, as follows: local landholders - 4,82,253 acres; Sindhi *zamindars* from outside the Tract - 11,038 acres; Punjabi colonists - 51,992 acres; non-Punjabi colonists - 17,353 acres; Junior Talpurs - 9,731 acres; military pensioners - 4,860 acres; others - 1,168 acres (G.E. Chatfield, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 23 Aug. 1901, App. I - *ibid.*, 1904 (July- Dec), 2488).

²⁴⁸ L. Robertson, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, Report (pt. III), 31 July 1901 (*ibid.*, 1901 (July-Dec.), 2191).

²⁴⁹ M. Yakub, Actg. Depy. Commr., T. & P., to Commr., Sindh, 13 Aug. 1901 (*ibid.*, 2404).

²⁵⁰ Commr., Sindh, memo., 3 March 1902 (*ibid.*, 1902 (Jan-July), 381).

Despite the conditions imposed by Government, the Jamrao Tract continued to lure *haris* from the less fortunate parts of Sindh. The Indus Delta region was especially badly hit. It was, at the best of times, a poor area and a Settlement Officer reported in 1904 that *taluka* Mirpur Sakro had been reduced to 'a more wretched condition than any non-desert *taluka* in Sindh,' as a result of the malfunctioning of the *Baghiar* Canal. He explained that *zamindars* had suffered greatly from desertion by *haris* who:

finding cultivation in this *taluka* did not afford them even a moderate livelihood, have fled across the river to Shahbandar, or gone to seek their fortunes on the banks of the Jamrao.²⁵¹

It was a longstanding problem which the opening of the Jamrao in 1900 exacerbated but did not create. Between 1891-1901, the population of the *taluka* had increased by only 6%, compared with 20% over the previous decade - and the Settlement Officer warned that the population could probably have decreased had it not been for a influx of famine-stricken refugees from Kutch. As the labor force diminished, agriculture suffered; during the 1890's, the average cultivated area declined from 27,610 acres to 23,605 acres.²⁵² In the nearby *taluka* of Thatta, the cultivated area was reduced from an average of 23,957 acres in 1894-1899 to 23,207 acres in 1699-1903; this, also, was said to be a result of the shortage of *haris*.²⁵³

Zamindars' response to their difficulties was interesting and instructive. There was a good inundation in *taluka* Ghorabari in 1904, but *zamindars* were unable to take advantage of it as they could not find the extra *haris* to extend cultivation. Under the circumstances, one might have expected that they would try to attract labor by offering favorable *batai* rates. However, they did not do so. In that year, the *batai* rates quoted in Ghorabari were at the traditional low level of the Delta region - the *haris* kept one quarter of the produce on 'flow' lands and half on 'lift' lands, with the *zamindar* loaning seed for which he reimbursed himself at *batai*.²⁵⁴ Instead of using the prospect of a better living to entice the *haris* to stay, the *zamindars* resorted to punitive measures. They started to give vast *taqavi* loans, of up to Rs 100, which would be repaid when the *hari* left the *zamindar's* service. The intention was to tie the *haris* down with overwhelming debts so that they could not escape. Unfortunately for the *zamindars*, the plan often misfired because many *haris* took the risk of running away without repaying the debts,

²⁵¹ W.F. Hudson, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 22 June 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXII, Mirpur Sakro S.R., 14).

²⁵² Ibid. The total population of Mirpur Sakro *taluka* was 21,711 in 1881, 26,064 in 1891 and 27,600 in 1901.

²⁵³ Hudson, 20 June 1904 (B.N'.S. CCCXXXI, Thatta S.R., 2, 18). The population of Thatta *taluka* was 39,750 in 1881, 45,647 in 1891 and 49,085 in 1901, so the argument that there were fewer *haris* is, on the face of it, less convincing than for Mirpur Sakro.

²⁵⁴ Hudson, 28 June 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXIII, Ghorabari S.R., 2412). The population of Ghorabari *taluka* was 34,360 in 1881, 30,518 in 1891 and 34,736 in 1901.

or else, knowing repayment was beyond their means, they became lazy and indifferent; either way, it was the *zamindars* who suffered in the long run.²⁵⁵

Even when there was a chronic shortage of labor, therefore, market forces did not operate in favor of work people. The reason was simple, that the law of the *zamindar* made short work of the law of supply and demand. The fact that the *zamindars'* policy was not successful only emphasizes the point: their power enabled them to perpetuate customs which, by discouraging the labor force, actually worked against their own best interests. Similarly, according to the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Sindh Frontier, the emigration of *haris* from the Desert Canal lands in the 1870's was partly a result of the bad treatment they received from their *zamindars*; he alleged that the Begari Canal *zamindars*, who adopted a more reasonable attitude, did not suffer from desertion on the same scale.²⁵⁶

The cumulative impression of this evidence is that *haris* were feckless and disinterested in cultivation. Knowing that they would not get a fair share of the crop, but that the *zamindar* was bound to keep them alive if he wished to harvest anything at all, they put the minimum effort into their work. For their part, the *zamindars* tried to bully *haris* into obedience through *taqavi* loans (which were also, in a sense, bribes) and by occasionally throwing them off the land. Only when conditions became intolerable, as in the Delta at the turn of the century, did *haris* try to remedy their situation - and their response was to go away and be *haris* elsewhere. In this way, the labor shortage, instead of strengthening the position of the working man, may in fact have helped to keep it weak by keeping alive the hope of escape. Instead of standing up to the *zamindar*, as he might have been obliged to do in a more crowded province, the *hari* could simply run away from his problem.

IV

Haris might have become more conscientious agriculturists if they had been given security of tenure, but no such action was discussed in nineteenth century Sindh. For much of the century, British thinking was informed by *laissez-faire* principles: many administrators believed that contracts, freely entered into, were the best guarantee of justice and prosperity. The Irish Land Act of 1860 had overridden tenancy rights in Ireland by providing that relations between landlord and tenant should be governed by contract only,²⁵⁷ and there was no reason why rights denied to the Irish should be granted to Indians. Moreover, the Indian Mutiny was widely believed to have taught.

²⁵⁵ L.W. Seymour, Sup., Land Records & Agri., Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 20 Apr. 1899 (B.N.S. CCCXXVI, Jati S.R., 16). See also Hudson's Mirpur Sakro S.R., 14, Thatta S.R., 18, Ghorabari S.R., 12.

²⁵⁶ R. Giles, Depy. Comm., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 28 Feb. 1887 (P.S.C., R.D., file 58, 1877-1886, comm. Ia).

²⁵⁷ J. Raj, *The Mutiny and British Land Policy in North India, 1856-1868* (London, 1965), 81.

the lesson that there interference with the *status quo*.²⁵⁸ This was inducement to leave well alone.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the conventional wisdom became less rigid, and less cautious. The Famine Commission of 1880 recommended that tenants-at-will should be given greater protection,²⁵⁹ and some steps in this direction were taken in Oudh in 1886, when tenants-at-will were given a measure of security: after 1921, they were given life tenure.²⁶⁰

No similar measures were considered in Sindh. When, in 1902, the Government of Bombay enquired whether any tenancy legislation was needed in Sindh, officers serving there replied emphatically that it was not. *Haris*, they said, were very well off. The Collector of Larkana expressed the classic view that the law of contract was more than adequate protection, if only the *haris* would take advantage of it. Because of the labor shortage:

the tenant is generally in a better position than the landlord, and needs no protection whatever; and as a matter of fact he could make far more advantageous terms for himself than he does at present were it not for the extreme conservatism of the Mahomedan population in Sindh, which induces the tenant quietly to accept the terms imposed by custom and tradition.²⁶¹

This analysis was fine in theory, but it did not take account of the realities of the situation. If the *zamindar* was unwilling to alter 'the terms imposed by custom and tradition,' there was little the *hari* could do about it, for the *zamindar* was entitled, as a 'superior holder' under the Land Revenue Code, to take him to Court and force him to pay his customary rent. The terms imposed by custom and tradition had all the backing of the British legal system.²⁶² No legislation was introduced to protect *haris* until long after the creation of Pakistan. During the British period, only the Deccan Agriculturists

²⁵⁸ Cf. T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton University, 1965), 176-179.

²⁵⁹ C.H. Philips (ed.), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947: Select Documents* (Oxford, 1962), 631.

²⁶⁰ Neale, *Economic Change in Rural India*, 104.

²⁶¹ W.H. Lucas, Collr., Larkana, to Commr., Sindh, 9 May 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 113). The Bombay Government's enquiries were prompted by the Report of the 1901 Famine Commission, which recommended tenancy legislation to improve the condition of peasants in the Bombay Presidency. The Commissioner in Sindh advised that it would be harmful to interfere between *zamindars* and *haris* (memo., 15 May 1902, *ibid.*, 109), and the consensus among Sindh officials supported him (*ibid.*, 109-126). The Government of Bombay, in its turn, came to the conclusion that legislation would not benefit any part of the Presidency, and so no action was taken as a result of the Famine Commission's suggestions (Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 719, 2 Feb. 1902, *ibid.*, 101-108).

²⁶² If a superior holder applied to a Collector for assistance in recovering his dues from a tenant, the Collector had to base his decision on 'the rent payable by the usage of the locality.' He had no discretion to withhold assistance for the recovery of rent which he had found to be lawfully due. Either party could appeal to a civil court against the Collector's decision, but, in view of the costs involved, this was hardly a course of action open to the average *hari* (H.V. Sathe, Annotated Edition of the Land Revenue Code, containing Bombay Act V of 1879 and the rules passed thereunder (Poona, 1892), 114).

relief Act, extended to Sindh in 1901, made a slight modification to the system by exempting *haris* from prosecution if they failed to repay their *taqavi* loans.²⁶³ This made it less risky for the *haris* to run away, but, as the experience of the Desert Canal lands and the Delta shows, the risks had not deterred *haris* in the past. No legislation could prevent *zamindars* giving private punishments to *haris* if they wished. In 1945, a Tenancy Legislation Committee recommended that *haris* should be given a limited degree of protection if they had worked for the same *zamindars* for ten years, but even this minimal proposal was never put into effect.²⁶⁴

British administrators were remarkably averse to disturbing the relations between *zamindars* and *haris*. Though some officials expressed sympathy for *haris*, the majority viewed rural society through the *Wadero's* eyes; consequently, they were somewhat prejudiced against the aspirations of *haris*. They commonly saw *haris* as a threat to *zamindars* and successive generations of administrators convinced themselves that the *hari* was prospering at the *zamindar's* expense. The earliest reference in this vein was a Memorandum by Evan James in 1873; *haris*, he said, were becoming too powerful - they were absconding from their estates and ruining their masters.²⁶⁵ Thirty years later, an officer reported that the *zamindar* had recovered his strength, but he confirmed that a few years previously; 'the *zamindar* was more or less at the mercy of the *hari*;²⁶⁶ one of his contemporaries, however, thought the danger was not yet past, for he insisted:

the party in power here is the cultivator. The *zamindar* is here on sufferance.²⁶⁷

A *zamirdar* member of the 1943 Tenancy Committee wrote:

Hari's today have usually the upper hand. It is rather *zamindar* who needs protection ... against the *haris*.²⁶⁸

A Deputy Commissioner stationed in Sindh said much the same thing in 1976: according to him, although the *zamindar* had been powerful before, successive land reforms had eroded his position and within a few years the *haris* would be the power in

²⁶³ Lucas to Commr., Sindg, 9 May 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 113).

²⁶⁴ The Committee recommended that tenancy rights should be given to *haris* who had personally cultivated four acres of land annually for the same *zamindar* for ten years. There was nothing to prevent *haris* being evicted before they became eligible, except that the *zamindar* was supposed to give a *hari* one year's notice (two years if the *hari* had served him for six years or more). Even 'protected' *haris* who had been given rights would not have had full security of tenure; the Committee suggested that they could be evicted if, for example, they were inefficient cultivators or if they did some cultivation for other *zamindars* (Report of the Tenancy Legislation Committee, 3-6).

²⁶⁵ H.E.M. James, Under Secy., Govt. of Bombay, memo., 21 July 1873 (Papers relating to the Revenue Settlement in Sindh (Bombay, 1875), 488).

²⁶⁶ S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., to Depy. Commr., T & P., 31 March 1905 (B.N.S. CCCCLIX, Umarnkot S.R., 15).

²⁶⁷ J.C. Pringle, Asst. Collr., Tando, to Collr., Hbad., 8 Feb. 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLI, Tando Allahyar S.R., 42).

²⁶⁸ Report of the Tenancy Legislation Committee, Minute of Dissent by Dialmal Doulatram, 13.

the land.²⁶⁹ This quotation brings the wheel full circle, back to James' Memorandum of 1873.

There is a sameness about these comments. The *hari* is strong, so the *zamindari* system is about to collapse: but it never does. It is extraordinary that the *hari*, weighed down with debts and in constant danger of dismissal, could ever be regarded as a rival to the *zamindar*. It is worth looking at the impressions of Sir Lancelot Graham, who has appointed Governor of Sindh in 1936. He confessed to the Viceroy that he could not appreciate the prevailing view of Sindh officials that *haris* 'do not require to have any rights.' He himself believed that some form of tenancy legislation was vital, to improve *haris*' conditions and forestall an eventual agrarian revolt.²⁷⁰

Neither the reforms nor the revolt materialized, for Graham had underestimated the power of the *Wadero*. *Haris* had no option but to submit to the terms imposed by *zamindars*. Here, also, is the explanation of the partiality shown by British officers towards big *zamindars*. The local administration depended on the collaboration of *Waderos*, and so it was essential that the rural power-structure should be preserved, with them at the top. It was inevitable that administrators should reserve their sympathy for their formidable collaborators, leaving the *hari* in his traditional, lowly place.

²⁶⁹ Interview with S. Siddiqui, Depy. Commr., Thatta, 19 Oct. 1976.

²⁷⁰ L. Graham, Govr., Sindh, to Govr.General, India, 5 June 1937 (I.O.R., Pol. & Jud. Dept., Govrs.' Fortnightly Reports: Sindh, 1937).

Chapter 3

Rural Power: 2. The *Waderos*

I

Great landed magnates, the Muslim *jagirdars* and big *zamindars*, had appropriated a considerable amount of power to themselves in the rural areas of Sindh. In effect, they constituted the local administration, all village affairs being left to them. There was in Sindh no regular system of village administration, such as existed elsewhere in India.²⁷¹ R.K. Pringle, the first Commissioner in Sindh, explained in 1847:

The population is not, as in India, divided into village communities each having its hereditary establishment for the management of its affairs; nor are there any hereditary district establishments; the heads of tribes and castes exercise an undefined influence among their members, and this may in some degree, though I apprehend very imperfectly, supply the want of those useful institutions which contribute so much to facilitate our revenue and police arrangements in India.²⁷²

The situation remained unchanged throughout the nineteenth century. In 1882, a report on Land Tenures in Sindh emphasized that, if a village system had ever flourished in Sindh, it no longer did so:

all trace of an organization for administrative purposes, all traces of hereditary village-officers with assigned duties and remuneration, has long since passed away.²⁷³

These words were echoed by a Commissioner in Sindh in 1904:

there is in Sindh no village system ... There are indeed few villages proper. The *Deh* of Sindh is a revenue unit consisting generally of a cluster of hamlets rather than villages ... There are no hereditary village officers or village servants.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ R. Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London & Toronto, 1968), 25-29.

²⁷² R.K. Pringle, *Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 31 Dec. 1851* (Selections from the pre-Mutiny Records of the Commissioner in Sindh (n.d.) (hereafter referred to as pre-Mutiny Records, 3).

²⁷³ 'Land Tenures in Sindh' (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1882, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 30, 275).

²⁷⁴ *Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Oct. 1904* (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1905 (Jan-June), *Confl. Pr.*, par. 2).

It was therefore the great *zamindars* and *jagirdars* who looked after local affairs and represented local interests. Government and people both relied, on them to administer the countryside. Their influence was fully recognized and utilized by the British; the Government of Bombay declared in 1893 that they were:

the medium through which the administration of the Province is mainly carried on outside the large towns. They are the interpreters between Government and the general body of the population.²⁷⁵

They were, in a word, the rock upon which British rule in Sindh was founded. Before looking at the relationship between Government and the magnates, however, it is necessary to consider who the magnates were, and from where they derived their importance. First the *jagirdars* will be discussed, then the *Wederos* - the great *zamindars*.

II

Jagirdars were the most distinguished figures in the countryside. Before the British conquest they had exercised virtually paramount power within their *jagirs*, holding jurisdiction over the administration of criminal justice and the police and over petty matters of civil law.²⁷⁶ Some of them were great Baluch *Sardars* (chiefs) who had been given *jagirs* by the Talpurs and their predecessors as a means of buying their allegiance or, at least, discouraging their enmity. Others were warrior chiefs who, under the Talpurs, had received *jagirs* in return for putting their armed retainers at the disposal of their Mir. Captain Preedy, who had been Political Agent at Karachi before the British conquest, described them as:

a fierce and turbulent body, like the Mamelukes of Egypt, formidable alike to princes and people, who had pushed the Mirs into war with the British in 1843.²⁷⁷

Napier, the conqueror of Sindh, had no intention of allowing the *jagirdars* to retain their huge powers. He deprived them of their legal functions, setting up a regular police force and giving magisterial powers to his own subordinates. However, he had no wish - to humiliate them: he believed they were the aristocracy of Sindh and hoped that, overcoming their natural resentment of their new masters, they would collaborate with the Government, using their influence, as country gentlemen, in favor of the British.²⁷⁸ One of Napier's first acts as Governor of Sindh was to confirm in perpetuity the *jagirs* of all those men who came to Karachi before 24 May 1844 to 'salaam' him as a gesture of submission.²⁷⁹ It was a singularly rash and ill-considered move, which he soon came to

²⁷⁵ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 115, 17 May 1893 (P.S.C., J.D., 1893, file 1, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 108, 935).

²⁷⁶ History of Alienations in the Province of Sindh (Bombay, 1886-1888), vol. I, 8.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 62, 77.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

regret. It had been Talpur practice to pay their civil and military establishment through the allocation of *jagirs*, the functionaries receiving revenue from *zamindars* in lieu of salaries.²⁸⁰ As well as the men of note whom Napier wished to encourage, the list of *jagirdars* therefore included a host of officials from the defunct regime, whose duties had now been taken over by British employees. As the Collector of Hyderabad remarked, Napier had:

guaranteed to continue Pro tempore the payment of more than half of the civil and military and some of the personal establishment of the ex-Amirs.²⁸¹

He had confirmed, without any preliminary enquiry, no less than 1,993 *sanads* (title-deeds).²⁸² In the Hyderabad Collectorate alone, seventeen *lakhs* of acres had been alienated in *jagir*.²⁸³

The subsequent history of British *jagir* policy was a retreat from Napier's excessively generous gesture. The problem was to weed out those adherents of the old Baluch regime who were of no political value, while ensuring that men who could be useful to the British did not suffer. Traditionally, *jagirs* had been held at the pleasure of the ruler. When he died, all *jagirs* granted by him lapsed unless they were reconfirmed by his successor. Napier had introduced the hereditary principle and his successors adhered to his wishes, as their colleagues all over India had done in similar circumstances. By making *jagirs* hereditary, the British transformed *jagirdars* into an aristocracy on the modern English pattern - an ornamental noble elite with an assured source of income and no responsibilities unless they chose to interest themselves in public life. It was vital that this newly constituted aristocracy should be an exclusive band no men from inferior stations should be allowed in.

Until 1853, British policy towards *jagirdars* was confused and incoherent. Napier had started the process of weeding out unimportant *jagirdars* as early as 1845, when he decreed that *jagirs* granted as remunerations for offices which no longer existed should lapse to Government on the death of the present incumbents, and that no *jagir* should be re-granted without Government sanction.²⁸⁴ However, no rules were laid down to guide officers' investigations into *jagir* successions and decisions were made on an *ad-hoc* basis. As individuals' grants lapsed, doubts arose as to how their cosharers were affected, and people did not know which *jagirs* had been entirely resumed and which

²⁸⁰ B.N.S. LXVI, Summary of Proceedings relating to the Settlement of Jagheer Holdings in the Province of Sindh (Bombay, 1862) 'hereafter referred to as Jagheer Holdings', 5.

²⁸¹ *History of Alienations*, vol. I, 68.

²⁸² L. Pelly, Actg. First Asst. Commr. for Jagirs, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 1 Jan. 1856 (P.G.B., R.D., 12 Dec. 1857, pr., 9197, par. 20).

²⁸³ Rev. queries by Pringle, 1847: reply to query No. 4 by Capt. Rathborne, Collr., Hbad. (pre-Mutiny Records, 63).

²⁸⁴ *Jagheer Holdings*, 2; *History of Alienations*, vol. I, 28-33.

had not.²⁸⁵ Matters were not helped by the fact that the investigating officers kept no record of the terms on which they had re-granted the *sanads*.²⁸⁶

The policy, or lack of it, was thoroughly unsatisfactory, and when Bartle Frere became Commissioner in Sindh in 1852, he decided to set up a systematic *jagir* enquiry, to settle the *jagir* question once and for all. Barrow Ellis, Frere's deputy, was appointed Special Commissioner for *Jagirs* in 1853; his long and exhaustive investigations were not completed until 1853, when at last he was able to present a comprehensive report to the Government of Bombay.²⁸⁷ The details of his work have been fully described elsewhere.²⁸⁸ It is only necessary here to outline the most important aspects of his *jagir* policy.

Ellis established four classes of *jagirs*, based on the antiquity of the *sanads*. First-class *jagirs* predated the Talpur accession of 1783. The Talpurs had not been generous in confirming grants made by their predecessors, so Ellis reasoned that anyone whose *jagir* had survived such a long time must come from a family sufficiently important to merit special consideration. First-class *jagirs* were to be held in-perpetuity, undiminished and unassessed. As a result, a large extent of land (2.38 lakhs of acres) was alienated under Class 1, but much of it was barren and uncultivable.²⁸⁹ Altogether, fourteen first-class *jagirs* were confirmed, but 85% of the area alienated was held by only six men - Maliks Sardar Khan and Jehana Khan Numrio, Jam Mehr Ali Jokhio, Wadero Ghaibi Khan Chandio and Wadero Karim Dad Mari.²⁹⁰ These were tribal chiefs who were given their *jagirs* on behalf of their tribes rather than as personal possessions.

Ghaibi Khan Chandio's *jagir* was equivalent to a semi-autonomous state, for he held 1,48,024 acres, over half the total granted under Class 1; all of it was on Chandio tribal territory.²⁹¹

Second-class *jagirs* were confirmed to members of the four great Talpur families (Shandadani, Shahwani, Manikani and Khanani) and the 'Sindh *Sardars*,' men whose *sanads* had been awarded between 1783-1810. The Talpurs were a special case because they were the former rulers. Napier had promised that they would be given greater privileges than the other *jagirdars* and good faith demanded that Government honor his Pledge, although there was no record of what he had in mind. Napier had laid down as a fixed rule that all *jagirdars* must 'resign' (i.e. give up) their wastelands and pay

²⁸⁵ *Jagheer Holdings*, 13.

²⁸⁶ Pelly to Commr., 1 Jan. 1856 (P.G.B., R.D.), 12 Dec. 1857, pr. 9197, par. 28).

²⁸⁷ B.H. Ellis, Special Commr. for Jagirs, Sindh, report, 10 Nov. 1858 (ibid. 21 Feb. 1859, pr. 1061).

²⁸⁸ See *History of Alienations*; H. Khuhro, 'The British Administration of Sindh between 1843 and 1865: A Study in Social and Economic Development' (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1965), 64-148, & *The Making of Modern Sindh: British Policy and Social Change in the Nineteenth Century* (Karachi, 1978), 53-107.

²⁸⁹ Ellis, report, 10 Nov. 1858 (P.G.B., R.D., 21 Feb. 1859, pr. 1061, pars. 4-5).

²⁹⁰ *Jagheer Holdings*, 152-157.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

Government a quarter of their revenue from *jagir* land as *chowth*.²⁹² Ellis decided to resume the Talpurs' wastelands, but he excused them from paying *chowth*. As a result, the total *jagir* holding of the four great Talpur families was reduced from eight lakhs of acres in 1858, to five lakhs.²⁹³ Ellis selected 36 Talpurs from the four families as being sufficiently important to qualify for this preferential treatment. Their *jagirs* were confirmed in perpetuity to the lineal male heirs.²⁹⁴

The Sindh *Sardars* were a mixed bunch of men, of various ranks. They included fourteen less senior Talpurs, along with 49 Baluch notables and eleven assorted Sindhis and Sayeds, making a total of 74 *Sardars*.²⁹⁵ In 1858, they held three lakhs of acres, but they had to resign all *jagir* land in excess of 2,500 acres each, to reduce their total alienation to half a *lakh* of acres. However, Ellis felt Napier's other rule, that a quarter of the *jagir* revenue must be levied as *chowth*, could not be strictly applied to the Sindh *Sardars*: it would injure the interests of some *Sardars* from good families, but would be over-indulgent to others who were of inferior status. He therefore decided each case on its merits.²⁹⁶ In the event, 45 *Sardars* were deemed of sufficient standing to be relieved from payment of *chowth* altogether, seventeen paid *chowth*, two were partly assessed and ten, the least influential of the *Sardars*, were fully assessed.²⁹⁷

The *sanads* of third-class *jagirdars* were dated between 1810-1833. They were continued to the incumbents at the time of the British conquest without payment of *chowth*.²⁹⁸ When the incumbent died, his heir had to pay *chowth* and, on his death, the *jagir* lapsed to Government.²⁹⁹ Fourth-class *jagirs* had been granted between 1833 and the conquest in 1843. Ellis made them into life-grants which reverted to Government on the deaths of the incumbents.³⁰⁰ Ellis believed the *jagirdars* created between 1810 and the conquest were men of little standing. In 1810, Sindh had been divided between two Mirs, each of whom issued many new *sanads*. The trend was intensified after 1833, when Sindh was split into four parts; the rival Mirs bided against each other for the services of Baluch soldiers, offering *jagirs* in exchange for loyalty.³⁰¹

Ellis did not adhere to his rules too rigidly when investigating *sanads*. He treated them rather as guidelines from which he could depart when circumstances warranted it. He was, above all, anxious to ensure that important men were not excluded from the ranks

²⁹² History of Alienations, vol. I, 31 7:32, 77.

²⁹³ Ellis, report, 3 July 1858 (P.G.B., R.D., 21 Sept. 1858, pr. 6372, pars. 3, 7).

²⁹⁴ Ibid., par. 53; Jagheer Holdings, App. B, 124-129.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., App. D, 140-151.

²⁹⁶ Ellis, report, 14 Oct. 1858 (P.G.B., R.D., 21 Feb. 1859, pr. 1004, pars. 15-18, 29-77).

²⁹⁷ Jagheer Holdings, App. D, 140-151.

²⁹⁸ The conquest was dated from Napier's victory over the Mirs at the Battle of Miani on 17 Feb. 1843. Those who died in the battle were regarded as the incumbents.

²⁹⁹ History of Alienations, vol. I, 31-32.

³⁰⁰ Pelly to Commr., 1 Jan. 1856 (P.G.B., R.D., 12 Dec. 1857, Pr. 9197, par. 57).

³⁰¹ History of Alienations, vol. I, 191.

of hereditary *jagirdars* on technicalities. If he considered that a man's rank or influence was sufficiently high, Ellis might upgrade his *sanad* even if it ought, strictly, to have been time-barred.³⁰² For example, Wadero Ghaibi Khan Chandio's *jagir* had been granted in 1818 so he ought only to have been entitled to a third-class *jagir*. Ellis made him a first-class *jagirdar* for the same reasons that the Talpurs had issued him the *sanad* in the first place: he was head of the Chandio tribe, on the border with Baluchistan, and it was essential that he should be well disposed toward the Government of Sindh.³⁰³ Similarly, the Numrios' *jagirs* predated the Talpur Government, but they had no *sanads* to prove their case. Ellis awarded them first-class *jagirs* but he doubted whether their *Sardar* would have been able to retain any of his *jagirs* if normal procedures had been followed.³⁰⁴ On a lower level, Sayed Ghulam Rasul Shah of Jhangara, near Sehwan, was included on the roll of Sindh *Sardars*, although the date on his *sanad* qualified him for no more than a third-class *jagir*. This was done in recognition of the high position his family had enjoyed under the Talpurs and the great influence they still exerted in the neighborhood of Sehwan.³⁰⁵

Ellis' *jagir* settlement did not introduce any great changes into the rural power-structure. It merely confirmed the importance of certain families and allowed insignificant men to fade into obscurity. Those third and fourth-class *jagirdars* who had a *zamindari* interest in their land were not seriously affected when their *jagirs* lapsed to Government. The incomes of these men did not depend wholly on *jagir* revenues: they also had farms of their own, either within their *jagirs* or elsewhere. When Mir Jam died in 1904, his life *jagir* was resumed by Government, but his heir, Mir Ali Akbar Khan, was not reduced to penury. Mir Jam had a *zamindari* interest in his *jagir* and so, instead of inheriting a large *jagir*, Ali Akbar inherited an enormous *zamindari* estate of 15,594 acres,³⁰⁶ ample to ensure the family's continued influence over their neighbors. Ali Akbar's nearest rival in *taluka* Hyderabad was Sayed Zainalabadin Shah, who held a relatively paltry estate of 778 acres.³⁰⁷ In the same way, when Ghulam Khan Laghari's *jagir* was resumed, his sons lost little; they remained as substantial landholders, with estates of 1,973 acres and 1,352 acres respectively.³⁰⁸

³⁰² Ellis, report, 14 Oct. 1858 (P.G.B., R.D., 21 Feb. 1859, pr. 1004, par. 15).

³⁰³ Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 5 Apr. 1859 (*ibid.*, 3 June 1859, pr. 3254, par. 5).

³⁰⁴ Ellis, memo., n.d. (*ibid.*, Sept. 1852, pr. 11392, par. 16); report, 10 Nov. 1858 (*ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1859, pr. 1006, par. 6).

³⁰⁵ *History of Alienations*, vol. II, 278.

³⁰⁶ E.L. Moysey, Actg. Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 27 June 1906, App. XX (B.N.S. CCCCLXII, Hbad. S.R., 96).

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ L.W. Seymour, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 7 Feb. 1894, App. XX (B.N.S. CCCIX, Hale S.R., 67).

On the other hand, those men who had no *zamindari* interest in their *jagirs*, and who lacked the acumen to acquire such an interest in the meantime,³⁰⁹ faded from the scene. In 1882, for example, Ali Gohar Laghari died. His life *jagir* had been worth Rs 5,004 per year, but he had no *zamindari* interest in the land. His only survivor, a daughter, was left destitute.³¹⁰ Ten years later, Ali Gohar's younger brother, who had depended on him for his subsistence, was granted a compassionate allowance of Rs 12 per month to save him from penury.³¹¹ When Fateh Khan Mari died in 1880, his relatives had to subsist on the fifty acres on land in which he held a *zamindari* interest, the remaining 600 acres of his fourth-class *jagir* lapsing to Government.³¹²

Whenever a *jagir* lapsed and the holder had no *zamindari* interest, Government softened the blow by granting compassionate allowances to his immediate dependants.³¹³ The rest of the family had to make their way as *zamindars* or else disappear into the mass of smallholders and *haris*. In this way, the less important *jagirdars* faded away gradually and fairly painlessly, leaving the men of substance to exert their influence as first or second-class *jagirdars* or as *Waderos*. By 1900, all third and fourth-class *jagirs* had been resumed by Government. While a lack of lineal male heirs had cut the number of hereditary *jagirdars* almost by half. Forty-seven Sindh *Sardars* held 66,110 acres and twenty-six representatives of the four great Talpur families held 4,18,252 acres. Sixteen³¹⁴ first-class *jagirdars* held 2,49,266 acres. Only a ninth of the occupied area of Sindh was therefore alienated in *jagir*.³¹⁵ Ellis' policy of reducing *jagir* lands to a minimum had been eminently successful.

³⁰⁹ Sayed Ghulam Rasul Shah of *taluqa* Sehwan had no *zamindari* interest in his *jagir*, although he held *zamindari* land elsewhere in Sehwan and Mehar (M.R. Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 - I.O.R. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 5). He therefore persuaded Sayed Gimbal Shah, who held the *zamindari* on Ghulam Rasul's *jagir*, to give him cultivation rights on the land (bond, 12 Feb. 1869). This produced a complicated arrangement, whereby the *jagirdar*, as inferior holder, paid rent to the *zamindar* who in turn paid revenue back to the *jagirdar* (from papers in possession of Sayed Pir Bux Shah of Jhangara, *taluqa* Sehwan). Ghulam Rasul's *jagir* did not lapse to Govt., but the episode illustrates the way in which a *jagirdar* could insure himself against loss in the event of his *jagir* being resumed, if he was sufficiently astute.

³¹⁰ When her plight came to the notice of Govt., she was awarded a compassionate allowance of Rs 12 per month (Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 6707, 18 Aug. 1885 - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1885 (Jan-June), 657).

³¹¹ Commr., Sindh, memo., 8 June 1893 (ibid., 1893, 1011-1012).

³¹² Ibid., 17 Apr. 1880 (ibid., 1880, 357).

³¹³ For example, see Commr., 2 Nov. 1877 (ibid., 1877, 842) & Collr., Hbad., to Commr., 26 Sept. 1884 (ibid., 1885 (Jan-June), 29). The custom of granting compassionate allowances, to the widows of senior *jagirdars* at least, dated back to the time of the Talpurs (Ellis, 23 Jan. 1854 - ibid, 16 March 1854, pr. 2716, par. 2).

³¹⁴ Two first class-*jagirs* were created by the British Govt., in addition to Ellis' *jagir* settlement. One was a tribal grant in U.S.F. which was treated as a first-class *jagir* (E.H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* (London, 1907), 419) and the other was awarded to Seth Naomal Hotchand for services rendered during the conquest of Sindh (History of Alienations, vol, II, 58-61).

³¹⁵ Report on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency, 1900-1901 (Bombay, 1901), App. VIII, 32. 7,33,628 acres were alienated in *jagir*, while 56,06,202 acres were held on ordinary tenure from Govt.

III

Most of the *jagirdars* were Baluchis and few powerful Sindhis had been included on the *jagir* roll. The British Government did not feel it was necessary to redress the balance by appointing more Sindhis as *jagirdars*. The British had no use for *jagirdars per se*. The most important tribal chiefs, the Talpurs and the Sindh *Sardars* had been confirmed in their *jagirs*, not to give them power, but in recognition of the power they already had, and as a means of attaching them to Government. *Jagirdars* did not have to fulfill any formal obligations. Government had honored them by confirming their *jagirs*, and so they were expected to show their appreciation by helping the administration whenever possible, but this was not a statutory duty. They were, however, liable to lose their *jagirs* if they were disloyal.³¹⁶

What Government needed was men with local influence who could assist its district officers. *Jagirdars* had their part to play but, for all their status, they were few in numbers. *Waderos* supplied the deficiency; within their domains they were no less powerful than *jagirdars*, and in one sense they could be regarded as more important: for they were more numerous. In 1900, there were 1,741 *zamindars* holding estates of over 500 acres each, but there were only 89 *jagirdars*.³¹⁷ As the third and fourth class *jagirs* lapsed to Government, *jagirdars* became more thinly spread over the province, but almost every village had its *Wadero*.

Waderos held no *sanads* or other titles of authority. The word, '*Wadero*;' was a term of respect and not the designation of an office or class. A *Wadero's* position depended entirely on his landed wealth, his personal status and the deference he could command from his neighbors. *Waderos* maintained patriarchal authority over their *raj* (community) and the agricultural classes looked up to them as their leaders.³¹⁸ Captain Wallace, a Settlement Officer with several years experience in Sindh, expressed his opinion in 1862 that:

The Wuddera is able to exercise a most beneficial influence over the residents in his Deh.³¹⁹

Forty years later, conditions had not changed. H.C. Mules, the Collector of Sukkur, praised great *zamindars* in 1902 as constituting 'the backbone of Sindh.'³²⁰ On another occasion he explained:

³¹⁶ Pelly to Commr., 1 Jan. 1856 (P.G.B., R.D., 12 Dec. 1857, pr. 9197, par. 33).

³¹⁷ Report on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency, 1900-1901, Apps. V & VI, 24, 26.

³¹⁸ R.R. Wallace, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, n.d. (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1862-1863, compn. 17, 238).

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ H.C. Mules, Collr., Sukkur, to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 112).

The peasant of Sindh is not the class of man which ... exists elsewhere, the "backbone" of the country, &c. The Sindhi peasant has not been accustomed to independence, and has always leaned upon the *zamindars*, "*Waderas*," and headmen.³²¹

Small *zamindars* were submissive to *Waderos*, and prompt to do their bidding. If bunds burst, canals were breached or floods occurred, each *Wadero* would bring out as many men as he could, set them to work:

and by his presence and example, keeps them together, and makes them do what is required, and this frequently without payment or with only bare Subsistence.³²²

A modern short story, *The Deluge*, by Ghulam Rabbani Agro, sheds light on this nineteenth century quotation. Rabbani describes how a *Wadero's* anger is sufficient to terrify a peasant into helping to repair a breached *buad*, even though it means leaving his own family to drown. No force is used by the *Wadero*, or even threatened; the peasant's instinctive dread is enough.³²³ Rabbani, who is himself a small *zamindar*, has explained that the children of peasants and *haris* have fear of the *Wadero* drummed into them, literally at their mothers' knees, along with respect for their fathers. Rabbani has even asserted that mothers sometimes use the *Wadero* as a 'bogey-man,' to frighten their children into obedience.³²⁴ In this way; the rural population is still brought up to expect punishments and rewards from the *Waderos*. Their obedience to *Waderos* is therefore instinctive and deep-rooted.

There were also sound practical reasons for smallholders' deference towards *Waderos*. It cannot be explained away in terms of tradition and force of personality. Employing hundred of *haris* on their vast estates, *Waderos* had the resources to turn out labor to construct and maintain irrigational works which were beyond the capacity of smallholders. Manpower was a valuable commodity in rural areas, supplementing the wealth represented by cash, land and crops. The *Wadero's* workforce was also a form of security. Cattle lifting was a regular industry in Sindh, and the *haris* could be used to track down or drive off cattle thieves and dacoits. This enabled *Waderos* to protect and assist their neighbors. Moreover, many *Waderos* were in league with cattle thieves who were often their own *haris*.³²⁵ The Cattle Theft Committee stated bluntly in 1926 that some *zamindars*:

³²¹ Mules, encl. in H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896 (*ibid.*, 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 841). James made a similar comment in 1897: 'Partly from hereditary dependence on a *zamindar* or Chief of a tribe, the Sindhi peasant-proprietor is unfortunately not the sturdy, independent cultivator such as the Jat of the Punjab, or even the Kunbi of the Deccan' (memo., 21 Aug. 1897 - P.S.C., R.D., file 69A, 1896-1899, vol. I, 205).

³²² James to Govr., 12 Aug. 189C, Note B (P.G.B, R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 815).

³²³ G.R. Sindhi, '*The Deluge*,' in H.K. Ramani, (ed.), *Sindhi Short Stories* (Karachi, n.d.), 71-78.

³²⁴ Interview with Ghulam Rabbani Agro Sindhi, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Sindh, 16 Feb. 1977.

³²⁵ Commr., Sindh, memo., 10 July 1925 (P.G.B., H.D., 1926, 51) & 31 March 1927 (*ibid.*, 1929, 1125-1127).

Think their prestige is enhanced by the influence they are able to exert upon *badmashes, thugs*, and feel obliged to keep a few thieves among their followers for the purpose of harassing a neighbor in the event of a quarrel.³²⁶

Similar accusations have been made by officials in Sindh, before and since that report.³²⁷ It may not be too fanciful to suggest that, because protection was needed against the thieves, some *Waderos* took it upon themselves to harass their weaker neighbors simply to remind them how indispensable it was to be well protected by their *Wadero*.

Smallholders and peasants were not tenants of *Waderos*, nor were they dependent on them financially, but they had to keep in their good books. It was not merely a question of being physically protected or harassed. If a man's cattle were stolen, he would naturally require the *Wadero's* help to trace and recover them. In addition, he might want the *Wadero* to stand surety for him when he borrowed from a *bania*, or to intercede on his behalf if the *bania* was threatening to foreclose on a mortgage. If any problem arose with the revenue authorities, a man might request his *Wadero's* help: it was routine for *Waderos* to petition Government on behalf of the landholders in their areas. If a dispute arose between agriculturists over water or women, for example, they might ask their *Waderos* to settle it for them. This would be particularly important if the disputants were under the protection of different *Waderos*, for a smallholder could not address himself directly to so lofty a personage as a strange *Wadero*; he would have to ask his own *Wadero* to approach the neighbor for him. If there was a gap in status between the *Waderos* themselves, then the junior one, in his turn, would have to approach a senior *Wadero*, *jagirdar* or *Pir*.³²⁸

A smallholder could only expect this kind of help from a *Wadero* if he remained loyal and subservient to him. It involved a host of social obligations, such as attending the

³²⁶ Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the question of Cattle-Lifting in Sindh (Karachi, 1926) hereafter referred to as Cattle Theft Cttee. Report7, 2, 3.

³²⁷ For example, see A. Mayhew, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, n.d. (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1896, vol. IV, pt. III, compn. 83); M. Masud, Hari Committee Report Note of Dissent (Karachi, ?1949), 12.

³²⁸ On 2 May 1977, while the author was staying with Mir Ahmed Khan Talpur on his lands near Umarkot, he saw an illustration of the way in which *Waderos* still act on behalf of their raj. Cattle, stolen from some petty zamindars of Mir Saheb's raj, had been traced to the house of a man owing allegiance to a neighboring *Wadero*. The animals had been ransomed, but bitterness remained, because the offender's father had been a follower of Mir Saheb and the latter did not appreciate the disloyalty compounded by theft. Mir Saheb made his anger known to the culprit (in ways never explained to the author). In desperation, the renegade and two other petty holders who were implicated with him, appealed to their *Wadero* to talk to Mir Saheb. They could not approach the Mir on their own, as he was too distinguished a figure. The *Wadero* arrived at Mir Saheb's *auta* one evening, accompanied by his three protégés. The two *Waderos* sat on chairs, while the petty men sat on a mat, a little distance away. All were served with tea and snacks. The *Waderos* chatted for a while before coming to the point. After ticking the men off, rather like a headmaster, Mir Saheb assured them that he no longer harbored a grudge and they went away satisfied. His anger had partly been a warning to other would-be defectors from his own raj, and partly an indication to cattle-thieves that he would not tolerate harm being done to men who were under his protection.

marriages and funerals of the *Wadero's* family and paying courtesy calls on him. In addition, they gave him small gifts; like milk, ghee and honey and some smallholders appear to have maintained a regular fund to remunerate their *Waderos*. Without these tokens of respect, they could not hope to receive any support from their *Wadero*; carrying out various jobs for him was therefore another way of earning his favor.³²⁹

For *haris* and smallholders, *Waderos* were the real power in the land. The British authority, with its police and law courts, was remote. It was often physically remote the nearest police station might be several miles away. A man seeking justice there could have to make a long journey on poor roads, tiring himself and wasting time.

Instead, he was more likely to turn to his *Wadero* in times of trouble. In 1893, for example, a *hari* named Budho found his brother, Nawaz, dying after being struck during a quarrel. Budho went straight to the village of Tharo Khan Lahori and told the *Wadero* what had happened; it was only after reporting to him that Budho went on to Larkana and informed the police.³³⁰ The interesting point is that the murder did not take place in an isolated area, but was on the outskirts of a large town. The Lahoris' village was only a mile or so from the Deputy Collector's office, so the nearest police station was quite accessible. Moreover, Tharo Khan's son had already investigated the background to the crime. While making his rounds of the estate, he had seen Nawaz lying on the ground, and had heard the whole story from him. He then sought out the assailant and demanded an explanation, but took no further action at the time as he had not realized how serious the injury was; Nawaz' liver had been ruptured, and so there was no external bleeding.³³¹ Not only, then, did the *Wadero* hear of the murder before the police, but he had already looked into the circumstances behind it in the course of his normal duties. If it had been a simple case of assault rather than murder, it is likely that the *Wadero* would have sorted the matter out without reference to the police.

There are many cases on record in which *Waderos* and *jagirdars* are seen to act as the *de facto* civil authorities. A remarkable one occurred on the night of 29 December 1889. A gang of dacoits broke into the houses of two wealthy men in a village in Tando Allahyar, wounding six people. *Wadero* Allah Bakhsh, whose village was nearby, heard of the robbery while it was still in progress. He set out at once with about thirty armed men, but he arrived too late. As the villagers were frightened, he took control of the situation. He sent men in different directions to warn the neighborhood, and he made arrangements for the care of the wounded. Fateh Khan Khokhar, a *jagirdar*, responded to his call and brought some of his followers to the village. At daybreak, Allah Bakhsh,

³²⁹ R.K. Pringle, rev. queries, 1847: replies to query no. 2 by Capt. Preedy, Collr., Karachi, & Capt. Rathborne, Collr., Hbad. (pre-Mutiny Records, 53); interview with P.K. Shahani, *zamindar*, Member, National Assembly of Pakistan, 27 Oct. 1976; interview with Mir Ahmed Khan Talpur, *zamindar*, 2 May 1977.

³³⁰ Sadar Court of Sindh, Karachi, summing up., 23 Sept. 1893 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1893, vol. I, pt. III, compn. 10, 1021-1023.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 1022.

Fateh Khan and their men rode off in pursuit of the dacoits. They succeeded in capturing several of them. All this happened before the police put in an appearance.³³² The whole operation was organized by the *Wadero* and the *jagirdar*. Indeed, the police found it impossible to get any useful information out of the nervous villagers and had to rely on evidence gathered by Allah Bakhsh.³³³ The only role the police performed was to pick up the prisoners and write up the evidence. *Wadero* Allah Bakhsh had turned out a large body of armed men, at no notice, in the middle of the night, and had rounded up members of a gang of violent criminals. This was the reality of the *Waderos'* local influence. There can be no doubt that Allah Bakhsh cut a more impressive figure than police officers who arrived after the action was over. The outlook must have been bleak for anyone living in the vicinity who was, in *Wadero* Allah Bakhsh's eyes, a wrongdoer.

This conclusion is reinforced by an incident which took place in 1896, in Upper Sindh Frontier District. A boy named Safar had been raped while tending cattle, and he recognized his attacker as a man from the village of *Wadero* Tajo Khan. Safar's family made a complaint to the *Wadero* who ordered his men to bring out all the villagers for an identity parade; Safar picked out one Piru as the culprit. Tajo Khan then sent men to investigate the scene of the crime. They found signs of a struggle, along with drops of dried blood and semen, all of which confirmed Safar's story. They were also able to identify Piru's tracks. Tajo Khan therefore told the boy's family to go to the police, who naturally proceeded to work up a case against Piru.

Sometime later, however, Tajo Khan changed his mind. He informed H.C. Mules, Deputy Commissioner of Upper Sindh Frontier, that the true culprit was, Piru's brother, Ditto. This was good enough for Mules and he ordered the police to drop the case against Piru. The police objected, alleging that Tajo Khan was shielding Piru, but Mules overruled their protests. He pointed out that Tajo Khan was 'an old and reliable *zamindar* of the highest respectability' who could, according to Mules, have no motive for helping one brother at the expense of the other. He condemned the police criticisms as a discreditable attempt to throw doubt on Tajo Khan's good faith. However, he conceded that the case could not be tried in a regular court, where the laws of evidence were applied somewhat strictly, so he sent it before a Council of Elders which duly convicted Ditto.³³⁴

The police, quite literally, did not figure at all in this scene of law enforcement. They were no more than a faint voice offstage. The crime was reported to the *Wadero* who investigated it, discovered a suspect and organized the detective work. The police only came in at the end to rubber-stamp his efforts. The entire body of evidence was then set

³³² District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Collr., Hbad., 2 July 1890 (*ibid.*, file 2, 1890-1891, vol. I, pt. I, compn. 2, 69).

³³³ *Ibid.*, 70.

³³⁴ H.C. Mules, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., report of jirga at Jacobabad, 28 Apr. 1896 (*ibid.*, file 1, 1896, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 16, 475-481).

aside at the instigation of the very *Wadero* who had built it up, as a result of uncorroborated hearsay evidence produced by him. The brothers were not from Tajo Khan's tribe and so there is no reason to suppose that he had special knowledge of the matter as a tribal leader. The lesson is simple: it was more vital for agriculturists to be on good terms with their *Wadero* than with the police.

These two cases indicate that a *Wadero's* word was sufficient to bring a man to Court. If a *Wadero* was unscrupulous, he could have men charged almost at his whim. This was alleged, officially, on at least one occasion. In 1891, one Ghulam Mangrio claimed that he had been seized by the police who, instead of taking him to the police station, brought him to the *autaq* of Sayed Murid Shah, a local *jagirdar*. Ghulam Mangrio said the Sayed had him hanged by the hair of his head until he agreed to pay Rs 200 for his release. Colonel Mayhew, the Collector of Shikarpur, ordered an enquiry, but it was fruitless because everyone was too frightened of the Sayed to give evidence against him. Mayhew declared angrily:

The Police were the servants of this Troublesome *Jagirdar* and Disturber of the Public Peace.³³⁵

It followed that a man whom a *Wadero* wished to shield was safe from justice, while *Waderos* themselves could be virtually above the law. Since the police relied on the *Wadero's* help in order to find criminals, there was little they could do if the *Wadero* himself was implicated.

This can be illustrated by a most dramatic episode which occurred in 1896. On 1 November of that year *Wadero* Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto visited Jeramdas Dharamdas, the Mukhtiarkar of Ratodero. Jeramdas believed Ghulam Murtaza was a bad character and he was known to be preparing a report against him for submission to the Collector of Shikarpur. Ghulam Murtaza hoped he would be able to persuade Jeramdas to change his mind, but the Mukhtiarkar refused to see him immediately; he made Ghulam Murtaza wait outside in the sun for an hour or so, then granted him only a short interview. It was a great dishonor for a *Wadero* to be treated in this way and Ghulam Murtaza was overheard to say that the Mukhtiarkar 'gives me no proper respect. I shall "see" him.'

The following morning, Ghulam Murtaza took a train to Larkana and spent the day with the Chief Constable of Kambar. The latter asked him if Jeramdas had sent in his report yet, to which Ghulam Murtaza replied that Jeramdas was dead. Indeed, Jeramdas had been found murdered in his bed that morning - but the discovery was not made until after Ghulam Murtaza's train had left for Larkana, so it was clear that he had prior knowledge of it. Moreover, a *hari* belonging to the *Wadero's* father, Khuda Bakhsh

³³⁵ A. Mayhew, Collr., Shpur., n.d. (ibid., file 2, 1892, vol. II, compn. 50, 166-167).

Bhutto, was seen in the vicinity of the place where the Mukhtiarkar was staying, along with a *khaskheli* (hereditary servant) of Ghulam Murtaza, on the night of the murder. The circumstantial evidence was strong and the committing Magistrate refused bail to Ghulam Murtaza, but it was not possible to prove the charges and the *Wadero* was acquitted.³³⁶

Colonel Mayhew, the Collector of Shikarpur, had no doubt of Ghulam Murtaza's guilt. Jeramdas, so Mayhew assured the Commissioner in Sindh, had lost his life as a result of his efforts:

to bring this man Ghulam Murtaza Khudabux Bhuto to his senses and to make him mend his wicked and dissolute and infamous ways and to give up his evil practices which are dishonest and criminal - so has brought down upon him without question the wrath or revenge of this powerful rascal.³³⁷

Ghulam Murtaza was a wealthy man with estates in the Shikarpur and Upper Sindh Frontier Districts. His grandfather, Dodo Khan Bhutto, was one of the most important *zamindars* in Sindh - 'and the family one and all have for years been notorious for their influence for Evil,' according to Mayhew.³³⁸ The Commissioner in Sindh agreed and persuaded the Bombay Government to offer a reward of Rs 1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the murderers or instigators, to counterbalance the large amounts of money being spent on preventing Ghulam Murtaza's conviction. The murder, explained the Commissioner, had terrified the local officials and he reiterated that Ghulam Mutaza 'is well-known to have instigated other murderous attacks if not murders.'³³⁹ Mayhew declared it was:

the talk of the Bazaar that this is the 13th murder these Bhuttos have perpetrated and got off scot free.³⁴⁰

Getting away with the murder of a senior Government officer must have had a most potent effect in spreading fear throughout the countryside. It was the writ of the Bhuttos which ran in the Ratodero region, not the writ of the Government.

Mayhew was well aware of the implications the affair could have on Government's reputation. The *Waderos*, power inspired such dread among the agricultural population that it was difficult to convict a man like Bhutto through the ordinary courts.

³³⁶ Court of Session, Shpur., summing up, 20 Nov. 1896 (ibid., 1896, vol. III, pt. III, compn. 72, 723-737).

³³⁷ Mayhew to Commr., Sindh, 10 Nov. 1896 (ibid., 703-704).

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Commr. to Govr., Bombay, 17 Nov. 1896 (ibid., 704). A man, Sahibdino, of taluqa Ratodero, had accused *Waderos* Rasul Bakhsh & Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto of complicity in the murder of his brother the previous year (petition to Commr., 27 March 1895 - ibid., 1895, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 6, 883).

³⁴⁰ Mayhew to Commr., n.d. (ibid., file 1, 1696, vol. IV, pt. III, compn. 83).

Consequently, Government was made to look impotent. In a demi-official letter to the Commissioner in Sindh, Mayhew asked for the Frontier Regulations to be extended to the Shikarpur District, so that suspects could be convicted on circumstantial evidence. If the Frontier Regulations had been in force, said Mayhew, Ghulam Murtaza and the other Bhuttos would have been in gaol.³⁴¹ The Commissioner sympathized, but pointed out that it would not be possible for the Governor of Bombay to introduce extraordinary courts into a non-frontier district like Shikarpur. The authorities would have to make the best of the existing judicial arrangements, however unsatisfactory they might be.³⁴²

Ghulam Murtaza's case was not isolated. The following year, Mayhew complained that the notables of *taluqa* Kambar were:

the instigators of thefts and harbourers of thieves and scoundrels of every sort and description.

He alleged that the police did as the notables bid and the masses feared the *Waderos* more than the Government. While Mayhew had been in camp at Kambar, four of his clerks had been robbed and a *bania* had been attacked and robbed within sight of the camp. Mayhew was sure these were not ordinary crimes, but were organized by the *Waderos* to emphasize that Government was helpless and that they could do as they pleased without fear of detection or chastisement.³⁴³ Anyone who testified against the *Waderos* or their 'parasites' was made to suffer sooner or later - for example, his house might be broken into or set on fire, his cattle might be stolen, his crops burned or his women's hair shaved. As a result, people were not willing to come forward to help the police against the *Waderos*. Without the support of the local notables, Mayhew commented, Government was severely handicapped if not powerless.³⁴⁴ Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that Government met with silence when it tried to make a case against Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto.

There was remarkably little the Government could do about such people. In 1884, the Collector of Hyderabad had suggested that two Sayeds who were instigating much of the crime around Matiari should be asked to resign from the Municipal Board: but the Commissioner in Sindh pointed out that it would be impossible to enforce the demand if they refused. Instead, he stripped them of all their Government honors. This was the strongest action he could contemplate.³⁴⁵ Mayhew resorted to a similar stratagem to confront the challenge posed by the *Waderos* of Kambar. He advised officers not to

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² Commr. to Mayhew, 9 Nov. 1896 (*ibid.*).

³⁴³ Mayhew to Commr., 11 Dec. 1897 (*ibid.*, 1897, vol. IV, pt. II, compn. 48, 739-747).

³⁴⁴ Mayhew, deposition, n.d. (*ibid.*, 751-754).

³⁴⁵ District Sup., Police, Hbad., memo., 10 March 1884 (*ibid.*, file 2, 1884, vol. I, compn. 9); Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 12 March 1884, Commr. to Collr., 20 March 1884 (*ibid.*).

accept any hospitable offerings from offending *Waderos*. *Zamindars* enhanced their *izzat* (prestige) when officers became their guests for a shooting party or were given presents of game or sheep - if officers refused their hospitality, then it was a mark of disfavor which would damage their prestige. In effect, he was asking his subordinates to cold-shoulder recalcitrant *Waderos*.³⁴⁶

Even this suggestion went too far. At the same time Mayhew had to remind his Deputy Collectors that they should not accent hospitality or invitations from men of position as a matter of routine. He complained that officers were in the habit of receiving *Waderos* after they had been deprived of their honors by Government, even if they had been cited under the law and were known to use their influence for illegal ends.³⁴⁷ Sindh was excellent hunting country, and no doubt the hospitable *Waderos* knew what to do to keep sporting British officers well disposed towards them. Moreover, *Waderos* were essential to the administration and officers had little choice but to attempt to reconcile them into some degree of cooperation, however much they might be involved in criminal activities. On the other hand, it was hardly worth the trouble of disgracing *Waderos* if British officers continued to socialize with them.

The *Waderos'* influence therefore affected both high and low. Deputy Collectors were susceptible to it, while *haris* were at their mercy. Government could not even guarantee the safety of its own officers and yet it relied on *Waderos* for the administration of the country. It is small wonder that smallholders and peasants obeyed the *Waderos* without question, looking up to them as their leaders.

IV

As *Waderos'* power depended on their own wealth and prestige, they had no need of Government support. A *jagirdar* who misbehaved could be threatened with the loss, of his *jagir*,³⁴⁸ but, so long as he paid his land revenue, a *Wadero* could not be thrown off his estate. In that respect, Government had no hold over *Waderos*. However, as has just been mentioned, their need to maintain their prestige could make them vulnerable to Government pressure on occasions. *Wadero* lost face if they were snubbed by Government officials and, by the same token, their standing increased if they received marks of distinction from Government. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Sindh Government had developed a remarkably successful system of bribing *Waderos* with honors to secure their cooperation.

³⁴⁶ Mayhew, memo., 17 Dec. 1897 (ibid., file 1, 1897, vol. IV, pt. II, compn. 48, 757).

³⁴⁷ Mayhew, circular to Depy. Collrs., 18 Dec. 1897 (ibid., 758-759).

³⁴⁸ In 1869, for example, the Commr., Sindh, deprived Khairo Khan Karmati of *taluqa* Mirpur Sakro, of half of his *jagir*, after an enquiry had established that he had impeded police investigations into a murder. In 1872, the *jagir* was restored, with a warning that he could not expect similar leniency in the future (F.J.F. Ross, enquiry, 22 June 1869; Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to Commr., 25 June 1872 - ibid., file 1, 1872, vol. III, compn. 1).

Waderos' preoccupation with prestige was not mere vanity. Prestige was of distinct practical importance to them, for it helped to determine the extent of their influence. *Zamindars* with over 500 acres held between 10% to 70% of the occupied area in different parts of Sindh.³⁴⁹ The rest of the land was held by smallholders. Each *Wadero* therefore had to compete with his neighbors for the allegiance of the great mass of smallholders. He had to impress upon the lesser men that he was a powerful and formidable person, so that they would seek his protection and cultivate good relations with him rather than with his rivals. They would give their allegiance to the man for whom they had most respect; in this way, they joined his *raj* (community).

The smallholders would respect the man whose *izzat*, or prestige, was greatest. *Izzat* was once defined as 'consideration in the eyes of one's neighbors.'³⁵⁰ In the case of a *Wadero*, a large estate and plenty of retainers were pre-requisites, but maintaining *izzat* also involved less tangible elements which provided the trappings of power. In a word, a man had to 'look the part' of a great *Wadero*. Lavish entertainments and the ostentatious provision of charity to *faqirs*, beggars, hangers-on and others gave the impression of spectacular wealth and hinted at greatness of soul. Hunting parties, with multitudes of *haris* acting as beaters, further testified to a *Wadero's* prosperity, besides demonstrating his power over men. A modern *zamindar* once compared a *Wadero's* prestige to a balloon: one pinprick, and it would burst. He said that if a *Wadero* was summoned by a local officer and made to wait all day, or if he was made to sit on the ground in the presence of an officer, then his *izzat* would be destroyed: the balloon would burst. The word would spread and he would lose face. People would realize he was not such a great man as he claimed to be and they might resist his authority.

Smallholders would desert him and tender their allegiance to a rival. He would lose their services and their gifts, and he might find himself being harassed by more powerful *Waderos*. He might even find it difficult to enforce the collection of his share of the crop at *batai*.³⁵¹ It is no wonder that Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto reacted so decisively, murdering the Mukhtiarkar after being made to sit in the sun. *Izzat* was a vital matter to *Waderos*.

Many *Waderos* felt their *izzat* was enhanced if they collaborated with Government and were rewarded for it. A man loaded with honors would appear to have the ear of senior officials: it might be dangerous to cross him and advantageous to be on good terms with him. There was certainly some truth in this philosophy. When *Wadero* Tajo Khan changed his mind about the guilt of the man suspected of raping the boy, the Deputy Commissioner accepted his testimony on the grounds that he was a 'respectable' *zamindar* - and one of the ways in which he must have judged his respectability was by looking at Tajo Khan's past record of cooperation with Government. Tajo Khan, then,

³⁴⁹ See App. VIII.

³⁵⁰ R. Giles, Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 19 Oct. 1899 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (Jan-July), 651).

³⁵¹ Interview with P.K. Shahani, 27 Oct. 1976.

did have the ear of the highest official in the area, and he could influence him in a quite spectacular way. One can understand why, as an officer observed in 1854, *Waderos* displayed 'an almost ridiculous anxiety' over favors from Government,³⁵² for favors were proof of Government trust. The honors coveted by *Waderos* included swords, *lungis* (strips of cloth worn over the shoulders like a scarf), gun licenses, seats in *darbars*, *afrinamas* (letters written by responsible officers in recognition of services rendered), and small grants of rent-free land (*seri* and *mamuli* grants).

One of the honors the Government was able to manipulate most effectively concerned the right of a man to be seated in the presence of a British officer. The right was loosely referred to as a 'chair,' and favored *Waderos* were known as '*kursi-nishin*' *zamindars* or 'chairholders.' A chair was a high distinction and a man had to be of some importance to qualify for one. In 1889, five *zamindars* were recommended for rewards for the assistance they had given the Settlement Department while their holdings were being measured. Their example had a good effect on the smallholders, with the result that Survey operations had been carried out with a minimum of expense to Government. The Settlement Officer mentioned that three of them were anxious to receive the privilege of a chair, but the Commissioner in and was advised that they were not sufficiently important to merit such an honor. Instead, he decided to give them *lungis* in an open *darbar*.³⁵³ A *lungi* indicated that a man had on some occasion performed a valuable service: but a chair proved that Government regarded him as a valuable man in himself. It was an even greater mark of distinction if a man was considered worthy to be put on a Collector's *darbari* list or, better, the Commissioner's. Once included in the list, he could attend all the official *darbars*. There was an additional refinement that some men could sit at *darbars* while others had to stand.

A chair, a position on a *darbari* list, or a gun license was not a permanent right; it was held at the pleasure of the Commissioner in Sindh. The honors therefore carried a certain degree of responsibility with them as they were marks of Government's continuing favor; having earned the honor, a man had constantly to prove to Government that he was still worthy of it. This gave the Government a hold over the *Waderos*, for a privilege could be withdrawn if the holder misbehaved himself. An indication of the value *Waderos* attached to these honors may be obtained by glancing at the evidence of witnesses before the 1917 *Rasai* Committee. When asked about the positions held by them, many mentioned that they were Honorary Magistrates or Presidents of District Local Boards, but several added that they were chair holders in

³⁵² L. Pelly, Depy. Colir., to Colir., Upper Sindh, 20 Sept. 1854 (B.N.S. XVIII, Official Correspondence relative to the Introduction of a Rough Survey and Settlement in the Province of Sindh (Bombay, 1855-1859), pt. 1, 67).

³⁵³ L.W. Seymour, 'Asst. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 28 Dec. 1899; S. Ali, Depy. Collr., to Depy. Commr., U.S.F., 4 Jan. 1890; Commr., Sindh, memo., 9 Jan. 1890 (P.S.C., J.D., file 2, 1890-1891, vol. I, pt. I, compn. 2, 141-147).

certain Districts, were on a Collector's *darbari* list, or held a gun license.³⁵⁴ This shows that they put being a chair holder on a par with performing a function in local government. It was a mark of great status.

The British Government was well aware of this. It took the award of a chair extremely seriously. In 1875, the Collector of Karachi explained that he gave all schoolmasters a chair when they visited him at his office or attended his *darbars*, but he believed Deputy Collectors and Mukhtiarkars did not always show them this consideration. He pointed out that the people should be encouraged to respect schoolmasters and suggested that the Commissioner should declare all schoolmasters to be entitled to chairs.³⁵⁵ His letter provoked a lengthy correspondence among Sindh officials. The Educational Inspector objected to giving such a privilege to assistant masters and so a circular was issued announcing that only head masters were entitled to chairs.³⁵⁶ Even this prompted an angry response from the Deputy Collector of Larkana. He complained that the head masters of Vernacular Schools were generally young and poorly paid. Responsible officers like Head Munshis, who exercised magisterial powers, would resent having to stand or squat while a young schoolmaster drawing less than half their salary should be permitted to sit.³⁵⁷ The Commissioner, however, informed him, that as the question had been fully considered before a decision was reached, his comments were unnecessary.³⁵⁸ The Government of Sindh, then, attached high importance to the award of a chair. It was a privilege which could not be conferred lightly.

Government was always careful to ensure that an honor did not enhance a man's *izzat* more than he deserved. Pir Sahibdino Shah, of *taluka* Guni, was recommended for an *afrinama* and a sword in 1894, for his help detecting some serious, offences of housebreaking and cattle theft.³⁵⁹ When the Pir heard of this, he volunteered to give some money of his own, to enable Government to buy a really valuable and highly finished sword. The District Superintendent of Police showed some enthusiasm for the proposal, but the Commissioner in Sindh was not taken with it. The Pir, he wrote tartly, must be content with whatever mark of distinction it pleased Government to bestow, and could not be permitted to 'fictitiously enhance the recognition of his merits.'³⁶⁰ With swords and *lungis*, the importance of the honor could be varied according to its value, better steel or workmanship on a sword, or finer cloth or embroidery on a *lungi* reflecting more merit on the recipient.³⁶¹

³⁵⁴ Committee appointed by Government to enquire into Rasai, Lapo and Chher in Sindh (Karachj, 1919), vol. IV, pt. V, 115 & pt. VI, 159.

³⁵⁵ Collr., Karachi, to Educ. Inspr., Sindh, 4 March 1875 (P.S.C., G.D., file 4, 1874-1875, compn. 31, pars. 1-2).

³⁵⁶ Educ. Inspr., memo., 12 March 1875; Commr., Sindh, circular, 12 March 1875 (ibid.).

³⁵⁷ Depy. Collr., Larkana, to Collr., Shpur., 29 March 1875.

³⁵⁸ Commr., Sindh, memo., June 1875 (ibid.).

³⁵⁹ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Commr., hind, 19 Dec. 1894 (ibid., J.D., file 2, 1895, vol. I, Dt..I, compn. 4, 495).

³⁶⁰ District Sup. to Collr., Hbad., 10 Apr. 1895; Commr., memo., 2 July 1895 (ibid., 501-502, 507).

³⁶¹ In 1890, Wadero Mithal Khan and a *zamindar* named Fateh Mohammad, of Moro, helped to arrest a notorious dacoit. Mithal Khan was awarded a *lungi* worth Rs 150 and a sword, while Fateh Mohammad was given only a *lungi*

A good illustration of how the honors system worked in practice may be obtained by looking at the efforts of the District Superintendent of Police, Shikarpur, to track down a gang of dacoits in 1893. The episode began in January 1893, when two dacoits were arrested by Rasul Bakhsh Bhutto, grandson of the famous Dodo Khan Bhutto: but, remarked the Superintendent, 'not the slightest credit' was due to him for the arrest. Rasul Bakhsh had in fact been harboring the men and had only turned them in to throw suspicion off himself. Far from being rewarded, he was deprived of his gun license and other privileges.³⁶² More robberies occurred in Naushahro Abro the following month, and Wadero Ghulam Kadar Drakhan made some arrests. In March 1893, the Superintendent followed the dacoits' tracks into Kalat territory, taking with him Ghulam Kadar Drakhan and another *Wadero*, Allah Bakhsh Pathan, as well as Lashkar Khan Jamali, Sardar of the Jamali tribe, and his son, Yar Mohammad. The Superintendent was sure that Lashkar Khan could put the police onto the scent of the dacoits if he chose to, but he doubted whether the mere promise of a reward would be a sufficient inducement. He decided to put on a show, to turn Lashkar Khan's thoughts towards his *izzat*. In the presence of a large number of people, the Superintendent wrote out an *afrinama* to Ghulam Kadar Drakhan, thanking him for his efforts so far, and he told him he would be presented with a sword later. The Superintendent declared with satisfaction, 'The effect was instantaneous.' Two more dacoits were arrested within days, as a result of information provided by Lashkar Khan and the personal exertions of his son.

The Superintendent next returned to British territory. He summoned Gul Mohammad Drakhan and Gauhar Khan Jamali, *Waderos* whom he suspected of harboring a dacoit named Mehra. He warned them that if Mehra was not produced shortly, they would be deprived of all their honors. Gul Mohammad was singled out for a stern warning from the Commissioner in Sindh himself.³⁶³ The threat worked for within a fortnight he brought Mehra in.³⁶⁴ The Superintendent was sure that the *Wadero's* fear of losing his honors, as Rasul Bakhsh Bhutto had done, had had a salutary effect on his behavior.³⁶⁵

With a judicious mixture of rewards and punishments, the Superintendent had persuaded various *Waderos* to assist the Police, though not all had been voluntary collaborators. One man, Rasul Bakhsh Bhutto, had been thoroughly disgraced and another, Ghulam Kadar Drakhan, lavishly honored, *pour encourager les autres*. An interesting additional point is that although Allah Bakhsh Pathan had been threatened with the Commissioner's displeasure at one stage, when he had done what was

worth Rs 20. Clearly, the honors were intended to reflect greater merit on Mithal Khan, although no reason for this was given in the record (Colir., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 23 July 1890 - *ibid.*, 1890-1891, vol. I, pt. I, compn. 2).

³⁶² District Sup., Police, Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 13 March & 7 Apr. 1893 (*ibid.*, 1893, vol. II compn. 63).

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13 March 1893.

³⁶⁴ Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Coumr., Sindh; 28 March 1893 (*ibid.*).

³⁶⁵ District Sup., Police, Shpur., 16 March & Apr. 1893 *ibid.*

required, he was given an *afrinama*.³⁶⁶ Government spared neither the carrot nor the stick when it came to demanding cooperation from *Waderos*.

The honors system had the disadvantage that it provided only an informal link with Government. A *lungi* enhanced a man's *izzat* only if he was looking for favors from Government. If One considers the murder of the Mukhtiarkar in 1896, then Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto's acquittal, in the face of Government's strenuous efforts to secure a conviction, must have boosted his prestige more than even the highest honors from Government. Indeed, it is probably no exaggeration to say that, under such circumstances, to be stripped of one's honors could be regarded as a distinction in itself. That is to say, if Government distinguished one man by presenting him with a chair, it also distinguished another when it struck him off the Commissioner's *darbari* list. Both were men to be reckoned with, with whom lesser men would not wish to cross swords: the *izzat* of both would be enhanced. For example, Sayed Mohammad Shah of Sann, *taluqa* Sehwan, was singled out by the Collector of Karachi in 1895 as 'without exception, the most troublesome and evil-dispositioned *zemindar* in the Sehwan Sub-Division.' His chairs, gun-licenses and all other privileges had been withdrawn:

on account of the systematic aid and refuge afforded by him to notorious thieves and outlaws & the systematic obstruction offered by him to all Government officials.³⁶⁷

It takes an exceptional man to earn such strong enmity from senior Government officials and get away with it. Government's attempts to undermine his *izzat* clearly had no significant effect on it: not only was it impossible to collect enough evidence to prefer charges against him, but Government's pressure could not bully him into changing his ways. On the contrary, ten years later, the Superintendent of Police reiterated the accusations against him. The Superintendent had no doubt that Mohammad Shah 'causes thefts, housebreaking, dacoities & murders to be committed.' He also attached an impressive list of influential people, including prominent Government officials and high-ranking *jagirdars*, who were willing to testify to Mohammad Shah's bad character.³⁶⁸ Mohammad Shah was evidently one of those men for whom Government favor held no attraction, being sufficiently confident of his own status to ignore the adverse opinion held of him in official circles. His criminal career continued to flourish until 1905, when it was brought to an untimely end by his murder.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Colir., Shpur., memo., 8 Jan, 1894 (ibid.).

³⁶⁷ Colir., Karachi, memo., 7 May 1895 (ibid., 1895, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 6, 921).

³⁶⁸ District Sup., Police, Karachi, to Collr., Karachi, 17 Oct. 1904. The influential people included Malik Sobdar Khan, chief of the Numrio tribe, Maliks Essab Khan & Dodo Khan (both senior notables in the Numrio tribe), Seth Vishindas, one of the most wealthy and famous merchant-*zamindars* of Sindh, and Sardar Mohammad Yakub, Vizier of Khairpur State (ibid., 1905, vol. II, compn. 14, 3-5).

³⁶⁹ Collr., Karachi, to Commr., d, 10 Nov. 1905 (ibid., Sin 77).

Moreover, those *Waderos* who were well disposed towards Government sometimes found that, despite the rewards, help with law enforcement could have its drawbacks. Once a criminal had been arrested, the matter had to go to Court, where *izzat* counted for nothing. A *Wadero* was treated like any other witness and was liable to suffer the indignity of cross-examination by a Hindu lawyer. And although Judges had due regard for the respectability of witnesses' characters, they simply could not convict men on the word of some *Wadero*.

The situation had been different during the first twenty years of British rule, because justice at that time was administered by district officers. They had wide-ranging and arbitrary powers and they knew the local *Waderos*. They could use their discretion and give more-weight to *Waderos'* testimony. The system suited both the *Waderos* and the officials, although it placed a heavy burden of work on the latter.³⁷⁰

In 1866, the Bombay Code was introduced to Sindh and properly constituted courts were set up. District officers continued to exercise magisterial powers for minor offences, but prisoners could appeal against sentence to superior courts.³⁷¹ Judges did not have the same Powers of discretion as district-officers. Nor did they want them. They were accustomed to respect established court procedures, to adhere to the laws of evidence and, particularly, to presume the innocence of the accused. Their attitude was incompatible with that of the *Waderos*, who felt their prestige could not bear the dishonor of having their word questioned in public.

Within a few years of the introduction of the Code, Sindh officials chafed under its restraints. They complained that Judges were ignorant of local conditions: Judges stuck to the letter of the law, without sufficient concern for the customs of the people. In 1870, Sir William Merewether, the Commissioner in Sindh, reprimanded R.H. Pinhey, his Judicial Commissioner, for reducing sentences passed on cattle lifters by magistrates, which had come to him on appeal. Pinhey urged various legal considerations which had led him to believe the sentences were severe, but Merewether brushed them aside. The magistrates, he reminded Pinhey, were district officers who, with their contacts among the people, were the best judges of what punishments were appropriate:

Local experience is the only safe guide, applied of course within the limits assigned by law.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 Oct. 1872 (Papers relating to the Indebtedness of the Zemindars of the Muncher Lake in Sindh (Madras, 1874), 5.

³⁷¹ Bombay Act XIT of 1866: An Act to declare the constitution of Courts of civil and criminal judicature in the province of Sindh.

³⁷² W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to R.H. Pinhey, Jud. Commr., Sindh, 11 May 1870 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1870, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 21, par. 5); see also Pinhey's reply, 13 May 1870 (in *ibid.*).

In one sentence, Merewether had set aside the whole concept of a legal code. The fact that he added the afterthought about 'the limits assigned by law' increases the suspicion that those limits were not second nature to him.

Friction between Judges and administrators persisted. In 1888, the Sessions Judge of Shikarpur was transferred to the Presidency proper as a result of pressure from the Collector of Shikarpur and other officers. They had complained that the Judge's ignorance of Sindh led him to misinterpret the testimony of witnesses and acquit people who ought to have been convicted.³⁷³ His successor was in the opinion of the administrators, no improvement, for he tried to keep Sindh sentences in line with those of the rest of the Presidency, reducing many of the sentences imposed by district officers, and on occasions setting aside convictions. He felt that the Sindh policy towards cattle lifting, in particular, was too severe, but the Collector of Shikarpur and the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Sindh Frontier both complained that the administration of justice would become impossible if such leniency persisted. The Judicial Commissioner in Sindh supported the officials. Cattle stealing was more prevalent in Sindh than elsewhere in the Presidency and so sterner measures were required to suppress it. In a mood, perhaps, of provincial chauvinism, the Judicial Commissioner declared that he saw no reason why the Presidency proper should be used as a standard for Sindh.³⁷⁴ The controversy ceased a year after the Judge's appointment, when he died of overwork - brought on, according to the Judicial Commissioner, by the harsh summer of Upper Sindh and his excessive study of law reports from the Presidency proper.³⁷⁵ He was replaced by a Sindhi, Dayaram Gidumal, who understood the country and gave satisfaction to the Sindh authorities.³⁷⁶

At the basis of these arguments was the district officers' anxiety to preserve their working relationship with the *Waderos*. In 1870, Merewether had alleged that interfering in a magistrate's sentence reduced him in the eyes of the people and made him less effective as an administrator.³⁷⁷ If British officers felt their own *izzat* might be in jeopardy, *Waderos* were bound to be even more concerned about theirs. Officers frequently asserted that, in consequence of the legalistic attitudes of Judges, *Waderos*

³⁷³ A. Mayhew, Colin., Shpur., to Remembrancer, Legal Affairs, Bombay, 5 Jul., 1887; R. Giles, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 8 Dec. 1887 (ibid., 1889, vol. II, compn. 54, 309, 320). Giles complained that the Judge had dismissed as 'unreliable' the evidence of the wife of a man accused of murdering her lover; she had admitted to having an affair with the murdered man and Giles declared that anyone acquainted with the country would have known that nothing short of torture would have wrung such a confession from her if it had been false. The acquittal of the accused meant that Giles had to take steps to protect him from the revenge of the victim's relations.

³⁷⁴ Sadar Court of Sindh, Karachi, judgement, 17 Jan. 1889 (ibid., 1889, vol. II, compn. 54, 419). See also judgements, 31 July & 7 Nov. 1888 (ibid., 397, 406-407); Giles, memo., 20 June 1888; Giles to Commr., 7 May & 22 June 1889 (ibid., 393-395, 441-444); Giles to Jud. Commr., 19 Nov. 1888, 28 Jan. 1889 (ibid., 413, 423-425); Commr., memo., 10 May 1889 (ibid., 387).

³⁷⁵ Jud. Commr. to Commr.; 23 July 1889 (ibid., 463-464).

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 24 Aug. 1891 (ibid., 1892, vol. III, pt. I, compn 56, 188-191).

³⁷⁷ W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to Jud. Commr., 11 May 1870 (ibid., 1870, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 21, par. 6).

were becoming reluctant to help the police. The complaints increased towards the end of the century. The Collector of Larkana stated the *Waderos'* case in 1904:

"What is the use," they Say, "of our helping the police in catching thieves if we are disgraced in the eyes of the people and made the laughing stock of all the *badmashes thugs* in the country by having our word disbelieved by the Court at the instance of a petty *Bania vakil* (lawyer)" That is the attitude of many respectable and loyal *zamindars*.³⁷⁸

Two years later he repeated his warning:

Each time a thief is acquitted in spite of the *zamindar's* efforts to bring him to justice the latter's influence is diminished. The thief comes back and laughs at the *zamindar*.³⁷⁹

Anything which caused a *zamindar* to lose his prestige or become apathetic with regard to assisting the police weakened Government's power to deal with crime.³⁸⁰ The Collector appears to have taken it for granted that any suspect produced by a *Wadero* was certain to be guilty. It did not occur to him, apparently, that courts might have been justified in acquitting men in the face of the *Waderos'* evidence on occasions. The Collector felt that the problem could best be solved by introducing the Frontier Regulations to his District.³⁸¹ They would have enabled him to commit cases where the evidence was circumstantial or uncorroborated to a *jirga* (council of elders), instead of a court. The *jirga* would give proper deference to the word of an important *Wadero*. The members of a *jirga* could establish the facts of a case through their personal knowledge and experience as tribal leaders, in a way which was unthinkable in a regular court.³⁸² It was a demand made by several Sindh officials on different occasions, but the British Government was only prepared to tolerate such a compromise with legal principles in frontier regions where tribal customs hindered the normal administration of justice. Elsewhere, the solid panoply of law courts had to be maintained.³⁸³

As the legal system could not be changed, the alternative was to change the constitutional position of the *Waderos*. This had become apparent to Bartle Frere when he was Commissioner in Sindh in the 1850s, before the introduction of the Bombay

³⁷⁸ Collr., Larkana, to Commr., Sindh, 9 Sept. 1904 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1905 Jan-June), Confl. pi., par. 2). See also District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Collr., Hbad., 2 July 1890 (P.S.C., J.D., file 2, 1890-1891, vol. I, pt. I, compn. 2, 72); Collr., memo., 21 July 1890 (ibid., 76); Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, n.rl. (ibid., file 1, 1896, vol. IV, pt. III, compn. 83).

³⁷⁹ Collr., Larkana, to Commr., 25 Sept. 1906 (ibid., vol. XI, compn. 50, 149).

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 143-147.

³⁸² Bombay Regulation III of 1892: Sindh Frontier Regulation, 1892. *Jirgas* did not have the power to sentence, merely to establish guilt and recommend a sentence or compromise to the District Magistrate.

³⁸³ For exhaustive arguments for and against extension of Frontier Regulations, see correspondence in P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1903, vol. VIII, compn. 22.

Code. He had seen how useful village *patels* (headmen) were to local administrators in the Deccan and he believed the Sindh administration would benefit if *Waderos* could be persuaded to perform similar duties. *Patels* had well-defined obligations and remuneration, and their authority depended partly on local influence and partly on the support of Government. They were village officers who had a duty to assist the local police and revenue administration.³⁸⁴ Many *Waderos* did help with the day-to-day business of revenue and justice but, unlike *patels*, they were not accountable to Government.³⁸⁵ Frere was advised that *Waderos* as a class could not be trusted with heavy responsibility; and so he did not attempt to set up a regular system of *patels*. Instead, he gave *seri* grants to a limited number of respected *Waderos* as a first step to a more widespread system. These were small grants of rent-free land, originally given to stimulate cultivation. Frere changed the conditions by making grants conditional on the aid grantees regularly gave to the administration.³⁸⁶ As the size of *seri* grants was only twenty to thirty acres,³⁸⁷ their economic significance to *Waderos* was negligible. This was a contrast to the Deccan where, because holdings were so much smaller than in Sindh, similar or smaller grants had considerable value to the *patels*.³⁸⁸ In Sindh, *seri* grants has no intrinsic worth beyond whatever importance was attributed to them as favors from Government.

The system was not successful. Officers could not find many men whom they considered suitable, and so *patels* were only introduced into a few *dehs*. Indeed, it may even be misleading to refer to *seridars* (*seri* grantees) as *patels*. It was a foreign word, borrowed from the Deccan where Frere and other officers had previous experience. *Seri* grants could not turn *Waderos* into village officers. At best, they could encourage them, in a general way, to cooperate with Government. Despite the vague conditions, attached to them, *seri* grants were hardly more potent, in prompting help from *Waderos*, than chairs in *darbars*, and they were considerably more expensive.

The drawbacks to the system became increasingly apparent as time went on and in 1874 the Bombay Government decided no new *seri* grants were to be awarded. At the same time, a committee was appointed to enquire into the possibility of introducing village officers on a large scale. Its recommendations, presented in 1877, led to the passing of the Sindh Villagers Officers Act of 1881. This provided for the appointment of *patels* in every *deh*, to be remunerated by *seri* grants, and it defined their duties.³⁸⁹ A report on

³⁸⁴ Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century*, 25-29.

³⁸⁵ Frere complained that Sindh lacked 'all that frame work of villages and other municipalities which keeps society together' (to Govr., Bombay, 28 March 1854, P.G.B., R.D., 10 June 1854, pr. 5706, par. 30); see also his remarks on Lt. Jameson's report on Sahiti (*ibid.*, March 1853, Pr. 3034, par. 48).

³⁸⁶ Aitken, *Gazetteer*, 382.

³⁸⁷ See Commr., Sindh, memos., 21 & 24 May 1874 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1874, 323, 336).

³⁸⁸ Kumar describes three men in the Deccan, with estates of 30 acres each, as 'substantial cultivators;' one of them was a Patel (*Western India in the Nineteenth Century*, 21).

³⁸⁹ Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Oct. 1904 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1905 (Jan-June), Confl. Pr., par. 5); Bombay Act IV of 1881: The Sindh Village Officers Act, 1881.

Land Tenures in Sindh, published the following year, hailed the Act as marking the beginning of a new village system,³⁹⁰ but in fact it was hardly an improvement on Frere's scheme. It proved to be a dead letter.³⁹¹ The Commissioner in Sindh reported that men of real influence were not prepared to accept *patelships* which involved statutory obligations and so reduced their independence. He believed it was best to continue with the old informal system of honoring *zamindars*.³⁹² *Seri* grants were therefore allowed to lapse, except in Thar and Parkar, where Frere's *patel* system had taken root and proved useful to Government.³⁹³ No explanation was ever given for the popularity of *seri* grants in the desert. Perhaps the extreme uncertainty of cultivation there made *seridars* more appreciative of any concessions made to them. Whatever the reason, at the end of the century *seri* grants in Thar and Parkar still retained:

a value in the eyes of the people altogether out of proportion to the amount of assessment which in many cases does not exceed two or three rupees.³⁹⁴

In 1899, the Government of Bombay put forward fresh Proposals to institute a *patel* system in the rest of Sindh. Government felt village headmen of some kind, with defined functions, were necessary - although it had learnt its lesson sufficiently to concede that it would be difficult to do this in 'a province like Sindh where no villages in the Indian sense of the term exist.'³⁹⁵ To make the proposal sound more attractive to Sindhi ears, Government suggested *seridars* should be known by the familiar term of *Wadero*, instead of being called *patels*. Robert Giles, the Acting Commissioner in Sindh, nipped the plan in the bud. He explained that '*Wadero*' was a title of respect given to large *zamindars*; it could not be conferred on lesser men. Giles did not agree that the current relationship between *Waderos* and the Government was deficient. In his experience, *Waderos*:

already recognize their responsibility as regards crime and assistance to Government while in no way regarding themselves as Government servants.

He saw little chance of grafting the 'village system' onto the '*zamindari* system,' though he conceded it might be useful to appoint some smallholders as *patels* in those few areas where there were no recognized headmen.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁰ 'Land Tenures in Sind' (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 30, 275).

³⁹¹ At least, sections 4 & 5, relating to *patels*, were a dead letter but the Act also set up a comprehensive network of Govt. revenue officers (*tapedars*) in every village; hitherto, *tapedars* had not been evenly spread throughout the province. This part of the Act was successful.

³⁹² Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Oct. 1904 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1905 (Jan-June), Confl. Pr., par. 5).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Commr., Sindh, memo., 14 Sept. 1892 (*ibid.*, 1892, 883).

³⁹⁵ Under-Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to R. Giles, Actg. Commr., Sindh, 7 July 1899 (*ibid.*, 1900 (Jan-June), 650).

³⁹⁶ Giles to Secy., 28 Apr. 1899 (*ibid.*, 649, 651).

When Evan James, the Commissioner in Sindh, returned to his post a couple of months later, he disagreed with his *locum tenens*. The present arrangement between *Waderos* and Government was too vague to be satisfactory. The feudal system, he believed, could not last forever and some replacement must be found. He decided to nominate a few of the best *Waderos* as *seridars* and present their *sanads* in open *darbar*; he might: award them *lungis* as well, to add to the sense of occasion. At the same time, he would read out their duties under the Village Officers Act, expressing confidence that these duties would always be borne in mind. He was sure that by appealing to their *izzat*, he could persuade *Waderos* that it was an honor to be given responsibility by Government. James hoped that soon *sanads* would eagerly be sought after:

And gradually a defined sense of responsibility for the specific duties recited in the *sanad* will replace, or rather supplement, the indefinite traditional feeling that Government requires aid on certain occasions.³⁹⁷

James' plan was stillborn. The following year, the Government of Bombay decided not to implement it. It accepted the view that *Waderos* were already sufficiently alive to their responsibilities. There was, therefore, no need to appoint *patels*, except in places where there was no local magnate, or it was clear the appointment was a sinecure. J. Muir-Mackenzie, Giles' successor as Commissioner in Sindh, endorsed this policy in 1904, reiterating the arguments of his predecessors. He suggested that *Waderos* might be used more often in the investigation and trial of petty cases, but warned that Government should proceed with the utmost caution in this respect.³⁹⁸ Like Prere's officers fifty years earlier, he was chary of giving extra powers to the *Waderos*.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the experiment with *patels* was concluded and the wheel had turned full circle. Government did not feel *Waderos* could be trusted with statutory powers, while *Waderos* refused to compromise their independence by accepting subordinate positions. There was still no niche for the *Waderos* within the administration. The makeshift honors system trundled along, with varying success. In 1926, the Cattle Theft Committee commented on yet another proposal that the appointment of village headmen might help, to put down crime. The Committee members echoed the familiar arguments. They doubted whether big *zamindars*, 'of the class who form the *de facto* village headmen in Sindh,' would take the posts either with or without remuneration - while a headman of lower status would not be able to report offences against the wishes of a more Powerful neighbor. In short, the idea was impractical.³⁹⁹

The *Waderos* therefore continued to enjoy their power, with little or no responsibility. They had no need of Government patronage, and so the Sindh authorities were never

³⁹⁷ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Secy., 23 Dec. 1899 (ibid., 1900,(Jan-June), 653).

³⁹⁸ Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Oct. 1904 (ibid., 1905 (Jan-June), Confl. Pr., pars. 12, 13).

³⁹⁹ Cattle Theft Cttee. Report, 20.

able to acquire control over them, beyond the vague threats and promises inherent in the honors system; Frere's *seri* grants, far from drawing *Waderos* into the administrative machine, merely provided them with embellishments for their *izzat*.

At the end of the nineteenth century, though, the Government did take some tentative steps towards delegating legal responsibilities to landed magnates, when it started to appoint Honorary Magistrates. The idea seems first to have been raised in 1864, but the Commissioner in Sindh decided no good would come of it, The appointment of Honorary Magistrates in the Punjab had in his opinion met with doubtful success. The Commissioner said that as an experiment three *Sardars* had been appointed as Honorary Magistrates in Sindh, but they had turned the administration of justice into 'a complete farce.' One of the *Sardars* was reluctant to send cattle, thieves to prison for more than a week, while the magistrate a few miles away was giving them two years.⁴⁰⁰ The experience was not repeated until 1887, when a Parsi, Byramji Jehangirji Rajkotwalla, was appointed Honorary Magistrate, with his jurisdiction limited to the Karachi Municipal area.⁴⁰¹

Two years later, Government took the step of appointing a *jagirdar*, Mir Abdul Hussain Khan Talpur, as magistrate. He was a member of one of the four great Talpur families, but the Judicial Commissioner in Sindh was extremely reluctant to proceed with the appointment. He did not feel that men like the Mir, who did not speak English, should serve as magistrates and he doubted whether the Mir had much knowledge or experience of local administration.

Furthermore, as he was to exercise his powers in villages belonging to himself and his relations, the Judicial Commissioner suggested it was unlikely that offenders would feel free to appeal against his decisions. After much heart-searching on the part of the Judicial Commissioner and the Commissioner, the Mir was appointed.⁴⁰² Their opinion appears to have been influenced by a personal appeal from the Mir himself and by the strong personal recommendation of the Collector of Hyderabad, who incidentally pointed out that it would be good policy if the Mirs could be persuaded to take an interest in Government affairs instead of secluding themselves as was their wont.⁴⁰³ The appointment of Mir Abdul Hussain was followed by the appointment of four more Talpur *jagirdars* as Honorary Magistrates.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 June 1864 (P.S.C., G.D., file 4, 1862-1864, compn. 8, par. 8).

⁴⁰¹ Collr., Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, 17 June 1887 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1887, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 60).

⁴⁰² Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 15 Apr. 1889, & to Jud. Commr., 29 Apr. 1889; Commr., memo.; 10 May 1889; Jud. Commr., memo., 13 May 1889; Commr., memo., 21 May 1889 (*ibid.*, 1889, vol. II, compn. 39, 127, 130-131, 135, 137-138, 139). The Mir was appointed under Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 4157, 7 Aug. 1889 (*ibid.*, 149).

⁴⁰³ H.H. Mir Abdul Hussain Khan Talpur to Collr., Hbad., June 1889; Collr. to Commr., Sindh, 25 June 1889 (*ibid.*, 142.7,143, 149).

⁴⁰⁴ See Order no. 1634, 23 March 1892 (*ibid.*, 1892, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 37, 837).

The five appointees worked successfully so, in May 1892, James, the Commissioner in Sindh, agreed to take another step forward by appointing two non-*jagirdars* as Honorary Magistrates. The Deputy Collector of Naushahro Feroze, Kadirdad Khan, had recommended Sayed Gambal Shah of *taluqa* Naushahro and Ghulam Rasul Jatoi of *taluqa* Moro. Their Sindhi education, said Kadirdad, was as good as that of any Government official, their Persian generally better, and they had been studying the law in preparation for the appointment.⁴⁰⁵ James welcomed the suggestion enthusiastically. Their appointment would not just help the local administration, but would have:

distinct political value, as showing that Government desire to utilize the voluntary services of land owners & native gentlemen of position, who have qualified themselves for the powers by education & by setting a good example of prudence & forethought in the management of their estates to the *Zemindars* around them.⁴⁰⁶

For James, then, the Honorary Magistracy was a way of showing Government's appreciation for well-disposed and intelligent men. Such appointments might induce other *Waderos* to improve themselves through education and better husbandry, in the hope that they too might be honored by an appointment. James was pleased to learn the following year that the two *Waderos* had discharged their duties satisfactorily.⁴⁰⁷

The creation of Honorary Magistrates had definite political advantages, besides helping to relieve the burden of work on District Officers. The appointments involved local magnates in the administration, without turning them into Government servants as *patelships* threatened to do. On the contrary, an Honorary Magistracy conferred great honor on the holder because it gave him substantial powers and responsibilities. Mir Abdul Hussain Khan, for example, assured James that, 'I am doing judicial work for the sake of gaining your good will'. He declared that men either worked for gain or fame, and that he was working for fame, adding:

We covet honor for honor's sake and I believe the Government approves of and encourages this idea.⁴⁰⁸

If a man gained honor by accepting an Honorary Magistracy then, by the same token, he could not afford the disgrace of being deprived of it. Ghulam Rasul Jatoi, for instance, became greatly alarmed when he was deprived of his magisterial powers in 1902. It had been done through no fault of his own, but because bad health prevented him from carrying out his duties. Ghulam Rasul complained that the removal of his name from the list of Honorary Magistrates:

⁴⁰⁵ K. Khan, Depy. Collr., Naushahro, to Collr., Hbad., 30 Apr. 1892 (ibid., 1893 vol. I, pt. III, compn. 11, 1226).

⁴⁰⁶ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, memo., 28 May 1892 (ibid., 1229).

⁴⁰⁷ Khan to Collr., 20 Jan. 1893; James, memo., 11 Apr. 1893 (ibid., 1239-1240, 1243).

⁴⁰⁸ H.H. Mir Abdul Hussain Khan Talpur to James, 21 June 1892, & to Collr., Hbad., 9 July 1891 (ibid., 1375, 1292).

would affect me most prejudicially in the eyes of my neighboring *Zemindars* and-fellow subjects, and loner me entirely in their estimation.⁴⁰⁹

The following year, the Collector of Larkana explained angrily that Wadero Tharo Khan Lahori, an Honorary Magistrate:

has never tried a case and has neither the necessary knowledge nor fitness to try one.

He advised that Tharo Khan be deprived of his powers, unless Honorary Magistracies were intended to be purely ornamental posts. The Commissioner in Sindh did not agree, noting in the margin of his letter:

Leave him the powers. It would be a slight on him to withdraw them.⁴¹⁰

Tharo Khan was so incompetent as a Magistrate that Wadero Illahi Bakhsh Bhutto was appointed as a second magistrate for Larkana, to try his cases for him.⁴¹¹ If Tharo Khan's name had been taken off the list, his *izzat* would have been seriously damaged. Politically, this was useful to Government and well worth the slight inconvenience of doubling posts on occasions, for the men appointed were at its disposal. As Rabert Giles, the Collector of Karachi, remarked while recommending the appointment as Honorary Magistrate of Malik Sobdar Khan, chief of the Numrio tribe:

The young fellow ... will gain prestige and we - trust - a hold, for good, over him.⁴¹²

Sobdar Khan was appointed,⁴¹³ but it prove difficult to find other men of substance who were capable of taking the responsibility. Magistrates had serious duties to perform in the administration of justice. Appointments could not be lightly handed out in the pursuit of political expediency alone. Many *Waderos* were ill-educated and few had any appreciation of legal procedures. The problems encountered by Government in looking for a few men suitable to act as Honorary Magistrates shed light on its reluctance to invest *Waderos* with powers as village headmen.

⁴⁰⁹ Ghulam Rasul Jatoi, petition, 25 Dec. 1902 (ibid., 1903, vol. V, compn. 11, 285-286). His name was retained see note by Commr. (ibid., 286).

⁴¹⁰ Collr., Larkana, to Commr., Sindh, 7 Nov. 1903 (ibid., 1904, vol. I, pt. VIII, compn. 11, 1); note by Commr. (ibid., 5).

⁴¹¹ Collr., Larkana, to Commr., 15 Sept. 1906; Order no. 718, 3 Oct. 1906 (ibid., 1906, vol. I, compn. 1, 39-41, 49).

⁴¹² Collr., Karachi, to Commr., 17 Dec. 1896 (ibid., 1897, vol. III, compn. 11, par. 1).

⁴¹³ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 3432, 29 Apr. 1897 (ibid.).

Tharo Khan Lahori was a case in point. He had first been recommended in 1893, by Giles, while the latter was Collector of Shikarpur. Giles frankly admitted that he intended the post as an honor, because Tharo Khan was the leading *zamindar* of the District, rather than as an opportunity for him to exercise his powers. Giles explained that in the event of his actually having to try a case, a Munshi could be sent over from the nearby Government offices to give legal advice.⁴¹⁴ Tharo Khan, though deserving honors from a grateful Government, was hardly suited to act as an Honorary Magistrate, and the Judicial Commissioner in Sindh found Giles' suggestion most objectionable. Magisterial powers could not be conferred as a reward for loyal service.⁴¹⁵ In 1898, one of Giles' successors again put forward Tharo Khan's name, and this time he was successful, the Judicial Commissioner of the day apparently being unaware of the objections against his candidacy.⁴¹⁶ As was shown on the previous page, the original suspicion, of Tharo Khan's unsuitability was only too well founded. Giles appears to have been more interested in the political advantages of Honorary Magistracies, than in their weighty judicial obligations, for in 1896, he made a similar recommendation. He proposed the name of Wadero Dital Khan Chandio, the premier *zamindar* of the Delta region, who had proved his personal worth by his readiness to assist Government in every way. It was a drawback that he was old and uneducated, but he could pay for a qualified Munshi, while his sons, who were educated, would also help him.⁴¹⁷ Government was unable to endorse Giles' proposal.⁴¹⁸ The same problem recurred with regard to other names put forward by local officers. Giles' predecessor as Collector of Karachi in 1893 was not prepared to nominate anyone in his whole District as being 'fit to be invested with magisterial powers.' The Assistant Collector of Sehwan had found three men in his Division, but the Collector approved only of Nawab Hassan Ali Khan Laghari, who struck him as having some intelligence and ability - but he turned out to be ineligible as he already held-land within the area where his jurisdiction was to lie.⁴¹⁹

Even when suitable men were discovered, there were often obstacles in the way of their appointment for, as one British officer exclaimed, 'Sindh is the home of feuds, enmities and false complaints.'⁴²⁰ *Waderos* tended to be drawn into rivalries with one another as they competed with each other for the allegiance of smallholders. Giles complained in 1896 that it was hard to find men who were both worthy of appointment and free from involvement in local jealousies. There was only one such man in the whole of Thatta

⁴¹⁴ R. Giles, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 19 Aug. 1893 & 30 Oct. 1893 (ibid., 1893, vol. I, pt. III compn. II, 1259, 1113-1114).

⁴¹⁵ Jud. Commr. to Commr. 1133).

⁴¹⁶ Collr., Shpur., memo. III, pt. I, compn. 11 in Sindh (ibid., 18).

⁴¹⁷ Collr., Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, 17 Dec. 1896 (ibid., 1897, vol. III, compn. 11, pars. 3-4).

⁴¹⁸ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 3432, 29 Apr. 1897 (ibid.).

⁴¹⁹ Collr., Karachi, to Commr., 20 June 1893 (ibid., 1893, vol. I, pt. III, compn. 11, 1252); note to Commr., n.d. (ibid., 1255).

⁴²⁰ Collr., Sukkur, to Commr., 23 Aug. 1904 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1905 (Jan-June), Confl. Pr., par. 3).

Division, and he was too old and weak to be effective in his post for long.⁴²¹ The Assistant Collector of Jherruck had been impressed with Sayed Nawaz Ali Shah who seemed, at first glance, an ideal choice. He was an influential landholder from a good family; he was well educated and had looked up the law in preparation for his appointment. It transpired, however, that the Sayed's family had a longstanding feud with that of a neighbor, Shaikh Bakardar, and so any power the Sayed possessed might be fully employed against the Shaikh's followers.⁴²² A similar problem arose when the Assistant Collector of Hala warmly recommended Akhund Yar Mohammad of Matiari. He had known the Akhund for twenty-five years and entertained the highest opinion of him. He was an excellent farmer, paying a large annual assessment of Rs 2,000, a good and just landlord and he was respected and liked by his people. Indeed:

There are few native gentlemen in Sindh better fitted for the honor and who could be trusted to make use of the powers of a Magistrate more judiciously and uprightly.⁴²³

Nevertheless, the Judicial Commissioner strongly opposed the appointment, on the ground that the people of Matiari would interpret it as setting the Akhund up over his rival, Sayed Mohammad Ali Shah. No matter how honest the Akhund might be, there would be continual complaints of injustice and demands for cases involving the Sayed's men to be transferred to other courts.⁴²⁴ In the event, the decision not to appoint him was regarded as a triumph for the Sayed's group. In 1895, they petitioned the Commissioner that, as the Government had shown its appreciation of the Akhund's bad character by refusing to appoint him as a magistrate, it should follow the matter up by dismissing him from the office of Municipal Commissioner and turning down his application for a gun license.⁴²⁵ The petition, being purely malicious, had no effect on Government, but it confirmed the Judicial Commissioner's fears that the appointment of the Akhund would have led to bad feeling.

Once it became known that Government was looking for Honorary Magistrates, the mere rumor that a man might be chosen was sufficient to prompt his rivals to protest to the Commissioner in Sindh.⁴²⁶ Government was not usually interested in the substance

⁴²¹ Collr., Karachi, to Commr., 17 Dec. 1896 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1897, vol. III, compn. 11, par. 7).

⁴²² Asst. Collr., Jherruck, to Collr., Karachi, 19 Feb. 1892 (ibid., 1892, vol. II, pt. V, compn. 23, 679); memo., 24 Feb. 1892 (ibid., 683).

⁴²³ Asst. Collr, Hala, to Collr., Hbad., 24 Nov. 1892 (ibid., 1893, vol. II, pt. I, compn.; 34, 316-317).

⁴²⁴ Jud. Commr. to Commr., Sindh, 13 March 1893 (ibid., 313-315).

⁴²⁵ Mohammad Ali Haji & others of Matiari, petition to Commr., Sindh, n.d. (ibid., 1895, vol. I, pt. IV, compn. 7, 602 - 603).

⁴²⁶ Eg. Ghulam Khaskheli, petitions to Commr., 17 Nov. & 4 Dec. 1894; inhabitants of Raj Mahajan, *talua* Tando Bago, petition, n.d.; Sayed Murad Shah & others of Badin, petition, 14 May 1895; Pir Shamsuldin of Shpur., petition, n.d. (ibid., 1895, vol. I, pt. IV, compn. 7, 489-495, 497-502, 613-618); Kazi Raza of Shpur., petition, n.d.; Walidad of Umarkot, petition, 4 Sept, 1896 (ibid., 1896, vol. IV, pt. II, compn. 7).

of accusations made by a man's enemies: but the existence of those enemies meant it would be impossible for him to carry out his duties without controversy.

James' experiment, in which he tried to use Honorary Magistracies to involve men of substance in the administration, was not, therefore, a success. When he asked his subordinates for more names in 1896, they did not manifest any enthusiasm. The Collector of Hyderabad thought Honorary Magistrates were unnecessary,⁴²⁷ and the Deputy Commissioner of Thar and Parkar agreed with him. The Deputy Commissioner asserted that the leading men already made themselves useful to the administration in various ways while, being generally uneducated, they could not perform magisterial duties which would in any case be irksome for them.⁴²⁸ Of all the District Officers, only the Collector of Karachi, Giles, gave a positive response, as a result of which Malik Sobdar Khan Numrio was appointed, as has been mentioned above.⁴²⁹ By 1899, there were still no more than thirteen Honorary Magistrates in Sindh, of whom six were *jagirdars* and two were *zamindars*; the rest were professional men with jurisdiction over urban areas and retired Mukhtiarkars who had previously exercised magisterial powers.⁴³⁰

At the close of the nineteenth century, therefore, the Government of Sindh was still unable formally to involve *Waderos* in the administration. *Waderos* were unwilling to accept positions as village headmen because they feared their *izzat* might suffer if they appeared to be subordinate to the Government. They would probably have welcomed greater powers and responsibilities as Honorary Magistrates, but Government did not trust them sufficiently. It preferred to play safe by appointing ex-officials and *jagirdars*, from the old ruling family especially, who were so high in rank that they were unaffected by the jealousies which played a large part in the lives of lesser *jagirdars* and *Waderos*.

Consequently, the success of the administration depended on the cultivation of an informal relationship with the *Waderos*. They were the power in the land, and they had to be persuaded that it was in their interests to help Government. The distribution of honors was an improvised system but reasonably effective; most *Waderos* coveted such honors and feared their prestige would suffer if they were deprived of them. There was the drawback that those *Waderos* who did not prize Government honors had nothing to lose and might even flout the administration, but in the absence of any alternative the inconvenience had to be endured. Attempts to make *Waderos* accountable to

⁴²⁷ Collr., Hbad., memo., 5 Sept. 1896, vol. III, compn. 11).

⁴²⁸ Depy. Commr., T. & P., memo., 10 Sept. 1896 (ibid.).

⁴²⁹ Colir., Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, 17 Dec. 1897 (ibid.).

⁴³⁰ Lists of Honorary Magistrates in Sindh (ibid., 1892, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 37, 837; 1893, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 11, 1108; 1894, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 12, 18-19; 1899, vol. III, compn. 11, 18; 1902, vol. II, compn. 11). Also Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 26 May 1892, & to Jud. Commr., 2. Sept. 1893 (ibid., 1893, vol. I, pt. III, compn. 11, 1417-1419, 1145-1146); Colir., Shpur., to Commr., 17 June 1892, 19 Aug. 1893, 30 Oct. 1893 (ibid., 1399-1411, 1259, 1113-1114); Jud. Commr. to Commr., 22 Aug. 1894 (ibid., 1894, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 26, 63-64).

Government by giving them *seri* grants failed because *seridars* never regarded their grants as anything but marks of distinction. If Government had seriously tried to gain economic control over *Waderos*, it would have had to alienate an unacceptably large amount of land to them. In some ways, the appointment of Honorary Magistrates was a refinement of the honors system as it was a way of demonstrating Government's confidence in Muslim notables as a class. To this extent, it was as much a political as a judicial scheme, designed to boost the *izzat* of *Waderos*.

As well as persuading *Waderos* to cooperate, Government had also to ensure that their authority over the countryside did not diminish. That is to say, it had to be certain that their *izzat* was as high as ever and that their estates remained intact. It has been pointed out that some *Waderos* felt their prestige was damaged when their word was doubted in open Court, and it was hoped the honors system would counteract these fears. More important, though, was the economic foundation of *Waderos'* power. They could only be useful to Government if they were Wealthy. It was essential that the Sindhi countryside should continue to be dominated by great Muslim landholders.

Chapter 4

The *Ryotwari* Settlement and the *Waderos*

I

Many British officers believed, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, that the *Waderos*' estates were breaking up. Unable to make a living from their sprawling holdings, cultivated by disinterested *haris*, *Waderos* raised money by mortgaging their property to *bania* moneylenders. Gradually, their land passed to their creditors or else was bought up by more efficient smallholders. In view of the crucial position *Waderos* occupied in the countryside, Government was naturally alarmed by the prospect of their imminent ruin and took urgent steps to sustain them.⁴³¹ In the end, the great estates did not disintegrate. Large holders were well established in Sindh at the end of the nineteenth century (cf. Appendix- VIII) and they are still flourishing eighty years later, despite successive Pakistani attempts to cut them down to size. Nevertheless, the British Government remained sensitive to their plight until well into the twentieth century. As late as 1908, a Bombay report expressed the fear that the demise of the *Waderos* had merely been postponed, not averted.⁴³²

Officials laid much of the blame for the *Waderos*' predicament at the door of the revenue settlement. The *ryotwari* settlement of the Deccan had been introduced into Sindh in the 1860's. Critics alleged that the system had been designed for the smallholders of the Deccan and was ill suited to the large holders of Sindh. They were of the view that the system of assessment was driving the *Waderos* to debt and dissolution. The following chapter will discuss the land revenue system of Sindh and the modifications made to it in the nineteenth century. It will then attempt to evaluate its implications for rural society and, in particular, to establish to what extent the *ryotwari* settlement worked to the advantage or disadvantage of large holders or small holders.

II

Land revenue was a most sensitive issue in India. It was the one aspect of Government policy which had a direct and immediate impact on the lives of the majority of the population and it was, in addition, the main source of income for the Government. Its collection was therefore a matter of great importance, preoccupying rulers and subjects alike. One of the first tasks of the administration of a newly conquered province was to

⁴³¹ Cf. Chapter 6 below.

⁴³² B.N.S. CCLXXVIII, Character of Land Tenures and System of Survey and Settlement in the Bombay Presidency (Bombay, 1908), 19.

'settle' the revenue. To this end, Settlement Officers were appointed, whose job was to determine reasonable rates of assessment. Their first step was to survey the province, to provide accurate maps from which they could work. A Settlement Officer had to be thoroughly familiar with local agricultural conditions. He had to be aware of the various types of soil which existed in each district and the outturns of different crops which could be obtained from them; he had to understand the irrigational system, the methods of cultivation and any other factors which affected production, such as an area's susceptibility to floods, droughts or pests. His appreciation of these matters enabled him to establish the likely outturn per acre, the costs of cultivation and, with reference to the prevailing prices, to calculate the profits men could expect from their farms. He was then in a position to recommend at what rates per acre the Government assessment should be levied in different regions.⁴³³ It was a tedious and time-consuming business, which could hardly be repeated each year. The Settlement Officer therefore had to predict future trends and fix the assessment for a certain period: most Indian settlements were revised every thirty years.

However, Government was only one of a number of parties who shared in the produce of the land. Apart from the actual landholder, or co-sharing holders, there might be tenants, sub-tenants, village artisans and religious figures to consider. Not only, then, did a Settlement Officer have to take into account these various claims before determining the Government share, but he also had to study the tenancy system and decide on whom the revenue should be settled. The decision to collect land revenue from one class of person rather than another could have serious consequences for rural society. The choice of a revenue system was therefore extremely important. In Sindh, two models were considered - the village-lease system of the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab, and the *ryotwari* system of the Deccan. Both were tried in the early years of British rule but, from 1863, Government committed itself to the Deccan model. It was, in some respects, a surprising choice.

Under the village-lease system, the revenue was settled on an entire village or community and the headman was made responsible for its payment. In Sindh, it would have meant that *Waderos* paid land revenue on behalf of their *raj*. It was administratively convenient as it entailed a minimum of Government interference. Government simply had to calculate the total revenue which a village should pay and take it from the leaseholder as a lump sum. Wasteland was included within the lease, and the villagers were left to decide among themselves how much land should be cultivated and by whom. Government made a note of the rights of inferior holders, but had no direct dealings with them. So long as the leaseholder paid his revenue, it was no concern of the authorities what proportions the inferior holders contributed - although

⁴³³ For a detailed account of the work of Settlement Officers under a ryotwari settlement, see N. Mukherjee, *The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792 —1827* (Calcutta, 1962), 126-138, 150-176.

Government could intervene if any of the parties requested it.⁴³⁴ The system put a great deal of responsibility on local magnates, and so it was well suited to a region which was dominated by powerful landholders.

The *ryotwari* system, by contrast, had emerged from experience of regions where peasant holdings predominated. It was based on a detailed field-survey. The area was demarcated into 'Survey Numbers' (fields), each of which was mapped, its boundaries clearly marked on the ground and its holder's name registered as the occupant. As Survey Numbers could be 'resigned' (given back to Government) or taken up at the start of each cultivating season, agriculturists could vary the size of their estates according to their resources. Assessment was levied per Survey Number, whether or not it was cultivated. Evidently, the more a man could cultivate in fewer Survey Numbers, the greater his profits would be. The *ryotwari* settlement, therefore, encouraged highly intensive, efficient and small-scale agriculture, and tended to penalize large estates where land was wasted and cultivation relatively inefficient. Revenue was collected from individual landholders, however small their holdings might be, and so local magnates were cut out of the picture.⁴³⁵ The *ryotwari* settlement had not been devised with men like the Sindhi *Waderos* in mind.

Before the British conquest of 1843, there was a village-lease settlement in Sindh, Government collecting its revenue, in kind, from the *Waderos*.⁴³⁶ Napier, however; preferred the *ryotwari* system and was suspicious of great landholders; he encouraged his officers to bypass them and deal directly the smallholders.⁴³⁷ It did not amount to a coherent revenue policy, but it helped to undermine the traditional system. When Sindh was annexed to the Bombay Presidency in 1847, P.K. Pringle, the Commissioner in

⁴³⁴ For details of the North-Western Provinces system, see B.H. Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India* (London, 1892), vol. II, 30-62, 156-177; W.C. Neale, *Economic Change in Rural India: Land Tenure and Land Reform in Uttar Pradesh, 1800-1955* (Yale University, 1962), 56-77; T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1965), 39-42. For Punjab system see Baden-Powell, vol. II, 544-545; Metcalf, 43-44; Y.B. Mathur, *British Administration of the Punjab (1849-75)* (Delhi, n.d.), 14-15, 143-147. For village-lease system in Sindh, see H.B.E. Frere, *Commr., Sindh, to Collr., Karachi, n.d. (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1857-1858, compn. 1, 76)*.

⁴³⁵ For details, of Deccan system, see Baden-Powell, vol. II, 210-222; R. Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century: A Study in the Social History of Maharashtra* (London & Toronto, 1968), 84-127, & 'The Rise of the Rich Peasants in Western India' in D.A. Low (ed.), *Soundings in Modern South Asian History* (London, 1968), 25, 30-55. For discussion of principles behind Deccan & N.W. Provinces systems, see E. Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959; reprinted 1969), 93-110, & *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978), 92-118; Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 30 March 1864 (Papers relating to the Revenue Settlement in Sindh (Bombay, 1875), hereafter referred to as Revenue Papers, 107-108).

⁴³⁶ H. James, Depy. Collr., 'Report on the Purgana of Chandookah, in Upper Sindh,' 31 Dec. 1847 (B.N.S. XVII.(Bombay, 1855), pt. 2, 728). Napier had limited Govt. demand to a maximum of one-third of the gross annual produce (Selections from the Records of the Deputy Commissioner, Upper Sindh Frontier, Rev. Misc. file, 1850-1852, compn. 1, Revenue Regulations of Sir Charles Napier, Regulation 8)

⁴³⁷ *The History of Alienations in the Province of Sindh* (Bombay, 1886-1888), vol. I, 62.

Sindh, halted the drift to a *ryotwari* settlement by ordering a return to the village-leases. At the same time, he replaced the batai assessment with a cash demand.⁴³⁸

Pringle's leases were disastrous. They were imposed hastily, without preliminary enquiries. Village boundaries were neither demarcated nor enquired into - only in Thar and Parkar were any reliable maps drawn.⁴³⁹ In the absence of trustworthy information about the property included in leases, officers appear to have based their terms largely on guesswork: in the Hyderabad Collectorate, many leases were given to men who were not even landholders.⁴⁴⁰ The leases were fixed for seven years and no remissions were allowed except under extremely serious circumstances.⁴⁴¹ Rents were based on the average value of the Government share in previous years, but prices were unusually high in the late 1840's, for the disturbed state of the Punjab created an enormous demand for Sindhi grain. After the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, prices began to fall and many leaseholders found that they could not pay their rent.⁴⁴²

By the time Bartle Frere succeeded Pringle as Commissioner in 1852, the leases were universally unpopular and the system was in a shambles. Frere sympathized with the leaseholders, accusing Pringle of:

leasing out the entire country without any idea of what we were leasing, or to whom, at excessive rates.⁴⁴³

The leases had broken down, partly, because Government had insufficient data about agricultural conditions in Sindh. It would be impossible to introduce a long-term settlement until the province had been fully surveyed - something which should have been done years before. This would take a long time and so, in 1855, Frere initiated a 'rough' survey as an interim measure. Officers were to obtain a general picture of the province which would enable them to devise a correspondingly 'rough' settlement. Their work would provide the basis for a more painstaking and accurate survey later on.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁸ Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, vol. III, 337.

⁴³⁹ H.B.E. Frere, Coulmr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 12 Jan. 1855 (B.N.S. XVIII, Pt. 1, Official Correspondence relative to the Introduction of a Rough Surire and Settlement in the Province of Sindh (Bombay, 1855), hereafter referred to as Rough Survey & Settlement. 3).

⁴⁴⁰ Frere to Govr., 21 Dec. 1854 (P.G.B., R.D., 11 July 1855, pr. 6136, par. 2).

⁴⁴¹ Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, vol. III, 337; M.R. Haig, *Settlt. Offr.*, 27 July 1869 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 10).

⁴⁴² The average price of grain dropped from Rs 30 - Rs 35 per kharar in 1847 to Rs 9-12, in 1852 (T.R. Steuart, *Collr.*, Upper Sindh, to Frere, 24 Jan. 1854 - *Rough Survey & Settlt.*, pt. 1, 27); see also Haig, 27 July 1869 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 10).

⁴⁴³ Frere to Collr., Shpur., 28 March 1854 (*Rough Survey & Settlt.*, pt. 1, 37).

⁴⁴⁴ Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, vol. III, 337.

Meanwhile, a makeshift revenue system, based on crop-rating, replaced Pringle's leases. Collectors fixed a rate of assessment per cultivated *bigah* (about half an acre) or per *hurlo* (the area irrigated by a Persian wheel). The local officers estimated the extent of cultivation at each harvest and levied the Government demand accordingly. As maps had not yet been prepared, their estimates were necessarily crude. When Frere toured Sehwan Division in 1857, he was shocked to learn just how rough a 'rough' settlement could be. He complained that, instead of establishing a *bigoti* rate (rate per *bigah*) beforehand, the Deputy Collector and his assistants worked backwards. They first tried to discover how much land had been cultivated and what crops had been raised. Then, with reference to the previous year's assessment 'and after much haggling' with the *zamindar*, the officials agreed on a certain sum which would represent the current year's assessment. This figure they 'divided by the number of *Beegas* supposed to be cultivated,' to arrive at a rate per *bigah*. Frere found that the extent of cultivation was generally underestimated, with the result that the nominal *bigoti* rates appeared to be too high. He received 'vociferous complaints' from the *zamindars*, but with no reliable records to refer to:

I could rarely ascertain whether just grounds *for complaint* did or did not exist.⁴⁴⁵

The one redeeming feature was that at least Government no longer attempted to take from the *zamindar* more than he actually had. While disapproving of the way in which Pringle's leases had been introduced, Frere nevertheless favored the continuation of the village-lease system.⁴⁴⁶ He was anxious that *Waderos* should be involved with the local administration and that they should be encouraged, by every means possible, to exert their influence on Government's behalf.⁴⁴⁷ Village-leases would reinforce their position, whereas a *ryotwari* settlement might leave them without an effective role to play in the countryside. However, the four years of Napier's rule, when a *ryotwari* model was encouraged, had accustomed many smallholders to pay revenue directly to Government, while the hardships caused by Pringle's leases had made *Waderos* wary of taking on financial commitments on behalf of other men. These two factors combined to destroy enthusiasm, among both large and smallholders, for the village-lease system. In addition, none of the Settlement Officers working in Sindh had experience outside the Bombay Presidency. Consequently, despite Frere's recommendations, they came to base their work on the more familiar Deccan pattern, with its minute field-survey.⁴⁴⁸ They were encouraged in this by John Jacob who, acting as Commissioner during Frere's

⁴⁴⁵ Frere to Collr., Karachi, n.d. (P.S.C., R.D.; file 86, 1857 - 1858, compn. 1, 73-78). For similar criticisms of crop-rating see Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 8).

⁴⁴⁶ J.R. Archer, Asst. Commr., Sindh, n.d. (Rough Survey & Settl., pt. 2, 260).

⁴⁴⁷ See Frere to Govr., Bombay, 12 Jan. 1855 (ibid., Pt. 1, 5) & his remarks on Jameson's report on Sahiti, (P.G.B., R.D., March 1853, pr. 3034, par. 48).

⁴⁴⁸ Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 30 March 1864 (Revenue Papers, 107); Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, vol. III, 337-338.

absence on leave in 1856, ordered officers to go into more detail than Frere had envisaged when the rough survey had commenced.⁴⁴⁹

The two systems existed side by side at this time, some smallholders paying revenue to Government, others paying through their *Waderos* but, in 1862, Samuel Mansfield, the Commissioner in Sindh, took a further step towards the formal introduction of the Deccan settlement. He ruled that all land belonged to Government and that no *zamindar* could exercise any rights over a piece of land unless he paid revenue on it.⁴⁵⁰ He clearly anticipated that a field-assessment would be introduced, under which every Survey Number was at the disposal of Government and had to be paid for by the holder. The declaration was against the spirit of the village-lease system where all land, cultivated or not, was included in a block in the lease.⁴⁵¹ In the same year, Major J. T. Francis, a Bombay Settlement Officer, was seconded to Sindh to devise a system of settlement. A Deccan-style field-survey had been under way for several years and the Sindh Government had just adopted a Deccan-inspired policy towards wastelands. It was hardly surprising that when Francis submitted his report, in March 1863, he recommended the introduction of a Deccan-type settlement.⁴⁵² His report, far from ending the confusion which had prevailed with regard to settlement matters in Sindh, merely opened a new chapter. The 'original,' or 'diffused rate,' settlements introduced by Francis from 1863 were superseded by 'revision' settlements from 1874; finally, 'irrigational' settlements were introduced after 1881. It therefore took twenty years for the *ryotwari* system to be successfully adapted to suit Sindhi conditions.

⁴⁴⁹ S. Mansfield, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 24 Sept. 1862 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 846).

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 864.

⁴⁵¹ Mansfield's decision was in accordance with practice in the Bombay Deccan, where Govt. had long asserted its proprietary rights over all wasteland. It was a natural consequence of the assumption, which dominated official thinking at this time, that the State was the sole landlord in India and that agriculturists were merely tenants of the State (see Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, 87-88, 107). In the Bombay Presidency then, were, officially, no landed proprietors, only 'Government occupants' who paid 'rent' (i.e. land revenue) to Govt. It is doubtful whether this doctrine was a correct interpretation of Indian tradition, although it was certainly expedient for Govt. According to I. Habib, neither the State, the peasant, nor the *zamindar* could strictly be described as the proprietor: all of them had rights in the land or, rather, in the produce, as did village artisans and religious men (*The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)* (Aligarh, 1963), 111-118, 154; see also Neale, *Economic Change in India*, 55. The doctrine was not accepted without protest in Sindh. E. James, writing in 1872, insisted that before Mansfield's pronouncement, 'The *Zemindars* were the owners of the soil in the strictest sense of the word' (Papers relating to the Indebtedness of the *Zemindars* of the Muncher Lake in Sindh (Madras, 1874), hereafter referred to as *Muncher Papers*, 12). His opinion was unchanged twenty years later when he returned to Sindh as Commr. (James to Govr., 12 Aug. 1896, Note A - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.), *Confl. Pr.*, 795). The non-official members of the 1926 Fallow Rules Cttee., who were all *zamindars*, also denied that *zamindars* were the 'occupants' of Bombay official parlance; they were, on the contrary, 'the proprietors of the land' (Report of the Members of the Fallow Rules Committee, Sindh (Karachi, 1926), 53-54). Whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, Mansfield's decision was never reversed; Govt. continued to exercise proprietorship over wastelands in Sindh long after the British had left (Standing Orders of the Revenue Department (Karachi, 1960), Order 2, Section 3).

⁴⁵² J. Francis, Sup., Rev. Survey & Assessment, Thana & Ratnagiri, on Special Duty in Sindh, report, 16 March 1863 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 873-896; also copy in Revenue Papers).

Francis, anticipating some of the difficulties, suggested a number of important modifications to the basic Deccan model. Mansfield's ruling on wastelands, for instance, had serious implications for Sindh, creating problems which had not arisen in the Deccan. Most *Waderos* included vast tracts of uncultivated waste in their holdings. Its possession enhanced their *izzat* by swelling the acreage of their estates, besides giving them a steady income from letting cut grazing and woodcutting rights. After Mansfield's decision, this land had to be assessed. The *zamindars* either had to pay revenue on it or else give it up, allowing it to become 'Government waste' which could be given out to other *zamindars*.⁴⁵³

It followed that *zamindars* would be penalized if they left land fallow. This was the case in the densely populated Deccan where, because land was scarce and holdings were small, men intensively cultivated every acre they could acquire: but in Sindh, land was abundant and it was customary to leave fields fallow for at least two years out of three. A *zamindar* who owned wasteland was preventing other farmers from putting it to better use, but fallows were a different matter. Francis felt that Government would unnecessarily antagonize *zamindars* if it interfered with their long established habits of cultivation.⁴⁵⁴ He therefore altered the principle of the ryotwari system, so as to enable *zamindars* to leave some areas fallow. He borrowed a complicated and ingenious, not to say bizarre, expedient devised by John Jacob in Upper Sindh Frontier, which became known as the 'diffused rate' system.⁴⁵⁵ The land was divided into large Survey Numbers of twenty to thirty acres each, and it was assumed that the *zamindar* cultivated only one-third of his land every year, leaving the rest fallow. If one imagines a thirty-acre field assessed at three rupees per acre then, with ten acres cultivated every year, its annual assessment would be fixed at thirty rupees, giving it a 'diffused rate' of one rupee per acre per year. After three years, each acre would have paid the 'full rate' of three rupees.⁴⁵⁶ There was nothing to prevent the *zamindar* cultivating more than ten acres per year, in which case the extra cultivation was clear profit: this was intended as a bonus for making good use of the land.⁴⁵⁷

The 'diffused rate' system was, for Government, a disaster. *Zamindars* soon realized that if they cultivated the entire Survey Number for a year, then resigned it as Government waste, they could get away with paying only a third of the revenue. In a word, their farming became more efficient and more intensive, but the Government lost money. This was not the reward for good husbandry which Francis had had in mind. The problem was first noticed in *talūqa* Sakrand in 1865,⁴⁵⁸ but the pattern became familiar throughout the province. In Dadu, for example, the occupied area decreased from

⁴⁵³ Mansfield to Govr., Bombay, 24 Sept. 1862 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 864).

⁴⁵⁴ Francis, report, 16 March 1863 (ibid., 888).

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr. Sindh, 1 Nov. 1883, (R.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 101).

⁴⁵⁷ W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Apr. 1874 (Revenue Papers, 501).

⁴⁵⁸ E.L. Taverner, Settl. Offr., to Collr., Hbad., 19 June 1865 (B.N.S. CXC VIII, Kandiaro S.R., 47).

78,455 acres at the start of the settlement in 1867 to 59,333 acres by the time it expired in 1877.⁴⁵⁹ Over the same period, the occupied area of Naushahro Feroze fell from 1,53,367 acres to 94,230 acres.⁴⁶⁰ The Commissioner in Sindh tried to check the abuse by ordering that, if a *zamindar* wished to reoccupy land, he must pay the assessment during the period during which it had been left unoccupied.⁴⁶¹ This had little effect, for plenty of wasteland was available and there was no need for *zamindars* to take up the land they had previously resigned.

Luckily for Government, Francis had fixed the maximum term of a Sindhi, settlement at ten years and so it did not have to endure the 'diffused rate' system indefinitely.⁴⁶² In 1874, a conference of Settlement Officers, convened at Hyderabad to discuss various matters relating to settlements in Sindh, decided to abolish it.⁴⁶³ Henceforth, Survey Numbers were much smaller (four and a half acres on average) and the full rate of assessment was charged each year - but only if the field, or part of it, was cultivated.⁴⁶⁴ This enabled men to leave land fallow if they wished. Fallow rules were introduced to prevent fields being left barren for too long. After a certain period (fixed for each *taluqa*), *zamindars* had to cultivate, or at least pay assessment on, their fallow lands or else forfeit them to Government.⁴⁶⁵ 'Revision' settlements, introduced under the new rules, replaced the 'diffused rate' settlements as they expired.⁴⁶⁶

Other difficulties remained. The rates of assessment in the Deccan were related to such criteria as the quality and depth of soils and the proximity of lands to markets. On irrigated lands, separate rates were imposed as land-tax and water-rate. It was a tidy system, which could not be applied to Sindh. All soil in Sindh was alluvial. It could vary so widely in quality within a limited area, that any attempt to classify it was doomed to failure. Instead, Francis, in his report of 1863, adopted a rudimentary soil analysis. He identified the presence of sand or salt in the soil as serious 'faults' which impaired its productiveness, and worked out a scale by which Settlement Officers could gauge their importance.⁴⁶⁷ However, Mansfield, the Commissioner, suspected that even this scale might prove too detailed to put into practice.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁵⁹ Survey Commr.'s office, memo., 11 March 1880 (I.O.R. no. (9)2016, Dadu S.R., 12).

⁴⁶⁰ M.R. Haig, Settlt. Offr., 12 Aug. 1880 (B.N.S. CXCVIII, Naushahro Feroze S.R., 35).

⁴⁶¹ Merewether to Govr., Bombay, 8 Apr. 1874 (Revenue Papers, 501); see also Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 9).

⁴⁶² Francis had advised that the assessment should be kept low at first, to encourage agriculturists to use their surplus capital to take up new land, but he recommended that the concession should not continue for more than ten years (report, 16 March 1863-1863, 885).

⁴⁶³ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1438, 10 March 1875, par. 10 (Revenue Papers, appended after 525).

⁴⁶⁴ Anderson to Commr., Sindh, 1 Nov. 1883 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 102).

⁴⁶⁵ Report of the Members of the Fallow Rules Committee, Sindh, 32.

⁴⁶⁶ 'Diffused rate' settlements were also known as 'original' settlements.

⁴⁶⁷ Francis, report, 16 March 1863 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 874-875).

⁴⁶⁸ Mansfield to Govr., Bombay, 20 Aug. 1864 (Revenue Papers, 136).

Francis also realized that it would be impossible to separate the land-tax and the water-rate. Departing still further from the practice of the Deccan, he decided revenue should be payable per Persian wheel on 'lift' lands and per *bigah* on all other lands. The former, he remarked, could be regarded as a water-rate, the latter as a land-tax, but he warned against trying to distinguish between the two in an irrigated country like Sindh: they were combined. He emphasized that the quality of the soil was a matter of secondary importance, to the nature of the water-supply.⁴⁶⁹

In the event, as Mansfield had predicted, Francis' soil classification was too complicated to be workable. Settlement Officers paid increasing attention to the irrigational facilities when calculating assessment rates. The practice was not appreciated by the Government of Bombay. In July 1872, Alexander Rogers, a member of the Governor's Council, condemned the principles which dictated settlement operations in Sindh. Too much emphasis, in his opinion, had been laid on the water-supply, while vital considerations affecting the value of the land, like its proximity to markets, had been ignored.⁴⁷⁰ Early next year, the Bombay Government decided that it would not sanction any more settlements until it had received a satisfactory explanation of the premises on which they were based.⁴⁷¹ In 1875, displaying a remarkable ignorance of Sindhi conditions, the Bombay Government passed a resolution which insisted that:

purely irrigation and purely settlement questions should not be mixed together.⁴⁷²

This comment was included in the resolution which abolished the diffused rate system. Therefore, though the 'revision' settlements did away with the discredited 'diffused rate,' they introduced a new difficulty of their own. Settlement Officers were expected to adhere to a Deccan settlement system which was not practicable in Sindh. When deciding what assessment lands could bear, they were supposed to ignore important factors like the cost of canal clearances, which affected farmers' incomes, and the level of the country, which determined how well land was irrigated, and 'group' villages⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁹ Francis, report, 16 March 1863 (P.G.B., P.D., 1863, 876-877). He also proposed that *zamindars* obtaining their water from Govt. canals should pay an extra cess (*hakabo*) of two annas in the rupee, as it was unfair that they should pay exactly the same revenue as men who maintained private canals at their own expense (*ibid.*, 879, 882).

⁴⁷⁰ A. Rogers, Minute, 10 Aug. 1872 (B.N.S. CXCVI, Hbad. S.R., 29).

⁴⁷¹ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 750, 10 Feb. 1873 (B.N.S. CCI, Naushahro Abro S.R., 34).

⁴⁷² Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1438, 10 March 1875, par. 15 (Revenue Papers, appended after 525).

⁴⁷³ It was a Settlt. Offr.'s job to divide each *taluka* into a number of groups of similarly circumstanced villages. Group I, for instance, would comprise the 'best' villages, which could stand the highest assessments. Less fortunate villages were put in lower groups; there were seldom more than four groups in a *taluka*. This process was known as 'grouping' the villages. Soil quality, proximity to markets and irrigational facilities were the main criteria which determined the Settlt. Offr.'s decision. In 1869-1870, Larkana was assessed per acre as follows:

according to their 'natural facilities for water-supply' and their distance from markets.⁴⁷⁴ But most land in Sindh had no natural water-supply, being entirely dependent on artificial irrigation. In addition, towns tended to be situated on high-lying land, safe from floods, where irrigation was precarious; consequently, estates with good access to markets were often less valuable than they would have been in a non-irrigated country because they did not have an assured source of water.⁴⁷⁵

The solution to the problem came in 1881, when Colonel Haig, Superintendent of the Sindh Revenue Survey, settled the *talukas* of Mehar, Tigar and Labdaria. He felt their condition was too poor to stand a full assessment, and so he introduced temporary settlements until they improved. Haig had argued strongly against Rogers' criticisms a decade earlier and he now threw caution to the wind by discarding all pretence of adherence to the Deccan model. The three *talukas* suffered from an uncertain water-supply, and so Haig based his rates entirely on the irrigational facilities of the villages.⁴⁷⁶ The experiment proved so successful that Haig's 'irrigational' settlements were extended to the whole of Sindh as the 'revision' settlements expired in the 1880's and 1890's.⁴⁷⁷ The main criterion for grouping villages was the quality of the water-supply, although other matters like access to markets were taken into account when necessary. Rates were then set for the different types of irrigation and farmers were left free to change their methods (and hence their assessment) as their circumstances dictated. For example, because it was expensive to cultivate by means of a Persian wheel, rates were lower on 'lift' lands. A *zamindar* who had cultivated by 'flow' one year would therefore pay less revenue the following season, if a poor inundation had obliged him to depend on wheels.⁴⁷⁸ It was an ideal system for an irrigated country, and 'irrigational' settlements remained in force until after the end of British rule in Sindh.

When 'irrigational' settlements superseded 'revision' settlements, the fallow rules were suspended. For a while, *zamindars*, holding lands under 'irrigational' settlements could leave their land fallow indefinitely. To remedy this, the Government of Sindh introduced Fallow Rules in 1887 which applied to the whole province. The most

	Kharif				Rabi			
	Flow		Lift		Lift		Sailab	
	Rs	as	Rs	as	Rs	as	Rs	as
Group I	4	0	-	-	4	0	-	-
Group II	3	8	1	8	3	8	-	-
Group III	3	0	1	4	3	0	3	0
Group IV	2	8	1	0	2	8	2	4

(Haig, 5 Feb, 1881 - B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 33).

⁴⁷⁴ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 750, 10 Feb. 1873 (B.N.S. CCI, Naushahro Abro S.R., 34).

⁴⁷⁵ Haig, memo., 4 March 1873 (ibid., 34a).

⁴⁷⁶ Haig, 9 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CXCIX, Tigar S.R., 20-22), 10 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CC, Labdaria S.R., 30-34), 14 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S.. CXCIX, Mehar S.R., 29-31).

⁴⁷⁷ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 3397, 13 June 1881 (cited in Anderson, 14 June 1882 (B.N.S. CC, Kambar S.R., 1). For an account of the success of the irrigational settl., see A. Mayhew, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 31 Oct. 1885 (B.N.S. CC, Labdaria S.R., 43-45).

⁴⁷⁸ B.N.S. CCLXXVIII, Character of Land Tenures, 17.

important was Rule Number 4, which provided that *zamindars* had to pay assessment on each Survey Number at least once in five years, or else forfeit it to Government.⁴⁷⁹ It meant that *zamiadars* could, if they wished, hold up to five times as much land as they cultivated.

The technical problems of the *ryotwari* settlement, therefore, were not resolved until some three decades after Frere had initiated the 'rough' survey and settlement in 1855. The Deccan prototype had been altered almost out of existence, with a water-rate substituted for the land-tax and with liberal provision for fallows. Only the field assessment remained to identify it as a *ryotwari* system. It was, however, precisely this feature of the settlement which generated the most heated controversy. Many British officers, who would have preferred to see a village-lease system, believed that the field-assessment harmed the interests of the *waderos* on whom the administration relied.

The first, and most eminent, person to oppose the introduction of the *ryotwari* settlement to Sindh was Lord Lawrence. He was Governor-General of India when Major Francis presented his report in 1863, and he took immediate exception to Francis' analysis. He was certain that the proposed system was unsuitable for large *zamindars*, and he doubted whether Francis had fully considered the matter. Before Francis' arrival in Sindh, a third of the province had been subjected to a field-survey and Lawrence suspected that Francis had merely confirmed the *fait accompli*. He urged the Bombay Government to think again, commending to them the village-lease system which had proved successful among the large holders of the North-Western Provinces⁴⁸⁰ - and of which Lawrence himself happened to have been one of the architects.⁴⁸¹

Lawrence's arguments had no effect on either Francis or Mansfield, the Commissioner in Sindh. Both maintained that the Deccan system was the finest in India, which had increased the cultivated area and the prosperity of the Bombay Presidency. Francis, indeed, seemed able to find no defect in the Deccan settlement, nor any merit in that of the North-Western Provinces.⁴⁸² In the face of their intransigence, Lawrence agreed, in 1864, to let the Sindh authorities go ahead with their *ryotwari* system as they pleased, although he did so reluctantly: his final letter on the subject painted a glowing picture

⁴⁷⁹ Report of the Members of the Fallow Rules Committee, Sindh, 6. Anderson pointed out this defect in the 'irrigational' settlts. in his letter to Commr., Sindh 19 Jan. 1885 (P.S.C., P.D., file 86, 1885-1892, compn. 1, par. 1).

⁴⁸⁰ Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 30 March 1864 (Revenue Papers, 108-117); for discussion of suitability of village-lease system-for big *zamindars*, of above, 137).

⁴⁸¹ Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt*; 43. Since Lawrence was better known as an upholder of peasant rights than as a champion of the landed gentry, his attitude towards Sindh appears to be inconsistent. His distrust of the great magnates of Oudh, however, was sharpened by his fear that they might re-enact the Mutiny (ibid., 166, 189-195; S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge, 1965), 62); as the Sindhi *Waderos*, by contrast, had shown conspicuous loyalty during the rebellion, he may have felt it would be most prudent to give them every support.

⁴⁸² Mansfield; to Govr., Bombay, 20 Aug. 1864 (Revenue Papers, 130-137); Francis to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 8 Aug. 1864 (ibid., 145-146).

of the virtues of the village-lease system.⁴⁸³ The Survey and Settlement Act passed into law in 1865, giving formal sanction to Francis' recommendations.⁴⁸⁴

The disagreement between Lawrence and the Sindh authorities was based on deep-rooted attitudes to rural society. Francis had not accepted Lawrence's allegations that the *ryotwari* settlement was prejudicial to large holders, but he was more interested in emphasizing that it was 'peculiarly adapted' to the needs of petty holders; and the latter, he pointed out, constituted the majority.⁴⁸⁵ This was the crux of the argument. Lawrence stressed the importance of the *Waderos* because they were more influential; Francis concerned himself with the smallholders because they were more numerous.

In his report, Francis gave only cursory attention to the *Waderos*. He suggested that they should continue to take out leases on whole villages if they wished: but the liabilities of all inferior holders should be recorded, field by field, in readiness for a regular field-assessment, should they decline to pay as a body.⁴⁸⁶ This apparent concession was not advantageous to large holders. They would be held responsible for precise amounts of revenue under a detailed field-settlement, but they were offered no corresponding advantages or privileges. It held none of the attractions of a village-lease, where inferior and superior holders were left to determine their respective liabilities among themselves. Furthermore, the lease would run for the full period of the settlement - at least ten years and their experience of Pringle's leases had made *Waderos* unwilling to enter into long-term commitments with Government.⁴⁸⁷ In a province where irrigation was as uncertain as in Sindh, nobody would want to act as guarantor for other men's cultivation. This was, in itself, one of the strongest arguments against the village-lease system, as Francis had anticipated.⁴⁸⁸

Francis' experience of Sindh was limited and he seems to have turned a blind eye to the requirements of the *Waderos*. There is no record that he ever visited Sindh before 1862, and he had only a few months in which to familiarize himself with local conditions and write his report.⁴⁸⁹ He relied heavily on his experience of helping Captain Haig, the Karachi Settlement Officer, to settle *taluka* Kotri in 1862. This convinced him that the *ryotwari* settlement really was suitable for Sindh. He justified his conclusion on the unexpected grounds that:

⁴⁸³ Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 14 Feb. 1865 (*ibid.*, 150-155).

⁴⁸⁴ Bombay Act I of 1865, Survey and Settlement Act, 1865.

⁴⁸⁵ Francis, 8 Aug. 1864 (Revenue Papers, 145).

⁴⁸⁶ Francis, report, 16 March 1863 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 887).

⁴⁸⁷ Haig to Commr., Sindh, 23 March 1863 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1862-1863, vol. II, compn. 25, 162).

⁴⁸⁸ Francis, 8 Aug. 1864 (Revenue Papers, 145).

⁴⁸⁹ *The History of Services of Gazetted Officers in the Civil Department serving in the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay, 1878), 76.

the *Zemindaree* tenure, as it exists in the Kotree Districts, differs in no material point from a *Ryotwaree* holding in the Deccan.⁴⁹⁰

He explained that a *zamindar* was, in Sindh, anyone who paid revenue to the state. In Kotri, this generally meant someone with a few acres which he cultivated himself, like a Deccan *ryot* (peasant), while the subdivision of land was quite as small as in the Deccan. Since the circumstances were so similar, Francis felt no revenue system could work better in Sindh than that which had proved so successful in the Deccan. He was aware that many of his colleagues disagreed with this conclusion, but he asserted, in somewhat guarded language:

I have no hesitation in saying that, in my opinion, there is nothing in the nature of the *Zemindaree* tenure, as it exists in the Kotree Talooka certainly, which precludes the general application of the Deccan form of settlement.⁴⁹¹

Francis evidently depended on Kotri to justify his argument, and Captain Taverner, the Hyderabad Settlement Officer, remarked to the Commissioner in Sindh early in 1863 that:

Francis & Haig both write in great glee with regard to the Kotree Settlement.⁴⁹²

Yet it was a curious *taluqa* on which to set so high a value. Holdings in Kotri were exceptionally small. When Haig and Francis introduced the settlement, there were only three estates over 400 acres, the largest of which was less than 900 acres.⁴⁹³ A glance, at Appendix VIII will confirm that this was unusual. In Sukkur, around this time, there were twenty-six *zamindars* holding over 500 acres each, including four with more than 2,500 acres,⁴⁹⁴ while in Naushahro Feroze, forty-four *zamindars* held over 500 acres, three of whose estates were larger than 2,000 acres.⁴⁹⁵ Kotri was hardly the obvious *taluqa* in which to test the applicability of the *ryotwari* settlement to the great *Waderos* of Sindh.

Francis' deductions may have been influenced by Captain Haig.⁴⁹⁶ It was Haig, more than anyone else, who was responsible for applying the Deccan system to Sindh. He was first sent to the province in 1859 and, apart from short breaks for leave, served there continuously until 1881. Besides being closely involved with the preparation and implantation of Francis' report, he was, in 1874, put in charge of the Sindh Settlement

⁴⁹⁰ Francis, report, 16 March 1863 (P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 886).

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² E.L. Taverner, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 6 March 1863 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1863-1864, vol. I, compn. 3).

⁴⁹³ Haig, 6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kotri S.R., 35-36).

⁴⁹⁴ In 1862-1863 (Haig to Collr., Shpur., (Sept. 1873, B.N.S. CCI, Sukkur S.R., 41).

⁴⁹⁵ In 1866-1867 (Haig, 12 Aug. 1880 - B.N.S. CXCVIII, Naushahro Feroze S.R., 42).

⁴⁹⁶ Francis acknowledged the help given by all three Settlt. Offrs. in Sindh, but added that he was especially indebted to Haig (report, 16 March 1863 - P.G.B., R.D., 1863, 881).

Department, with the title of Settlement Officer in Sindh.⁴⁹⁷ It is therefore interesting to note that he voiced a marked antagonism towards the Sindhi *Waderos* Writing in the Sindh Gazetteer of 1876, Haig praised Napier for criticizing them. Napier had, in Haig's opinion, deprived the great *zamindars* of much of their former influence and had given some independence to the smallholders. Haig added that it was still the policy of the British administration to foster this desire for independence and put all landholders on the same footing.⁴⁹⁸ It was an interpretation with which many of his colleagues must have disagreed and the compiler of the 1907 Gazetteer, reprinting Haig's remarks, felt obliged to set the record straight by printing a more conventional analysis of British policy after them.⁴⁹⁹ Haig had been brought up in Ireland during the 'Hungry Forties',⁵⁰⁰ and it is possible that his Irish background prejudiced him against landlordism; among the comments of Napier which Haig quoted approvingly was one comparing the Sindhi *Waderos* with the 'middlemen' of Ireland.⁵⁰¹

In 1872, Haig revised the Kotri settlement. His analysis of its effects gives some grounds for suspecting that the *ryotwari* system of Sindh was actually intended to discriminate against large holders. He found that the number of smallholdings had increased, while the number of large holdings had decreased. The average size of holdings had been reduced from thirty-eight to nineteen acres, and no-one now held an estate larger than 600 acres.⁵⁰² This was the result of the settlement which had influenced Francis' thinking in his report and with which he and Haig were said to be well satisfied. Haig thoroughly approved of the trend towards smaller holdings; he thought it would benefit the country, and he credited the settlement with producing this happy situation.⁵⁰³ As further evidence of the good effect it was having, he cited the case of Abdul Rahman Thebo who, in 1862, had been a *hari*, without an acre to his name. After the introduction of the settlement, he and two relatives borrowed Rs 600. They used Rs 366 to buy 185 acres of land which was being auctioned to recover arrears of land revenue.

This was a particularly inexpensive way of acquiring land. Prices were generally low at such auctions because 'respectable people' regarded it as a disreputable way of acquiring land, and refused to bid.⁵⁰⁴ Abdul Rahman had no such scruples. The rest of the money was set aside for stock and seed. After two years, the partnership was dissolved and the land was divided between the three cosharers. Abdul Rahman supplemented his income by contracting to carry out canal clearances; he succeeded in

⁴⁹⁷ *History of Services* (1880), 89; Haig to A.W. Hughes, Compiler, *Sindh Gazetteer*, 25 March 1875 (P.S.C., P.D., file 86, 1882, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 31, 301).

⁴⁹⁸ A.W. Hughes; *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* (London, 1876), 79-81.

⁴⁹⁹ E.H. Aitken, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* (London, 1907), 412-413.

⁵⁰⁰ I.O.R., Military Dept., Cadet Papers, 1845-1846, compn. 225, 157-168.

⁵⁰¹ Hughes, *Gazetteer*, 81.

⁵⁰² Haig, 6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kotri S.R., 35).

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁰⁴ Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, (Sehwan S.R., 14).

extending his holding and by 1872 he was the largest holder in the *taluka*, with 598 acres.⁵⁰⁵ Haig admitted that the case was exceptional, but concluded it was:

an indication of the improvement in the condition of at all events the poorer classes of agriculturists, which may be looked for as a future result of the settlement.⁵⁰⁶

It is possible that Abdul Rahman would have flourished under any settlement system, while the shrinking of large holdings need not have weakened the *Waderos* if they were shedding excess wastelands or taking advantage of the 'diffused rate' system. Haig's position, though, was unambiguous. His settlements were tailored for 'the poorer classes of agriculturists,' and he was more or less-indifferent to the fate of the large holders.

Evan James, a young officer appointed Deputy Collector of Sehwan in 1870, also believed that the settlement system was strengthening smallholders and he became convinced that it was seriously damaging the interests of large holders. He served only two years in Sindh, but a report he produced just before leaving in 1872 had a great effect on the administration of the province. Haig had settled Sehwan in 1864. By the time James took charge of the Sub-Division, a similar pattern to that at Kotri had emerged, but on a grander scale. Sehwan was a more representative *taluka* than Kotri, in that there was a greater proportion of large holders. There had been twenty-three men holding over 500 acres each in 1864, but by 1876, when the settlement was revised, only one was left.⁵⁰⁷ James reported that most of the *Waderos* were hopelessly in debt to Hindu *banias*, to whom they were losing their estates. Worst affected were those holding land irrigated from the Manchar Lake.⁵⁰⁸

James saw in the settlement one of the chief agents of the *Waderos'* ruin. When it was introduced, they had been given the choice of surrendering their uncultivated waste at once, or paying for it before they had time to bring it under the plough. This was a consequence of Mansfield's decision on 1862, that all wasteland belonged to Government unless *zamindars* were prepared to pay land revenue on it. Unwilling to give up their traditional rights over uncultivated lands, they preferred to pay for them. They were driven to moneylenders to raise the cash, and so they sank into debt. James did not blame them for clinging to more land than they could cultivate. He defended them passionately:

What course would an English squire adopt, if told to throw up a moor on his estate, or his lawn, or his park, or in default pay a heavy rent on it, commencing

⁵⁰⁵ Haig, 6 Jan. 1873 (H.M.S. CXCV, Kotri S.R., 37).

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 26).

⁵⁰⁸ H.E.M. James, 'Report on the *Zemindars* of the Muncher Lake, 1872' (Muncher Papers, 1).

at once, though he knew that it would be some time before he could make the land fit to grow crops? Would he part with his paternal acres, or hold by them, trusting to scrape enough money from his cultivated farms to pay for them meanwhile? He would choose the latter alternative, I think, and so did the Muncher *zamindars*.⁵⁰⁹

James admitted that his ideas were greatly influenced by conversations with the *zamindars*,⁵¹⁰ and he may have been repeating their complaints.⁵¹¹ He was apparently unaware of the facility with which some of them were disposing of their 'paternal acres' when it suited their purposes under the 'diffused rate' Settlements. James had been brought up at Barrock Park, near Carlisle, where his family owned property.⁵¹² Coming from the Cumberland gentry, he may, in contrast to Haig, have been predisposed to sympathies with the great landed families of Sindh.

The burden of James' argument was that *Waderos* had to maintain their status and that Government had prejudiced their interests by putting them on the same level as peasants with regard to revenue payments. Peasants had no position to keep up, and so they did not exercise authority over tracts of wasteland. Haig had kept no record of the *lapo* (a *zamindari* fee): which *Waderos* levied from men who cultivated land which had formerly belonged to them. James concluded angrily that 'all *Zemindars*' rights were 'treated as nullities' by Haig and the Settlement Department.⁵¹³

It fell to Colonel Haig, as the senior Settlement Officer in Sindh and the author of the Sehwan settlement, to answer James' criticisms. Haig vigorously defended the principles behind the *ryotwari* system by denying that *zamindari* rights existed in Sindh. He had not recorded the rights a *zamindar* could exercise over wasteland transferred to others:

for the sufficient reason that I had not, as I have not now, the least idea of what they are, or that he has any rights at all over such land.⁵¹⁴

He refused to admit that there was a qualitative difference between a *zamindar* and a peasant. The distinction was:

simply one of social standing, and generally (not always) of extent of occupancy.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵¹¹ As Merewether, Commr., Sindh, alleged (to Govr., Bombay, 28 Oct. 1872, *ibid.*, 1).

⁵¹² *Who Was Who, 1916-1928* (London, 1929), 500; Barroch Park remained in the family's possession until 1976 (R.E. Powell, niece of James, to author, 4 Apr. 1976).

⁵¹³ James, report, 1872 (Muncher Papers, 17).

⁵¹⁴ Haig, memo., 7 Aug. 1872 (*ibid.*, 158).

If a peasant had wasteland, he was free to levy whatever fees he wished, but neither he nor a *Wadero* could do so unless they paid assessment on it to Government.⁵¹⁵

Haig's case was a straightforward enunciation of the principles inherent in Mansfield's decision of 1862 that all waste belonged to Government. Unlike James, he had no compassion for men who clung to unprofitable land for sentimental reasons or to uphold their *izzat*. They merely caused large areas to lie waste, which other farmers could put to good use.⁵¹⁶ He pointed out that one large holder in Sehwan who was prospering despite the alleged hardships of the settlement was Makhdum Dost Mohammad, who:

had the good sense to keep no more land than he could cultivate.⁵¹⁷

It was a simple matter of economics. Haig insisted that all complaints in Sehwan stemmed from a body of reckless and improvident *zamindars*:

who under any circumstances would have steadily kept on the road to ruin, and find in the Settlement a convenient excuse for the pass to which they have brought themselves.⁵¹⁸

Haig defended the principle, but he did not defend the specific settlement which he had introduced to Sehwan. On the contrary, when he revised it in 1876, he declared:

Nowhere has a Settlement so wretchedly miscarried as that which happily has terminated in Sehwan.⁵¹⁹

He contended, though, that Sehwan was exceptional and that James, who had little experience of Sindh, was not justified in applying to the rest of the province lessons he had learned there. He accused James of generalizing 'from a limited number of particular instances.' There were, Haig alleged, factors operating in Sehwan which made it a special case.⁵²⁰

Nobody would have denied that the *zamindars* of Sehwan had serious problems. Whether they were relevant to the rest of Sindh was a different question. Most of the land was irrigated by overflow from Lake Manchar. During the 1860's, the Indus changed its course. The mouths of the channels feeding the Manchar silted up,

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174. Haig made similar remarks in a memo. dated 6 Jan. 1874 (Revenue Papers, 509-510).

⁵¹⁸ Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 21).

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ Haig, memo., 6 Jan. 1874 (Revenue Papers, 507).

preventing it from draining efficiently. By 1875, less than half the original cultivated area could be cropped.⁵²¹

Many of the leading *zamindars* were Sayeds. The Talpurs, out of religious respect, had given them exemptions from land revenue, but these had been stopped by the British Government - a misfortune which, accompanied by the silting of the Manchar, dealt a severe blow to their livelihood. In Haig's opinion, they had added to their difficulties by leading debauched lives. The Sayeds were quarrelsome, 'swift to shed blood in miserable family brawls,' and addicted to drugs, gambling and promiscuity; the sums they squandered on prostitutes, according to Haig, 'would suffice to redeem many a ruined estate.'⁵²² When he introduced the settlement in 1864, he found that the big *zamindars*, whom he castigated as 'the idle class,' were all in debt, but he did not feel this entitled them to liberal treatment in the form of low rates of assessment.⁵²³

However, the settlement had a harsher effect than Haig intended, for Maher, the Deputy Collector of the time, refused to give sufficient remissions of revenue. The rates were the same on cultivated as on uncultivated land, but it had never been. Haig's intention that *zamindars* should be penalized if they were unable to cultivate as a result of circumstances beyond their control - for example, flooding, water-deficiency, or pests might blight the efforts of the most dedicated agriculturists, through no fault of their own. Between 1864 to 1874, the occupied area fell from 79,465 acres to 55,627 acres. Since the reduction of the occupied area was a phenomenon commonly associated with the 'diffused rate' system, it cannot be taken in isolation as evidence of hardship, but Haig admitted that much of the best land had passed from large holders to smallholders; the latter, he said, were scornfully described as 'Settlement *Zamindars*' by the old proprietors.⁵²⁴ Haig believed that the silting of the Manchar, the character of the Sayeds and Maher's unreasonably strict policy on remissions had combined to damage the fortunes of the *Waderos*; the settlement itself was not responsible. Then, after 1869, when Maher left, remissions were given on a more generous scale, enabling the *Waderos* to recover. Indeed, Haig claimed that during the second part of the settlement, remissions had been granted too generously, many *zamindars* receiving more than they were entitled to.⁵²⁵ Haig argued, therefore, that a combination of circumstances had led to the wreck of the settlement at Sehwan.

The Government of Bombay did not accept that Sehwan was an isolated case. The failure of the 'diffused rate' system had long been obvious, and Government was so unhappy about many aspects of the Sindh settlements that it had refused to sanction new ones. It felt that James had made some points of general interest, and his remarks

⁵²¹ Bombay Govt. 1875, 318).

⁵²² Haig, memo., 7 Aug. (Manchar Papers, 172); 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 4-5).

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-13, 21.

were added to the agenda of the conference of Settlement Officers which met at Hyderabad in November, 1874.

The conference conceded that the 'natural dislike' of *Waderos* to relinquish their wasteland had probably added to the financial difficulties, and that it was 'only right and politic' for Government to help them by respecting some of their claims over waste. At the same time, the conference re-emphasized the principle that *zamindars* had no legal titles to land they did not pay for; any concession on this point 'must be considered an act of grace.' The conference devised a novel expedient to effect this. Instead of paying assessment per Survey Number, *Waderos* would be able to take their entire estates on lease, at a reduction of up to 30% on the aggregate assessment the estates would otherwise have had to pay. Each application for a lease was to be decided on its merits by local officers.⁵²⁶

In the event, this proposal remained a dead letter. There is no record of any *zamindar* applying to lease his estate on the terms offered. Giving a man one-third of his estate free of assessment was not, in fact, a great favor: it would not even cover his fallows if he was accustomed to leave two-thirds of his holding barren each year; it certainly would not help to subsidize the vast tracts of wasteland which some *Waderos* possessed.⁵²⁷ The fallow rules which accompanied the 'revision' settlements were a far more generous concession, for they enabled a man to leave up to four-fifths of his estate uncultivated. Furthermore, *Waderos* had no desire to repeat their experience of Pringle's leases, when they had been made liable for the revenue on specified acreages which they could not reduce when they had difficulty paying the excessive rates demanded. A regular field-assessment was more flexible. A man could cut his coat according to the cloth, resigning. Survey Numbers if he could not afford to pay for them and taking them up again if conditions improved.

Moreover, the settlement did not in practice jeopardize *Waderos*, claims over wasteland. Whatever Government might say, it was generally recognized in the countryside that certain lands belonged to certain families even if they had not been cultivated for a long time.⁵²⁸ The problem of their rights therefore resolved itself eventually, without any need for special action on the *Waderos'* behalf. Government's technical ownership of the land could not set aside the *Waderos'* local influence, while the fallow rules gave landholders the opportunity to keep a lien on lands which they could not immediately cultivate.

⁵²⁶ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1438, 10 March 1875., par. 7 (Revenue Papers, appended after 525).

⁵²⁷ Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, vol. III, 339.

⁵²⁸ Before the introduction of Haig's original settl. into Sehwan in 1864, Sayed Gul Mohammad Shah had resigned 800 acres of waste in one *deh* alone (Haig to Collr., Karachi, 11 Nov. 1860 - P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1861-1862, vol. compn. 5, par. I).

Many officers still believed, however, that the very concept of a *ryotwari* settlement was incompatible with the existence of *Waderos*. This was the fear Lawrence had raised in 1863, when Francis had submitted his proposals for the Sindh settlement system. James stated the case in detail in 1873, in a memorandum he prepared after leaving Sindh.

Under a *ryotwari* settlement, every Survey Number was assessed; a man who farmed intensively, without wasting any land, would have no difficulty in paying his revenue but a big *zamindar*, dependent on *haris*, was less able than a peasant-proprietor to guarantee efficient cultivation. There was also, argued James, a more serious objection to the system. The field-survey was unfair because it took no account of the fact that, while a peasant could keep all his crop for himself, a *zamindar* had to make *batai* with his *haris*. That is to say, a Survey Number on a *zamindar's* estate had to support two people, not one. At the same time, *haris* were beginning to be attracted by the prospect of taking up cultivable wasteland on their own account and setting themselves up as smallholders. The *zamindar* had to offer them higher rates at *batai*, to make it worth their while to stay in his employ. James painted a grim picture:

the *zemindar*, when he calls on his *harees* to engage for raising a crop, is told he must submit to getting almost nothing out of the land but the bare assessment, or the *haree* says "I will take up land for myself." The *zemindar* is thus reduced either to letting his land be cultivated for a song, or ... he has to pay for it when he gets nothing out of it.⁵²⁹

Thus the *zamindar* who, so James had alleged in 1872, was already involved in debt in order to retain his 'paternal acres' of waste, had in addition to be satisfied with a minimal return on his cultivated lands. The *Waderos* were bound to fall further into debt. James warned:

We have ruined such numbers of them in Sindh that we ought to be careful to ruin as few more as we can.⁵³⁰

The accounts of Estates Nos. 1, 3 and 4 in Appendix VII were contemporary with James' memorandum. They do not confirm his assertions. The assessment amounted respectively to 22%, 24% and 43% of the gross incomes of the *zamindars*, whose net profits were 40%, 43% and 24%. These figures are no more conclusive than any Indian statistics, but they indicate that, even after making *batai* and paying assessment, *zamindars* could still make a reasonable profit.

Colonel Merewether, the Commissioner in Sindh, was not convinced by James' analysis. He commented on his inexperience and accused him of prejudice. James had, he said,

⁵²⁹ Anderson, 24 July 1886 (I.O.R. no. (9)2207, Jati S.R., 4).

⁵³⁰ James, memo., 21 July 1873 (Revenue Papers, 488).

formed 'hastily drawn conclusions' from 'a partial knowledge of the subject.' Instead, he recommended to the Governor of Bombay the reply made by Colonel Haig, whom Merewether praised as:

the oldest, most experienced, and most able Settlement Officer in Sindh.⁵³¹

Haig maintained that James had started from a false premise. He agreed that large holders received only a portion of the crop, but he explained that peasants were in precisely the same position. While the *zamindar* had to divide his produce with his *haris*, the peasant had to divide it with his cosharers. The field-survey could not discriminate in favor of either party on that score. Moreover, Haig pointed out that the petty holder had less resilience than the large holder, for if the crop failed on his few acres, he had no others to fall back on.⁵³²

However, some of Haig's arguments contradicted his protestations over the equitability of the settlements. For example, he did not deny that *haris* were becoming more independent, at the expense of the *Waderos*, but he could see no harm in it:

To a certain extent, indeed, the peasantry have everywhere become more independent, for they have prospered under the settlement. This is a change of circumstances unfavorable to the old proprietors, but inevitable under the travelling tendencies of our rule.⁵³³

He clearly conceded James' point here, though he approached it from a different angle; while James was alarmed to see the *Waderos* weakened, Haig was pleased to see the peasants thriving. Abdul Rahman Thebo of Kotri, for instance, the *hari* who had become a *zamindar* after profiting from the misfortunes of an old proprietor, must have been the essence of James' villain the *hari* with ideas above his station: Haig, by contrast, admired him, regarding his success as a vindication of the settlement system. The two attitudes actually complemented one another, indicating that, whatever Haig might say to the contrary, both men believed the *ryotwari* system was ill suited to the requirements of *Waderos*. The pattern of their argument recalls the dispute between Lord Lawrence and the Sindh authorities in 1864.

A leveling tendency was intrinsic to the *ryotwari* settlement. It was designed for petty holders. The field-assessment put a premium on intensive cultivation and so tended to put the holders of extensive estates at a disadvantage; it encouraged large holders to give up their excess lands. At the same time, because Survey Numbers were small, men of the most limited means could afford to take up land and in this way the settlement promoted the development of a peasant class. With the size of *Waderos'* estates

⁵³¹ Merewether to Govr., Bombay, 8 Apr. 1874 (ibid., 498).

⁵³² Haig, memo., 6 Jan. 1874 (ibid., 509-510).

⁵³³ Ibid., 509.

apparently diminishing, and with the number of peasants increasing, it seemed to some British administrators that the *Waderos* must soon cease to exist.

The controversy surrounding the *ryotwari* settlement came to a head in connection with *taluqa* Larkana, in the 1880's. Larkana was an ideal laboratory in which to test the settlement. It was a complete contrast to Sehwan, where James had formed his opinions. No burden like the Manchar Lake hindered cultivation, nor did new canals improve it. From the time of the introduction of the original, 'diffused rate,' settlement in 1869-1870, the irrigational facilities were consistently excellent. Prices remained constant. Apart from the occasional good or bad season, the only variable was the settlement.⁵³⁴

Larkana was known as the garden of Upper Sindh. It was well situated for water and famous for the quality of its *sugdasi* rice, grown in the *mail* area in the western part of the *taluqa*. Larkana had always been prosperous. When he introduced the original settlement in 1869, Major Haig was pleased to note that, in addition to its natural advantages, Larkana was:

happy in possessing a most enterprising and intelligent body of proprietors.⁵³⁵

Colonel Francis, who was still responsible for supervising settlement operations in Sindh, believed the public spirit of the Larkana *zamindars* was without parallel anywhere in the Bombay Presidency.⁵³⁶ Their greatest achievement was the construction of the Fordwah, a canal opened in 1855, over half the cost of which, amounting to Rs 23,000, had been met by the *zamindars*.⁵³⁷ In 1862-1863, they had contributed Rs 86,177 for public works, on top of their private expenses for canal clearances.⁵³⁸

Unfortunately, though irrigational works gave them a good return on their investment, the *zamindars* may sometimes have displayed generosity which was beyond their means. In addition, Captain Ford, the Assistant Collector of Larkana, penalized *zamindars* who did not take advantage of the newly irrigated wastelands, encouraging them to hold more land than they could afford to cultivate. The Collector of Larkana condemned Ford's 'forcing' system in 1869, but by that time all the leading *zamindars* were in debt, except for Fateh Mohammad Lahori and his sons.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ See G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 29-33); C.G. Henderson, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 30 Apr. 1907 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXII, Larkana S.R., 2-5).

⁵³⁵ Haig to Collr., Shpur., 27 July 1869 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 8).

⁵³⁶ Francis, memo., 11 Nov. 1869 (ibid., 26).

⁵³⁷ The total cost of cutting the Fordwah was Rs 23,466, of which Govt. paid only Rs 9,000 (St. Clair Ford, Depy. Collr., Larkana, to Collr., Upper Sindh, 20 Feb. 1855 - B.N.S. XXXVI, Official Correspondence regarding the Ford Wah, in the Shikarpur Collectorate, Sindh, 1855-1856 (Bombay, 1856), 14). The following year, the *zamindars* gave Rs 30,000 towards enlarging the canal (Haig to Collr., Shpur., 27 July 1869 - B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 8).

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁵³⁹ Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 5 Oct 1869 (ibid., 23).

In 1881, Haig revised the settlement. Many of the *Waderos* were in desperate straits. The most dramatic case was that of Khalifa Mohammad Panah, whose entire estate of 2,727 acres had been sold to his creditor, Seth Gokuldas. The 1,300 acres estate of Sardar Khan Abro had also been dispersed among his creditors. At the introduction of the settlement in 1869-1870, the largest holder had been Shah Nawaz Abro, with 4,077 acres, but he had since been reduced to 1,182 acres - and no less than 1,439 acres of his land had been auctioned by Government to recover arrears of land revenue. Other *zamindars* had lost similarly large amounts of land and were heavily in debt.⁵⁴⁰ Appendix XI shows the holdings of large holders in Larkana in 1869, 1881 and 1892.

The settlement had generated a substantial increase in revenue over the 'rough' settlement which had preceded it, but this was almost exactly matched by an extension of the cultivated area, and the average rate of assessment per acre was actually less under Haig's settlement than under the 'rough' settlement (see Appendix XII for the revenue history of *taluqa* Larkana).⁵⁴¹ Haig refused to blame the settlement for—the *Waderos*' misfortune, attributing it instead to their 'neglect, dissipation and extravagance.'⁵⁴² He had evidently revised his earlier, favorable, opinion of the Larkana *zamindars*. The settlement, he felt, had pressed too lightly on them. It had been under the 'diffused rate' system, and had produced the familiar pattern of declining revenue collections and a reduction in the occupied area, neither of which was matched by a corresponding decrease in cultivation. Haig replaced it with a 'revision' settlement. The rates, he insisted, were reasonable, but they had the effect of enhancing the revenue collections by an average of 41% over the next decade.⁵⁴³

Haig's 'revision' settlement was given a trial in 1881-1882. He had predicted that the revenue demand would be Rs 2,98,863, but it turned out to be Rs 3,30,160, over a *lakh* of rupees more than the demand in the final year of the previous settlement. The increase was due to a good inundation and the growth of cultivation on the more highly assessed lands. The Government of Bombay believed the results proved that Haig's rates were judicious and did not strain the resources of the *zamindars*. In 1882, his settlement was confirmed for ten years, although the rates on lands near the town of Larkana were reduced slightly.⁵⁴⁴

Government's decision, so some *zamindars* alleged in a petition to the Governor of Bombay early in 1883, came as a great shock to the inhabitants of Larkana. Over Rs 14,000 remained uncollected at the end of the year 1881-1882 and they insisted it was

⁵⁴⁰ Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (ibid., 36-38).

⁵⁴¹ Though one should bear in mind Frere's allegations that the nominal rates per acre were exaggerated under 'rough' settlements.

⁵⁴² Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 38).

⁵⁴³ Cf. Appendix XII.

⁵⁴⁴ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 6238, 9 Sept. 1882 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1882, 826).

beyond their capacity to pay Haig's rates. They begged the Governor to order that the settlement be revised again. Not only did the petitioners object to the particular settlement, but they condemned the whole settlement system of Sindh, in terms which would have struck a sympathetic chord in the heart of Evan James. The *zamindars* complained that they had been forced to pay assessment on uncultivated land; in fact, all land was encumbered with such heavy rates of assessment that even *bantias* refused to buy it except at disproportionately low prices. Unable to sell their land, *zamindars* had no alternative but to throw it up, or else mortgage it at nominal rates. In the long run, they would all be ruined. If the Governor did not believe them, they advised him to send for the report of Robert Giles, the Assistant Collector of Larkana.⁵⁴⁵

Giles was indeed strongly critical both of the settlement and the system. Because *Waderos* had to *batai* their crops and were, he alleged, defrauded by their *haris* into the bargain, they could not compete with smallholders under a field-assessment. He believed that this explained why revenue was so forthcoming on the mail lands, where the majority of holdings were small, while elsewhere in Larkana there were difficulties over collecting it.⁵⁴⁶ When James first aired these criticisms in 1873, Haig had answered them by explaining that it was not true to say that smallholders could keep their entire crop for themselves: they had to share it with their partners. Nevertheless, it remained an article of faith with James, Giles and others that the *batai* system made large holders uncompetitive. It was a curious belief. The *batai* system was ancient and practiced throughout India. If the large holders did not like it, they had only to switch over to the *danai* (cash rent) system. In fact, the *batai* operated in favor of the *zamindars* rather than against them and they were, on the whole, reluctant to adopt *danai* rents.

Other officials supported Giles. Thomas Hart-Davies, the Manager of Encumbered Estates in Sindh, was adamant that, unless Haig's rates were reduced immediately, 'the *Zemindars* of the district will be totally ruined.'⁵⁴⁷ Colonel Wallace, the Collector of Shikarpur, gave especially eloquent backing to these intimations of disaster. He looked far beyond the present settlement, in an apocalyptic repetition of James' vision of despair a decade previously. The *zamindar*, he insisted, was doomed, for he 'cannot maintain his position under a *ryotwari* system of settlement.' *Zamindars* beggared themselves by offering high betel rates which they could not afford, in a vain attempt to stop their *haris* deserting them to become petty holders.⁵⁴⁸ Wallace declared passionately:

⁵⁴⁵ Larkana zamindars, petition to GoVr., Bombay, 9 March 1883 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1884, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 2, pars. 6, 8).

⁵⁴⁶ R. Giles, Asst. Collr., Larkana, to Collr., Shpur., 14 Apr. 1883 (ibid., par. 21).

⁵⁴⁷ T. Hart-Davies, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 18 July 1883 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 88).

⁵⁴⁸ He produced no evidence to substantiate this claim; on the contrary, *batai* rates appear to have remained unchanged throughout the century (cf. above, 74). H. James, Depy. Collr., Shpur., had affirmed some years previously that the Larkana *zamindars* were accustomed to pass the burden of land revenue onto their *haris* if they had difficulty paying it themselves (report, 31 Dec. 1847 - B.N.S. XVII, pt. 2, 728).

It is hopeless to attempt to stem the tide and preserve the old *Zemindar* who has however done excellent service to the state. Sooner or later, one by one, the *Zemindar* will be obliged to lessen his holding until by degrees he, or as it is to be hoped, his descendants will sink into the position of a cultivator. We might reduce the Government demand upon him to stave off the evil for a time, but we cannot prevent the cultivator from setting up on his own account. Thus year by year the number of small holdings will increase until the larger holdings disappear altogether.⁵⁴⁹

Colonel Anderson, who had succeeded Haig as Superintendent of the Sindh Revenue Survey in 1881, was unmoved by this barrage of criticism. What is interesting is that he did not deny that the days of the great *zamindar* were numbered. Merely, like Haig before him, he apparently had no regrets about it. A large estate, he maintained, could not be managed as economically as a small one - especially if the owner was a *Wadero*. *Waderos* being remarkably unbusinesslike in their habits. Therefore, revenue which a peasant could easily pay, pressed heavily on a *Wadero*. *Banias*, who seldom held more land than they could afford, were also better equipped to cope with their revenue. Unable to compete, it was inevitable that the *Wadero* should see his estate slip gradually into the hands of peasants and *banias*. If, 'for political or sentimental' reasons, Government wished to 'bolster him up for a few more years,' the only solution would be to grant a special remission for the *Wadero* class. As they were the most influential people in the country, *Waderos* were in a position to make their grievances heard and many officials, 'ignoring the justice and difficulties of the situation,' sympathized with them. They blamed the *ryotwari* settlement but really, said Anderson, the *Wadero's* demise was:

due to causes as natural as that man shall grow old and die.⁵⁵⁰

Despite the petitions of the *zamindars* and the pleas of Giles and Wallace, the Bombay Government refused to make any serious modifications to Haig's rates.⁵⁵¹ But the Larkana *zamindars* did not, as a class, 'grow old and die.' On the contrary, they survived and prospered. In 1883-1884, Government had great difficulty collecting the revenue, nearly Rs. 14,000 remaining in arrears, and a large number of warning notices had to be issued. However, less land than usual was actually forfeited for non-payment of arrears, as the *zamindars* managed to make up the deficit the following year. The Bombay Government interpreted this to mean that the *zamindars* were unwilling, rather than unable, to pay, and had deliberately withheld their revenue as a protest.⁵⁵² After 1884, the problem ceased, confirming Government's suspicions. Even in the worst years of the 'revision' settlement (1885-1887), the revenue demand was almost equal to the best

⁵⁴⁹ P.R. Wallace, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 9 Oct. 1883 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 99).

⁵⁵⁰ Anderson to Commr., Sindh, 1 Nov; 1883 (ibid, 100). His attitude was remarkably similar to Haig.

⁵⁵¹ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2659, 28 March 1884 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1884, (Jan-June), 344-345).

⁵⁵² Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 21 Feb. 1884 (ibid., 290-291).

years under Haig's original settlement, yet the *zamindars* had no apparent difficulty in paying.(cf. Appendix XII).

A slight rise in prices during the currency of the 'revision' settlement may have helped them. When Haig introduced his original settlement in 1869, the average price of uncleaned rice was Rs 1-5 per *maund*, but by 1882 it had fallen to between eleven to thirteen annas per *maund*. In 1884, prices climbed back to the 1869 figure; at Rs 1-4-9 per *maund*. This rise helped the *zamindars* but, when fixing the rates, Haig had assumed an average price of Rs 1-11 per *maund*, and this figure was not reached until 1892, the final year of the settlement. The average price of rice for the whole year of the settlement was much lower than Haig had expected, at Rs 1-4-8 (see Appendix XIII). The upturn of prices, therefore, though it was welcome, was insufficient to make the difference between ruin and prosperity.

For the *Waderos* positively thrived on Haig's settlement. Most of them extended their holdings (cf. Appendix XI). When the original settlement was introduced in 1869-1870, there were sixteen large holders, with an average holding of 1,178 acres each. By the time the settlement was revised in 1888-1881, they had been reduced to twelve, with an average holding of 979 acres - though one should bear in mind that this was a 'diffused rate' settlement, under which some *zamindars* may have found it convenient to trim their estates. When Haig's controversial settlement was revised in 1891-1892, the number of large holders was thirteen, with an average holding of 1,265 acres; the average size of a large estate had increased by a fifth under Haig's settlement. The inference must be that *Waderos* had not suffered unduly as a result of the *ryotwari* system.

It was a development which ought not to have been wholly unexpected. The arguments of Wallace, Giles and Hart-Davies in 1882-1883 had centered on those men who were badly in debt - people like Khalifa Mohammad Panah and Sardar Khan Abro. These were the *Waderos* whom Haig had accused of dissipation and neglect. But their importance should not have been overstressed. Haig had mentioned other, more enterprising *zamindars* who had flourished under the original settlement in the 1870's.

He had singled out the Lahori family for praise, especially its head, Tharo Khan Lahori. His father, Fateh Khan, had been the only *zamindar* free from debt in 1869 and Tharo Khan followed his example, adding to his inherited wealth with purchases of good land in Larkana and Kambar.⁵⁵³ Colonel Anderson, who betrayed no admiration for Sindhi *Waderos* as a whole, described him as:

a man of some education and good address, has immense influence from his position, and energy of character amongst the other *Zemindars* and is highly respected by the

⁵⁵³ Collr., Shpur., to Survey & Settlt. Commr., 5 Oct. 1869; Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 23, 38).

officials, both European and Native; he is a shrewd and careful man of business and altogether the most favorable specimen of the Muhammadan *Zemindar* that I have met.⁵⁵⁴

Tharo Khan's assessment had been raised by Haig; both Anderson and the Commissioner in Sindh believed that all the petitions against the settlement had been instigated by him.⁵⁵⁵ Giles also held Tharo Khan in high esteem; some ten years later, he was anxious that Tharo Khan should be appointed as an Honorary Magistrate, as a mark of respect. It would appear, then, that much of the opposition to the settlement may be traced back to a man who was not in financial difficulties. It is surprising that, while prophesying the decline of the *Waderos*, Giles should have ignored the prosperous example of Tharo Khan Lahori, the leading *zamindar* of the *taluqa*, who virtually lived on his doorstep - the Lahori *autaq* being only a few minutes ride from the Assistant Collector's office.⁵⁵⁶

The Lahoris were not exceptional. Ghulam Ali Isran, for example, made his fortune during this period. In 1869, he held only 177 acres in the rich, rice-producing mail lands and, by the end of Haig's first settlement, which supposedly drove the great *zamindars* into debt, he had built up his holding to 652 acres. Ten years later, in 1892, he was one of the largest holders in the *taluqa*, with 1,990 acres.⁵⁵⁷ His success was surely as dramatic as the collapse of Khalifa Mohammad Panah. One ought to mention, in addition, Khuda Bakhsh, son of Dodo Khan Bhutto, the leading *zamindar* of *taluqa* Ratodero, who bought 919 acres during Haig's original settlement; clearly, this family of large holders did not consider the rates of assessment to be prohibitive,(see Appendix XI for large holders in Larkana).

By 1892, therefore, there was evidence that several of the *Waderos* of Larkana were prospering: but it still did not seem conclusive either to Giles (now Collector of Shikarpur) or to Evan James, who had just been appointed Commissioner in Sindh. The settlement was revised that year and the Settlement Officer proposed to enhance the rates of assessment. Giles disagreed. Instead, he reduced and rearranged the Settlement Officer's rates, so as to keep the total revenue demand at its current level. James accepted Giles' recommendations.⁵⁵⁸ In the event, the *zamindars* extended their cultivation and the revenue demand for 1893-1894, the first year of the new settlement, was over half a *lakh* of rupees above the highest previous demand.(see Appendix XII). That the *zamindars* had no difficulty in meeting their obligations is shown by the fact that the arrears for that year amounted to no more than four annas. The same pattern

⁵⁵⁴ Anderson, 1 Nov. 1883 (ibid., 100).

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, and see Commr.'s pencil note on Anderson's letter in P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1884, vol. I, pt. II, compn. 2. Also G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 37).

⁵⁵⁶ The same journey took the author about quarter of an hour in a tonga on 16 Nov. 1976.

⁵⁵⁷ Haig, 5 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 38).

⁵⁵⁸ James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 18 May 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 5-7).

was repeated throughout the term of the settlement. It was, due for revision in 1901 but Giles, now Commissioner in Sindh, postponed it as he did not believe the *taluka* could stand any augmentation of its revenue demand. Two years later, it was further postponed by the Collector of Larkana. By this time, Larkana was paying more revenue than any other *taluka* in Sindh.⁵⁵⁹ At last, in 1907, the settlement was revised and the rates increased. The Settlement Officer, in his glowing account of Larkana's prosperity, paid scant heed to the warnings of the past. He insisted that 'the *taluka* is ripe for some enhancement of assessment.'⁵⁶⁰

The Larkana *Waderos* therefore thrived under a settlement which all had agreed would deliver them a coup de grace. That is not a vindication of the *ryotwari* system. It does not prove that the settlement was well adapted to the needs of large holders, nor that the rates of assessment were moderate. It merely confirms that large holders rested on solid economic foundations which could not be easily undermined. The estates may not have been cultivated efficiently, but nevertheless they realized sufficient profits to ensure that their holders remained extremely wealthy men. It would take more than a settlement system to make or break the *Waderos*.

Men like Giles overestimated the impact which settlements could have on social conditions, and their belief in the imminent demise of the *Waderos* influenced their judgment. The correspondence relating to the revision of the settlement in Sukkur in 1898 sheds interesting light on this tendency.

Sukkur, like Larkana, was a rich *taluka*. It was, in fact, the most thickly populated *taluka* in the Shikarpur Collectorate. Yet in 1898, the Settlement Officer reported that all but five or six of the big *zamindars* were heavily in debt. He could find no adverse natural circumstances to account for this, so he attributed it to their own extravagant and improvident habits.⁵⁶¹ Giles, who was Acting Commissioner in Sindh, disagreed. With some justification, he called these reasons 'the stereotyped ones.' For him, the settlement, as in Larkana, was the villain of the piece, and he urged the Governor of Bombay to reduce the assessment.⁵⁶² It should be noted that Giles did not ask Government to reduce the heavy burden of revenue for the sake of the cultivators in general: he was concerned specifically with the great *zamindars*.⁵⁶³

The Governor was not impressed with the arguments of either officer. He doubted whether the *Waderos* were truly in such difficulties as they claimed. He pointed out that

⁵⁵⁹ Commr., Sindh, memo., 7 Nov. 1903 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Aug-Dec.), 1455).

⁵⁶⁰ C.G. Henderson, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 30 Apr. 1907 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXII, Larkana S.R., 11).

⁵⁶¹ S. Ali, Depy. Collr., Sukkur, to R. Giles, Actg. Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1898 (B.N.S., CCCXXVIII, Sukkur S.R., 26).

⁵⁶² Giles to Govr., Bombay, 4 Apr. 1899 (ibid., ii).

⁵⁶³ At this time, some administrators in India felt that the burden of land revenue should be reduced throughout the Empire (see Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, 117-119), and Giles may have participated in the prevailing mood; he professed his concern, though, for the great families, rather than for agriculturists as a whole.

while in 1889-1890, thirteen Muslim large holders were shown to have held 15,385 acres altogether, in 1897-1898, the same number held 22,465 acres:

figures which by themselves do not support the alleged decline of the great families.

The Governor refused to sanction the reductions proposed by Giles.⁵⁶⁴

Appendix XIV confirms the Governor's impression. Apart from a few men who had forfeited small amounts for the nonpayment of assessment on fallow-lands, and two men who appear to have transferred land to relations, all the big *zamindars* extended their holdings; the average holding of a Muslim large holder increased from 1,183 acres in 1889-1890 to 1,728 acres in 1897-1898. The half-dozen Hindu large holders were in a similar position, although they were building up their estates at a proportionately greater rate, their average holding increasing from 299 acres to 412 acres. It is reasonable to accept that the *Waderos* must have had debts, for they could hardly have taken up such a great deal of land, and brought it under the plough, without borrowing capital. That is not necessarily evidence of their insolvency, however; it could merely indicate that they were investing money to increase their wealth. On the basis of landholdings, then, the *Waderos* appear to have been prospering in Sukkur, over the period when Giles and the Settlement Officer said their fortunes were deteriorating. It is the same conclusion one was obliged to reach with regard to Larkana.

Indeed, it is hard to find many concrete examples of *Waderos* on the decline. Appendices VIII and IX show that *zamindars* with estates of over 500 acres were still firmly established in Sindh in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶⁵ Appendix IX, which contrasts the estates of Hindu and Muslim large holders, indicates that there were few *talukas* in which *Waderos* were losing ground to Hindus. The apparent exceptions were in Hyderabad Collectorate, where Hindus were investing in cotton lands as the development of railways made exports easier and more lucrative.⁵⁶⁶ In some of these *talukas*, notably Kandiaro, Naushahro Feroze, Shahdadpur and Tando Allahyar, their holdings were bigger than Muslims: but the *Waderos* do not appear to have suffered in consequence for, except in Shagdadpur, they also expanded their estates and the number of Muslim large holders increased. The Muslims' success was simply less spectacular than that of the Hindus. Appendix VIII records what proportion of the occupied area of each *taluka* was in the hands of large holders, giving a basis for comparing the relative progress of large and smallholders. There were not many *talukas* in which the *Waderos*' share of the occupied area declined. One such was Johi, in Hyderabad Collectorate, where the area occupied by large holders fell from 25.5% of the

⁵⁶⁴ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 4718, 7 July 1899 (B.N.S. CCCXXVIII, Sukkur S.R., par. 2).

⁵⁶⁵ The figures are taken from the nominal lists of large holders appended to some S.R.s; unfortunately, such lists were not printed in all S.R.s; it is especially regrettable that no nominal list of large holders in Sehwan is available.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. below, 189.

total to 19% between 1887-1897: but, although the average size of large holdings diminished slightly over this period, the number of large holders in Johi actually increased. This does not represent a serious set-back to the *Waderos*. Even in Sehwan, where irrigation remained precarious until the opening of the Sukkur Barrage in 1932, the *Waderos* managed to recover their fortunes to some extent; only one man had held over 500 acres in 1876, but by 1889 there were nine.⁵⁶⁷

Taluqa Mirpur Sakro, of the Karachi Collectorate, provided the most dramatic example of large holders declining in relation to smallholders. As in Sehwan, the causes were natural, and were not connected with the settlement; the neighboring Delta *talukas* Ghorabari, Jati, Thatta and Sujawal manifested a similar pattern (see Appendix VIII).

Mirpur Sakro was one of the poorest *talukas* in Sindh. The cultivated area was decreasing annually and by 1901-1902, all the *zamindars* were deeply indebted both to Government and to *bantias*, the Settlement Officer doubted whether either would get their money unless there was a rapid and sustained improvement in the water-supply.⁵⁶⁸ Over the period of 1889-1903, for which details of large holdings are available, the average size of a Muslim large holding fell from 1,061 acres to 725 acres, while the number of big Muslim *zamindars* almost halved. Many men had lost huge amounts of land under the fallow rules and others had been obliged to sell their land, often to Hindu creditors. Their Hindu competitors were not faring much better, for, out of eleven men with over 500 acres in 1889-1890, there were only four in 1902-1903. Nevertheless, three new large holders were prepared to invest in Mirpur Sakro by purchasing land - and two of them were Muslims. As in Larkana, so even in this miserable *taluka*, if some *Waderos* were losing land, others were buying it (see Appendix XV).

In the nearby *taluka* of Sujawal, conditions were less desperate and most of the *Waderos* extended their holdings. There was one case, though, which exactly matched the model, described by James and Wallace, of *haris* profiting at the expense of *Waderos*. In 1883-1884, Shaikh Imam Bakhsh held only 83 acres. Ten years later, he was a large holder of 2,087 acres, having bought out his 'former master,' Nawab Pir Bakhsh Khan Talpur.⁵⁶⁹ Pir Bakhsh's estate had been reduced from 3,238 acres to 509 acres.

A similar fate befell the heirs of Sayed Saleh Mohammad Shah, who lost their property to a Muslim moneylender, Mohab Ali Miano. These appear to be good examples of the decline of the Muslim landed gentry, yet in fact some of the *Waderos* were flourishing: three increased their holdings by over a thousand acres each. Their success was a

⁵⁶⁷ Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. no. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 26); G. Berrie, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 19 Sept. 1889 (B.N.S. CCCCLV, Sehwan S.R., 13).

⁵⁶⁸ W.F. Hudson, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 22 June 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXII, Mirpour Sakro S.R., 16).

⁵⁶⁹ H.S. Lawrence, Actg. Asst. Commr., Sindh, - 1897 (B.N.S. CCCVI, Sujawal S.R., 9).

contrast to the misfortunes of the big Hindu *zamindars*. Though one man, Deval, built up a substantial holding between 1883-1896, another, Navalrai, lost half of his, while the third Hindu, Basarmal, sold his entire estate to a *Wadero*. The net result in Sujawal was that, in the place of twelve estates with more than 500 acres in 1883-1884, there were only nine in 1895-1896; in 1913-1914, there were still nine large estates. Meanwhile, the size of large holdings steadily increased, from an average of 1,084 acres in 1883-1884 to 1,682 acres in 1895-1896, to 2,277 acres in 1913-1914. That is to say that, after 1883, there were fewer estates, but larger ones (see Appendix XVI).

None of this evidence lends any weight to the hypothesis that the *ryotwari* settlement damaged the interests of *Waderos*, nor is there any proof that the great estates were breaking up. Some estates certainly did disintegrate, but others replaced them. It is tempting to suggest that an 'old' class of *Waderos*, like Khalifa Mohammad Panah of Larkana and Nawab Pir Bakhsh Khan Talpur of Sujawal, was giving way to 'new' *Waderos* like Abdul Rahman Thebo of Kotri, Ghulam Ali Isran of Larkana and Shaikh Imam Bakhsh of Sujawal, but these are isolated cases. Too many old estates remained intact to support this view. The majority of estates remained in the same families, fluctuating in size but, as often as not, being enlarged. To stretch Colonel Anderson's metaphor, it was inevitable that some *Waderos* should grow old and die but not all at once. It was equally inevitable that others should be born, and most should live on.

III

As a class, therefore, *Waderos* were not suffering in consequence of the *ryotwari* settlement. The question still remains of whether peasants, for whom the system had originally been designed, were prospering under it. It will be recalled that many officers, including both Haig and James, believed smallholders were establishing themselves at the expense of large holders; *haris* were deserting their masters to swell the ranks of an expanding class of petty *zamindars*. The following pages will consider the fortunes of the peasants.

L.J. Mountford, the Manager of Encumbered Estates, brought James' theories up to date in 1901. Taking a retrospective look at nineteenth century developments, he explained that, after big *zamindars* had been forced to throw up their wastelands in the 1860's and 1870's, irrigational improvements made them cultivable: but by that time, the *Waderos* were too deeply indebted to take advantage of the situation and it was left to the *haris* to seize the opportunity. The *Wadero*, as a result:

lost not only his land and his rent therefrom, but also his tenantry.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁷⁰ L. J. Mountford, Manager, Encd. Estates, Sindh, 'Relations Between Debtors and Creditors in Sindh' (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1697).

Mountford's scenario, though neat and widely accepted at the time, does not fit the facts, for it has been shown above that many big *zamindars* did extend their holdings. If *haris* were indeed leaving the great estates, their masters were evidently managing to carry on without them. Indeed, it is possible that it was the *zamindars* who put their *haris* out of work, rather than the *haris* who deserted them. Under the fallow rules, *zamindars* could leave land uncultivated for four consecutive years so that, if *haris* were not available, there was no compulsion to attempt cultivation or to give up the land. But, the moment a man cultivated even a small portion of a Survey Number, the full assessment was levied on it. Remissions of revenue were of course available, but no-one would plan his cultivation on the assumption that he would receive liberal remissions if he took unnecessary risks. Farmers may have become reluctant to engage *haris* for the less well-favored Survey Numbers unless they were certain of obtaining a good crop. At the same time, the fewer *haris* a *zamindar* had to make *batai* with, the greater his profit would be. Therefore, the settlement system may have encouraged *zamindars* to cut their work-force to the minimum; this could help to explain how *Waderos* managed to survive the loss of some of their *haris*.⁵⁷¹

Whether he quitted his employer voluntarily or was dismissed, a *hari* could not lightly embark on a career as a landholder. It was not such an easy option as commentators like Mountford implied. It was an expensive and risky step to take, and many would-be peasants must have been daunted by the prospect. Waste was given free of charge by Government, but it had to be made cultivable before it was of any use to the new occupant. Water-courses had to be dug to bring water from the canal to the field, jungle (natural vegetation) had to be cleared, the soil had to be broken up. If the land was irrigated by 'lift,' as most was in the nineteenth century, a Persian wheel had to be constructed and the prospective smallholder must have a team of bullocks to drive it. He had to have a plough, a seed-drill and other equipment. He had to obtain seed with which to sow the soil, fodder for his cattle and food for his family. Finally, sufficient profit must remain to him, after his first year's cultivation, to pay the Government assessment.

Some figures which Colonel Haig collected in 1873 are reproduced in Appendix XVII. They show the incomes of two peasant families in *taluqa* Sukkur; they give an idea of the expenses involved in small-scale cultivation and the amounts of money an aspiring peasant would have to borrow. Haig cited 'the cases to prove that it was possible to live on minute holdings', but he admitted that the families involved were 'rare exceptions.' They were Shaikhs (recent converts to Islam) who had inherited 'the frugal and industrious habits of their Hindu forefathers.' They had no dealings, with

⁵⁷¹ Under the 'diffused rate' system, fields were assessed whether or not they were cultivated, which may have tempted some *zamindars* to take risks in the 1860's and 1870's. On the other hand, the main drawback of this system, from Govt.'s point of view, was that many *zamindars* reduced their cultivation, resigning all fields which they could not cultivate intensively; in the process, it is probable that they cut their workforce to a minimum, since they had only a limited number of fields to cultivate.

moneylenders and they took great pains to sell their produce to the highest-bidder, getting better prices than most peasants. Their yields were unusually high and, in consequence, their food consumption was larger than for others of their class.⁵⁷²

If one imagines that the first family were *haris* who had just taken up their land then, at the prices quoted by Haig, they would have needed Rs 14-4 to buy nine and a quarter *maunds* of seed (Rs 1-15-2 per acre). However, the rate given, of Rs 1-8 per *maund*, was the price at which they sold the grain. If they had been buying from a dealer, they would have had to pay more. The average price per *maund* of wheat in Sukkur at this time was Rs 2-8-8; *juari* was Rs 1-15-2 per *maund*.⁵⁷³ At these dealers' prices, the cost of their seed would have been Rs 20-9-3 (Rs 2-13-6 per acre). The second family would have needed Rs 27-9-3 (Rs 2-10-8 per acre), or Rs 11-8-2 (Rs 1-12-5 per acre) at the cheaper rate.⁵⁷⁴

Therefore, it appears that an outlay of around two or three rupees per acre was required for seed. This represents an investment of between twenty to thirty rupees on a ten-acre plot. When one remembers that a debt of twenty rupees may have induced a *hari* to commit murder on behalf of Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto in 1896, and that *taqavi* loans of as little as ten to twenty rupees were regarded as enough to entangle *haris* hopelessly in debt, then one can appreciate that one is speaking of sums which were, for a *hari*, enormous. On top of these liabilities, the *hari* had to discharge his debt to his *zamindar*.

These calculations take no existing accumulation of account of the cost of making land cultivable, nor do they enable the families to buy fish and spices (the first family spent Rs 51 on provisions, the second Rs 44), nor, most important, do they include funds to purchase seed for cash crops like tobacco and sugar-cane. The incomes of both families depended on the sale of cash crops. The first family earned only Rs 2-12-4 per acre from cereals, while the second family made Rs 6-0-12 per acre from the sale of cereals and straw. The average assessment in Sukkur was Rs 2-10-6 per acre and so, without the cash crops, the first family would have nothing left with which to repay their debts and prepare for the following season. There is in addition the question of subsistence while the crops were growing. The grain consumed by the first family was worth Rs 90 (Rs 139-6-5 at the market price), that consumed by the second family amounted to Rs 86-10 (Rs 130-1-2 at the market price). Circumstances would dictate how much grain remained to a *hari* from his share at *batai*, and how much he would have to obtain on credit from a *bania*, but it is unlikely, in view of the evidence presented in the discussion on the *batai* system, that a *hari* would be able to keep sufficient of his crop to feed his

⁵⁷² Haig to Collr., Shpur., Sept. 1873 (Revenue Papers, 206-209).

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, Statement IV, 240.

⁵⁷⁴ Abdul Rahman Thebo, the *hari* who made such a spectacular rise to fortune in Kotri between 1862-1872, made an initial investment of Rs 234 on stock and seed for 185 acres of land (Rs 1-4-2 per acre; the Collr., Karachi, however, disputed Haig's figures, believing the expenses he attributed to Abdul Rahman were unrealistically low (memo., 22 March 1873 - B.N.S. CXCV, Kotri S.R., 62).

family for a year. Food could represent a considerable expense for a family of newly established peasants.

Moreover, this was only the beginning. The inundation in Sindh was so uncertain, that a man with just a few acres had no security. He would be exceptionally lucky to get two good crops in succession, while a couple of bad seasons would bring him to the end of his meager resources.⁵⁷⁵ Having run up debts to obtain their land, then, many *ex-haris* fell further into debt to survive. It is hardly surprising that, as Evan James remarked in 1897, the number of *haris* who had become successful landholders could be 'counted on the fingers.'⁵⁷⁶

James had predicted this result two decades previously, in 1873, when he asserted that no agriculturist could depend for his living on a farm of less than twenty acres. Such holdings, he believed, were only cultivated every two or three years, as a prop to the holders' main livelihood, which came from sheep, goats or cattle.⁵⁷⁷ The Collector of Karachi agreed with James, saying:

It is impossible for a holder of anything under 15 acres to be more than a slave to some money-lender.⁵⁷⁸

Even Haig, who favored the growth of peasant holdings, gave tacit support to these views. He quoted the figures reproduced in Appendix XVII as proof that a family of peasants could exist free of debt: but he had to confess that they were exceptionally frugal and business-minded people who supplemented their incomes with non-agricultural earnings from carting and spinning. What is more, their solvency depended on their ability to cultivate their entire holdings. The loss of only a few acres would have destroyed their profits; they were extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of the inundation. The Collector of Sukkur estimated in 1902 that a man had to be certain of cultivating forty or fifty acres annually if he wished to amass sufficient resources to tide him over the inevitable bad seasons. Anyone who could not guarantee that extent of cultivation would be ruined after a couple of poor inundations. In the circumstances of Sindh, that involved holding at least 100 acres, half of which would probably be cultivable each year. Anyone with less, believed the Collector, was worse off than a *hari*.⁵⁷⁹

The table of landholdings reproduced in Appendix X confirms the Collector's impression that holders with more than 100 acres were making the best progress. Their

⁵⁷⁵ James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, App: comments by Collr., Shpur., & Depy. Commrs., U.S.F., T. & P. (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 840, 841, 844).

⁵⁷⁶ James, memo., 21 Aug. 1897 (P.S.C., R.D., file 69A, 1896-1899, vol. I, 205).

⁵⁷⁷ James to Collr., Shpur., 4 Feb. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCV, Kotri S.R., 52).

⁵⁷⁸ Collr., Karachi, memo., 22 March 1873 (ibid., 61).

⁵⁷⁹ B.C. Mules, Collr., Sukkur, to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 112).

number increased by half over the fifteen years from 1880-1895, whereas the total of holders with less than 100 acres grew by only 18%.

Men with the smallest means, therefore, could not safely rely on their plots for their livelihood. Many of them supplemented their income in some way: and the most readily available source of employment in rural Sindh was as a *hari* on some *zamindar's* lands.⁵⁸⁰ Tiny holdings, then, may not always have been proper peasant occupancies, but were rather kitchen-plots for fortunate *haris*. It follows that even when *haris* became smallholders, *zamindars* did not necessarily lose their services. Apart from the tiniest holders, larger petty holders also needed to hire out their labor on occasions, when their crops failed or they were unable to sow their land. For example, the water-supply at the tail of a canal might fail, forcing peasants with land there to work as *haris* for a *zamindar* whose estate (or part of whose estate) was at the head, or whose land was irrigated from a different canal. One may also consider a family who had recently taken up land; in order to reduce their burden of debt, some members might contract to take on extra work as *haris*. Anyone holding under about twenty acres was, potentially at least, a *hari*.

Moreover, an aspiring peasant had to obtain capital from somewhere, and the village *bania* was the most likely source. The average *hari* had no security but his cattle. This might satisfy a *bania*, but if *zamindars* sometimes complained of *haris* absconding without paying their debts, then a *bania*, with none of the *zamindars'* prestige, must have had all the more reason to fear that an ex-*hari* might bolt if his crops failed. Some *haris* may have mortgaged their land before taking it up, as a form of future security. There can be no doubt, though, that *banias* would give preference to men who already had some land to mortgage. E.W. Trevor, Deputy Collector of Sehwan, confirmed in 1882 that applications for the smallest plots of land invariably came from men who already had some small holdings of their own. When plots of less than ten acres were given out, he explained, it did not mean that the number of petty holders was increasing, but only the size of petty holdings.⁵⁸¹

Therefore, the view that *haris* were taking up wasteland at the expense of their masters may not be correct. There is a further, simple consideration: it is not credible that *haris* should have grabbed up land in defiance of their *zamindars*. A big *zamindar* would have no difficulty in trumping up charges against any bold spirits who defied him, or burning their crops. At the very least, they would lose his protection. Middling *zamindars*, with holdings of between 100 to 500 acres, might find it more difficult to

⁵⁸⁰ James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896 (ibid., 1899 (July Dec.), Confl. Pr., 801). A recent study by L. Gulick showed that three *haris* on a modern farm near Hyderabad. owned small plots of four, five and seven acres each. Their income derived from a combination of their shares at *batai*, their livestock (buffaloes, goats and chickens) and the produce of their lands; their holdings were, in effect, kitchen gardens ('*The Agricultural Geography of the Lower Indus Valley*,' 106; unpublished work in the possession of Dr. G. A. Allana, Director, Institute of Sindhology, University of Sindh).

⁵⁸¹ E.W. Trevor, Depy. Collr., Sehwan, to Collr., Karachi, 29 Aug. 1872 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1872, vol. I, compn. 30).

assert their authority over their *haris* yet it appears, from Appendix. X, that they formed the most successful group of landholders in Sindh; their numbers increased by 65% over the period 1880-1881 to 1894-1895. They do not appear to have suffered from the loss of their workforce. If some *haris* left their *zamindars* to become Smallholders, then, they did it with the *zamindars*' tacit approval. That is to say, there was enough land to go round and the *zamindars* could afford to lose them.

Many officials believed that the peasant was a creation, of British rule.⁵⁸² There are no figures to indicate how substantial a body of peasants existed in Sindh at the time of the conquest. At the end of the century, when reasonably accurate statistics were available, there is no evidence that *haris* were setting themselves up as landholders on a large, scale; holders of plots of under five acres were the most slowly advancing section of agriculturists, their total increasing by only 12% between 1880-1895. In that respect, the *ryotwari* settlement does not appear to have injured the interests of *Waderos*. They may have lost some ground to middling *zamindars*, but not to any significant extent. The number of large holders increased by only 15% between 1880-1895, but that is not tantamount to a decline. Appendix VIII reveals that large holders still held a substantial proportion of the occupied area and that many of them were enlarging their holdings.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² Mountford referred to peasants, somewhat fancifully, as 'exotics needing cherishing, if they are to exist at all;' he added that, since Govt. policy had created the peasant in Sindh, he must be protected, or else Govt. should 'stop creating him altogether' ('Debtors and Creditors' - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1698-1699). Mules, Collr., Sukkur, was more cynical: 'The petty holder in Sindh is a creation of our rule and a great mistake we made in creating him' (to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 1902, R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 112). See. also Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of India, 7 Oct. 1899 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 55).

⁵⁸³ British officers' anxiety about the fate of the *Waderos* was a natural result of the special relationship they had built up with them. Relying on *Waderos* to assist the local administration, and knowing there was no alternative to them, they were extremely sensitive to any hint that their collaborators were in difficulties. Their fears may have been fuelled by a misplaced confidence in their own statistics. Nineteenth century settlement reports included many pages of tables which have a seductively authoritative appearance but, like most Indian statistics, must be treated with caution. (See C. Dewey, 'Patwari and Chaukidar: Subordinate Officials and the Reliability of India's Agricultural Statistics' in Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (eds.), *The Imperial Impact: studies in the Economic History of Africa and India* (London, 1978), 280-314). Among them were statements comparing the sizes of holdings at the various settlements. These were worse than useless: they were positively misleading, for they consistently exaggerated the number of smallholders. The information was collected according to the area held in each *deh*, not according to the aggregate area of each holding. That is to say, a man with five one-hundred acre holdings in five *dehs* was recorded as five holders of one-hundred acres, not as one holder of five hundred acres (see G. Berrie, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev, Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 19 Sept. 1889 (B.N.S. CCCCLV, Sehwan S.R., 13). Some officers, putting faith in these figures, interpreted them to mean that smallholders were more important than they really were. For example, when Colonel Haig expressed his pleasure that Kotri, in 1873, contained no estate larger than 400 acres, he was quoting from the table of landholdings. He did not realize that in the same report he mentioned that Abdul Rahman Thabo held 598 acres (6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kotri S.R., 36, 37). The following figures for Larkana illustrate the point neatly:

Those *haris* who crossed the great divide to become smallholders were financed by the *bantias*.⁵⁸⁴ Even before he took up his new land, the would-be peasant was deeply in debt and if he added to his possessions, he added to his debts at the same time. During his early years as a landholder, he depended on the *bania* for subsistence and the bad seasons forced him to borrow more. The Collector of Shikarpur remarked disparagingly in 1902 that the petty holders were perpetually engaged in litigation with *bantias*,

eventually being sold up and relapsing to their natural condition of "*hari*."⁵⁸⁵

This was an exaggeration, for the petty holders did survive as a class, but it was true that their whole existence was bound up with debt.

What was true for the peasant was true for the large holder. Without capital he could not extend his estate. He pledged his land as security and found in the *bania* a ready source of credit. Like the peasant, he borrowed freely from him. The growth of indebtedness among both large and smallholders reflected their need to borrow in order to increase their landed wealth. One of the main beneficiaries from the extension of the occupied area was therefore the *bania*, who financed the agriculturists and took interest from their profits. He may even have benefited to a greater extent than his clients.

Number of holders						
Year	Under 20 acres	21-50 acres	51-100 acres	101-500 acres	Over 500 acres	Total
1870	3,764	712	183	134	26	4,819
1881	5,902	672	216	170	7	6,966
1892	9,641	707	224	191	5	10,768

(G.F. Mathieson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 March 1892 - B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 35).

The message of this table is unambiguous: the number of men holding less than twenty acres was rising dramatically, while the number of large holders was falling, equally dramatically. Obviously, the large holders were declining and the small holders multiplying at an alarming rate. Yet the nominal list of large holders attached to Mathieson's report. (see Appendix XI) shows that only sixteen men held over 500 acres in 1870, twelve in 1881 and thirteen in 1892 - a different story altogether. (The discrepancy in the number of large holders in 1870 indicates that several *Waderos* held blocks of over 500 acres in different *dehs*.)

⁵⁸⁴ James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 796).

⁵⁸⁵ Mules to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 1902, (ibid., 1903 (Jan-July), 112).

Chapter 5

Rural Debt: 1. 'The Omnipresent *Bania*'⁵⁸⁶

I

After revisiting Sindh in 1876, Sir Richard Burton wrote:

The Hindu's reed-pen is a rod of iron and abjectly the unhappy Sindhi trembles before it.⁵⁸⁷

It was a colorful summary of the average British official's attitude towards debt. What is interesting is that Burton scarcely appeared to recognize the Hindus as Sindhis at all; he wrote as if they were interlopers on the Sindhi scene. Twenty years later, Evan James, the Commissioner in Sindh, quoted Burton's remark to lend support to his own argument that debt was an intolerable burden on Sindhi Muslims in general and the *Waderos* in particular.⁵⁸⁸ Burton's picture was a caricature rather than a portrait but, like any caricature, it had an emotional truth at bottom.

Debt was a problem throughout India; in Sindh, its social effects were aggravated because the creditors were almost all Hindu, the debtors almost all Muslim.⁵⁸⁹ There was nothing new in this, but British rule brought about some important changes in the relationship between debtors and creditors. In particular, the British conferred property rights on landholders. This enabled the latter to dispose of their holdings as they wished, but at the same time it gave creditors the power to seize their debtors' lands in satisfaction of their claims, a procedure which was unthinkable in pre-British times.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁶ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 10 June 1886 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kohistan S.R., 4).

⁵⁸⁷ R.F. Burton, *Sindh Revisited* (London, 1877), vol. I, 299. For similar comments see S.S. Thorburn, *Muslims and Money-lenders in the Punjab* (Edinburgh & London), 37-38; L.W. Seymour, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 27 March 1893 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmir S.R., 21); M. Yakub, Actg. Depy. Commr., T. & P., 18 May 1901 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1718). M.R. Haig was one of the few Officers to criticize these prejudices (to Collr., Shpur., 27 July 1869 - B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., '10).

⁵⁸⁸ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 801).

⁵⁸⁹ There were, inevitably, exceptions. Some Hindu *zamindars* were hounded for debt by Hindu moneylenders, while some Muslims, notably Memons, were moneylenders and traders. See P.G.B., R.D.L. 1902 (Jan-June), B Pr. 200; H.S. Lawrence, Actg. Commr., Sindh, n.d. (B.N.S. CCCXXVI, Sujawal S.R., 9).

⁵⁹⁰ Established by Regulation V of 1827, Chapter V, Section 15 (The Bombay Code (Calcutta, 1880), 7). See also Thorburn, *Muslims and Money-lenders in the Punjab*, 56-57; P. Harnetty, "A Curious Exercise of Political Economy:" Some implications of British Land Revenue Policy in the Central Provinces of India, 1861 - c. 1900,' *South Asia*, no. 6 (Dec. 1976), 22. For traditional Hindu attitudes to moneylending, see M.L. Seth, 'Indian Money-

Contemporary British observers alleged that this provided an opportunity to acquire land cheaply, of which creditors were prompt to avail themselves. In Sindh, Hindus had not been free to take up land before the British conquest and so, under British rule, they established themselves as landholders - but many may have done so at the expense of their Muslim neighbors.

Some proof of this trend was provided in 1896 by an investigation carried out, in six 'representative' villages from each of the the irrigated *taluqas* in Sindh.⁵⁹¹ It was found that about ten years earlier, Hindus had held 24% of the occupied area, but that by 1895-1896 they held 28% of the occupied land. These figures reveal that a revolution had taken place in land ownership, for half a century before, they had held a negligible area of land. Moreover, of the 30, 839 acres which they had acquired in the selected villages between 1890-1891 and 1895-1896, only 7,683 acres, roughly a quarter, consisted of new land taken up by them: the rest, 23,143 acres, they had taken from Muslims. In addition, they enjoyed the produce of a further 14.8% of the land, which was mortgaged to them. Altogether, then, by 1896, Hindus had the benefit of 42% of the occupied area. Evan James commented in his review of this report:

No one could possibly object to the Hindus taking up land on their own account. It is a free country, and enterprise should be encouraged ... What I do object to is that they should be allowed to obtain by usury land belonging to others, And to reduce the former owners to a state of abject dependence. The feeling of injustice engendered by this tyranny strikes at the foundations of our rule.⁵⁹²

Many British administrators agreed with James. They were apprehensive that Muslim indebtedness might destroy the delicate system of local government which they had built up with the *Waderos* and *jagirdars* of Sindh. Before looking at the social and political implications of debt, though, one should study the *bania* and his operations. That is the subject of the present chapter.

II

The Muslim population of Sindh, and especially the *Waderos*, tended to regard land as a means of enhancing their *izzat*. Large holding contributed to their status. Hindus may also have thought in these terms to some extent, but the growth of Sindh's export trade in the nineteenth century, based on the produce of Sindhi farms,⁵⁹³ made land of greater

lender in pre-British Times,' *The Research Bulletin (Arts) of the University of the Panjab*, S. no. XV, Economics, I (1955), 6-7.

⁵⁹¹ James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 798-799; also Statements 1 & 2, 803-809). Unfortunately, the report did not state what were the criteria for selecting the 'representative' villages so, as with all Indian statistics, the results should be treated with caution.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 802.

⁵⁹³ Cf. above, 41.

value to them as an investment. It guaranteed traders access to raw materials. For this reason, Hindu merchants were keen to start up their own farms, and much of the profit they realized from trade was invested in land. As they were less concerned with maintaining *izzat*, their holdings tended to be smaller and more economical than those of Muslims and they were often more efficient as farmers; one Settlement Officer warned that it was misleading to think that land passing to Hindus was going into the hands of non-agriculturists:

the Hindu money-lender being often considerably more of an agriculturist than the kind of Mahomedan who loses his land.⁵⁹⁴

The main concentration of Hindu landholders was in the cotton-growing areas of eastern Sindh, the development of railways in the seventies and eighties having put these lands within easy reach of market centre's like Hyderabad, Shahdadpur and Tando Allahyar. Many of them used their capital to set up cotton gins and also rice-husking factories to process their produce and increase the efficiency of their agricultural operations.⁵⁹⁵ One of the most prominent of the Hindu capitalists was Seth Vishindas Nihalchand, the son of a great Kotri merchant. By the time of his death, he had multifarious business interests. He was a forest contractor and he owned two fleets of boats, plying as far as the Persian Gulf, the Malabar Coast and Madras. He put a great deal of his capital into the land; in 1892-1893, he held 697 acres in Hala and he was the largest holder in Kotri, with 1,811 acres in 1889-1890; he established cotton gins, cotton-bale presses and rice-husking machines near his lands.⁵⁹⁶ When, in 1885, the *zamindars* of *talua* Manjhand, adjoining Kotri, wanted to reopen an old canal which had grown deficient, Vishindas stepped into the breach with his store of capital. The Irrigation Department had opposed the scheme, on the ground that it would be too expensive. Vishindas, however, offered to carry out the necessary works and keep the canal in order at his own expense, provided he was given occupancy rights on 3,000 acres of barren land. He further insisted that he should be allowed to collect all Government revenue on lands directly watered by the canal while it was under his management. After six years, he handed the canal back to the Irrigation Department as a regular Government canal.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁴ E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Hala, to Commr., Sindh, 15 Apr. 1905 (B.N.S. CCCXXXVI, Hala S.R., 28). See also Haig, 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 10), H.C. Mules, Depy. Commr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 31 March 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXIV, Jacobabad S.R., 17).

⁵⁹⁵ J.C. Pringle, Asst. Collr., Tando, 8 Feb. 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., 11). For chronology of railway development in Sindh see G.H. Khaskhelly, M.A.A. Beg, A.A. Qureshi, *Economy of Sindh* (Hyderabad, 1976), 41.

⁵⁹⁶ L.W. Seymour, Sup., Land Records & Agri., Sindh, to Commr., Sine, 7 Feb. 1894 (B.N.S. CCCIX, Hala S.P., App. XX, 70) & 31 May 1899 (B.N.S. CCCCLXX, Kotri S.R., 37); M.U. Abbasi (ed.), *The Colourful Personalities of Sindh and Famous Firms and Factories* (Karachi, 1944), 96-97.

⁵⁹⁷ Bombay Govt. Sesn. no. 8671, 26 Oct. 1885 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1885 (July-Dec.), 1174); Pr. 450 (ibid., 1886, 228); W.H. Lucas, Asst. Collr., Sehwan, to Commr., Sindh, 30 Apr. 1895 (B.N.S. CCCXXI, Manjhand S.R., App. XXI, 52).

Vishindas was an exceptional case: but though few men could afford to take up thousands of acres of barren land, all over Sindh *baniyas* were investing in land according to their means.⁵⁹⁸ They specialized in cash crops, such as oilseeds, cotton, tobacco, wheat and vegetables and, as Appendix IX shows, their holdings were generally smaller than those of Muslims. Village *baniyas*, who dealt directly with the agriculturists, could not be compared with the great merchants of Karachi, Sukkur and Shikarpur, but even they were wealthy men - which often made them attractive targets for robbers. A *bania* in 1897 claimed to be carrying no less than Rs 1,000 about his person when he was set upon and attacked near Jacobabad.⁵⁹⁹ Other *baniyas*, whose houses had been robbed, alleged that they had lost property worth as much as Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000.⁶⁰⁰ These figures give an idea of the large sums of money village *baniyas* had at their disposal; they were men of substance.

A pervasive network of agents linked the large European, Bombay and Sindhi trading houses of Karachi with the village *baniyas* in the countryside. Most firms had agents in Hyderabad, Sehwan, Jacobabad and other market centre's and also, by the end of the century, at smaller towns like Tando Allahyar and Tardo Adam. They forwarded agricultural produce to the main offices, but they did not have direct contact with the agriculturists; they bought the produce from the village *baniyas*.⁶⁰¹

The village *bania* was the lynchpin of the commercial system. He occupied a pivotal position as merchant and 'moneylender.' As merchant, he was a middleman. He bought Produce from the cultivators at the threshing-floor; some he kept for retailing locally, the rest he re-sold to the dealers in the market centre's. His position as a trader made him a natural source of credit and so he had become, in addition, a 'moneylender,' providing, among other things, the investment which enabled agriculture to develop. It was his 'money lending' function which gave him his importance in rural life.

The arrangement suited those involved with trade very well. The existence of village *baniyas* saved the great merchants from having to employ a large body of agents to go shopping around the farmlands. But it was less advantageous to the producers because the middleman took out a large part of their profits. If agriculturists had cut out the middleman by selling directly to the agents in the market towns, they would have obtained better prices: but this was extremely rare. Colonel Haig said in 1876 that he knew of almost no instance of an agriculturist going beyond his own or a neighboring village for a buyer, nor trying to make a better bargain than he has already made with

⁵⁹⁸ See James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 798-799).

⁵⁹⁹ Dodo Khan Burdi, talucia Jacobabad, petition to Commr., Sindh, n.d. (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1897, vol. IV, pt. II, compn. 54, 838).

⁶⁰⁰ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 11 Feb. 1892 (ibid., 1892, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 80, 560-563).

⁶⁰¹ J.C. Pringle to Collr., Hbad., 8 Feb. 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., 11); W.S. Cole, Actg. Sup., Land Records & Agri., Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 18 March & 17 Apr. 1896 (B.N.S. CCCXXIX, Kandiaro S.R., 1, Naushahro Feroz S.R., 2); W.F. Hudson, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., 22 & 28 June 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXII, Mirpur Sakro S.P., 3, Ghorabari S.R., 2).

his usual *bania*.⁶⁰² It was reported some years later that it simply was 'not the custom' to seek a better bargain.⁶⁰³ Shepherds in Kohistan did not even go the trouble of shearing their own sheep, but sold the fleece on the sheep's back to the *bania*, who made his own arrangements for shearing and no doubt lowered his buying price accordingly.⁶⁰⁴

The system appears highly unsatisfactory for the agriculturist, but he had little choice. He did not have the necessary connections among the large dealers, so could not afford to cart his produce to town on the off chance of finding a good price.⁶⁰⁵ Some British administrators hoped that the coming of the railways would alter the picture. Occasionally, large firms set up agencies at railway stations, where they bought from agriculturists at the prevailing market rates. A Settlement Officer wrote enthusiastically in 1901 that:

the railway comes to the rescue of the cultivator in his most uneven struggle with the money-lender and trader.

No longer was the cost and organization of sending produce to market beyond cultivators' means:

Already, one hears of the cultivators hurrying off with their grain to the station to sell it while the price is high and pay off the season's debt.

He hoped that agriculturists would no longer play into the hands of local *banias* who knew and took advantage of their family circumstances when trying to knock down prices or negotiate loans.⁶⁰⁶ However, these hopes were not fulfilled, and the *bania* preserved his traditional role. When Settlement Reports were written in 1929 and 1930; it was still rare for agriculturists to take their produce to the railway stations. The majority handed it over to the village *banias* as they had always done.⁶⁰⁷

Agriculturists did not feel free to sell on the open market because they were not simply selling their produce: they were regulating their accounts with their *banias* at the same time. First, the *bania* established the value of the crop, with reference to the price he

⁶⁰² M.R. Haig, Settlt. Offr., 10 Jan. 1876 (I.O.R. (9)2015, Sehwan S.R., 6).

⁶⁰³ Pringle to Collr., Hbad., 8 Feb. 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., 11).

⁶⁰⁴ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 10 June 1886 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kohistan S.R., 4).

⁶⁰⁵ G.E. Chatfield, Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., Sindh, 24 Oct. 1904 (B.N.S. CCCXXXIV, Jamrao Tract S.R., 3); E.L. Moysey, Asst. Collr., Tando, to Collr., Hbad., 28 Dec. 1908 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVIII, Guni S.R., 2); R.B. Settlt. Offr., Naushahro, to Commr., 31 May 1909 (B.N.S. CCCXCIV, Kandiaro S.R., 2).

⁶⁰⁶ Pringle to Collr., Hbad., 8 Feb. 1901 (B.N.S. CCCCLVII, Tando Allahyar S.R., 8). See also S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., to Depy. Commr., T. & P., 31 March 1905 (B.N.S. CCCCLIX, Umarmkot S.R., 4); S.H. Coverntoa, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., 23 Apr. 1909 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVII, Dadu S.R., 1).

⁶⁰⁷ Eg. A.C. Green, Asst. Rev. Offr., Lloyd Barrage & Canals Scheme, n.d. (1929) (B.N.S. DXCIX, Larkana, Kambar, Warah, Mehar S.R.s, 1, 18, 26, 39); N. Khubchand, Asst. Settlt. Offr., 30 Apr 1930 (B.N.S. DCLVI, Khipro, Samaro, Sanghar, Umarmkot S.R.s, 2, 56, 99, 134).

erected to sell it for in the market; then he compared it with the debts outstanding. The price credited to the agriculturist therefore represented the difference between the value the *bania* attributed to the crop and the amount owed. The calculations were complicated by the fluctuating prices throughout the year. For example, if an agriculturist borrowed seed at the beginning, of the season, when prices were high, he would repay at harvest-time, when prices were low. The arithmetic involved was sufficiently confusing:

even if the *bania* were honest and not addicted to taking unfair advantage of the complication.⁶⁰⁸

Before an agriculturist could consider selling his produce on the open market, he had to pay off his season's debts: but his creditors frequently made sure that his debts more than accounted for all his produce. In 1901, after five years of investigation into the debts of hundreds of *zamindars*, L.J. Mountford, the Manager of Encumbered Estates in Sindh, produced a pamphlet in which he gave an impressive account of the frauds perpetrated by *banias*, in falsifying their accounts and debiting their clients for items they had not received.⁶⁰⁹ One has to bear in mind that Mountford's experience was based on hard cases, *zamindars* thoroughly entangled in debt, and he was unlikely to see *banias* at their best as he approached them as their debtors' representative. Nevertheless, if there were any, reputable village *banias*, they made no impression on the official records. Mountford himself admitted that some village *banias* were honest and that the big traders were renowned for their integrity, but he came to the conclusion that dishonesty was more common among village *banias* than honesty.⁶¹⁰ There must have been a strong temptation for *banias* to be unscrupulous, as the majority of their clients were illiterate and quite ignorant of business affairs.⁶¹¹ Mountrord recalled one investigation he had made:

the *zamindar*, an old man of 65, seemed very much amused during the enquiry, and when, after the *Banya* had produced his accounts and I had examined them, I asked the *zamindar* what he had to say to a debt of Rs 500, he smilingly produced a receipt on pink paper, saying he had discharged the amount of Rs 500 in his grain-yard last year, and that this was the receipt. He could not read, and then I

⁶⁰⁸ Haig, 6 Jan. 1873 (B.N.S. CXCIV, Kotri. S.R., 38). See also Seymour to Commr., Sindh, 27 March 1393 (B.N.S. CCCXXII, Kashmore S.R., 21); J.R. Martin, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., 27 May 1908 (B.N.S. CCCXXCI, Naushahro Abro S.R., 3).

⁶⁰⁹ L.J. Mountford, Manager, Encd. Estates, Sindh, 'Relations between Debtors and Creditors in Sind', hereafter referred to as '*Debtor's & Creditors*' (P.G.b., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1754-1760).

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1758.

⁶¹¹ *Banias* often succeeded in buying produce at excessively low rates which bore no relation to current market prices (A.W.M.H. Ali, Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh,, 18 July 1904 - B.N.S. CCCXXXV, Thul, Kandhkot, Kashmore S.R.s, 8; Moysey to Commr., 16 July 1906 - B.N.S. CCCCLXI, Tando Allahyar S.R., 13).

told him that the receipt was for Rs 200 and not Rs 500, his system received a shock.⁶¹²

Even if the client were literate, it seldom made much difference because accounts were kept in the *bania*-Sindhi script which was incomprehensible to most non-*banias*.⁶¹³

One might expect big *zamindars* to have been in a better position to bargain with *banias* than anyone else, but this was not always the case. According to Mountford, they were curiously susceptible to flattery along the lines of, 'how can a poor weak *Banya* cheat' a powerful *Wadero*. They seldom insisted on receipts and were often prepared to take the *bania* at his face value.⁶¹⁴

The client's account was recorded in a ledger. On the right-hand side the *bania* entered all debits, such as grain supplied, household articles and cash provided, and bonds taken out. The credits, mainly the value attributed to the client's produce, were entered on the left-hand side. Every so often, the two columns were balanced out and the client acknowledged the debt which usually emerged at the end of the *bania*'s calculations. Acknowledging the account was generally a formality, as the agriculturists knew their supplies might be cut off if they contested it.

An account opened with a loan advanced by the *bania*. This was composed of two items. First was the actual sum required. This might represent the value of grain, cash or any other articles advanced by the *bania*, or it might be made up of old debts and interest which the *bania* wished to recover.⁶¹⁵ The second portion of the loan was known as *panjot*. It was a sort of commission charged by the *bania* for making the loan. It may have originated as a device to encourage prompt repayment, for the bond carried no interest up to a certain date, when it was levied at between 20% to 75%. In one case, for example, the client borrowed is 400 and the bond, dated 15 July 1896, was made out for Rs 688. It carried no interest for three years; interest charges therefore commenced in July 1899. On 16 June 1898, the client had repaid Rs 144, but, with interest running at two annas in the rupee per month, the client already owed Rs 1,142-6-6 on 4 January

⁶¹² Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1759.

⁶¹³ There were said to be great local variations in the *bania* figures & script, which made mastering them extremely difficult, but investigations at the end of the century showed them to be 'almost, entirely mythical' (J.H.E. Tupper, Asst. Collr., Larkana, Admin. Report, 1899-1900, P.S.C., G.D., file 4, 1901, vol. III, compn. 15). Mountford believed the story had arisen because *banias*, asked to decipher other *banias*' books in connection with income tax returns, claimed to be unable to do so (Sindh Encumbered Estates Annual Administration Report, hereafter referred to as Encd. Estates Report, 1899-1900, par. 15).

⁶¹⁴ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1759.

⁶¹⁵ In the discussion of accounts kept by *banias*, one should remember that the sums of money referred to may not represent money itself, but the value the *bania* attributed to his client's produce and to articles supplied by him to the client.

1900.⁶¹⁶ If the man had not repaid any money before the interest charges commenced, then he would have owed the *bania* Rs 1,395, which within six months would have doubled to Rs 2,327. Even though the client did repay some money, he would have owed Rs 2,827, nearly ten times his principal debt of Rs 256, if the *bania* had held back his claim for another twelve months. The interest in this case mounted up at a particularly vicious rate because it was charged monthly. Even when interest was charged annually, though, it had a harsh multiplier effect. In another case, a client borrowed Rs 1,800 and the bond was made out for Rs 1,942; it carried no interest for eighteen months, but thereafter interest was taken at 37.5% per year. Just over three years after the bond had been signed, the debt amounted to Rs 3,778.⁶¹⁷

The account was secured by a mortgage taken out on part of the client's land. In the most common form of mortgage, the client kept possession of the land, paying some or all of its produce as interest. Large sums could be borrowed against small areas; details of mortgages in Mehar between 1887-1891 show that one man borrowed Rs 300 against 41 acres, the creditor taking three-quarters of the produce as interest and paying three-quarters of the assessment. On the other hand, another man pledged 81 acres for only Rs 100, the creditor taking all the produce and paying all the assessment.⁶¹⁸ This may reflect the quality of the land or the extent to which the client, because he was more powerful, more astute or less indebted, was able to bargain with the *bania*. The Manager of Encumbered Estates once quoted an extremely unsatisfactory arrangement when a *zamindar* mortgaged 63 acres for only Rs 250, the entire produce to be paid as interest; the *zamindar* agreed, in case of default, to pay a penal rate of Rs 20 per acre. The Manager did admit, however, that this was not a typical case.⁶¹⁹

This situation could continue indefinitely. Less commonly, once the debt had mounted up sufficiently, the *bania* might press for a usufructuary mortgage in which he stipulated that he should have full control of the land until the debt was paid off; sometimes, an additional clause was inserted into the bond, to the effect that, if the debt was still outstanding after a certain period, the *bania* could foreclose. The *zamindar* remained, nominally, the *khatedar* (registered occupant), but the *bania* had effective possession: he paid the assessment, cleared water-courses and arranged *tagavi* loans for the *haris*.⁶²⁰ At the same time, he was supposed to take into account the debt and its interest and perhaps provide an allowance for the *zamindar* who, depending on how

⁶¹⁶ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1765. For discussion of Panjot, see also R.F. Burton, *Sindh and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (London, 1851; reprinted Karachi, 1974), 46-47; C.E.S. Steele, Depy. Commr., T. & P., encl. in James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896 (P.G.B., R.D.L. 1899 (July-Dec), Conn. Pr., 845).

⁶¹⁷ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1765.

⁶¹⁸ G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 24 May 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., 17).

⁶¹⁹ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1766. For specimens of mortgage & other bonds given by Indian *banias*, see L.C. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India* (London, 1929), 55-61.

⁶²⁰ In these conditions, the *bania* was legally regarded as the superior holder, with the *zamindar* as his tenant (H.V. Sathe, *Annotated Edition of the Land Revenue Code* (Poona, 1892), 104).

much of his estate he had mortgaged, might by now have become virtually dispossessed. According to Mountford, by concealing profits, exaggerating expenditure, manipulating the account and giving the *zamindar* a generous allowance, most *banias* succeeded in showing a steady loss, so as to remain in constant possession of the land.⁶²¹ In 1875, for example, some Baluchi *zamindars* mortgaged land to a *bania* for Rs 2,800; at the same time, they acknowledged past debts to the value of Rs 12,100 (of which Rs 7,708 was interest). Five years later, the *bania* insisted on the two debts being amalgamated into one usufructuary mortgage bond for Rs 14,000. The bondholder was to cultivate the whole area included in the bond and reimburse himself with interest at 24% until the debt had been paid off. The balance of the profits was to be divided equally between the debtors and the creditor. This arrangement did nothing to diminish the debt. On the contrary, in 1886, the *bania* claimed that it had swelled to Rs 68,123 as a result of losses he had made on cultivation, for which he held the *zamindars* responsible. On top of this, he added another Rs 59,121 as interest, making total debt of Rs 1,27,244. He then sued the *zamindars* in Court for a round Rs 1,10,000, remitting part of the interest.⁶²²

In this way, the principal debt of Rs 7,192 increased eightfold over a period of eleven-years and the *zamindars* were threatened with the loss of their entire estate. Luckily for the *zamindars*, this particular decree was never executed as the District Judge of Shikarpur later proved that the *bania* had falsified the accounts, but Mountford insisted it was a typical case.⁶²³ In only two cases out of the hundreds he had investigated had any profit been shown and the original debt diminished. Such mortgages, he alleged, invariably led to the sale of the land.⁶²⁴

Foreclosure was, however, a last resort. On the whole, a mortgage suited both parties. Many *zamindars* were surprisingly complacent about their mortgaged state. It saved them from worrying about tedious matters like the cultivation and management of estates, and there may have been a feeling among the great *zamindars* that it was beneath their dignity to concern themselves with such mundane affairs.⁶²⁵ In addition, the burden of finding cash for the assessment was transferred from their shoulders to the *banias*'. Estates were not, therefore, leased to *banias* as a consequence of debt alone. Some were leased for the convenience of the *zamindars*.⁶²⁶ In most cases, the motives

⁶²¹ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1766.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 1768.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1766.

⁶²⁵ Mountford once accused the average Muslim Madero of looking upon secular education, like 'a knight of old, as a thing for a scribe' (P.S.C., G.D., file 4, pt. 1, 1904, vol. II, compn. 1, between 106-107: Minutes of a Conference held at Govt. House, Karachi, 6 June 1904). If practical education was beneath their dignity, it is reasonable to infer that Waderos held commerce in equal patrician contempt.

⁶²⁶ Anderson, 11 March 1886 (B.M.S. CXCv, Badin S.R., 11); G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, 24 May 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., 13); S. Ali, Depy. Collr., Mehar, to Commr., Sindh, 12 Dec. 1907 (B.N.S. CCCXCII, Nasirabad S.R., 10).

were mixed, both convenience and debt playing a part. Indeed, it was often difficult to distinguish where leasing ended and mortgaging began. A Settlement Officer commented in 1919 that he had heard *zamindars* claim to have 'leased' their land, on terms which, in his opinion, sounded more like usufructuary mortgages.⁶²⁷ Whether these arrangements were described as leases or mortgages, they had an important feature in common: they operated to the financial disadvantage of the *zamindars*. Mountford gave several instances of estates which had been unprofitably leased to *banias*. One *zamindar* received an allowance of Rs 500 per year, although the *bania* admitted to making an annual profit of at least Rs 2,000; another was given Rs 553 when the *bania*'s profits came to Rs 1,435, and yet another *bania* paid only Rs 519 for land on which he made a profit of Rs 1,362.⁶²⁸ Criticizing this type of arrangement in 1909, a Settlement Officer exclaimed in disgust:

the *zamindar* reduces his income, half and gains in return nothing except a complete freedom from all risk and responsibilities of his position.⁶²⁹

From the *zamindar*'s point of view, however, this might not have been a negligible gain. Sir Richard Burton had seen the same mentality in action when he served in Sindh soon after the British conquest. Many *zamindars*, he said; were bankrupt and mortgaged to the *banias* precisely because they were not concerned about their solvency, provided they could maintain their life-style:

As long as the *zamindar* could procure his daily bread and dose of Bhang, support a wife or two, and possibly a dancing girl, wear a sword, and ride a horse, he would rarely, if ever, condescend to think or care about his property.

Burton added that this state of affairs had existed long before the British arrived on the scene.⁶³⁰ In other words, the *zamindar* was interested only in maintaining his *izzat* and amusements, and was prepared to leave the profits to the *bania*. The Talpurs were particularly well known for this style of management. One of the creditors of Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur explained in 1899 that the Mirs:

are not very careful in carrying on their expenses & in the disposal of their income. For instance, Mir Mahomed Khan enjoys a very large income, but he is quite indifferent as to how his affairs are managed. His officials ... spend his money in any way they please, & have been squandering it. The Mir Saheb is himself devoted to hunting knows nothing.⁶³¹

⁶²⁷ A.S.V. Ascdtt, Personal Asst. to Collr., Nawabshah, to Collr., 10 Apr. 1919 (B.N.S. DXXXVII, Sakrand S.R., 12).

⁶²⁸ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1784.

⁶²⁹ S.H. Covernton, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 23 Apr. 1909 (B.N.S. CCCCLXXXVII, Sehwan S.R., 10).

⁶³⁰ Burton, *Sindh*, 46.

⁶³¹ Quoted in Note to Commr., Sindh, 29 Oct. 1899 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1899, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 12, 69).

Apart from his land, which was all mortgaged, the Mir received a political pension of Rs 10,800 per year,⁶³² so he need not have been in straitened circumstances. This kind of lackadaisical attitude explains why so many *zamindars* were content to muddle through, oblivious to their debts: although technically bankrupt, they continued to live in the manner to which they were accustomed.

This was because the *bania* needed the *zamindar's* backing. A *bania* had no *izzat*, however wealthy he might be, and so, without the *zamindar* behind him, he might find it difficult to obtain from the *haris* that respectful assistance which is so essential to success as a *zamindar*. So long as the *zamindar* was still nominally in control of the estate and still enjoyed his high status in the countryside; the *haris* would cooperate with the *bania* as the *zamindar's* representative. Even if the land was actually sold to the *bania*, the *zamindar* often remained on it as the *bania's* tenant. The *zamindar* thus had all the trappings of his position, but without the substance - the title deeds - and he went on:

year after year after year hoping against hope, to lay by sufficient to enable him to regain his ancestral property.⁶³³

Giving the *zamindar* a generous pension, to enable him to keep up appearances, was therefore a sound investment on the *bania's* part.

On occasions, however, relations between the two parties broke down. For example, the *zamindar* might make *batai* in the *bania's* absence, so that the latter suspected he was being cheated of his season's interest; or the *bania* might play false by omitting to pay the Government assessment in a bad season. The *zamindar* would retaliate by seizing the entire outturn the following season, and litigation would ensue.⁶³⁴ If this happened, then the *zamindar* was almost certain to find himself threatened with the loss of his land. Under the Talpurs, the dice had been more evenly loaded. If a *zamindar* was bankrupt, his creditors could seize his crop and his movable property, but they could not deprive him of his livelihood by taking away his land.⁶³⁵ When the British conquered Sindh, they changed this, giving creditors the power to foreclose on their debtors' lands. This gave landholders more security and *banias* lent money to them more readily, knowing that if the worst came to the worst, they could recover their money by taking the land.⁶³⁶ Until 1866, the law was administered by Deputy Collectors who, being allowed a great deal of discretion, mitigated its harshness: they naturally did not want to see their loyal *Waderos* thrown off their estates. Moreover, it took time for the *banias* themselves to adjust to their new circumstances. When the Collector of Karachi

⁶³² Mountford to Commr., Sindh, 23 Jan. 1898 (*ibid.*, 112).

⁶³³ Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 30 Sept. 1880 (P.S.C., R.D., file 86, 1882, vol. I, pt. I, compn. 1, 34-35).

⁶³⁴ Steele, encl. in James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 845).

⁶³⁵ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1775.

⁶³⁶ W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 Oct. 1872 (Papers relating to the Indebtedness of the Zemindars of the Muncher Lake in Sindh (Madras, 1874) *hereafter referred to as Muncher Papers*, 5).

investigated debt in Sehwan in 1859, he found only one case in which the *bania* had stipulated that the land would become his property if the mortgage was not paid off within a certain time. The Collector believed that the *bania* had been inspired by hints from the Mukhtiarkar of Sehwan, who was a relation and who was naturally more familiar with British law.⁶³⁷ This suggests that most *banias* were not yet fully aware of their enhanced powers.

The Bombay Code, introduced in 1866, deprived local administrators of their jurisdiction over civil cases which were henceforth decided in properly constituted civil courts. Moreover, the Judges, in contrast to the Collectors, were given little discretion deciding cases. This was particularly important with respect to the laws upholding the sanctity of contract: provided a creditor could prove that his client had acknowledged his account, then that was the end of the matter and the debtor must pay his debt.⁶³⁸ No principle of equity could come into play. The Civil Code put considerable power into the hands of creditors, and many debtors despaired of obtaining justice under its Provisions. A few years after the introduction of the Code, Evan James reported that *zamindars* regarded the civil court set up under the Code as a calamity:

destined to bring their ancestral property to ruin, their ladies to dishonor, and themselves to imprisonment and disgrace. It was a plague which every one of them told me must have been sent upon them by God as a punishment for their sins.⁶³⁹

Furthermore, there was no restriction on interest charges. Not only could interest exceed the principal debt, but it could be levied at any rate: the Subordinate Judge of Shikarpur ruled in 1899 that 37.5% per month is not heavy.⁶⁴⁰ The only qualification was that penal interest could not be charged - but if a bond contained a clause that, in case of default, heavier interest would be charged, then it was no longer, technically, penal interest, but was simply part of the contract to which the debtor had agreed. In 1895, the Subordinate Judge of Sukkur enforced a claim for Rs 1,481 which had grown out of a principal debt of Rs 650 on the ground that, as the bond contained a 300% penalty clause, the amount claimed was not excessive.⁶⁴¹ As Evan James remarked in 1900, civil courts appeared to work on the theory that:

⁶³⁷ J.B. Dunsterville, *Settlt. Offr., to Collr., Karachi, 3 May 1859* (P.G.B., P.D., 31 Dec. 1859, pr. 9640, par. 10).

⁶³⁸ A.W.M.H. Ali, *Depy. Collr., U.S.F.*, who had been a Subordinate Judge, said that in his experience, if a debtor acknowledged a balance, a decree was automatically awarded to the creditor (to *Depy. ComMr., U.S.F.*, 27 June. 1901 - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1725).

⁶³⁹ H.E.M. James, 'Report on the *Zemindars* of the Muncher Lake, 1872' (Muncher Papers, 41). Thorburn also considered that the introduction of civil courts in India, superseding the old patriarchal system of justice administered by district officers, had done much to increase the hardships created by indebtedness (*Musulmans and Money-lenders in the Punjab*, 116-122).

⁶⁴⁰ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1777.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*

every Indian debtor, when he signed his bond, had an English solicitor at his back advising him.⁶⁴²

It was difficult for debtors to win suits brought against them by their creditors, so most cases were undefended. Having received a civil court decree for the execution of a bond, the creditor might apply to the court for an attachment of the debtor's movable or immovable property. Even the lesser evil - the attachment of movable property was an unpleasant business which could cause the debtor serious financial damage. In 1870, Akhund Sayed Khan complained on behalf of some *zamindars* of taluqa Naushahro that their farming implements, including Persian wheels and bullocks, were frequently seized in payment of their debts:

The wheels come to a standstill and cultivation suffers. In this manner, the cultivators are deprived of their means of support & we *zemindars* are subject to a loss by having to pay Government assessment when nothing was cultivated & produced.⁶⁴³

It is hard to see how the execution of civil court decrees under these circumstances could lead to anything except further debts: and so the Civil Courts played their part in the vicious circle of the *bania's* system, whereby debts generated more debts. It is not surprising that debtors preferred, if possible, to cut out the civil courts and reach some agreement with their creditors, even if it did mean mortgaging land at less favorable rates. In Upper Sindh Frontier in 1882:

the simple threat of being sued in the Civil Court is quite enough to induce a Beluch to execute a bond on whatever terms his creditors may wish to execute.⁶⁴⁴

The Baluchis explained that debtors were in no position to contest cases when the *banias* were educated and assisted by counsel. They themselves were illiterate and legal advice was not readily available. They did not trust Hindu pleaders, while the few Muslim lawyers in Shikarpur took advantage of their rarity to charge exorbitant fees. If they lost a suit, they ran the danger of losing their land: in the long term it was easier, cheaper and less risky to avoid a suit and sign a bond.⁶⁴⁵

There was another reason why Muslim large holders in particular were anxious to avoid civil suits. They felt that court appearances in criminal cases were beneath their dignity, as cross-examination damaged their prestige. It was even more humiliating for

⁶⁴² Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 20 June 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (July-Dec), 1557).

⁶⁴³ Akhund Sayed Khan & others of Raj Mahajan, *talua* Naushahro, petition to Commr., Sindh, 4 Dec. 189 (P.S.C., (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1870, pt. I, vol. II, compn. 1).

⁶⁴⁴ K. Khan, Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Depy. Commr., U.S.F., 18 Dec. 1882 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1880-1893, pt. I, vol. II, compn. 4, 270-271).

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

a great *wadero* to be hauled up in court by some lowly *bania*, his private affairs bandied about in public and, in the end, to have a decree made out against him. This seriously reduced his standing in the eyes of his neighbors, but the execution of a decree after a court hearing was an even greater disaster so far as a man's dignity was concerned. A *zamindar* from Sehwan explained in 1872:

a bailiff of the Court who is perhaps a Hindoo shall forcibly enter and search the recesses of your house. The privacy of your ladies, who have never left the house since they were children, shall be violated, under pretence of collecting your household furniture, and then your character and reputation are blasted forever.⁶⁴⁶

Such a calamity had to be avoided at all costs if a man was to preserve any standing in the country.

Most commonly, a civil suit did not go to these extremes. Between 1877-1881, the Jacobabad Civil Court issued decrees against 103 *zamindars*, but only three of them were executed. The other decree-holders extracted fresh bonds from their judgment-debtors.⁶⁴⁷ *Banias* preferred to compromise, using the decree as a lever to negotiate a new lease on the land. The main value of a civil Court to a *bania* was that the threat of a suit was a useful stick with which to cow a recalcitrant debtor and, if that failed, a decree would force the debtor to agree to a renewed, and more stringent, mortgage.

Zamindars had long been accustomed to lease or mortgage their lands to *banias*, partly to avoid responsibility and partly because they were in debt. The effect of the Civil Code was to convert a custom into an obligation, and to force debtors to accept increasingly unfavorable terms. The process can be seen at work in the case of Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur. For several years he allowed debts to accumulate, caring 'not for the morrow.'⁶⁴⁸ He was very shocked when one of his creditors threatened to execute a decree against him; he appealed to the Commissioner in Sindh, Evan James, the 'protector of nobles,' to prevent this happening as it would mean a loss of honor and reputation.⁶⁴⁹ Ghulam Mohammad had been happy with the arrangement until the civil suit entered the picture, for he had made no attempt to pay off any of his debts, leaving his creditors to recoup their money or not, as they pleased, from their leases. It was only when threatened with court decrees that he realized the dangers of his position.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁶ James, 'Report on the Zemindars of the Muncher Lake' (Muncher Papers, 41).

⁶⁴⁷ K. Khan, 18 Dec. 1882 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1880-1893, pt. I, vol. II, compn. 4, 270-271).

⁶⁴⁸ Note for Commr., Sindh, 29 Oct. 1899 (ibid., 1899, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 12, 68).

⁶⁴⁹ Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur, petition to Collr., Hbad., 4 July 1896 (ibid., 1896, vol. III, compn. 13, 191-192).

⁶⁵⁰ See correspondence in ibid.

A civil suit, however, was a last resort, for it was expensive and inconvenient for creditors as well as debtors. *Banias* in Mirpur Sakro complained in 1873 that it could cost them as much as fifty rupees to recover a debt of twenty rupees.⁶⁵¹ Other *banias* alleged that court proceedings could ruin both debtors and creditors.⁶⁵² The key to the *bania*'s system was not the civil court but the interest rate, combined with the easy credit facilities he offered. Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur claimed that his entire debt of Rs 25,632 consisted of interest. His creditors, he explained:

went on charging repeatedly interest and compound interest & including it in the principal which consequently went on increasing. They have not only received the whole principal from me but also a portion of the interest.⁶⁵³

It was a common practice for *banias* to bundle up old debts and interest into new bonds to force up the interest charges, and this was probably the basis of Ghulam Mohammad's complaints. As an example of how the system operated, one may cite a bond which was written up for Rs 650 in 1893, consisting entirely of an old debt and its interest; by 1895, interest on the new bond had mounted to such an extent that the Subordinate Court of Sukkur awarded a decree of Rs 1,481 to the creditor.⁶⁵⁴ The debts of another *zamindar* amounted to Rs 1,127 with their interest. His *bania* incorporated them into a fresh bond, added *panjot* of Rs 498 to make the total bond worth Rs 1,127, and after six years he was able to sue for repayment of Rs 7,471.⁶⁵⁵

Small debtors were as badly affected as large ones. In 1873, Gungadin Ramsing confessed sadly:

Some ten months ago I had the misfortune of borrowing twelve rupees from a *bania* money lender.

He had since repaid Rs 16, but with interest running at two rupees per month (about 17%), he still owed Rs 35. To recover this, the *bania* seized all his property 'and I am now a ruined man.'⁶⁵⁶ In 1894, one hears of a *hari* sued for Rs 110, of which no more than Rs 30 represented the principal; the remainder was interest which had accumulated at the rate of 75% per year.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵¹ Hindu community of Mirpur Sakro, petition to Commr., Sindh, 2 Apr. 1873 (ibid., 1874, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 11).

⁶⁵² *Panchayat* of Fandiario & Halani, petition to Commr., Sindh, March 1870 (ibid., 1870, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 1).

⁶⁵³ Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur, petition to Commr., Sindh, 3 June 1899 (ibid., 1899, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 12, 159).

⁶⁵⁴ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1778.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 1765.

⁶⁵⁶ Gungadin Ramsing, petition to Commr., Sindh, 26 July 1873 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1873, vol. II, comm. 1).

⁶⁵⁷ A. Mohammad, Subordinate Judge, Kotri, to District Judge, Karachi, 13 Oct. 1894 (ibid., 1895, vol. VIII, compn. 29, 657).

One reason for the high interest charges was the lack of security offered by agriculturists. Anyone lending money to landless *haris* and small *zamindars* was taking a considerable risk. Experience of the Punjab led Malcolm Darling to conclude that it was probably easier to recover a *lakh* of rupees from a reputable merchant, than a hundred from an improvident cultivator.⁶⁵⁸ Besides, some of the *bantias*' more substantial clients, the *Waderos*, showed very little concern over the repayment of their debts. Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur was a case in point. Because of his important family position, the Sindh Government felt it was advisable to intervene when it seemed likely that all his household property would be seized for debt. Various officers suggested schemes whereby part of his income could be set aside to pay off his debts, but the Mir doggedly refused to agree to any of them, protesting he could not afford it.⁶⁵⁹ One would have thought that a man in imminent danger of having all his worldly goods sold off by court decree was in no position to make terms, but the Mir Saheb did not appear to see matters in that light. He several times begged to be saved from the dishonor of being sued for debt, but was reluctant to concede that the simplest way out of his difficulties might be to pay the money back.⁶⁶⁰ Eventually, Evan James, Commissioner in Sindh, lost his patience and declared that people in the Mir's position must not be allowed to be 'absolutely irresponsible' about their financial affairs, 'refusing to make the slightest effort to discharge their liabilities.' He threatened to remove the Mir Saheb's name from the privilege schedule unless he agreed to compromise with his creditors.⁶⁶¹ In the end,

a compromise was reached, but repayment was stretched over such a long period that it can hardly have been satisfactory from the creditors' point of view.⁶⁶² One can understand why, on a different occasion, James sympathized with *bantias* who had to recover their dues in the face of:

the bad debts, the constant attempts to evade solemn promises, the attempted brow-beating.⁶⁶³

Some *bantias* of Mirpur Sakro explained in 1894 that if they lent money to Muslims at low interest rates, 'there seems, very little chance of getting the money back.'⁶⁶⁴

This explanation, though, is not complete. Land is the safest possible security; there was no question of a man losing all his money if his debtor held land. The amounts of

⁶⁵⁸ M.L. Darling, *Rusticus Loquitur* (Oxford, 1930), 328.

⁶⁵⁹ Asst. Collr., Naushahro, to Colir., Hbad., 10 Jan. 1895; Colir. to Commr., Sindh, 7 March & 18 July 1896 (P.S.C., J.D., 1896, vol. III, compn. 13, 55, 133, 183).

⁶⁶⁰ Mir Ghulam Mohammad Khan Talpur, petition to Colir., Hbad., 4 July 1896; Commr., Sindh, Order no. 1763, 5 Aug. 1896 (ibid., 189-192, 200).

⁶⁶¹ Commr., Sindh, note, n.d. (ibid., 155-156).

⁶⁶² Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Mir Ghulam Mohammad, 18 Jan. 1899 (ibid., 1899, vol. III, pt. I, compn. 12, 162).

⁶⁶³ James, 14 Nov. 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1901 (Jan-June), 689).

⁶⁶⁴ Inhabitants of Mirpur Hatboro, petition to Commr., Sindh, 23 June 1894 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1895, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 29, 631).

interest charged by *baniyas* were so huge, relative to the principal, that repayment of the debt seemed an unlikely proposition. This was the object of the exercise for the *bania*. He did not normally intend to recover his capital. He wished to get the maximum return from the principal outlay, so that he could receive regular interest. He would lose his income if the debt was paid back.

The account of Shah Nawaz Jatoi is instructive in this context. It is reproduced in Appendix XVIII. It opened with Shah Nawaz borrowing Rs 160; over the course of the next seven years he borrowed various amounts, to the total of Rs 253-8. After four years, he repaid Rs 200, but this did not even cover the interest which, at 24%, came to Rs 208-8. After seven years he had paid back all but Rs 19-5 of the principal debt, but in the meantime the interest had mounted up to Rs 457-8.

Three points stand out in this account. The first is that the total borrowed by Shah Nawaz was not large. The second is that, even so, the *bania* still had not recovered it after seven years. The third and most important point is that the principal debts dwindle into insignificance when set against the interest charged. Other accounts show a similar pattern. In the case of Chakar Khan Suhrani (also reproduced in Appendix XVIII), the *bania* had barely recovered half of his capital outlay after seven years. While Chakar Khan's repayments were not even sufficient to cover the interest. The *bania* sued Chakar Khan for debt and on 24 October 1886 was awarded Rs 14,000. It is difficult to see where this figure came from. When the account was closed in March 1885, it stood at Rs 9,663 so with interest at 20% it could only have been worth Rs 11,596 in March 1886. On 28 March 1898, the *bania* put in a new, and equally unrealistic, claim for Rs 60,233-3-2.⁶⁶⁵ It is unlikely that the *bania* seriously expected Chakar Khan to repay such vast sums, so one can only assume that he did not want to be repaid. In fact, he appears to have gone to a great deal of trouble to make repayment impossible. In another case recorded in Appendix XVIII, the debtor, Angan Gachal, was more conscientious in his repayments. Nevertheless, after repaying his principal debts, he still owed Rs 226, nearly as much as the entire principal debt.

Whatever a debtor's reasons for borrowing, he had little chance of ever repaying the debt. The *bania* could hardly have wished it otherwise. It positively went against his interests to have the debt discharged. It would be like killing the goose that laid the golden egg for the interest, taken in kind, fuelled his activities as a trader. In the literature of the nineteenth century, the *bania* was habitually described as a 'moneylender', but the accounts described above show that if it were so, then he was an unsuccessful one. It is a sorry moneylender who cannot recover his initial loan after ten years. In fact, *baniyas* could usually recover their money if they wanted to, but they were in no hurry to do so, as they preferred to enjoy the interest.⁶⁶⁶ If one thinks of the *bania*

⁶⁶⁵ Mountford, 22 Oct. 1900 (Encd. Estates Report, 1899-1900, App. A, 125).

⁶⁶⁶ Steele, encl. in James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.); Confl. Pr., 845); R. Giles, Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 31 Jan. 1902 (ibid., 1902 (July-Dec.), 1248). M.S. Gore confirms that the

as a shareholder, then his system makes more sense. His loans to the client would represent his investment and his interest would give him an extremely good return on his capital. Normally, he would ensure that his client did not pay back his capital, just as no stockholder would recover his investment except to change it; capital is useless if it is lying idle. Indeed, it is doubly misleading to think of the *bania* as a moneylender, for the simple reason that most of his transactions were carried out in kind, agriculturists seldom having any need of cash. The currency of the countryside was grain. Even if a man did need cash for some reason (to buy land, pay the assessment or organize a wedding, for example), he would always repay the loan in grain. The *bania* attributed a cash value to these transactions for his own convenience as a trader. The *bania* was primarily a merchant, and his money lending provided a means of acquiring grain cheaply. Much of the grain which village *banias* traded in the market centers had been obtained as interest.

In order to create opportunities for investment and maintain the supply of interest, the *bania* eagerly offered easy credit to his clients. The accounts discussed above are evidence that no system of banks or cooperative societies could hope to replace the *bania* as a source of credit, so long as *zamindars* were accustomed to unlimited credit facilities and did not expect their creditors to ask for their money back.

Apart from interest, the one item which tied an agriculturist to a *bania* and which he could not avoid unless he were very wealthy, was the necessity to borrow money to pay the Government assessment. When the installments of revenue became due, the price of grain fell, as everyone was in a hurry to sell; nobody wanted to be fined as a revenue defaulter. L.J. Mountford, the Manager of Encumbered Estates, had personal experience of the problem. He stated that in good seasons, when the market was flooded, the cultivator 'often simply could not sell grain to pay off the assessment except at ruinous rates.' The Encumbered Estates Department had the resources to pay the assessment and keep back the bulk of the produce until prices rose again, but the ordinary *zamindar* would not be so fortunate. He would have to dispose of some of his produce hastily at uneconomic rates, merely to raise the cash required by Government.⁶⁶⁷ The first installment of *kharif* revenue was due on 1 January every year, the second on 15 February and the third on 1 April. The first installment pre particularly badly timed, as sometimes the rice harvest was not over by then, and throughout these three months prices were low - or, in especially good seasons, it might be impossible to sell produce

moneylender in modern India is still more concerned with the interest than the principal; he 'looks upon money as the means of acquiring more money' (R.D. Lambert & B.F. Hoselitz (eds.), *The Role of Savings and Wealth in Southern Asia and the West* (Unesco, 1953), 187-188).

⁶⁶⁷ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1746, 1752. Few *zamindars* could afford to hold back their produce until prices went up again after *batai*, and so they had no choice but to sell a good deal of their produce at low rates. See also S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., to Depy. Commr., T. & P., 31 March 1905 (B.N.S. CCCCLX, Pithoro S.R., 4); L.N. Brown, Asst. Collr., Mehar, to Commr., Sindh, 22 Dec. 1914 (B.N.S. CCCXCVI, Mehar S.R.; 14); Thoiburn, *Musulmans and Money-lenders in the Punjab*, 49.

at all.⁶⁶⁸ In 1902, the Bombay Government agreed to drop the first installment of revenue and postpone the third by two weeks. Similar changes were made with regard to the collection of *rabi* revenue.⁶⁶⁹ These concessions were intended to make life a little easier for agriculturists, but they came late in the day. For nearly half a century, agriculturists had been paying revenue at the less convenient dates. Moreover, legislation could do nothing to alleviate the vital issue of low prices prevailing when the revenue was due.

However thrifty an agriculturist might be, he was bound to have recourse to a *bania* every year in order to pay his revenue, and he was obliged to do so under extremely unfavorable circumstances. There was no way of avoiding this unless he had large reserves of capital and could afford to play the market. That is to say, only a large *zamindar* could pay the Government assessment and at the same time be sure of regularly selling his surplus produce at a profit.

In consequence, many agriculturists left the whole matter of the assessment to their *banias*. In 1883, Colonel Anderson, Superintendent of the Sindh Revenue Survey, commented that agriculturists could seldom tell him how much revenue they paid, without reference to their *bania*.⁶⁷⁰ Twenty years later, the Collector of Shikarpur recalled that when he first came to Sindh as an Assistant Collector, he had tried to inspect the agriculturists' receipt books, in accordance with Presidency practice, to ensure that junior revenue officials were not defrauding them over the assessment; but it was a vain quest.

Village after village would be visited without a single receipt book being forthcoming, owing to their being all deposited with the local *Bania*, who was generally on his rounds.

An Assistant Collector, he reminded Government, had more important things to do than 'wasting his time knocking at the doors of petty *Banias*.'⁶⁷¹ Even in the progressive Larkana Division, only five percent of the *zamindars* paid their assessment themselves at the turn of the century, the *banias* acting on behalf of the others.⁶⁷² If the burden of debt was increasing in the nineteenth century, one important factor may have been as simple as the change-over from a *batai* to a cash assessment.

⁶⁶⁸ Gommr., Sindh, memo., 8 Jan. 1902 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Jan-July), 427); Mountford to Oommr., 27 March 1900 (ibid., 1900 (July-Dec.), 1273); W.H. Lucas, Collr., Karachi, to Commr., 19 Oct. 1901 (ibid., 1902 (Aug. Dec.), 1707).

⁶⁶⁹ Commr., Sindh, memo., 8 Jan. 1902 (ibid., 1902 (Jan. July), 427). Rabi dates were changed from 15 May, 15 June, 15 July to 15 June & 15 July only.

⁶⁷⁰ J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev, Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 30 July 1883 (B.N.S. CC, Larkana S.R., 92).

⁶⁷¹ J.L. Rieu, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 13 Oct. 1901 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1712).

⁶⁷² James, 14 Nov. 1900 (ibid., 1901 (Jan-June), 689).

This analysis of that *bania's* system shows that the vexed question of whether or not agricultural debt in India was contracted for productive or non-productive reasons was almost of secondary importance. Even if a man borrowed for some productive purpose, a good deal of his profit would be taken by the *bania* as interest, preventing the agriculturist from getting the full benefit of his investment.

No doubt, the thriftless habits of the rural population aggravated the problem. It was, for instance, expensive to maintain one's *izzat*. *Waderos'* tendency to enhance their prestige by taking up huge amounts of wasteland has already been mentioned.⁶⁷³ Large and sloppily cultivated estates were liabilities in themselves, but when *Waderos* borrowed money to acquire yet more uneconomic tracts, they were in danger of indebting themselves twice over.

Moreover, *Waderos* needed to impress their neighbors by surrounding themselves with retainers and servants, and it was incumbent on them to display lavish hospitality. Isa Khan Junejo, for example, a *zamindar* of taluqa Khipro, was unable to pay his assessment in 1905-1906 and had a debt of Rs 6,767, yet he prided himself on spending RS 125 per month to feed beggars and *faqirs*, and 'a crowd of loafers' would gather round at the time of *batai*.⁶⁷⁴

In addition, agriculturists of all classes were obliged to hold expensive celebrations at the times of marriages, funerals, circumcisions, births etc. Malcolm Darling believed such festivals were at the root of indebtedness, and he asserted that this was also 'the opinion of the countryside'.⁶⁷⁵ However, 'the opinion of the countryside' may not have counted for much: if 'the countryside' had really understood what caused debt, the problem would not have been so acute. J.C. Jack, in his *Economic Life of a Bengal District*, found that on average domestic festivals and entertainment accounted for only 6% of the annual expenditure of a 'family in comfort' and 4% of the expenditure of a 'family in extreme indigence'.⁶⁷⁶ This is by no means an excessive proportion, unless one begrudges agriculturists any form of non-productive spending. Jack also found that the 'family in comfort' devoted 11% of its expenditure to rent and local tax, which occupied 4% of the expenditure of the indigent family. No equivalent study was ever made in Sindh, but these figures confirm the supposition that domestic festivals may not have been so heavy a burden as was sometimes believed. The cost of weddings, at least, was mitigated in Sindh by the custom of guests bringing cash as presents.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³ Cf. above, 141, 150-151.

⁶⁷⁴ S.M. Bharucha, Depy. Collr., Nara Valley, to Depy. Collr., T. & P., 23 July 1906 (B.N.S. CCCCLXIX, Khipro S.R., 21). See also Darling, *Rusticus Loquitur*, 228.

⁶⁷⁵ M.L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (Oxford, 1947, 4th ed.), 52-53.

⁶⁷⁶ J.C. Jack, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, (Oxford, 1917), 59-61, 1 S. Islam came to the same conclusion in 'The Bengal Peasantry in Debt, 1904-1905, *The Dacca University Studies*, vol. XXII, pt. A (1974), 57. See also P.G.K. Panikar, *Rural Savings in India* (Bombay, 1970), 85-87.

⁶⁷⁷ The cost of a marriage ceremony was estimated in 1902 as being Rs 350 for a 'substantial landlord' and Rs 125 for a 'tenant' in Sindh, but these costs were halved by the customary gifts of cash (H.S. Lawrence, Actg. Director,

The most vital feature of the *bania's* system, then, was that, because there was no restriction on the amount of interest he took, he was able to acquire much of his grain at almost no cost. If he had been prevented from levying such high rates, he would still have had to buy the *zamindars'* grain, but his profit margin would not have been so excessive. At the same time, the agriculturist was prevented from receiving an adequate return on his crop. Those agriculturists who wished to extend or improve their cultivation may have been discouraged by the knowledge that the profits would go to their financiers.

With easy credit and heavy interest, the *bania* kept his client on a loose rein, and at the same time gave him enough rope to hang himself with, should the occasion arise. Once indebted to a *bania*, it was difficult for a man to avoid sinking further into debt - and the debtor who objected to the arrangement always had the threat of a civil suit hanging over him. If taken to court, the client would appreciate the disadvantages of the easygoing credit facilities he had hitherto enjoyed. He would have to pay back the impossible debts and their interest, as well as any other debts the *bania* could think of to make his case stronger, such as advances made to *haris* for which the *zamindar* had stood surety. Having won his case, the *bania* called the tune and if he demanded that, as a compromise, the client should sell him some land, the latter had little choice but to comply.

III

Inevitably, *banias'* commanding position, and the use some of them made of it, made them objects of resentment in the countryside. In Sindh, this was intensified by communal bitterness. It went against the grain for Muslims - especially men of substance - to see Hindus not only flourishing, but also exercising power in the civil courts and even depriving Muslims of their land in some cases.

Hindus occupied an ambiguous position in Sindh. Before the British conquest, they exercised such enormous influence as traders and civil servants, that they were excused payment of the *jeziat-el-hunud*, a tax paid by infidels living under the protection of Islam. Great merchants and civil servants were exempt from all taxation, while smaller merchants had to donate an annual *peshkash* of five to ten rupees per head.⁶⁷⁸ Even Dr. James Burnes, who took a jaundiced view of Muslim religious tolerance, had to admit after his visit to Sindh in 1827 that Hindus had considerable influence at the Court of

Land Records & Agri., Bombay, 'Memorandum on the Material Condition of the People of the Bombay Presidency, 1892-1902' - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1281).

⁶⁷⁸ Burton, *Sindh*, 50.

the Mirs.⁶⁷⁹ His brother, Alexander, confirmed this with greater enthusiasm a few years later; in his opinion, Hindus in Sindh were reasonably tolerated and very powerful.⁶⁸⁰

Despite their importance, however, Hindus were never left in any doubt that they had to depend on the good will of the majority of the community. They could not pass through the countryside, for example, without paying a fee to some *Wadero* for protection.⁶⁸¹ Consequently, they did not dare to hold land in villages, but restricted themselves to cultivation around the towns,⁶⁸² or else managed the estate of a powerful man.⁶⁸³ In addition, there was, before British conquest, a constant threat of forcible conversion to Islam; any Hindu who defrauded a Muslim had to forfeit property worth ten times the amount of the fraud and at the same time embrace Islam.⁶⁸⁴ Dr. Burnes was so shocked by the treatment endured by Hindus in Sindh, that he could not understand why any of them remained there, unless it was a result of:

that attachment, which man shares with the vegetable, to the soil in which he is reared.⁶⁸⁵

Thomas Postans and Charles Masson, who also visited Sindh before the British conquest, concluded that there was a more practical reason. They both commented that there was nothing to prevent Hindus emigrating to neighboring Hindu countries where they would be free from persecution. Their failure to do so was surely evidence that Hindu merchants were able to amass large profits which compensated for the disadvantages.⁶⁸⁶

In the end, though, these disadvantages convinced Seth Naomal Hotchand, one of the greatest merchants of Sindh, that the Hindus would be better off under British rule. He rendered such invaluable service to the British before, during and after the conquest, that he was rewarded with a 5,000 acre first-class *jagir*.⁶⁸⁷ His antagonism towards the Talpurs dated from 1832 when his father, Seth Hotchand, learned after a communal riot

⁶⁷⁹ J. Burnes, *Narrative of a Visit to the Court of Sindh* (London, 1829; reprinted Karachi, 1974), 12.

⁶⁸⁰ A. Burnes, *A Voyage on the Indus, vol. III of Travels into Bokhara* (London, 1834; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 226.

⁶⁸¹ C. Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab* (London, 1842; reprinted Karachi, 1974), vol. I, 379.

⁶⁸² Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 7.

⁶⁸³ Cf. above, 197.

⁶⁸⁴ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. II, 139; see also J. Burnes, *Visit to the Court of Sindh*, 84, 86.

⁶⁸⁵ J. Burnes, *Visit to the Court of Sindh*, 83; see also 81-82.

⁶⁸⁶ Masson, *Journeys in Baluchistan*, vol. I, 287, 389; T. Postans, *Personal Observations on Sindh* (London, 1843; reprinted Karachi, 1973), 65, 68, 397.

⁶⁸⁷ Naomal's services included providing British forces with food, transport & other necessities between 1837-1843, gathering intelligence, arranging for Napier's letters to be delivered during the campaign of 1843, and helping to reconcile the defeated Baluchi *jagirdars* to British rule. See H.W. Preedy, Collr., Karachi, 14 Jan. 1848 & Secy. Govt. of India to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 13 Nov. 1849 (Selections from the pre-Mutiny Records of the Commissioner in Sindh (n.d.), 397-401, 462).

in Hyderabad that his friendship with Mir Murad Ali Khan Talpur did not prevent him from being arrested and threatened with circumcision. Naomal explained later:

my family felt aggrieved by the wrongs inflicted upon them by the later Amirs in their blind zeal for their faith, and my principal object in being thus useful to the British Government at such great personal sacrifices was simply to secure their interest and regard for future good.⁶⁸⁸

The British conquest freed Hindus from their dependence on the majority community, putting them under the patronage of the British. They could move about the countryside freely and they could practice their religion openly. Commerce and the bureaucracy expanded under British rule, and both continued to be dominated by *baniyas* and *Amils*. In addition, it is doubtful whether Hindu 'moneylenders' would have dared to defraud their clients as blatantly under Talpur rule as some did under the British. That Hindus appreciated the changed state of affairs long after British rule was well established, was confirmed by Jethmal Parsram, a well-known Hindu literary figure; in 1924 he wrote that old people still spoke of 'the terror which hung over them' during Talpur rule.⁶⁸⁹

Evan James gave an interesting account of what this change meant in everyday terms. When he first served in Sindh in the 1870's, Hindus still had an instinctive dread of Muslims, not even daring to ride horses which, it was felt, were reserved for the superior community. When James was appointed Commissioner in Sindh in the 1890's, he noticed that Hindus who two decades previously:

never dreamed of riding aught but a camel, now bestride as good horses as their former Beluch masters, and never think of alighting to "salam" whoever it be that passes.

Idols and pictures, he remarked, were now openly displayed in Hindu shops and temples, something which would have been unthinkable during his earlier tenure in Sindh.⁶⁹⁰

Details like these rubbed in the message that the old order was changing to the advantage of the Hindus. Inevitably, Hindus could not resist showing their delight over their improved position which, in turn, provoked bad feeling from the Muslims. L.J. Mountford, the Manager of Encumbered Estates, accused Hindus of exercising their new-found power most effectively in the civil courts. Most of the Subordinate Judges were Hindus and Mountford complained that, since so many of their friends and

⁶⁸⁸ N. Hotchand, *A Forgotten Chapter in Indian History as described in the Memoirs of Seth Naomal Hotchand, C.S.I., of Karachi*, ed. by E. James (Exeter, 1915), 69-71.

⁶⁸⁹ J. Parsram, *Sindh and its Sufis* (1924), 56.

⁶⁹⁰ Commr., Sindh, note, n.d. (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1894, vol. II, pt. I., compn. 23, par. 3).

relations were *banias* enjoying high interest rates, they had a warped view of what constituted reasonable interest charges. This, he alleged, led civil courts to be too sympathetic towards creditors' claims.⁶⁹¹ Mountford, in fact, was echoing the opinion of many Muslims, that civil Courts were run by Hindus, for Hindus.⁶⁹² Karam Ali, a *zamindar* from *taluka* Moro, expressed this view forcefully in 1902. He insisted that it was impossible for Muslims to obtain justice from Civil Courts because all the pleaders were Hindus:

They combine with the mofussil *banias* and help them in concocting false accounts against us poor cultivators. After the filing of false suits, these very pleaders represent the *bania* plaintiffs. The claims are easily proved against us. We poor men have no means to engage pleaders and although we made vehement protests against the plaintiffs' claims and bring forward Mahomedan witnesses in proof of the falsity of their claims, we are not heard.⁶⁹³

Whether his accusations were justified, or whether they were the natural outcome of the frustration any man might feel after being made a fool of by sharp lawyers, Karam Ali voiced a feeling shared by a large number of Muslims. Khan Saheb Ali Mohammad Akhund, the only Muslim Subordinate Judge in Sindh, apparently made some misguided attempts to turn the balance against the Hindus in his court for in 1894 he disallowed the interest a Hindu was demanding from a Muslim on the ground that:

Formerly you Hindus used to ride on donkeys, and the interest you have extorted from Mahomedans has made you ride horses.⁶⁹⁴

Some of the Hindus whose cases were heard by him responded in an equally communal vein; Ali Mohammad was, they asserted, a good friend of the local *Waderos* - he entertained them in his chambers and visited them in their villages, while Muslim debtors were boasting that, now the Judge was a Muslim, they would no longer have to repay their debts.⁶⁹⁵

These accusations and counter-accusations were indicative of communal antagonisms which occasionally erupted into violence. The conversion of Hindus to Islam provided a common stimulus to public disturbance, for the Hindu population would often rise up in anger, claiming that the conversions had been obtained by force. This was in itself a measure of their increased security, as it is doubtful whether they would have dared to

⁶⁹¹ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1763.

⁶⁹² See K. Khan, Depy. Collr., U.S.F., to Depy. Commr., U.S.F., 18 Dec. 1882 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1880-1895, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 4, 271).

⁶⁹³ Karam Ali & others of taluka Moro, petition to Commr., Sindh, 16 Oct. 1902 (ibid., 1902, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 6).

⁶⁹⁴ Inhabitants of Mirpur Bathoro, petition to Commr., Sindh, 23 June 1894 (ibid., 1895, vol. VIII, compn. 24, 632-634). Ali Mohammad admitted that he had used the words in his letter to District Judge, Karachi, 13 Oct. 1894 (ibid., 657-658).

⁶⁹⁵ Inhabitants of Mirpur Bathoro, petition, above,(ibid., 635).

challenge the majority community so openly had the British not been there to keep the peace. Conversion cases led to riots in Sukkur in 1872,⁶⁹⁶ in the Sehwan area in 1884,⁶⁹⁷ in Hyderabad in 1892 and 1893⁶⁹⁸ and in Matiari in 1901.⁶⁹⁹ Communal riots also flared up over other issues. In 1882, Baluch soldiers attacked Hindus in the Hyderabad bazaar,⁷⁰⁰ while a dispute over the right of Hindus in Thatta to play music in a temple led to disturbances in 1891.⁷⁰¹ In 1893, a Mohurram procession in Sukkur turned into an anti-Hindu riot in which the Town Inspector of Police, a Hindu, was severely beaten.⁷⁰²

There were never any specifically anti-*bania* riots in Sindh, like the Deccan riots of 1875. When, in 1892 and 1896, Evan James, the Commissioner in Sindh, asked his district officers to provide details about attacks against moneylenders, the consensus of opinion was that the situation was not serious in the province as a whole.⁷⁰³ A disturbing pattern, however, emerged in the Hyderabad Collectorate, where there was a relatively large proportion of Hindus. Attacks were not frequent (three murders and eleven dacoities were reported between 1836-1895)⁷⁰⁴ but when they did occur, it was impossible to convict the culprits. This was evidence that the attacks were tolerated, if not actually instigated, by the local *Waderos*. It underlined that, despite their apparent strength, Hindus were still in a weak position, entirely dependent on the protection of the British. The final proof of this was to come in 1947, when the majority of Hindus fled Sindh in the wake of the departing British.

Even the power given to *banias* by civil courts was precarious, for it might prove extremely difficult to enforce a court decree in a country area. As one administrator commented wryly, 'foreclosures are tempered by assassination.'⁷⁰⁵ When a debtor decided to take the law into his own hands, there was little the local administration could do about it, for the sympathies of the countryside were with the criminal. In 1888, for example, the Muslims of Tando Jam took up the cause of a Sayed accused of murdering two *banias*. They were so enthusiastic in their support that they succeeded in scaring off all the Hindu witnesses. They even managed to intimidate the District Public Prosecutor, who was himself a Hindu, so that the Collector of Hyderabad had to ask for the Public Prosecutor in Sindh, an Englishman, to be sent down from Karachi.⁷⁰⁶

⁶⁹⁶ Pol. Sup., U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 30, Oct. 1875 (ibid., 1875, vol. II, compn. 23, par. 2).

⁶⁹⁷ See correspondence in ibid., 1884, vol. II, pt. II, compns. 67 & 41+8, & in ibid., file 2, 1884, vol. II, compn. 26A.

⁶⁹⁸ See correspondcace in ibid., file 1, 1893, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 56, 610-612, & in vol. III, pt. I, compn. 105.

⁶⁹⁹ Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 2 Apr. 1901,(ibid., 1901., 1901, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 24, 1167-1171).

⁷⁰⁰ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Colir., Hbad., 26 Aug. 1882 (ibid., 1882, vol. II, pt. II, compn. 47, 78-84).

⁷⁰¹ Commr., Sindh, note, n.d. (ibid., 1894, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 23).

⁷⁰² Actg. Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 4 June 1894 (ibid., 1894 vol. I, pt. I, compn. 9, 334).

⁷⁰³ Commr., Sindh, memo., 13 Jan. 1892 (ibid., 1892, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 80). See also correspondence in ibid., 1896, vol. IV, pt. II, compn. 31.

⁷⁰⁴ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Collr., Hbad., 17 Feb. 1896; Collr. to Commr., Sindh, 26 March 1896 (ibid., 271, 284).

⁷⁰⁵ James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note C (P.G.B., P.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 835).

⁷⁰⁶ Collr., Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 9 May 1888 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1888, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 36, 271 273).

This was not an isolated example. Two interesting cases may be cited as illustrations. The first shows how the relationship between a *bania* and his client could break down, leading to argument, litigation and, on this occasion, death. Sayed Ahmed Shah, of *taluqa* Naushahro, who shared three fields with a *bania* named Deja, once cut a *nim* tree from one of the fields, giving it to his Pir, Pir Nasirdin. Unfortunately, he did not ask Daya's permission first, so Daya promptly filed a suit against him for Rs 75, claiming that, in addition to the *nim*, Ahmed Shah had previously cut down two *babul* trees. In view of what has already been said of civil courts, it is no surprise that the Sayed was anxious to avoid a suit. He appealed to Pir Nasirdin to reconcile Daya to a compromise, but the meeting arranged between the two parties turned into a slanging match. Daya called Ahmed Shah a liar, to which the Sayed retorted by insulting the *bania's* sister. Far from being mollified, Daya now filed a second suit, for libel, demanding damages of Rs 1,000. He was so angry that he ignored the appeals of various influential people who interceded on Ahmed Shah's behalf. A couple of months later, Daya was killed in broad daylight, while riding along the high road. It was almost certain that Ahmed Shah was responsible, and he and some relations were arrested, but the prosecution case failed because no one was prepared to testify against them.⁷⁰⁷ Both men had recourse to the weapons available to their communities, the Hindu turning to the courts, the Muslim appealing to influential men and then resorting to violence.

The second case gives an exceptionally vivid impression of the way in which those who attacked *banias* were sheltered by the Muslim community. In 1881, Gopaldas, a wealthy *bania* of *taluqa* Moro, disappeared. He was notorious for his extortionate practices as a moneylender and it was common knowledge that some of his debtors had decided to avenge themselves on him. They murdered him and threw his body in the river. There was no secret about it. On the contrary, his fate became such a byword in the area that children were heard taunting each other with it. When it came to procuring evidence against the murderers, however, it seemed that nobody knew anything. The Superintendent of Police was certain the local people were deliberately obstructing his investigations and he quartered punitive police on the villages from which the murderers came, but to no avail. No charges were ever brought. Indeed, the Superintendent himself sympathized with the villagers, for he remarked:

If only one half of the misdeeds of the murdered man ... are based on facts, I scarcely wonder at the tenacity with which the secret of this murder is guarded.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁷ K. Khan, Depy. Collr., 7 Apr. 1892 (ibid., 1892, vol. III, pt. II, compn. 80, 602-605).

⁷⁰⁸ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Commr., Sindh, 17 Jan. 1882. See also his letters of 8 Aug. 1881, 28 Jan. & 3 Feb. 1882, & Jairamdas of *taluqa* Moro, petition to Commr., 75 July 1881 (ibid., file 2, 1882, vol. II, compn. 31(3)).

A few years later, Gopaldas' brother, Jairarndas, was badly wounded and a large part of his property stolen; again, it proved impossible to discover the culprits.⁷⁰⁹ One can appreciate why Evan James once remarked that:

the murderers of Hindu moneylenders are rarely convicted in Sindh.⁷¹⁰

Cases of dacoities committed against *banias* shed further light on the somewhat vulnerable circumstances of the village *banias*. A *bania* named Ladho, of *taluka* Moro, had filed many suits against his fellow-villagers and had come into possession of most of their ornaments, which they had mortgaged to them. He was not, therefore, a popular man and when his house was broken into, the villagers did nothing to help him. On the contrary, they let the dacoits go ahead with their business of stealing property worth Rs 21,118. It may have been by way of return for this favor that the dacoits took the opportunity, while they were on the premises, to burn all of Ladho's books and accounts. Once the dacoits had gone, the villagers, far from assisting the police with their investigations, 'openly ... rejoiced at the damage done, to him.'⁷¹¹ Around the same time, in 1889, another *bania*, Mangho, of *taluka* Tando Allahyar, was robbed by dacoits who, after beating him, turned him and his family out of the house. The dacoits locked themselves in and spent the next two hours coolly going through his possessions and destroying his accounts. Meanwhile, about 150 village men surrounded the house, but they did not help Mangho: indeed it is hard to avoid the suspicion that they came specifically to prevent help from being given. The police found it impossible to get any useful information out of the villagers, despite the huge numbers of witnesses, and were unable to bring charges against the men they suspected.⁷¹²

In neither of the two cases above did the police suggest that the villagers as a whole were responsible for instigating the dacoities, but the suspects were local men. What one can say is that the villagers regarded the *banias* as fair game and that they cheered the dacoits on. It is also clear that the dacoits sympathized with the villagers since they destroyed the *banias*' accounts. Moreover, *Waderos* almost certainly connived at the murders and dacoities even if they did not actually inspire them.⁷¹³ When it came to

⁷⁰⁹ District Sup., Police, Hbad., to Commr., 18 Jan. 1892 (ibid., file 1, 1892, vol. III. pt. II, compn. 80, 534).

⁷¹⁰ James to Govr., Bombay, 11 Feb. 1892 (rough copy; these remarks deleted from final draft, ibid., 562).

⁷¹¹ District Sup.; Police, Hbad., to Commr., 11 Feb. 1892 (ibid., 562).

⁷¹² Ibid., 561-562.

⁷¹³ District Sup., Police, Hbad., believed that the principal inhabitants had deliberately impeded the police search for evidence in the above dacoity cases, as well as in other, similar, cases (to Commr., 18 Jan., 1892, ibid., 534). Collr., Shpur., accused the leading inhabitants of *taluka* Nasirabad of conspiring to murder a *bania* & intimidate prosecution witnesses (to District Sup., Police, Shpur., 15 March 1892 (ibid., vol. III, pt. I, compn. 53, 169-171). Earlier, the Hindu community of Sehwan had accused the local Sayeds of instigating attacks on Hindus (Hindu Panchayats of Lalti, Bhan, Karampur, Mohi, Dari Dero, Otekimen, Labadia: petition to Commr., Sindh, n.d. (ibid., file 2, 1884, vol. II, comn. 26A). The account of Govt.'s attempts to convict Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto for the murder of the Hindu Mukhtiarkar in 1896, shows how difficult it was for Govt. to prove such charges against *Waderos*, however strongly they were suspected of criminal activities.

crimes against *baniyas*, *Waderos* were interested parties who were generally unwilling to assist the British authorities.

As British rule depended on the influence of the *Waderos*, anything which tended to make them less willing collaborators was, potentially, a threat to that rule. The problem was most acute in the Hyderabad Collectorate, but Evan James warned that, in the 1890's, good relations between Hindus and Muslims were beginning to break down all over the province. This was a result of the improved social position of Hindus and Muslim resentment at the working of the Civil Code.⁷¹⁴ It was in this context that the problem of indebtedness was tackled by the Government of Sindh. At worst, indebted *Waderos* were being deprived of their land and, hence, of their power. At best, indebtedness created bad feeling among them. The Sindh authorities therefore devoted themselves to relieving the debts of the Muslim landed magnates, the *jagirdars* and great *zamindars*.

⁷¹⁴ Commr., Sindh, note, n.d. (ibid., file 1, 1894, vol. II, pt. I, compn. 23).

Chapter 6

Rural Debt: 2. Preserving the Balance of Power

I

British officials saw debt as a political rather than an economic problem. It was not their primary concern that the *bania* creamed off the profits of agriculture, nor were they generally disquieted by the predicament of the smallholder. Administrators were preoccupied with the consequences indebtedness might have for the traditional leaders of rural society. Victorian officers stationed in Sindh believed that power was slipping away from the *Waderos* into the hands of Hindu merchants. Sometimes the process was physically apparent, as land, the basis of power, passed from Muslim debtors to Hindu creditors. Less visible, but more common, was the insidious ruin of *zamindars* who were virtually reduced to tenants on their own mortgaged estates. Local administration without the *Waderos* was unthinkable. *Banias* could not replace them because they did not possess the influence, respect or status of *Waderos*: they were, in short, totally devoid of *izzat*. Nor could Government expect anything from petty *zamindars* who were accustomed to depend on their powerful neighbors.

The Sindh Government therefore restricted its sympathies to the *Waderos*, so as to reinforce the old order and preserve the balance of power in the countryside. Four Encumbered Estates Acts were introduced for their benefit, in 1876, 1881, 1881 and 1896. No action was taken to help the mass of agriculturists in the nineteenth century. The Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act, which was brought into operation elsewhere in the Bombay Presidency in 1879, was intended to relieve the debts of all classes of agriculturists. However, in 1882, the Commissioner in Sindh ruled out the notion that it, or any similar Act, was desirable in Sindh. There was, he believed, no need to assist people 'whose position in the social scale gave them no special claims to consideration.' In his opinion, Government had a duty only towards 'certain classes who were politically and socially of importance,' and he even felt that the Encumbered Estates Act itself had embraced too wide a social spectrum.⁷¹⁵ Petty holders were just as indebted as big ones, if not more so, but they received no assistance until 1901, when the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was at last extended to Sindh. In the meantime, they were left to sink or swim as best they could. The following chapter will investigate official reactions to debt in Sindh, and consider the effects and implications of the measures taken by Government.

⁷¹⁵ Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 25 Nov. 1882 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1880-1882, vol. III, compn. 40,

II

Colonel Dunsterville, a Karachi Settlement Officer, was the first person officially to draw Government's attention to the problem of debt among large holders. In 1859, he found that all the cultivable land in *taluqa* Sehwan had been mortgaged and he was unable to find any estate which was free of debt. All of the *Waderos* had mortgaged their land to *bantias* who were depriving them of their profits and even of their livelihood: one of the leading, proprietors, Dunsterville explained, had been reduced to such penury that he was troubled for his actual subsistence.⁷¹⁶ Bartle Frere, the Commissioner in Sindh, felt that prompt and effective action was demanded. He ordered that a modified version of the Irish Encumbered Estates Act should be introduced. Accordingly, the most important estates were put under the management of the Deputy Collector of Sehwan, who negotiated compromises with the creditors and in some cases sold off parts of the estates in payment of their liabilities. There was no suggestion at this time that debt was a general problem in Sindh, and so Frere did not ask for investigations to be carried out in other parts of the province. Sehwan was regarded as an isolated case and in 1861, Dunsterville reported that the crisis was over; the Deputy Collector had cleared the estates of most of their debts.⁷¹⁷

Dunsterville's confidence, however, was premature. A decade later, the issue of debt in Sehwan was raised more urgently by Evan James, while he was serving there as Deputy Collector. James believed that unsuitable *ryotwari* settlements had attacked the interests of large holders and that inflexible civil court procedures had enabled *bantias* to gain a stranglehold over their debtors. Both factors had combined to entangle *Waderos* in debt and he urged Government to take prompt measures to remedy the situation.

James recognized that indebtedness could have serious political implications. In the first place, *Waderos* might be indebted out of existence. James alleged that 'the genuine aristocracy of the country' was being replaced by:

a race of rack-renting usurers, who grind the agricultural classes, exhaust the land, and who, apart from their being of an idolatrous faith and therefore despised by the bulk of the population, can never in an emergency be of service to Government.⁷¹⁸

The other danger, James feared, was that those *Waderos* who survived the onslaughts of indebtedness would become disenchanted with British rule and might even oppose it, assisted by their ruined brethren. He warned that:

⁷¹⁶ J.B. Dunsterville, Settl. Offr., to Collr., Karachi, 3 May 1859 (P.G.B., R.D., 31 Dec. 1859, pr. 9640, par. 2, 9).

⁷¹⁷ Dunsterville to Commr., Sindh, 12 March 1861 (ibid., Apr. 1861, 779-792).

⁷¹⁸ R.E.M. James, 'Report on the Zemindars of the Muncher Lake,' 1872 (Papers relating to the Indebtedness of the Zemindars of the Muncher Lake in Sindh (Madras, 1874), 70).

One of the chief causes of the mutiny was the general ruin of the upper classes of native society in some Provinces.

James admitted that Sindhis were 'more loyal than any other race in India,' but he believed he could see signs that even in Sindh the British were beginning to lose their popularity: which 'cannot but be a source of political danger.'⁷¹⁹

James was aware that many of his colleagues were prejudiced against *zamindars*. They wished for land to be held by small proprietors, arguing that it would be 'a good thing for Sindh to get rid of such cumberers of the earth' as the great *zamindars*. James conceded that in an ideal world it might be better to dispense with the *Wadero* class but since *Waderos* did exist, it would be 'absolutely immoral' to allow them to be deprived of their property by unjust laws. He argued that 'the unworthy *Zemindars* of Bengal' had given big *zamindars* in general a bad name and pointed out that the *taluqrdars* of Gujerat, Oudh and Broach had been helped by Encumbered Estates Acts: there was, he felt, no reason why the *zamindars* of Sehwan should be denied similar Government aid.⁷²⁰

According to James, then, there were strong moral and political grounds to justify Government intervention on the *zamindars*' behalf. To this end, he proposed that the Deputy Collector of Sehwan be empowered to take over management of the estates of indebted *zamindars*.⁷²¹ James did not suggest that Government should legislate for the whole province; he does not appear to have contemplated anything more far-reaching than a revival of the rescue-bid which Bartle Frere had initiated in Sehwan in 1858.

Although James derived his conclusions from experience of the Sehwan area only, Sir William Merewether, the Commissioner in Sindh, believed they were of more general significance. Merewether doubted whether the *zamindars* of Sehwan were alone. He suspected that, instead of the limited action envisaged by James, Government would have to pass a relief act for all the landed magnates of Sindh.⁷²² However, he lacked the evidence to reinforce his arguments: there were no statistics to illustrate the magnitude of debt in Sindh. Merewether therefore ordered his district officers to enquire into the debts of hereditary *jagirdars* and *zamindars* paying over Rs 500 per year as land revenue assessment. When the figures were compiled in 1874; they confirmed Merewether's suspicions. The debts of the Sehwan *zamindars* amounted to Rs 1,66,243,⁷²³ but the total debt of 669 of Sindh's greatest magnates came to nearly Rs 30 lakhs, giving an average debt per debtor of Rs 4,447 (see Appendix XIX). In most cases, the debts were worth

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² W.L. Merewether, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 28 Oct. 1872 (ibid., 2).

⁷²³ Or, rather the debts of the *zamindars* around Lake Manchar, including some from *taluqa* Johi, as well as from Sehwan.

more than twice the net yearly income of the debtor.⁷²⁴ Nearly two-thirds of the hereditary *jagirdars'* total debt was owed by the four great Talpur families alone, and it was with some justification that Merewether referred to the *jagirdars* as:

a class steeped in debt, they live in a chronic state of difficulty, and they die so, leaving their debts to embarrass and weigh down their heirs.⁷²⁵

In 1868, Merewether had asked for an Act to be introduced to Sindh to relieve the debts of *jagirdars*, but W.R.S.V. Fitzgerald, the Governor of Bombay, had refused to pass 'class legislation.'⁷²⁶ Merewether used the impressive figures produced in 1874 to refute this objection. The figures, with James' report, underlined Merewether's insistence on the gravity of the crisis facing the *Waderos*; they gave him the backing he needed to demand an Encumbered Estates Act which would embrace, not just *jagirdars*, but big *zamindars* as well. Moreover, James, who had been appointed Under-Secretary to the Government of Bombay in 1873, was in a position to support Merewether from the Presidency capital itself.⁷²⁷ Sir Philip Woodhouse, Fitzgerald's successor as Governor, responded sympathetically. He agreed that an Act was necessary and, referring to his predecessor's attitude, dismissed 'the objection that so-called "class legislation" is objectionable.' In his opinion, as similar legislation had been passed elsewhere, it was even more urgent in a frontier province like Sindh. This was an oblique reference to the civil war in Kalat and the rebelliousness which might infect discontented Baluchis in Sindh. The Bombay Government submitting its proposals to the Government of India for sanction, warned that:

The *Jagirdars* and *Zemindars*, the nobles, gentry, and yeomen of that province are overwhelmed with debt, and there is absolutely no hope of relieving them unless special action be taken. If matters are allowed to drift on as they have done hitherto, the result can but be a social revolution of a grave character. The land will pass out of the hands of the hereditary owners, who ... will thus feel they have a distinct grievance against the British Government.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁴ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2606, 6 May 1875 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1875, 317, 319-320). If from the Rs 20 lakhs of debt one deducted that of *zamindars* whose liabilities amounted to less than twice their annual income, the total was reduced by only Rs 3 lakhs (ibid., 319). It is surely significant, however, that according to the figures in App. XIX, the incidence of debt was highest in the richest areas of the province (Hbad. & Shpur. Collectorates) and lowest in T. & P., the poorest region. This coincides with the view of some writers on rural India, that debt was associated with the relative affluence of a region or class, rather than its poverty (see S. Islam, '*The Bengal Peasantry in Debt, 1904-1945*') in *The Dacca University Studies*, vol. XXII, pt. A (1974), 54-55).

⁷²⁵ Quoted in Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2606, 6 May 1875 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1875, 320).

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ *The History of Services of Gazetted Officers in the Civil. Department serving in the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay, 1889), 17.

⁷²⁸ Quoted in Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2606, 6 May 1875 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1875, 321).

The Government of India accepted the validity of these arguments and the Sindh Encumbered Estates Act was passed into law in 1876. The Act enabled Government to restore the fortunes of indebted landholders. Men who wished to take advantage of it applied to the Manager of Encumbered Estates. If he approved of their applications, then he took complete responsibility for their holdings, managing their cultivation and accounts and, at the same time, arranging to discharge their debts. Estates remained in the Manager's charge until all their liabilities had been cleared. They were then returned, solvent and financially secure, to their owners.⁷²⁹ The Act included two provisions which Woodhouse, the Governor of Bombay, had insisted on, since experience of a similar Act in Oudh had shown them to be important. No creditor could sue for recovery of any debt incurred by the owner while the estate was under management. This was done to prevent fresh debts from mounting up while the Manager was busy disposing of old ones: anyone lending money to a man whose estate was under management did so at his own risk. The other provision was that an estate could not be taken under management until the debts had been investigated, lest it were found to be hopelessly involved, becoming a burden on the time and resources of the Encumbered Estates Department.⁷³⁰ As well as satisfying himself that an estate was sufficiently encumbered to warrant his protection, the Manager had to ensure that it was not so bankrupt there was no hope of reviving it.

The Sindh Encumbered Estates Act was intended as a temporary measure, to meet the specific crisis; applications for protection had to be made within six months of the Act coming into force.⁷³¹ However, it proved so successful that, in 1881, it was extended and a further six-month period was assigned for receiving applications.⁷³² The Encumbered Estates Department remained in existence for eleven years. It was set up in 1876, under Colonel Boulton, the first Manager of Encumbered Estates in Sindh. He was succeeded by Thomas Hart-Davies in 1879 and the Department was wound up in 1887. During that period, it dealt with 772 estates and paid off debts worth Rs 38,07,602.⁷³³

The operation of rescuing the landed magnates from debt was done as cheaply as possible - it was, in fact, self-financing, the salaries of the Manager and other employees of the Encumbered Estates Department being paid for out of the profits of the estates. It was the Manager's aim to keep the costs of management at around 10% of the gross receipts. The need for estates to pay for the Government officials who managed them undoubtedly prolonged proceedings in some cases. In 1884, when his work was drawing to its conclusion, Hart-Davies reported that several estates, principally large

⁷²⁹ Bombay Act XIV of 1876, Sindh Encumbered Estates Act, 1876, Chapter III, sections 9-10; Chapter IV; Chapter V, section 25.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter III, section 8; Chapter IV, section 11; Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2606, 6 May 1875 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1875, 322).

⁷³¹ Sindh Incumbered Estates Act, 1876, Chapter II, section 3.

⁷³² Bombay Act XX of 1881, Sindh Incumbered Estates Act, 1881, section 1.

⁷³³ Sindh Encumbered Estates Annual-Administration Reports 'hereafter referred to as as Encl. Estates Reports', 1879-1887.

jagirs, were in a satisfactorily solvent condition, but he could not discharge them because the costs of management would fall too heavily on the remaining, smaller, estates; indeed:

the costs of management on these unfortunate estates would be more than doubled.⁷³⁴

An Encumbered Estates Act could not presume to eradicate the causes of indebtedness; it merely aimed to extricate certain individuals from the difficulties into which their debts had led them. Its application therefore had to be restricted to a particular class or area, so that a limited number of estates was involved. The benefits of the Sindh Encumbered Estates Acts were confined to hereditary *jagirdars* and to *zamindars* paying over Rs 300 per year as land revenue - a surprisingly low qualification since it meant that *zamindars* with estates as small as a couple of hundred acres might be eligible. Government regarded this as:

the line which should separate the landed gentry from the mere peasant proprietor.⁷³⁵

It was a generous definition which embraced the pettiest of the large holders. Broadening the scope of the Act in this way may have served to satisfy lingering Government prejudices against 'class legislation,' but it soon became apparent that the line had been drawn too low. Colonel Boulton, the first Manager, interpreted the Act liberally in 1876 and admitted to his protection all those *zamindars* who were eligible. Many of them held relatively small estates which could not be supervised successfully without an enlarged Encumbered Estates Department. Such men were not sufficiently substantial to be of political importance, so they were a drain on the Manager's resources, distracting him from his higher duties.⁷³⁶ Moreover, it turned out that some of them had exaggerated their debts, giving a false impression of insolvency in order to qualify for management. The Commissioner, on learning of this, declared sternly that it was not the object of the Act to enable petty *zamindars* to evade their liabilities, but to free the estates of *jagirdars* and large *zamindars* from debts which they could not repay without help.⁷³⁷ When the Act was extended in 1881 and fresh applications were made, Hart-Davies had learned from his predecessor's mistakes. He promised the Commissioner in Sindh that he would not keep any small fry in his net:

⁷³⁴ T. Hart-Davies, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, 11 Sept. 1884 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1883-1886, vol. IV, compn. 54, 9-11)

⁷³⁵ Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 2 Aug. 1878 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1878, 579).

⁷³⁶ Hart-Davies to Commr., Sindh, 23 Nov. 1880 (P.S.C., ROD., file 1, 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 20, 3).

⁷³⁷ Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 15 July 1879 (ibid., 1879-1880, compn. 6, 10).

as the Act is essentially a political measure, I should be careful to recommend only those, for relief who were really influential men of considerable property.⁷³⁸

In the event, he accepted only a third of the applicants, weeding out those who were of no importance.⁷³⁹ He was even more discriminating in 1884. A third Encumbered Estates Act had been passed which amended the previous Acts by extending relief to the heirs of *jagirdars* whose *jagirs* had lapsed at their death, provided they had a *zamindari* interest assessed at over Rs 300 per year.⁷⁴⁰ They had hitherto been excluded due to a technical oversight regarding the definition of the word '*zamindar*.' Under Hart-Davies' supervision, this Act, though equitable in spirit, was negligible in effect for it prompted only fifteen applications, of which he rejected fourteen.⁷⁴¹

The Sindh Encumbered Estates Acts, therefore, despite the nominal inclusion of lesser *zamindars*, was intended by the Sindh authorities to benefit only the leaders of society, the *Waderos* and the hereditary *jagirdars*. These were the men who, being valuable to the administration, could not be left to succumb to the perils of unregulated indebtedness. Government had to protect its collaborators. It was a remarkable exercise, which will be examined in the following pages.

The Manager's first task, on receiving an application for protection, was to establish the financial condition of the estate. This was easier said than done. In 1879, the Commissioner in Sindh suggested that an estate should not be regarded as encumbered unless its debts amounted to at least five years' income:⁷⁴² but there is no record of whether this criterion was actually adopted by the Manager when he was investigating estates three years previously. Furthermore, it was difficult to make an accurate estimate of a *zamindar's* income in the first place, since there were seldom any books to work from. In a list of estates under management, for example, the annual income of Dodo Khan Bhutto and his two sons was given as Rs 20,000. They had estimated their debts at Rs 1,34,644, 'which was more than five years' income, and so they seemed well qualified for protection.⁷⁴³ In correspondence with the Commissioner in Sindh in 1879, however, the Manager quoted the annual income of Dodo Khan alone, not taking into account his sons, as Rs 52,798.⁷⁴⁴ This makes their debts look less gigantic. It is impossible to say which figure was correct but the existence of such a huge discrepancy emphasizes the difficulty of deciding who could afford to pay his debts and who could not. There was also the problem of estimating the value of a *zamindar's* assets. In 1881,

⁷³⁸ Hart-Davies to Commr., 23 Nov. 1880 (ibid., 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 20, 2).

⁷³⁹ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1572, 26 Feb. 1883 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1883 (Jan-June), 180); Resn. no. 1008, 1 Feb. 1884 (ibid., 1884 (Jan-June), 145).

⁷⁴⁰ Bombay Act XI of 1884, Sindh Incumbered Estates Act, 1884, section 1.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., section 5A; Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 353, 16 Jan. 18 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1886, 46).

⁷⁴² Commr., Sindh, to Manager, Encl. Estates, 30 June 1879 (P.S.C., R.D. file 1, 1879-1880, compn. 6, 3).

⁷⁴³ See lists of estates under management in Encl. Estates Reports, 1879-1887 (estates nos. 222, 281, 282 of Shpur. Collectorate).

⁷⁴⁴ Manager, Encl. Estates, to Commr., Sindh, 5 Dec. 1879 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1879-1880, compn. 14).

some *banias* accused their debtors of transferring solvent fields into the names of their relatives, so that only mortgaged fields were included in the estate to be put under management. They further alleged that the debtors had concealed movable assets, such as jewellery, camels and horses, to give a false impression of their poverty.⁷⁴⁵ Such deception was temptingly easy to practice.

After completing the preliminary enquiries, the Manager forwarded his recommendation to the Commissioner in Sindh. If the latter agreed that the estate needed relief, he issued an Order of Management. This made the Manager, legally, the estate owner.⁷⁴⁶ The *zamindar* or *jagirdar* was put on a monthly pension. From his point of view, it must have been similar to being given an allowance by a *bania*, but with the comfortable assurance that he could not be threatened with a civil suit. There is no record of how the Manager worked out *zamindars'* allowances. Latif Allah Kalhoro, for instance, who held a large estate of 13,938 acres, received Rs 100 per month, while Diwan Parsram, whose estate was almost the same size (13,227 acres) received only Rs 50; Fateh Khan Subayo, with a much smaller estate of 3,094 acres, received Rs 15 per month.⁷⁴⁷

Before he could start to tackle an estate's debts, the Manager, as its new owner, had to secure its income. If possible, he leased it out. In a few cases, Hart-Davies leased parts of the estates to the owners themselves, provided they could find someone to stand surety for them; Mohammad Zaman Shah and Khair Mohammad Jakhar, both from Upper Sindh Frontier, were two *zamindars* who offered to lease their own estates to avoid parts being sold off to satisfy their creditors.⁷⁴⁸ More commonly, the Manager rented the land to the highest bidder. Many indebted *zamindars* had leased their estates to their creditors, at unsatisfactory rates, to pay off their mortgages. With the menace of a civil suit hanging over them, or with a civil court decree already issued against them, *zamindars* were in no position to bargain; they had to accept whatever terms the *banias* chose to extort from them.⁷⁴⁹ The Manager labored under no such disability. If he judged the rent to be too low, and if the creditor refused to pay more, the Manager could disregard the mortgage bond: he could turn the mortgagee off the land and give a fresh lease to someone who was prepared to pay an economic rate for it. Mir Ghulam Shah Nizamani, for example, had leased parts of his estate to three creditors in consideration of mortgage bonds. Bachumal's bond was for Rs 4,000, so he had taken up a lease for sixteen years, paying Rs 250 per year; the Manager leased the same area for five years, at Rs 1,825 per year. Tursiomal had taken some land for twelve years, at Rs 208 per year, to recover a debt of Rs 2,500; the Manager leased it for Rs 700 per year. A third part of the estate, which Asumal had leased for ten years, at Rs 160 per year, for a

⁷⁴⁵ Mulchand & others, petition, 6 Oct. 1881 (*ibid.*, 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 18, 7-9).

⁷⁴⁶ Hart-Davies to Commr., Sindh, 1 Dec. 1879 (*ibid.*, compn. 19, 61).

⁷⁴⁷ Hart-Davies to Commr., 15 July, 23 July, 6 Aug. 1884 (*ibid.*, 1883-1886, vol. III, compn. 36, 232-234, 241-244).

⁷⁴⁸ Hart-Davies to Commr., 14 Jan. 1884 (*ibid.*, vol. II, compn. 16, 9, 15).

⁷⁴⁹ Cf. above, 198-201.

bond worth Rs 1,600, was leased by the Manager for Rs 1,556 per year. Similarly, Mir Bijar Khan, who owed. Wadhmal and Basarmal Rs 60,000, leased part of his estate to them for ten years, at Rs 6,000 per year, but the Manager was able to lease it for Rs 13,000 per year.⁷⁵⁰ The only gainers from such leases had been the creditors. When more favorable terms were obtained, the lands yielded profits to the owners, enabling them to repay their debts more rapidly. Under these circumstances, merely by taking charge of an estate, the Manager could send it a good way along the road to solvency.

Some estates could not be leased profitably, because their condition was too poor. These had to be run directly by the staff of the Encumbered Estates Department. The Manager was unable to exercise close personal supervision over all of his employees, and so these estates were particularly vulnerable to speculation. Both the *zamindars*, living on small pensions, and the low-paid subordinate officials had every incentive and opportunity to appropriate some of the produce for themselves at *batai*, keeping it off the Departmental account books. Occasionally, they succeeded in taking advantage of the Manager's inexperience of Sindhi farming. *Karbi*, for example, the straw remaining after rice had been threshed, was extremely valuable as cattle fodder, but Hart-Davies did not learn of its worth until 1883. Up till then, he had dismissed *karbi* as just 'a little grass.' Meanwhile, this item had been left out of his receipts, to the benefit, presumably, of his staff and *zamindars*.⁷⁵¹ In the same year, Hart-Davies realized he was being cheated by Dodo Khan Bhutto and his two sons. As a result of their 'persistently dishonest behavior,' the financial condition of their estate had deteriorated since being taken over by the Manager. The *zamindars* had 'thrown every obstacle in the way of the Manager instead of aiding him' and consequently their debts, both to Government and private creditors, had increased. Their crimes were not specified, but it is likely that they had been taking produce away before it was credited to their income, making it appear that the estate was running at a loss. In the end, Hart-Davies reimbursed Government by selling off part of the estate.⁷⁵² In 1885, some *zamindars* were found to be cultivating land which did not belong to them and refusing to pay assessment on it. They were probably hoping to raise some money privately, without the Manager's knowledge. Robert Giles, the Deputy Commissioner of Upper Sindh Frontier, who had exposed their fraud, accused them of 'playing fast and loose with Government and the Manager,' and he urged that it was 'time to check them.'⁷⁵³ The Commissioner in Sindh endorsed Giles' remarks, ordering that the Manager should 'in future exercise stricter supervision' over them.⁷⁵⁴ This was easier said than done. The Manager had 270 estates on his books, most of which were divided between several cosharers; he could not

⁷⁵⁰ R. Giles, Actg. Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 8 Sept. 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1904. (July-Dec.), 1612). Equivalent figures, unfortunately, are not available for the period 1876-1887.

⁷⁵¹ Hart-Davies to Commr., 18 July 1883; J.W.M. Anderson, Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., 30 July 1883 (B.N.S..CC, Larkana S.R., 87, 91).

⁷⁵² Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 8116, 3 Nov. 1883 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1883 (July-Dec), 1112).

⁷⁵³ Giles, Manager, Encl. Estates, U.S.F., to Commr., Sindh, 12 Aug. 1885; see also Manager to Commr., 14 Apr. 1885 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1883-1886, vol. IV, compn. 55, 8, 1-5).

⁷⁵⁴ Commr., Sindh, memo., 29 Aug. 1885 (ibid., 19).

monitor the activities of every *zamindar* involved with the Department. While this problem was being sorted out, it was discovered that two other *zamindars* had been carrying off parts of their produce before the crops had been inspected; the Manager added the value of their produce to their Government debts.⁷⁵⁵ It was a perennial difficulty. A few years previously, Hart-Davies had commented sadly:

It is a discouraging fact that *zamindars* in whose interest so much trouble is being taken cannot be prevented from misappropriating produce.⁷⁵⁶

Such conduct roust have been especially aggravating because it diverted the Manager from his main, duty of clearing estates of debt. Once he had organized an estate's finances - either by leasing it or managing it departmentally, he needed to be free to deal with the creditors.

The moment an Order of Management was issued, the Manager became responsible for the estate's debts. All proceedings against the owner had to stop and the creditors had to present their claims to the Manager. Unlike a civil judge, he had a completely free hand in investigating any abuses *banias* might have perpetrated. Indeed, he was not permitted to allow interest at all on debts unless he was satisfied that the accounts were in order: while if a creditor could not prove that the whole principal debt was genuine, the Manager would automatically halve whatever sum had been proved.⁷⁵⁷ In addition, interest could not exceed the principal. When calculating interest, the Manager would not allow more than 9% per year - simple, and not compound, interest.⁷⁵⁸ This was a severe blow to the *bania's* system, but worse could follow. If an estate's assets were insufficient to meet the claims which the Manager had admitted, then the interest, which had already been drastically curtailed, was further arbitrarily reduced until it was within the means of the estate.⁷⁵⁹ Furthermore, if no accounts were produced to back up a bond, then the Manager took it for granted the claim was fraudulent and disallowed it, unless the debtor was willing to acknowledge that he had received the amount in cash - but if the debtor asserted that the bond contained interest, the claim was forfeit, for interest could not be included in the principal.⁷⁶⁰ As it was standard practice for *banias* to mix old interest and principal together when writing up bonds, this provision put them in an awkward position.⁷⁶¹ Even civil court decrees were not inviolate. In 1878, the Commissioner promulgated rules which established that, the

⁷⁵⁵ Giles to Commr., 4 Apr. 1886 (*ibid.*, vol. V, compn. 66, 76-78).

⁷⁵⁶ Quoted in Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1572, 26 Feb. 1883 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1883 (Jan-June), 181).

⁷⁵⁷ 'Rules made by the Commissioner in Sindh under Section 30 of Act XIV of 1876, with the previous sanction of the Honorable the Governor of Bombay in Council,' Rule 4(IV) and 4(V) (*ibid.*, 1877, 27-29).

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Rule 4 and 4(I).

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Rule 8.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Rule 4(VI). See also ruling of Jud. Commr., Sindh, 3 July 1883 (*ibid.*, 1883-1886 (vol. no. unmarked), compn. 5, 5).

⁷⁶¹ Cf. above, 202.

Manager could set court decrees aside and investigate the accounts, according to his own harsh procedures, as if no previous adjudication had taken place.⁷⁶²

These were draconian powers. One can see how sternly they were used against creditors in practice when one considers that, between 1876-1879, debts of Rs 30,77,693 were claimed against 313 estates, of which the Manager admitted only Rs 16,60,693.⁷⁶³ That is to say, he disallowed nearly half the sum presented against the estates.

When he had decided how much he was prepared to allow against an estate, the Manager submitted a liquidation scheme to the Commissioner in Sindh. In this, he discussed the estate's finances and, most important, explained how he proposed to liquidate the debts. Provided they were not excessive, Hart-Davies preferred to raise the money by selling part of the estate. The alternative was to persuade creditors to compromise and accept less than he had awarded them. They would be paid in cash by Government, the estate remaining under management till it had repaid the Government loan. He believed compromises were often unfair on creditors. Not only had their original claims been cut down by him, but they had been kept out of their money for several years and were lucky if they had received any interest in the meantime. If he sold some land, he could pay them quickly and in full.⁷⁶⁴ Hart-Davies may also have considered that by doing this he could discharge the estate from management immediately. The Commissioner, however, felt that schemes framed along these lines violated the spirit of the Act which was designed to preserve estates, not sell them. When estates were released from management, they should be on a sound financial footing so that owners could stay clear of debt in the future. That was the chief object of a liquidation scheme. He agreed that creditors who 'had behaved fairly by the debtor' deserved some consideration, but saw no reason to show generosity towards the many who had 'charged most exorbitant rates of interest.' In his opinion, a compromise, which left the estate intact, was generally the most satisfactory solution.⁷⁶⁵

Once the Manager had decided to press for a compromise, the creditors had little option but to accede to his demands. It was a cardinal principal of the Encumbered Estates Department that any creditors who refused to do so must be kept waiting until the estate had paid off all its debts to Government. Colonel Boulting, the first Manager of Encumbered Estates, had been unwilling to enforce this precept because it penalized those who did not wish to compromise.⁷⁶⁶ No less an authority than the Government of

⁷⁶² Provided the amount awarded by the court on principal or interest was not more than 25% in excess of what the Manager would have decreed if the award had not existed. This applied only to decrees issued before the estate had been taken under management (P.S.C., P.D., file 1, 1878-1879, compn. 8, 13). See also Remembrance of Legal Affairs, memo., 6 Feb. 1878 (*ibid.*, 3).

⁷⁶³ Bombay Govt. R., Isn. no. 6702, 1, Dec. 1879 (P.G.B., 1879, 719).

⁷⁶⁴ Hart-Davies to Commr., 17 & 29 Aug. 1882 (P.S.C., P.D., file 1, 1880-1882, vol. III, compn. 45., 2, 7).

⁷⁶⁵ H.N.B. Erskine, Commr., Sindh, to Hart-Davies, 22 Aug. 1882, & see also Erskine to Hart-Davies, 6 Sept. 1882 (*ibid.*, 6, 8).

⁷⁶⁶ C.F. Boulton, Manager, Encd. Estates, to Commr., 10 Apr. 1878 (*ibid.*, vol. II, compn. 19, 9-12).

India itself assured him that penalization was precisely the object of the exercise: creditors should be forced to accept whatever terms Government considered to be just.⁷⁶⁷ When Hart-Davies became Manager, he reported that the practice was essential to the smooth working of the Act. Creditors who had already seen their claims drastically curtailed by the Manager knew that they would have to wait an indefinite period for whatever money he had allowed them. They were usually prepared to cut their losses and reduce their demands even further, on condition that they were paid promptly. They preferred cash in hand to vague hopes of a fuller settlement in the distant future.⁷⁶⁸ For example, when the Manager awarded Rs 4,939 to the creditors of Kazi Mohammad Khalik in 1887, they agreed to knock off another 25% if they were paid within a month.⁷⁶⁹ On other occasions, creditors leased parts of estates in consideration of their claims.⁷⁷⁰ Sometimes Government itself was willing to compromise on debts owing to it by writing off outstanding balances of assessment on estates which were particularly badly favored.⁷⁷¹

Most liquidation schemes, therefore, were reasonably straightforward. After investigating an estate's debts, the Manager made an award and persuaded the creditors to compromise on it. If the Commissioner approved of the Manager's proposals, he sanctioned the scheme. The Manager then borrowed money from the Government treasury and discharged the estate's private debts by paying the creditors. It was now unencumbered and saved from the attentions of importunate *baniyas*. All that remained was for the estate to repay the Government loan out of its profits over the next few years. Once that had been done, it was released from management and restored, solvent, to the owner.

Some *baniyas*, however, were not prepared to cooperate with the Manager. If a creditor was dissatisfied with the sum awarded to him by the Manager, he did not have to accept it. He could file a suit against the Manager in a civil court. Some creditors did adopt this course, but they did not derive much practical benefit from it for, even if a case was decided in the creditor's favor, he could not attach any land so long as the estate was under management. He had to wait his turn like any other creditor who had refused to compromise.⁷⁷² It is hard to see what satisfaction *baniyas* can have gained from such action; the main effect was to delay the implementation of the estate's liquidation scheme.

⁷⁶⁷ A.O. Hume, Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 16 Jan. 1879 (*ibid.*, 49).

⁷⁶⁸ Hart-Davies to Commr., 21 Apr. 1880 (*ibid.*, 90).

⁷⁶⁹ Manager, Encl. Estates, to Commr., Sindh, 23 June 1887 (*ibid.*, 1887-1888, vol. I, compn. 1, 9).

⁷⁷⁰ For example, see Manager to Commr., 14 Jan. 1884 (*ibid.*, 1883-1886, vol. II, compn. 16, 10); Manager, U.S.F., 4 Apr. 1886 (*ibid.*, vol. V, compn. 66, 73, 78, 88).

⁷⁷¹ Commr., Sindh, memo., 16 May 1886 (*ibid.*, 98).

⁷⁷² Manager to Commr., 14 March 1882 (*ibid.*, 1880-1882, vol. I, compn. 3, 31).

In some cases, the Manager found that an estate was so hopelessly insolvent that he could not prepare a liquidation scheme for it. There was then no alternative but to relinquish management. This was not a common occurrence. It affected about one estate in ten: out of the 772 estates dealt with between 1876-1887, 76 were relinquished un-cleared.⁷⁷³ These estates invariably suffered from insurmountable natural disadvantages. The estate of Dost Mohammad Karmani, for example, was situated on low ground and repeated floods caused the soil to deteriorate. It was given up as 'quite hopeless' in 1886, the Manager explaining that, 'It could not be sold at any price nor could it be leased.' Dost Mohammad owed Government Rs 131 which had been lent to assist his cultivation, but the Manager was of the opinion that there was no chance of recovering it and so Government wrote it off.⁷⁷⁴ In the same year, Budho Khan Talpur's estate was also relinquished, after repeated disasters to the crops had made its condition even worse than it had originally been. He owed the Manager Rs 429 on account of cultivation expenses but, as with Dost Mohammad, the amount was written off as irrecoverable.⁷⁷⁵ Estates abandoned in this way were left to the mercy of their creditors, but it is doubtful whether they were worth much to them.

This brief sketch of the Manager's operations makes it clear that, under the Encumbered Estates Act, the dice were heavily loaded against creditors. It was an open offensive against the *bania*'s system. The object of a liquidation scheme was to force *banias* to take back their principal. As they were primarily grain dealers, rather than 'moneylenders' in the European sense, they were probably reluctant to do this. The principal was an investment which entitled a *bania* to a plentiful supply of grain as interest. When the principal was paid back, he lost his income.⁷⁷⁶ Indeed, unless he was lucky, he had already lost it, for the Manager generally stopped interest payments while he was investigating debts; the *bania* had no alternative but to take whatever cash the Manager offered in a compromise, as it was his only chance to recover his capital quickly, freeing it for reinvestment elsewhere. From the *banials* point of view, it was a thoroughly unsatisfactory arrangement. In 1881, some *banias* accused their debtors of applying to the Manager for protection 'only with a view to cause us loss.' Deprived of their interest, and unable to withdraw their principal, the *banias* complained that they could no longer maintain themselves.⁷⁷⁷

An Act framed for the relief of debtors could hardly be expected to benefit creditors. Many *banias*, anticipating how weak their position would become once their debtors were safely under management, did their best to prevent *zamindars* from seeking protection in the first place. Although a civil court decree could be overruled by the Manager after he had taken over an estate, nothing could be done about it if it had been

⁷⁷³ Encl. Estates Reports, 1879-1887.

⁷⁷⁴ Manager to Commr., 8 May 1886 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1887-1888, vol. III, compn. 17, 122-127).

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁶ Cf. above, 205.

⁷⁷⁷ Mulchand & others, petition, 6 Oct 1881 (P.S.C., P.D., 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 18, 9).

executed while he was still carrying out his preliminary enquiries. The Manager could not take back land seized by order of a civil court. Some creditors therefore attempted to foreclose on their mortgages before their clients could claim sanctuary with the Manager. They had nothing to lose if they failed, for they could expect harsh treatment from the Manager in any case. If they succeeded, they would recover their investments, so that the Manager could not freeze them, or else they would frighten their clients into dropping their claims for protection. When Government heard of such cases, it was usually able to outmaneuver the *banias*. Ghulam Haider Khan Khatian and Kadir Bakhsh Khan Laghari, for example, were threatened with imprisonment after they applied for protection in 1876. The Commissioner in Sindh forestalled the creditors' action by appointing the Deputy Collector as Manager, pending the enquiries of the official Manager of Encumbered Estates.⁷⁷⁸ In other cases, the Sadar Court ordered stays of execution against *zamindars* who had applied for protection.⁷⁷⁹ Many *zamindars*, however, may have been successfully intimidated before the Manager even heard of their intentions.

When the Act was extended in 1881, these difficulties arose again. *Zamindars* who let it be known that they were applying to the Manager at once found themselves being harassed by their creditors. Colonel Boulton, the original Manager, who was now Collector of Karachi, warned the Commissioner that some *zamindars* were in serious danger:

there is every possibility of their estates passing out of their hands before the relief comes.⁷⁸⁰

The creditors were helped by the fact that the current Judge of the Sadar Court, unlike his predecessor, refused to intervene by ordering stays of execution.⁷⁸¹ After some urgent correspondence, the Bill was rushed into law and the Commissioner notified by telegraph, so that the problem could be bypassed and the estates taken under management more quickly.⁷⁸² When the Act was again extended in 1884, the Commissioner was given the authority to suspend all proceedings pending in civil courts while the Manager conducted his preliminary enquiries.⁷⁸³ The intention was to prevent a repetition of the ugly incidents which had occurred previously: but, as only one estate was taken under management as a result of the Act, it was a clear case of shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted.

⁷⁷⁸ Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 31 Jan. 1877 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1877, 120).

⁷⁷⁹ C.F. Boulton, Actg. Collr., Karachi, to Commr., Sindh, 9 Aug. 1881 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 22, 2).

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, 3; see also Hart-Davies to Commr., 9 June 1881 *ibid.*, compn. 21, 9).

⁷⁸¹ Judge, Sadar Court, Sindh, to Commr., 12 Nov. 1881 (*ibid.*, vol. III, compn. 26, 5).

⁷⁸² Bombay Govt., telegraph to Commr., 8 Sept. 1881 (*ibid.*, vol. III, compn. 22, 16).

⁷⁸³ Act XI of 1884, Sindh Incumbered Estates Act, 1884, section 5A.

Some creditors adopted another ploy to frustrate, the Manager. After the Order of Management had been issued, they did not prefer any claims against the estate, or sometimes only a couple of the smaller creditors would come forward, to allay the Manager's suspicions. The debts therefore could not be liquidated, since apparently they did not exist. The estates had to be relinquished and left prey to the creditors who were now free to pursue their claims at leisure in the civil courts.⁷⁸⁴ This practice undermined the Act and for a while there seemed to be no solution, but an expedient was devised in 1879. If the Commissioner suspected that such a trick was being played, then he would sanction a liquidation scheme even though there were no debts to liquidate, specifying that any claims not brought forward were 'deemed ... to have been duly discharged.' The creditors were thus prevented from reviving their old debts in civil court suits.⁷⁸⁵

As the Encumbered Estates Act proved to be unpopular with creditors, its popularity with debtors increased. A large number of *Waderos* had been reluctant to come forward and seek protection in 1876 because they believed it was beneath their dignity and because they were suspicious of how the Act would work in practice. Gradually, their wariness wore off as they grew to appreciate the advantages of the Act. By 1880, Hart-Davies had been approached by over a hundred influential men who wished to place their estates under his protection, and he was anxious to assist them.⁷⁸⁶ It was his representations on their behalf which prompted the Bombay Government to pass the second Sindh Encumbered Estates Act in 1881.⁷⁸⁷ This enabled Hart-Davies to add 143 estates to his books, greatly increasing the significance of the Act.⁷⁸⁸

Three years later, he began to consider winding up his operations. At this time, 155 estates remained under management, but liquidation schemes had only been prepared for fifty-five of them.⁷⁸⁹ The Commissioner in Sindh was growing impatient, and he tried to hurry Hart-Davies along. He insisted that liquidation schemes must be prepared as quickly as possible, pointing out that some states had been under management since 1876 without any schemes being submitted. He ordered that the disposal of these estates should take precedence over everything else.⁷⁹⁰

In 1885, Hart—Davies was able to report some remarkable progress. His work was proceeding so quickly that only a hundred estates would remain in hand by the end of the year. As the number of estates decreased, the costs of management would have to be severely cut; he advised that his junior staff should be decreased, but that

⁷⁸⁴ Commr., Sindh, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 15 July 1879 (P.S.C., RD., file 1, 1879-1880, compn. 6, 15-19).

⁷⁸⁵ Remembrancer of Legal Affairs, memo., 26 July 1879 (*ibid.*).

⁷⁸⁶ Hart-Davies to Commr., 23 Nov. 1880 (*ibid.*, 1880-1882, vol. II, compn. 20, 1-3).

⁷⁸⁷ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1340, 5 March 1881 (*ibid.*, 13).

⁷⁸⁸ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1572, 26 Feb. 1883 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1883 (Jan-June), 180), & no. 1008, 1 Feb. 1884 (*ibid.*, 1884 (Jan-June), 145).

⁷⁸⁹ Hart-Davies to Commr., 21 June & 7 Nov. 1884 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1883-1886, vol. IV, compn. 54, 8-11).

⁷⁹⁰ H.N.B. Erskine, Commr., Sindh, to Hart-Davies, 21 June, 4 Nov., 29 Nov. 1884 (*ibid.*, 1-2, 15, 19).

retrenchment should start with himself: he should be relieved by a less highly paid manager. Hart-Davies' advice was taken and J.L. Jenkins, a more junior officer, replaced him.⁷⁹¹ This had the effect of reducing the annual cost of management by over Rs 20,000, from Rs 64,547 to Rs 44, 270.⁷⁹² At the same time, the smoothest running estates were handed over to the various Collectors for management. Within two years, all the remaining estates had either been released or put in the charge of the Collectors and so, in 1887, the Sindh Encumbered Estates Department ceased to exist.⁷⁹³

III

The preceding account of the working of the Encumbered Estates Act has given an impression of the laborer and difficulties involved in relieving estates. The Manager had to investigate *zamindars'* debts, uncovering any irregularities; he then had to bargain with the creditors and establish how much he was prepared to pay back to them. Besides discharging the debts he had also to take more positive steps towards restoring the estates to solvency. They had to be leased out and converted, as far as possible, into profitable concerns, so that the owners could stay out of debt in the future. It remains to be seen how successfully the Encumbered Estates Department was able to achieve its objectives.

It is possible that some of the men whose estates were taken under management may actually have been saved from total ruin. The fate of Khalifa Mohammad Panah illustrates this, since he was a man for whom the Act came too late. In 1866, he was regarded by Government as an influential and enterprising *Zemindar'* who was singled out for praise because he had improved his lands to such an extent that his assessment had increased from Rs 381 to Rs 10,985 in fourteen years. The increase was an index to the mounting value of his property. At that time, the annual profits of the Khalifa and his nephew were estimated at no less than Rs 21,000, after deducting assessment and the expenses of cultivation. They also had *batai* rights in fourteen *dehs* which brought in an extra profit of Rs 5,500. They appeared to be at the peak of prosperity, yet they found themselves inextricably encumbered with debts which they could not repay. Their principle creditor, Gokuldas, obtained a decree from a civil court ordering that their entire estate be put to auction. The Collector of Shikarpur tried to prevent disaster by getting a stay of execution from the court and managing the estate himself, but his efforts were in vain. There was as yet no procedure for taking over encumbered estates and the Bombay Government refused to give the Collector the necessary advances. He had to stand by and watch the estate break up. The ruin of the Khalifa and his nephew was so complete that their names did not even appear in the list of indebted *zamindars*

⁷⁹¹ Hart-Davies to Erskine, 15 June 1885; Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 6597, 12 Aug. 1885 (ibid., compn. 58, 1-2, 15).

⁷⁹² Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1248, 26 Feb. 1887 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1887, 137).

⁷⁹³ C.E.S. Steele, Manager, Encl. Estates, to Commr., 7 Sept. 1887 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1887-1888, vol. II, compn. 11, 78-85).

prepared in 1874.⁷⁹⁴ There can be little doubt that, if the Encumbered Estates Department had existed at the time, the Khalifa would have been saved from complete collapse.

To see how beneficial a period of management could be for some estates, one may take the example of Dodo Khan Bhutto. Without the help of the Manager, he might have found himself in Mohammad Panah's position, for his career followed a similar course. Like the Khalifa, he was a large and powerful *zamindar*; he and his sons held land all over Upper Sindh. In 1872, the Commissioner in Sindh praised him as 'one of the best and most enterprising *Zemindars* in the Province.'⁷⁹⁵ Nevertheless, four years later he and his sons were revealed to be heavily indebted and theirs was one of the first estates to be taken over by the Manager of Encumbered Estates. They had estimated their debts at Rs 1,34,644, but when the Managur asked their creditors to come forward, fifty-eight claims were made against the estate, totaling Rs 2,03,753. Most of this must have been interest, for the Manager admitted no more than Rs 98,673, less than half of that demanded.⁷⁹⁶ Such huge liabilities might eventually have brought Dodo Khan to the same misfortune as Mohammad Panak had suffered. When the Manager brushed aside over a *lakh* of crushing debts, his intervention Must have appeared almost providential to the encumbered *zamindars*.

Dodo Khan's debts were paid by a Government loan in 1879. By 1884, he had reimbursed Government and his estate was released from management.⁷⁹⁷ Within seven years, therefore, he had been completely cleared of overwhelming debts. Moreover, he was left in a sound financial condition and his credit remained good, for in 1889 he was able to invest in the construction of a canal across some of his land.⁷⁹⁸ Dodo Khan's career, aided by the Encumbered Estates Department, is a stark contrast to that of Mohammad Panah.

There was a danger that such spectacular results might actually militate against the Act's long-term success. In 1882 H.N.B. Erskine, the Commissioner in Sindh, feared that the net effect of the Act might be negative. He suspected that men whose estates had been cleared by the Manager would find it hard to obtain credit in the future and he

⁷⁹⁴ The Khalifa and his nephew do not appear to have been irresponsible *zamindars* of the type who neglected their lands; they had subscribed Rs 10,000 to the construction of the Fordwah canal and had spent Rs 43,000 on excavating canals for their own farms. In view of the punitive interest rates some *banias* charged, however, their very enterprise may have been their undoing, committing them to exorbitant interest repayments which were beyond their means (Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 2606, 6 May 1875; Collr., Shpur., 4 Aug. 1875, P.G.B., R.D.L., 1875, 323, 545; Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 18 May 1892, B.N.S. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 4).

⁷⁹⁵ Quoted in Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 3771, 29 Aug. 1872 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1872, 500). Dodo Khan was one of the greatest landholders in Sindh (cf. above, 55).

⁷⁹⁶ See lists of estates under management in Encl. Estates Reports, 1879-1887 (estates nos. 222, 281, 282, Shpur. Collectorate).

⁷⁹⁷ Commr., Sindh, memo., 10 Apr. 1884 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1884 (Jan-June), 550).

⁷⁹⁸ Collr., Shpur., to Commr., 10 Apr. 1889 (ibid., 1889, 381).

alleged that, by alarming creditors, the Act was forcing up interest rates for unprotected *zamindars*. In the meantime, Erskine was sure that landholders under management were being made less self-reliant and would be unlikely to exert themselves when thrown upon their own resources.⁷⁹⁹ Government never followed up the later careers of *zamindars* who had been under management, so it was not possible to test such assertions, but the activities of Dodo Khan Bhutto, at least, tend not to confirm them. Hart-Davies initially gave some support to Erskine's views for he complained that, once *zamindars* were protected from their creditors, they showed no great interest in extricating themselves from debt, but were content to leave all responsibility to the Manager.⁸⁰⁰ Three years later, though, in 1885, he reported a change in their attitude; at last, *zamindars*:

no longer regard the Manager as a "Deus ex Machina" to clear them of debt with no effort on their behalf.⁸⁰¹

Erskine remained unconvinced. He argued that, as the settlement system was being adapted to suit the great *zamindars*, there was no longer a need for 'a class of privileged estates in Sindh.' It was this belief, based on the old prejudice against 'class legislation,' which led him to goad Hart-Davies into hastening the demise of the Encumbered Estates Department.⁸⁰²

Evan James, who was appointed Commissioner in Sindh in 1892, regretted Erskine's approach. James had been instrumental in framing the 1876 Act and he had not lost faith in its utility. He maintained that it had taught *zamindars* the value of managing their business affairs more prudently:

One of the indirect effects of the Encumbered Estates Act was ... that many *zemindars* who were kept long out of their estates really did become wiser men.⁸⁰³

James believed that the Encumbered Estates Department had been dismantled prematurely: the *Waderos* still needed special apparatus to protect their interests. Soon after his appointment as Commissioner, he recommended that a Court of Wards should be set up in Sindh. It had an advantage over an Encumbered Estates Department, in that it could take preventative action. Government could intervene whenever it felt it was necessary, in the case of minors and children especially, to prevent an estate becoming insolvent in the first place. What was more, there was no obligation to discharge an estate when it was solvent, so the profits could be soundly invested in the land before the Ward had a chance to squander them away. The Bombay Government chewed over

⁷⁹⁹ Erskine to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 25 Nov. 1882 (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, 1880— 1882, vol. III, compn. 40, 30).

⁸⁰⁰ Quoted in Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1572, 26 Feb. 1883 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1883 (Jan-June), 180).

⁸⁰¹ Hart-Davies to Commr., 26 Aug. 1885 (Encd. Estates Report, 1884-1885, par. 16).

⁸⁰² Commr., Sindh, memo., 1 Aug. 1884 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1884 (July-Dec.), 929).

⁸⁰³ H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 2 July 1892 (B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., 2).

this proposal for a few years until, in 1895, Sir Charles Ollivant, the Acting Commissioner, urged the introduction of a new Encumbered Estates Act. Though a Court of Wards could forestall insolvency Encumbered Estates legislation was more useful after the damage had been done for while the Court of Wards could investigate and compromise debts, it could not arbitrarily cut them down, as the Manager of Encumbered Estates could. Consequently, an Encumbered Estates Act was more appropriate to Sindh, where the main task was to relieve estates which were already indebted.⁸⁰⁴

When James returned to his post the following year, he supported Ollivant's suggestion. He would have preferred a Court of Wards Act, provided the Court was given the power to compel creditors to accept compromises, but drafting and passing the Act would take a long time and meanwhile, according to James, many estates would have disintegrated. Only a few words needed to be altered for the Encumbered Estates Act to be revived, and so it could pass into law immediately.⁸⁰⁵

James reinforced his arguments with statistical evidence. There had been no investigation into indebtedness since 1874, when Merewether collected some statistics which ... had helped to pave the way for the 1876 Encumbered Estates Act. In 1895, however, the Government of India, concerned about the extent of rural debt throughout the Empire, had instructed provincial governments to examine the problem and propose remedial action.⁸⁰⁶ James therefore instituted a fresh enquiry into indebtedness in Sindh. Its findings, which became available in 1896, confirmed that *bantias* were making steady progress. Hindus held 28% of the occupied area of Sindh, while a further 15% was mortgaged to them.⁸⁰⁷ Most of their land had been bought, James alleged, from their Muslim debtors. He did not gather information about the magnitude of debt, but he argued that these figures sufficed to show the gravity of the situation. There was nothing in the report to indicate whether Hindus were profiting at the expense of large holders or smallholders or both, but James inferred that the problems of smallholders were relatively minor. The demand for labor was so great that, if they lost their land, they could always stave off starvation by working as *haris*, while plenty of unoccupied land was available if they wished to take up new holdings. James did not explain why ruined peasants should be in a better position than ruined *Waderos* to raise the capital which would enable them to take advantage of these wastelands. In fact, Appendix IX, which compares the holdings of Hindu and Muslim large holders, suggests that *Waderos* were not suffering unduly at the end of the century. Any decline in the number of large holders was generally compensated by a rise in the average size of occupancies,

⁸⁰⁴ Discussion reviewed in James, memo., 14 Nov. 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1904 (Jan-June), 973-974); see also Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 24 Apr. 1897; M. Yakub, Actg. Depy. Commr., T. & P., to Commr., Sindh, 15 May 1901, (ibid.: 965, 1023).

⁸⁰⁵ Reviewed in James to Govr., 6 July 1897 (ibid. 4-967).

⁸⁰⁶ See Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of India, 7 Oct. 1899 (ibid., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 21).

⁸⁰⁷ James to Govr., 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (ibid., 798-799).

and their fortunes were roughly parallel with those of Hindus. It does not appear, then, that large holders were losing their land to Hindus on a large scale. Nevertheless, James concluded that it was 'the leaders of the people,' the *jagirdars* and great *zamindars*, who were worst hit. He spoke in precisely the same terms which he had used when championing the cause of the Manchar *zamindars* in 1872. *Waderos*, he said, found it hard to pay the assessment when they had to offer high *batai* rates to their *haris* to prevent them seeking work elsewhere, and had at the same time to bear the costs of canal clearance and the like. As in the report written twenty years previously, he raised the specter of civil discontent, reminding Government of the way in which dispossessed landlords in Agra and Oudh had taken back their estates during the Indian Mutiny. James felt that some remarks made by the Government Advocate of the Punjab with respect to indebted Punjabi peasants could with equal justice be applied to the Sindh *Wadero*:

What has he to fear from a political cataclysm? What motive has he to aid our Government in its hour of need? None whatsoever. Quite the contrary. And may we hope that help from the *Banya* which the splendid Panjabi peasant could so well have afforded? A flock of sheep would be of more practical utility to us than every money-lender in the province.⁸⁰⁸

In James' opinion, then, the *Waderos* were as seriously afflicted with debt as ever. The Encumbered Estates Department had cleared individual estates but, as a class, *Waderos* had been unable to overcome their problems, and so the political dangers remained. The Encumbered Estates Department should never have been disbanded. As an officer remarked some, years later, the 1876 Encumbered Estates Act had given a brief respite to a few fortunate estates, but constant vigilance needed to be maintained:

unless we desire, to see our *zamindars* evolved off the face of the Province.⁸⁰⁹

The Government of India was surprised to find the Sindh authorities demanding a new Encumbered Estates Act so soon after the original one had lapsed. It was under the impression that the Act had been passed 'to meet special circumstances which have now ceased to exist.'⁸¹⁰ Though Government protested initially, it relented, in the face of James' arguments and the Act was passed at the end of 1896. L.J. Mountford took over as Manager of Encumbered Estates in March 1897, just ten years after the earlier Department had been closed down. The Act proved to be extremely popular among

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 801; Note B, 813.

⁸⁰⁹ L.J. Mountford, Manager, Encd. Estates, 'Relations between Debtors and Creditors in Sindh' hereafter referred to as 'Debtors & Creditors' (*ibid.*, 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1745).

⁸¹⁰ Offg. Secy., Govt. of India, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 30 Apr. 1896 (*ibid.*, 1896, 529).

Waderos. 383 estates were taken under management in the first year of its operation, and by 1900 Mountford had 544 estates on his books.⁸¹¹

Unlike its predecessor, the 1896 Sindh Encumbered Estates Act was not passed in isolation. As instructed by the Government of India, the Bombay Government had, in 1895, initiated a comprehensive investigation into agricultural indebtedness in the Presidency. Collecting the facts, discussing them and drawing conclusions from them was a lengthy process; Government was unable to submit a summary of its findings and an account of its proposals until 1899. Drafting new legislation required still more time. The revival of the Encumbered Estates Act was the first concrete result of this initiative in Sindh. Other important measures were the 1899 Government Occupants Act, the extension of the Deccan. Agriculturists Relief Act to Sindh in 1901, the Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 and the 1905 Bombay Court of Wards Act.

Most of the officers serving in Sindh had supported the passing of legislation along the lines of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act. James endorsed their suggestions.⁸¹² While an Encumbered Estates Act relieved the debts of insolvent large holders, an Alienation of Land Act could help all debtors, whatever their social class, before they fell into debt. It would have prevented agriculturists from mortgaging their lands or selling them to satisfy their debts. *Banias* would have found it difficult even to lease their debtors' lands, while it would have been impossible for estates to break up and pass to creditors. However, Lord Sandhurst, the Governor of Bombay, declared that he 'strenuously opposed' any such measure. It had always been a cardinal principle of the Bombay settlement system that landholders should be given full proprietorial rights over their lands and Sandhurst was unwilling to compromise on this as it could mean:

tying to his field a cultivator who desires for perfectly good reasons to part with it.⁸¹³

Sandhurst did make a concession over the Jamrao Tract, though, where the 1899 Government Occupants Act made colonists liable to eviction if they transferred or sublet their lands.⁸¹⁴ Because the Act only applied to newly granted lands, it did not affect existing rights. It was a negligible step at the time, but it became important after 1932, when the Sukkur Barrage was opened. All Barrage lands were given out on

⁸¹¹ Bombay Act XX of 1896, Sindh Incumbered Estates Act, 1896; Encl. Estates Reports, 1897-1900; Commr., Sindh, memo., 2 Dec. 1896 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1897, 206).

⁸¹² James to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note B (ibid., 1899 (July-Dec.), Confl. Pr., 813-819).

⁸¹³ Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of India, 7 Oct. 1899 (ibid., 33). The Govt. of India favored the Alienation of Land Act; for discussion of differences of opinion between Indian & Bombay Govts. over debt legislation, see I.J. Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India, 1875-1930* (University of California, 1970), 36-42.

⁸¹⁴ Bombay Act III of 1899, Government Occupants Act (Sindh), 1899, section 8. See also James to Govr., 11 Dec. 1899 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (Jan-June), 224).

restricted tenure under the Government Occupants Act, effectively bringing half of the occupied area of Sindh under an Alienation of Land Act.⁸¹⁵

Sandhurst was more responsive to requests for the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act to be extended to Sindh. It had long been in operation elsewhere in the Presidency, so it had the advantage over a Land Alienation Act, that no new legislation had to be drafted. James asked for its introduction in 1896, to complement the aid large holders were to receive under the Encumbered Estates Act. The Relief Act was of particular interest to smallholders, who did not yet have any protection. However, James was more concerned with the plight of the *Waderos* and did not consider smallholders to be in such urgent need of assistance.⁸¹⁶ Government agreed with him. The Encumbered Estates Act was passed almost immediately, but the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was not given any priority; the Government of India refused to sanction the extension of the Relief Act to Sindh until it had been able to review all the papers relating to debt in the Bombay Presidency. Sandhurst forwarded the reports in 1899 and repeated his recommendation that the Act should be passed.⁸¹⁷

The Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was at last extended to Sindh in 1901. Its main provision empowered civil courts to investigate the mortgage bonds presented to them in suits, and to ascertain the circumstances in which they had been drawn up. Hitherto, once a debtor had acknowledged a bond, it had to be enforced against him. Under the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act, however, a Judge could modify a bond, or else set it aside altogether if he suspected that a creditor had used force or fraud to obtain it. Many agriculturists accepted the claims made against them because they despaired of ever being able to prove, their version in court. They frequently did not even take the trouble to attend the court hearings, leaving their creditors to win their cases by default. If a suit was undefended, the Act therefore obliged the Judge to summon all parties to the dispute and look into its background. The Act also gave Judges discretion to reduce interest charges to whatever level they considered reasonable. Previously, they had had to enforce the rates of interest debtors had agreed to, however exorbitant they might be.⁸¹⁸

The Act was well intentioned, and effective as far as it went, but a civil suit was a last resort and *baniyas* did not take all their clients to court. Only the minority of debtors who were sued for debt could benefit from the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act - that is to say, those who were already in considerable difficulty. Those debtors who were not taken to court could not be helped unless, being properly aware of their rights, under

⁸¹⁵ Standing Orders of the Revenue Department (Karachi, 1960), Order no. 10 (Land Grant), pt. 1, section B(5), B(9).

⁸¹⁶ James to Govr., 12 Aug. 1896 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July-Dec), Confl. Pr., 801).

⁸¹⁷ Secy., Govt. of Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of India, 7 Oct. 1899 (*ibid.*, 55).

⁸¹⁸ Bombay Act XVII of 1879, Dekhan Agriculturists Relief Act, 1879, Chapter III. For account of the working of the Relief Act in the Deccan, see R. Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century* (London & Toronto, 1968), 215-226.

the Act, they were prepared to stand up to their creditors, refusing to sign unfair bonds - but the people really in need of protection were not the ones likely to know much about the Act's provisions. Nevertheless, debtors who did take advantage of the Act could now hope for equitable treatment, while the *bania* could no longer be certain that a civil suit was an effective weapon against his clients.

In practice, the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act did not generally have a profound effect on relations between debtors and creditors. *Banias* who feared that cases might go against them were able to put pressure on their clients, threatening to withhold credit except on the most rigorous terms.⁸¹⁹ Any immediate benefits obtained under the Act were therefore likely to be undone by long-term difficulties in obtaining credit. Many debtors believed that the risk of offending their creditors outweighed the hope of relief afforded by the court. They felt it was not worth their while to defend their cases - but every undefended case had automatically to be investigated by the Judge. Small *zamindars* often enabled *banias* to circumvent this awkward provision by agreeing to settle out of court, through arbitration, or by allowing themselves to be described as non-agriculturists. If all else failed, some *banias* succeeded in forcing agriculturists to sign affidavits in which they admitted all claims against them and asserted that they were aware of their rights under the Act. They were usually aware of no such things but, once they had done this, their cases were exempt from investigation even if they were undefended.⁸²⁰

The civil courts themselves were a further obstacle to the effective application of the Act. Protracted investigations into debt involved debtors in considerable expense. They had to travel to court from their remote villages and maintain themselves in lodgings throughout the court proceedings. As well as spending money, they were in danger of losing some of their agricultural income in the meantime, for smallholders could not afford to leave their lands for long, particularly at harvest-time. The problem, of courts being inconvenient, had been anticipated when the Act was originally introduced into the Deccan. To solve it, a court had been set up in every *taluka* and a system of local conciliation had been devised.⁸²¹ There is no record of why similar services were denied to Sindh. They may simply have been overlooked. The chief beneficiaries were mere smallholders, and the Act had been introduced, almost as an afterthought, at a time when debt legislation was fashionable with the central Government; the Sindh authorities did not attach such importance to the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act as to the Encumbered Estates Act. In 1903, a small gesture was made to remedy the defect;

⁸¹⁹ H.S. Lawrence, 'Memorandum on the Material Condition of the Bombay Presidency, 1892-1902', (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1902 (Aug-Dec.), 1282); S. Ali, Depy. Collr., Mehar, to Commr., Sindh, 15 Sept. 1902.(B.N.S. CCCXVI, Mehar S.R., 32); E.L. Moysey, Actg. Coln. Offr., Jamrao Canal, to Commr., 27 June 1906 (B.N.S. CDLXII, Hbad. S.R., 21).

⁸²⁰ Jud. Commr., Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1901, with App. B: Report by Subordinate Judge, Sehwan (P.S.C., R.D., file 1, pt. II, 1901-1905, vol. I, compn. 1, 54, 7773); to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 22 Nov. 1902, with Apps. A, C, D, G, Reports by District Judges, Karachi, Hbad., Subordinate Judges, Mehar, Larkana (ibid., 163 166, 177, 181, 183, 191); Note, unsigned, for Commr., Sindh, n.d. (ibid., 97-99).

⁸²¹ Jud. Commr., Sindh, 22 Nov. 1902 (ibid., 166).

four new courts were created, in Shikarpur, Larkana, Rohri and Hala, to make the courts slightly more accessible.⁸²²

A more serious impediment discouraged Muslim debtors from taking advantage of civil courts. Over a period of nearly forty years, civil courts had established their reputation as places in which debtors were brought to judgment, the claims against them ruthlessly enforced and their property attached. The equitable provisions of the Relief Act did nothing to change the balance of power in the courtroom: debtors still had to hold their own against the wiles and stratagems of professional lawyers. H.C. Mules, the Collector of Shikarpur, sympathized with *zamindars'* reluctance to put their trust in the courts:

At present the ordinary Mahomedan holder looks upon the Civil Court much as the sheep or goat may be imagined to look upon the slaughter house, a place above which he can discern in his mind's eye the inscription "All hope abandon ye who enter here," and he would not readily understand that the Civil Court could ever be a haven of refuge to him.⁸²³

The agriculturist's skepticism may have been justified. Judges were still allowing interest rates as high as 24% to 37.5% a few months after the Act had been passed.⁸²⁴ The Judicial Commissioner in Sindh had foreseen this difficulty, for he had circulated a Memorandum in November 1900, to prepare Judges for the Act. The Act required them to reduce interest charges to a reasonable level. He pointed out that banks regarded 12% as extremely liberal interest and advised that this should guide them in the disposal of cases. It apparently had a good influence, but he found it necessary to jog their memories by reissuing the Memorandum in 1904 and again in 1905. A significant pointer to the attitude of some Judges is given by the fact that he felt obliged to emphasize that, although they had to do justice to the lenders, they must remember that it was generally the borrowers who needed more protection.⁸²⁵ As the Act was intended for the relief of debtors, not of creditors, it is extraordinary that this had to be said at all.

Many small *zamindars*, then, felt the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was more trouble than it was worth. They had to make an expensive and time-consuming journey to a court where they could not be sure of a sympathetic hearing. If they did win justice, there was a strong possibility that their *banias* might retaliate by withdrawing credit facilities. For all its defects, though, the Relief Act did bring some help to the agriculturist debtor, if only because it stopped the creditor from having everything his own way. The *bania* could no longer rely on the civil courts to rubber-stamp his

⁸²² Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 1971, 11 Apr. 1903 (ibid., 243).

⁸²³ H.C. Mules, Collr., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 4 May 19402 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1903 (Jan-July), 113).

⁸²⁴ Mountford, 'Debtors & Creditors,' 1763.

⁸²⁵ Jud. Commr., Sindh, memo., 13 Nov. 1900, reissued 11 Aug. 1905 (P.S.C., J.D., file 1, 1905, vol. V, compn. 31, 233, 265).

mortgage bonds. A large number of debtors might retain their fear of the courts, but those who had the courage to stand up to *banias* now had some weapons at their disposal. In short, the Act was better than nothing: hitherto, smallholders had been without protection of any kind.

As the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act, largely designed for the benefit of smallholders, got into its stride, large holders were given further support by Government. A Court of Wards was set up in 1905, to supplement the work of the Encumbered Estates Department. It could take over the holdings of minors, widows and people declared by a civil court to be incapable of handling their own affairs. In addition, any other *zamindar* could be protected if the Governor of Bombay agreed that it was 'in the public interest' to preserve his estate.⁸²⁶ By 1912, there were 85 estates under management of the Court of Wards.⁸²⁷

The Encumbered Estates Act, the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act; and the Court of Wards Act were all attempts to help debtors by defending them against their creditors. A more positive way of relieving debt was to bypass the *bania* altogether. Interest-free *taqavi* loans were traditionally given to landholders by Indian Governments, to stimulate agricultural development. For much of the nineteenth century, however, the Sindh authorities were reluctant to advance money on a generous scale as they believed that *zamindars* would become dependent on Government loans, and would not learn thrift and self-reliance.⁸²⁸ Between 1877-1882, an average of only Rs 31,367 was given out as *taqavi* per year. Ten years later, between 1887-1892, average annual advances had increased slightly, to Rs 47,526, but this was still scarcely a drop in the ocean: the Manager of Encumbered Estates, dealing with a limited number of debtors, seldom repaid less than a *lakh* of rupees to debtors every year. Only in the closing years of the century did a new generation of administrators appreciate the potential value of *taqavi* advances; between 1897-1902, no less than Rs 2,85,49 were disbursed annually as *taqavi*.⁸²⁹ In the twentieth century, therefore, Government began to compete with the *bania* to some extent, depriving him of his monopoly of rural credit.

The Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 was a more substantial step in the same direction. Not only did a cooperative society provide an alternative source of credit to the *bania* but, as its funds were subscribed by the members themselves, it fostered a spirit of self-help among agriculturists. The Act had been introduced by the Indian Government for the whole of British India and initially it received little encouragement

⁸²⁶ Bombay Act I of 1905, Bombay Court of Wards Act, 1905, sections 4(I), 5(I), 9(I).

⁸²⁷ M. Webb, Court of Wards, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 22 Sept. 1912 (Report of the Estates under the Management of the Court of Wards in the Northern, Central and Southern Divisions and Sindh, 1911-1912, 17).

⁸²⁸ Commr., Sindh, memo., 4 March 1870 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1870, 190).

⁸²⁹ Reports on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency, 1877-1882, 1887-1892, 1897-1902.

from the Sindh administration.⁸³⁰ By 1909, there was still only one registered cooperative society in Sindh.⁸³¹ A society had been started in Kandiaro in 1906, but it proved a memorable failure. Only two leading Muslim *zamindars* joined it, one of whom was already insolvent, his estate being under the Manager of Encumbered Estates. The members subscribed a total of Rs 300 to the society, but when the Registrar of Cooperative Societies refused to allow them to borrow more than this amount from it, they asked for the society to be wound up. The Kandiaro Cooperative Society had survived no longer than a year. A Sindh Settlement Officer interpreted the members' attitude as proof that 'they did not intend to do anything for themselves,'⁸³² but that was not a fair comment. In fact, this little history illustrates one of the chief obstacles which retarded the development of the cooperative movement in Sindh. Agriculturists were accustomed to easy credit. They did not invest money with *bantias*: they simply borrowed from them, repaying the interest when they pleased. If they went to the trouble of putting cash into a society, then they would naturally expect even better credit facilities than they obtained from *bantias* to whom they paid nothing. Another stumbling-block was that the upper limit for loans was Rs 500 and so societies were unable to attract the great *zamindars* who could finance them.⁸³³

Despite its slow start, the cooperative movement began to progress rapidly during its second decade, as agriculturists became more familiar with its advantages. The problem of raising money was overcome by the adoption of the 'share model system,' introduced in 1917 to help petty holders and *haris* build up a reserve of capital. Members subscribed shares of twenty rupees each, which they paid in annual installments of two rupees. A review of the scheme ten years later claimed that some small *zamindars* had managed to save as much as Rs 300, while *haris* sometimes had savings of up to Rs 150.⁸³⁴ By 1929, there were 913 societies registered in Sindh; disposing of a working capital of Rs. 91,83,000.⁸³⁵ Meanwhile, big *zamindars* set up Cooperative *zamindari* banks which could grant loans of up to Rs 5,000 and which were therefore more useful to

⁸³⁰ When official opinion was canvassed in 1901, Asst. Collr., Larkana, was the only officer to suggest the scheme might work in Sindh (to Collr., Shpur., 11 Feb. 1901, P.G.B., R.D.L., 1901 (Jan-June), 1176). The Sindh officials' lack of enthusiasm for cooperative societies reflected a mood of skepticism which prevailed among their colleagues elsewhere in the Presidency and indeed throughout India (Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India*, 47-49).

⁸³¹ Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 572, 20 Jan. 1911 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1911 (Jan-Apr.), 104).

⁸³² R.B. Milne, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sindh, 31 May 1909 (B.N.S..CDXCIII, Kandiaro S.R., 14).

⁸³³ G.F.S. Collins, Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 27 Sept. 1926 (Annual Report relating to the establishment of Cooperative Societies in the Bombay Presidency 'hereafter referred to as Coop. Sacs. Report', 1925-1926, 17); Colir., Shpur., to Commr., Sindh, 2 May 1901 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1901 (Jan-June), 1174).

⁸³⁴ Collins, 26 Sept. 1927 (Coop. Socs. Report, 1926-1927, 20); see also L.C. Jain, *Indigenous Banking in India* (London, 1929) 201.

⁸³⁵ V.S. Bhide, Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Bombay, to Secy., Govt. of Bombay, 3 Sept. 1929 (Coop. Socs. Report, 1928-1929, 21).

them than the ordinary cooperative societies. There were three such banks in 1929, at Mirpurkhas, Larkana and Shikarpur; their assets totaled Rs 12,15,393.⁸³⁶

The growth of the cooperative movement and the increased availability of *taqavi* loans combined to make inroads into the *bania*'s monopoly of rural credit, giving Sindhi agriculturists an opportunity to reduce their dependence on the *bania* in the twentieth century. An agriculturist who nevertheless did fall deeply into debt could at least hope to be spared the harsh consequences of a civil court decree, for the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act had turned the court into a two-edged weapon which might strike the *bania* himself if he decided to sue his client. Large holders were doubly secure, as they could also seek shelter with the Manager of Encumbered Estates or the Court of Wards. Finally, after the completion of the Sukkur Barrage in 1932, half the occupied area of Sindh was placed on restricted tenure under the 1899 Government Occupants Act and could no longer be sold or mortgaged. That is not to say that the problem of agricultural indebtedness disappeared altogether. The *bania*'s system depended on easy credit and leisurely repayments, but Government and cooperative societies were less free with their credit and stricter about repayments. It was also convenient to borrow from the man to whom one sold his grain and who lived locally. The Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry of 1929-1930 came to the conclusion that debt was still a serious drain on the resources of Sindhi landholders and it was skeptical about the extent to which the cooperative movement had made a significant impact on the agricultural economy.⁸³⁷ However, these measures were, at least, attempts to lighten the burden of debt. In particular, they gave some relief to smallholders, who had been denied any form of protection before 1901.

During the nineteenth century, the Sindh authorities had been preoccupied with the *Waderos*, but the Sindh Encumbered Estates Act were not outstandingly effective. The 1876 Act had to be revived nine years after it had lapsed, while the 1896 Act was clearly no more successful, since it remained in full vigor until after the British had left India; in 1950, there were still 63 estates under the Manager of Encumbered Estates and 359 under the Court of Wards.⁸³⁸ Though the Encumbered Estates Act helped individuals, there was never any shortage of insolvent estates to replace those cleared of their liabilities. It did nothing to combat the causes of debt. The Act was, in short, a palliative. A palliative, though, may have been all that was required. At the beginning of this chapter, it was stressed that officials saw *Waderos*' indebtedness as, essentially, a political problem and the Encumbered Estates Act was a piece of political legislation. If the *Waderos*, as a class, were on the brink of disaster, then Government action could do

⁸³⁶ Ibid. The bank at Mirpurkhas was the first to be founded, in 1926. In its first year of operations, it gave out loans to the total of three and a half lakhs of rupees (Collins, 27 Sept. 1926, Coop. Socs. Report, 1925-1926, 17).

⁸³⁷ Report of the Bombay Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-1930 (Calcutta, 1930), vol. I, 77. For assessments of the cooperative movement over this period in other parts of the Bombay Presidency, see Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century*, 253-263, 329-330, Catanach, *Rural Credit in Western India*, 223-228.

⁸³⁸ H.T. Sorley, *Gazetteer of West Pakistan: The Former Province of Sindh* (n.d.), 552.

no more than to postpone the inevitable. In fact, that most *Waderos* were not in such dire straits as British officers commonly feared; a few estates did break up, but the rest muddled through, while many *Waderos* actually extended their holdings in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Encumbered Estates Department therefore reinforced, rather than saved, the *Wadero* class. It revived the fortunes of those who had difficulty in coping with their liabilities. Their recovery, in turn, boosted the morale of other *Waderos* who, though not so seriously encumbered, still felt threatened by the increasing prosperity of the *banias*. The existence of the Encumbered Estates Act reassured them that they were not alone in their struggle to maintain their position: they had a safety net if times were hard. In this context, the Manager hardly needed to root out indebtedness, so long as he continued to be regarded as a manifestation of Government's good intentions towards *Waderos*.

Conclusion

Sindh remained a rural country throughout the nineteenth century. It had no manufacturing industry; its economic life depended on the processing and export of agricultural produce, the fruit of the labors of the predominantly Muslim agriculturists. Nearly half of the province was desert. The remaining area had been reclaimed from the wilderness by water distributed through the Indus river and its canal system, but even here the irrigational facilities were scarce and unreliable; much of the land lay barren for lack of water, but a farmer who had suffered from drought one year might see his land flooded the next. Consequently, Sindh could not support a large population. Sindhis lived in small, isolated villages, scattered over the province wherever water was available. Many cultivators led semi-nomadic lives, shifting their homes as local irrigational conditions changed, and so there were few permanent villages. There was no established village organization. Only the *Waderos*, with their large, well-built *autags*, formed a stable element in the community, and the poorer agriculturists looked to them for security, protection and leadership.

In effect, *Waderos*, in association with a handful of hereditary *jagirdars*, ruled the Sindhi countryside. Successful government in Sindh was essentially a matter of coming to terms with them. In other parts of India, like the Deccan, for example, the British Government was able to gain a hold over local leaders by distributing grants of rent-free land. This put them under an obligation to the British, and they could be threatened with the confiscation of their grants if they misbehaved. No such option was open in Sindh. *Jagirdars* were not obliged to perform services for Government, and depriving them of their *jagirs* could have grave political consequences. As for the *Waderos*, their power was derived from their landed wealth and they owed nothing to the British. So long as they paid land revenue, *Waderos* could not be dispossessed, however strongly Government disapproved of them. Bartle Frere, in the 1850's, tried to make *Waderos* more dependent on Government through the allocation of *seri* grants, but the experiment was a failure: Government could not afford to alienate land on a sufficiently large scale to induce *Waderos* to sacrifice their independence. The Sindh Government, like many a colonial regime, had to collaborate with the local magnates on their own terms. In fact, most *Waderos* were glad to be of assistance. Believing that official favor enhanced their prestige, they were anxious to be distinguished with 'chairs,' *lungis* and other awards. By manipulating the honors system, district officers managed to acquire some control over the *Waderos*, making it worth their while to support the Government. By the turn of the century, *Waderos* were an integral part of the local administration; government without them was almost unthinkable.

Since there was no other class of collaborators on whom administrators could rely, it was essential that the great Muslim landholders should maintain their position in the countryside. No matter how well-disposed *Waderos* might be, they could not be effective if they lost their influence. The Sindh Government, therefore, was determined to ensure that *Waderos* continued to prosper; it was naturally dismayed when it received reports, in the 1870's, that the *Waderos'* economic strength was being eroded and that their great estates were in danger of breaking up. It was an alarming prospect and, over the following decades, administrators applied themselves to the task of bolstering up Sindh's landed gentry. They believed *Waderos* were under attack from several sides. A degree of independence among the *haris* who worked their estates, combined with the unsuitability of the *ryotwari* settlement, threatened their economic foundations. Most serious of all, widespread indebtedness was cutting down the incomes of many *Waderos* and even leading, in some cases, to the loss of their property. Not all officials agreed on the solutions, if any, which should be adopted, but the consensus of opinion led the Sindh authorities to give strong support to the landed magnates in the face of these challenges.

The *haris* were easiest to deal with: they were ignored. Even men like Colonel Haig, who showed some sympathy for the poorer classes, were remarkably complacent about *haris* and made no suggestions to improve their lot. No legislation was passed to give *haris* security of tenure, nor was any proposed until the 1940's. Some officials even begrudged *haris* their share of the produce, at *batai*, regarding it as a drain on *zamindars'* resources. Many also claimed that *haris* were setting themselves up as smallholders, depriving *zamindars* of their workforce. British officers tended to exaggerate the ease with which *haris* could do this, failing to take into account that it was a risky and difficult business. It could be dangerous for a *hari* to leave his master without repaying his debts and he took on a daunting financial commitment when, without any security, he approached a *bania* to subsidize his enterprise. Throughout the period, despite official assertions to the contrary, *haris* remained at the disposal of their *zamindars*, in debt to them and obliged to do their bidding; they were in no position to pose as credible rivals to them.

Nor did the *ryotwari* settlement hasten the *Waderos'* downfall, as was alleged by many British officers. Though it had been introduced with smallholders in mind, by men who were not sympathetic to big *zamindars*, it did not in practice promote the break-up of the great estates. Specific instances of estates disintegrating, though dramatic, were few and far between. The majority of *Waderos* survived the *ryotwari* settlement and a large number, far from collapsing, actually extended their holdings under it. In the event, then, the *ryotwari* settlement did little to disturb the status quo in rural Sindh.

Indebtedness was a more formidable problem. It was a long-standing feature of rural life all over India, not only in, Sindh. Agriculturists could not avoid debt; especially in an irrigated country where cultivation was expensive: besides obtaining seed, farmers

often had to dig water-courses and install Persian wheels. In addition, men occasionally had to raise money for domestic festivities, such as marriages or circumcisions. On top of these expenses, petty holders, with limited means, had to feed their families while their crops were growing, and so they bought provisions from their *bantias* on credit, in anticipation of the harvest; if the crop was poor, or failed altogether, then they had to apply to the *bantias* for further provisions, adding to their season's debt. Indebtedness, then, caused greater hardship to small *zamindars* than to the holders of great estates. On their own, though, even these items need not have perpetuated chronic indebtedness. Unfortunately, their ignorance of money matters prevented most agriculturists from striking advantageous bargains with their *bantias*. As they were illiterate, and did not keep accounts, agriculturists had no record of what they had borrowed, or when, or how much interest they should be paying on their various debts. *Bantias* took every opportunity to exploit the simplicity of their clients, levying interest at excessive rates and mixing together interest and principal. Agriculturists therefore needed money but, having borrowed it, they were likely to see their profits diverted to their *bantias* as interest. It was an iniquitous system, which undermined the profitability of agriculturists of all classes, but it had persisted for so long that it was accepted as a way of life in rural India. Sindhi agriculturists were simply one group among millions of Indian debtors who suffered in consequence of their inability to cope with business transactions.

In the late nineteenth century, however, the burden of rural debt grew exceptionally heavy. British rule was responsible for this development. Cash assessments, imposed on most parts on India by the mid-century, sharply increased the borrowing requirements of the agrarian community. Regularly, by a fixed date every year, landholders had to find cash to pay their land revenue: and with so many people demanding money at the same time, moneylenders were in a stronger position than ever to dictate harsh terms. In addition, British law permitted creditors to charge unlimited interest and to attach debtors' property if they defaulted. *Bantias* could cream off more of their debtors' profits than before and could even turn them off their land if necessary. It seemed that wealth and land, and consequently power, were passing from agriculturists to moneylenders. Under these circumstances, the growing prosperity of the *bania* constituted a threat to the existing social order. In fact, the *bania* was primarily a businessman, whose main ambition was to make money through trading and money lending. It was his success, in amassing wealth at the expense of agriculturists, which made him a contender for rural power.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, official opinion throughout India became increasingly alert to the social and political dangers which unrelieved indebtedness could engender. Encumbered Estates legislation was passed to protect large holders in Oudh in 1870, in Gujarat in 1871 and 1877, and in Sindh in 1876, 1881 and 1884. The Deccan riots of 1875 dramatically underlined the importance of the issue, reminding administrators that it was not only the landed magnates who suffered as a result of

debt. The riots led to the introduction of the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act in 1879, a measure whose benefits were extended to the entire agricultural population. By 1895, when the Government of India ordered a full-scale enquiry into rural indebtedness throughout the Indian Empire, most administrators were receptive to the idea that Government intervention was necessary.⁸³⁹ The Sindh authorities were particularly well aware of the problem, at least so far as it affected the *Waderos*, and took the opportunity to cajole Bombay into reviving the Sindh Encumbered Estates Act in 1896. This was one of the first practical results of the central Government's initiative, but it was the sole specifically Sindhi measure to be passed. The Court of Wards Act of 1905 applied equally to Sindh and the rest of the Presidency, while the Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904 was an all-Indian law, imposed by the Viceroy's Council. Indeed, the most famous piece of legislation of the time, the 1901 Punjab Alienation of Land Act, did not affect Sindh at all, despite the pleas of numerous local officers: they had to be content with the extension of the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act to Sindh in 1901.

No radical action was taken to curb indebtedness in Sindh before 1901. Only Encumbered Estates Acts were introduced, which had no far-reaching effect even on the small group for whom they were designed. Though several hundred estates were restored to solvency, a Manager of Encumbered Estates could do nothing to change the unbusinesslike habits of a whole class of *Waderos*, nor could he influence *bantias*' behavior towards debtors who were not under his protection. The only practical, long-term solution was to provide alternative, fairer sources of credit, in the hope that the competition would force *bantias* to lend their money on more reasonable terms. *Tagavi* loans were a step in this direction, but they were not available on a large scale until the end of the nineteenth century, while the cooperative movement did not become effective in Sindh until the second decade of the twentieth century.

In fact, Indian debt legislation as a whole was not generally inspired by economic considerations. Government was not so much concerned with the depressing effect of debt on agriculture as with its possible political consequences. The pattern was obvious in places like Oudh, Gujarat and Sindh, where select groups of large holders were protected while the rest of the population was left to its own devices, but it also applied elsewhere. The Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act and the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, for example, benefited all classes of agriculturists, not because the local authorities were more egalitarian in their thinking, but because it was not practicable, in those areas, to single out individuals: holdings were small and British rule depended on a mass of peasants.

⁸³⁹ For account of the shift of official opinion in the late nineteenth century, see P.H.M. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition: Influence and Authority in Nineteenth-Century India* (London, 1972), 184-246; C.J. Dewey, 'The Official Mind and the Problem of Agrarian Indebtedness in India, 1870-1910' (University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1972), 104-128, 130-173, 187-216).

What is remarkable is that, in Sindh at least, the class which received protection was not in urgent need of it. *Waderos* were less badly affected by indebtedness than smallholders.⁸⁴⁰ Nevertheless, they were perceived to be in difficulties and at the time the perception may have been as important as the reality. The Sindh Encumbered Estates Acts demonstrated Government's willingness to stand by its allies. Like the honors system, the denial of tenancy rights to *haris* and the modifications to the settlement system, the Acts helped to prevent *Waderos* from becoming either discontented or bankrupt. The Sindhi countryside in 1901 was dominated by hereditary *jagirdars* and several hundred great Muslim *zamindars*, just as it had been in 1865. It is true that the magnates might have remained in control whatever action Government had taken - but, without the sympatric policies, they would have been less satisfied with British rule.

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. above, 173-176.

APPENDIX I
TEMPERATURES IN SINDH
In Centigrade (celsius)

Sukkur								
	Jan		May		Jul		Nov	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
1896	74	50	113	76	111	83	92	55
1897	75	49	113	85	109	80	88	70
1898	80	60	114	83	111	84	90	64
1899	73	41	117	88	113	90	105	84
1900	86	70	118	92	120	94	108	86
1901	92	69	124	90	122	96	104	79
1902	97	68	122	94	120	94	105	76
1903	94	63	121	92	122	97	94	60
1904	73	50	113	84	113	81	94	57
1905	72	28	114	82	112	80	95	56
1906	78	40	110	78	Not available		Not available	
1907	Not available		Not available		108	86	90	68
1908	72	54	118	82	108	84	88	62
1909	75	51	117	85	117	84	92	67
1910	73	51	113	82	109	81	100	62
1911	73	48	112	85	110	88	91	61
1912	77	60	112	90	117	90	93	60
1913	82	60	117	88	115	87	104	67
1914	85	60	121	92	117	87	96	72
1915	84	56	118	86	116	88	98	66

Hyderabad								
	Jan		May		Jul		Nov	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
1896	88	45	114	75	105	79	100	51
1897	82	37	116	75	110	74	98	52
1898	89	42	114	74	111	73	97	52
1899	83	37	119	73	106	76	98	54
1900	80	36	114	73	109	79	100	55
1901	80	40	119	73	112	76	100	52
1902	95	43	115	59	111	75	93	58
1903	79	39	115	71	107	72	98	47
1904	85	40	116	72	108	77	98	57
1905	82	33	119	75	111	78	99	52
1906	76	47	110	78	100	81	93	64
1907	81	54	104	75	302	82	92	61
1908	77	51	107	76	95	80	89	59
1909	74	49	106	76	97	80	92	63
1910	75	49	105	77	94	79	89	59
1911	71	51	107	78	97	79	84	59
1912	76	54	109	78	101	82	86	59
1913	79	51	106	79	97	80	88	59
1914	78	53	110	79	96	82	87	66
1915	76	50	105	78	101	82	90	60

Karachi								
	Jan		May		Jul		Nov	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
1896	88	53	96	77	97	79	95	53
1897	82	41	95	75	98	75	93	56
1898	88	46	95	77	102	75	94	58
1899	82	40	109	77	95	77	98	59
1900	82	40	100	75	97	80	100	59
1901	82	42	116	76	95	78	100	56
1902	89	46	106	75	105	79	97	61
1903	80	45	114	76	105	76	94	51
1904	86	46	107	74	92	78	96	59
1905	81	40	107	75	100	79	95	59
1906	83	46	112	76	95	81	95	59
1907	84	46	104	65	96-	80	97	57
1908	84	49	107	74	95	76	92	60
1909	75	53	93	80	89	79	81	70
1910	74	54	87	72	89	80	85	60
1911	74	56	88	74	92	79	78	68
1912	64	58	90	70	95	60	76	65
1913	74	69	91	86	92	86	85	84
1914	84	66	96	86	89	85	81	76
1915	66	59	90	82	92	84	91	87

Thar and Parkar								
<i>(Umerkot 1896-1905, Mirpurkhas 1906-1915)</i>								
	Jan		May		Jul		Nov	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
1896	81	52	114	82	104	84	93	58
1897	80	44	113	81	108	84	90	62
1698	87	52	110	80	106	80	90	62
1899	78	45	116	79	113	80	94	66
1900	84	39	112	81	114	85	92	67
1901	78	45	115	82	113	85	93	60
1902	88	51	0.115	78	110	83	90	62
1903	74	46	116	82	114	84	92	60
1904	80	42	Not available		106	90	98	70
1905	82	45	120	90	118	90	98	68
1906	77	46	119	82	111	84	96	67
1907	84	56	112	73	108	84	98	61
1908	87	50	114	82	104	80	98	54
1909	80	44	110	72	103	80	102	62
1910	84	44	109	80	104	78	93	59
1911	84	46	109	81	102	80	87	56
1912	78	45	114	80	102	85	88	56
1913	Not available		111	78	108	80	95	60
1914	Not available		80	60	106	83	95	60
1915	Not available		112	70	108	78	96	48

Source: Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh, 'B' Volumes.

APPENDIX II
RAINFALL IN SINDH
(in inches)

	Sukkur	Hyderabad	Karachi	Kohistan	Umarkot	Nagar Parkar
1896	3.04	3.09	14.12	4.38	2.78	26.10
1897	6.18	10.74	14.23	10.47	10.21	19.49
1898	0.03	3.71	4.02	4.06	6.37	7.60
1899	0.25	0.40	0.59	0.15	0.06	0.66
1900	1.78	4.06	2.24	8.05	6.35	16.63
1901	1.61	1.96	1.98	3.19	2.64	4.43
1902	4.77	14.98	21.78	16.15	10.30	11.14
1903	3.06	5.35	5.91	6.35	5.10	11.88
1904	2.27	1.46	4.26	3.21	3.59	7.02
1905	1.15	2.53	4.50	4.99	2.41	11.69
1906	5.85	7.74	8.61	9.70	8.00	15.31
1907	2.79	6.17	8.94	12.25	5.72	16.99
1908	3.27	19.63	6.20	23.09	14.72	29.90
1909	1.36	6.62	5.06	3.79	10.59	19.75
1910	2.52	10.23	9.28	12.75	8.75	10.30
1911	0.80	3.65	5.16	6.00	4.06	1.81
1912	4.73	5.28	2.87	3.65	8.14	15.49
1913	3.19	14.72	14.12	31.55	26.36	33.51
1914	3.38	4.09	8.08	6.26	6.32	5.49
1915	1.44	1.04	2.04	0.85	2.34	3.25
Normal Mean*	2.67	6.37	7.20	8.54	7.15	13.67

*Average for over 40 years

Source: Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh, 'B' Volumes.

APPENDIX III
CROPS AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN SINDH
Statement of crops

	1871-72	1880-81	1890-91	1900-01
	(acres)	(acres)	(acres)	(acres)
Rice	5,29,239	5,41,407	7,06,157	9,27,002
Juari	5,09,287	3,59,773	4,62,450	8,05,634
Bajri	4,44,039	4,46,110	7,49,533	8,96,529
Wheat	2,410,605	2,27,487	4,05,775	4,51,789
Pulses	42,909	1,00,256	1,84,279	2,97,702
Oil-seeds	1,20,816	73,574	3,62,434	4,51,789
Cotton	53,875	48,059	1,05,487	83,561
Tobacco	7,641	6,538	7,985	8,464
Sugar-cane	2,777	2,548	2,532	2,337
Miscellaneous*	1,06,192	10,99,440	1,35,970	96,059
Total	20,27,380	29,05,192	31,22,602	40,20,866
*Includes fallow land.				
<i>Source: Reports on the Administration of the Bombay Presidency</i>				

Food production and consumption, 1902-1903
(Figures in thousands)

Production

Acreage under food-grain crops	-	2,789 acres
Acreage under non-food crops	-	674 acres
Outturn of food-grain crops	-	820 tons

Consumption

Food	-	711.8 tons
Seed	-	70.6 tons
Fodder for stock	-	49.8 tons
Wastage	-	41.0 tons
Total	-	873.2 tons

Shortfall in production - 53.1 tons.

Annual consumption of food-grains for human beings

498 children below 5 years @ 1/3 lb. per day	-	27.1 tons
791 children aged 5 - 15 years @ 1 lb. per day	-	128.9 tons
865 adult females @ 1½ lbs. per day	-	211.3 tons
1,057 adult males @ 2 lbs. per day	-	344.5 tons
Total annual consumption	-	711.8 tons

Source: Extract from Bombay Government Gazette, 21 April 1904 (cited on P.G.B., R.D.L., 1904 (Jan. - June), 546-547, 556-557)

APPENDIX IV POPULATION OF SINDH

	Hindus	Muslims	Others	Total
1872	390,435	1,712,266	89,696	2,192,415
1881	305,079	1,887,204	221,540	2,413,823
1891	567,536	2,215,147	89,091	2,871,774
1901	751,252'	2,446,489	13,169	3,210,910
1911	837,887	2,639,929	35,619	3,513,435

N.B. Fluctuations in population of Hindus due to inconsistent enumeration of Lohanas as, sometimes, Sikhs and sometimes. Hindus.

Proportion of Population Born Outside Sindh

1872 Not available

1881 8%

1891 8%

1901 9%

1911 9%

Source: Census Reports.

APPENDIX V MUSLIM RACES IN SINDH

1872
Not Available

1881						
	Karachi	Hyderabad	Thar and Parkar	Shikarpur	Upper Sindh Frontier	Total
Baluchi	85,314	129,482	22,629	132,301	39,286	409,012
Sindhi	246,760	392,472	80,212	492,733	61,584	1,273,761
Sayed	7,314	14,572	1,671	13,158	1,019	37,734
Pathan	2,686	2,810	135	6,539	2,589	14,729
Others	47,993	55,149	4,547	39,544	4,704	151,968
Total	390,067	594,485	109,194	684,275	109,183	1,887,204

1891						
	Karachi	Hyderabad	Thar and Parkar	Shikarpur	Upper Sindh Frontier	Total
Baluchi	91,403	177,421	31,727	146,280	56,138	502,969
Brauhi	7,129	1,462	297	13,007	7,384	29,279
Sindhi	244,394	387,483	110,956	349,727	61,111	1,153,671
Sayed	8,148	16,090	2,384	13,393	2,384	41,401
Pathan	5,158	3,761	411	9,156	2,987	21,473
Others	96,956	126,783	19,115	197,098	25,404	466,354
Total	453,188	713,000	164,890	728,661	155,408	2,215,147

1901						
	Karachi	Hyderabad	Thar and Parkar	Shikarpur	Upper Sindh Frontier	Total
Baluchi	58,658	163,228	60,421	159,466	72,458	514,231
Brauhi	12,055	3,590	5,106	17,854	8,740	47,345
Sindhi	389,851	528,893	131,942	56,077	115,841	1,690,204
Sayed	Not available					
Pathan	2,482	6,180	2,064	8,834	3,501	23,061
Others	20,428	42,741	11,776	57,307	9,650	134,548
Total	483,474	744,632	211,309	797,882	209,192	2,446,489

1901						
	Karachi	Hyderabad	Thar and Parkar	Shikarpur	Upper Sindh Frontier	Total
Baluchi	51,515*	177,976	54,344	68,034*	83,005	141,918
Brauhi	10,147*	3,445	1,089	4,624*	19,110	21,698
Sindhi	22,4337*	444,058	154,436	270,380*	106,412	299,178
Sayed	Not available					
Pathan	6,808*	3,741	806	6,906*	3,610	2,411
Others	103,527*	151,999	43,543	64,727*	23,833	92,312
Total	396,334*	781,219	254,218	414,671*	235,970	557,517

*Reduced population in Karachi and Shikarpur due to creation of new District of Larkana in 1901	Baluchi	576,792
	Brahui	60,113
	Sindhi	1,499,291
	Sayed	--
N.B. Fluctuations in population of Sindhis due to inconsistent enumeration of Sindhi tribes.	Pathan	24,282
	Others	479,451
	Total	2,639,929

Source: Census Reports.

APPENDIX VI LARGE HOLDERS IN *TALUQA* NASIRABAD

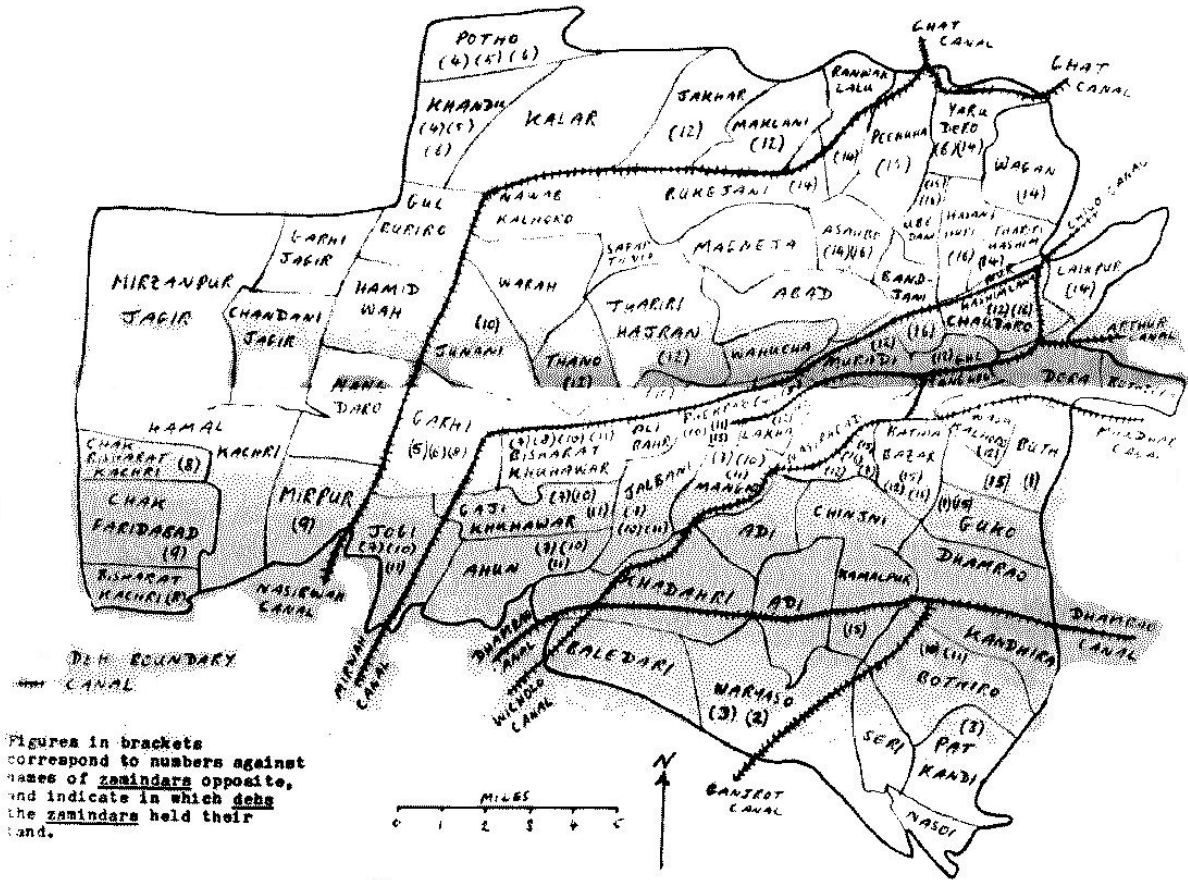
Numbers on map indicate in which *dehs* their lands were situated in 1895-1896.

1. Fatah Mohammad Junejo
1882 - 1863: 478 acres
1895 - 1896: 539 acres - took up new land
2. Allah Bakhsh Uner
1882 - 1383: Nil
1895 - 1896: 588 acres - took up new land
3. Nabi Bakhsh Suhol
1883 - 1884: 424 acres
1895 - 1896: 651 acres - inherited from father & new land
4. Abdul Baki Lakho
1883 - 1884: 367 acres
1895 - 1896: 540 acres - inherited from father & new land
5. Illahi Bakhsh Lakho
1883 - 1884: 103 acres
1895 - 1896: 540 acres - took up new land
6. Ali Mohammad Lakho
1883 - 1884: 557 acres
1895 - 1896: 1,470 acres took up new land
7. Pahilwan Khan Khuhawar
1863 - 1884: 280 acres
1895 - 1896: 1,381 acres - inherited from father & new land
8. Pir Mohammad Khuhawar
1683 - 1884: 950 acres
1895 - 1896: 1,026 acres - took up new land
9. Gehi Khan Chandio
1883 - 1884: 896 acres
1895 - 1896: 618 acres - relinquished fallow lands

10. Faiz Mohammad Khuhawar
1883 - 1884: 505 acres
1895 - 1896: 1,162 acres - took up new land
11. Fatah Ali Khuhawar
1883 - 1884: 175 acres
1895 - 1896: 700 acres - inherited & took up new land
12. Udernomal
1883 - 1884: 1,194 acres
1895 - 1896: 813 acres - estate divided on father's death
13. Sayed Khan Phulpoto
1887 - 1888: 518 acres
1895 - 1896: 597 acres inherited from father & new land
14. Mahbub Khan Wagan
1687 - 1888: 676 acres
1895 - 1896: 758 acres took up new land
15. Namomal
1887 - 1888: 972 acres
1895 - 1896: 773 acres estate divided on original owner's death
16. Narusal
1887 - 1888: 402 acres
1895 - 1896: 637 acres inherited from father & new land

Source: W.S. Cole, Actg. Sup., Land Records & Agri., Sindh, to Comer., Sindh, 7 Aug. 1897, App. XXI (B.N.S. no. CCCXVIII, Nasirabad S.R., 71).

TALUKA NASIRABAD 1897



Figures in brackets correspond to numbers against names of zamindars opposite, and indicate in which dehs the zamindars held their land.

APPENDIX VII EXAMPLES OF CROP DIVISION IN SINDH

(The figures have been recalculated to give the results which would have obtained had each *hari* worked ten acres. This has been done for ease of comparison and to give an idea of how much grain a *hari* could hope to receive at *batai*).

Estate No. 1:

1 acre of middle class rice land in the Indus Delta (1874)

The produce was divided into 12 shares:

<i>Zamindar</i>	- 8
<i>Hari</i>	- 3
Artisans	- 1

If the *hari* cultivated 10 acres altogether, then:

Total outturn	- 166.7 maunds
<i>Zamindar's</i> shares	- 111 maund ⁶
<i>Hari's</i> shares	- 41.6 maunds
Artisans' share	- 14 maunds
Value of outturn @ Rs 1-3-3 per maund	Rs 200

Value of <i>zamindar's</i> shares	Rs 133-8-8
-----------------------------------	------------

Zamindar's expenses:

Canal clearance	Rs 15-6-6
Seed	Rs 15-6-6
<i>Taqavi</i> owed to Govt.	Rs 12-8-0
Assessment	Rs 30-0-0
Miscellaneous	Rs 5-0-0
Total expenses	Rs 78-4-12
Balance of <i>zamindar's</i> shares	Rs 55-3-10
Value of <i>hari's</i> shares	Rs 50-0-0
Value of artisans' share	Rs 16-6-12

Estate No. 2:

264 acres in taluqa Jati, Indus Delta (1900)

The produce was divided on the same terms as Estate No. 1.

If each *hari* cultivated 10 acres, then:

Total outturn	- 130 maunds
<i>Zamindar's</i> shares	- 86.7 maunds
<i>Hari's</i> shares	- 32.5 maunds
Artisans' share	- 10.8 maunds

Value of outturn @ Rs 2-2-3 per maund* - Rs 278-13-11

Value of *zamindar's* shares* - Rs 185-14-7

Zamindar's expenses:

Canal clearance	- Rs 6-2-1
Seed	- Rs 28-6-8
Assessment	- Rs 30-1-2
Total expenses	- Rs 64-9-11

Balance of *zamindar's* shares - Rs 121-4-10

Value of *hari's* shares - Rs 69-10-8

Value of artisans' share - Rs 23-3-7

*Include 83.1 maunds sold @ Rs 2-3-3 per maund

Estate No. 3:

10 acres of first class rice lands in *taluka* Sukkur (1874)

The produce was divided equally after 1 share had been deducted for artisans.

Total outturn	- 266.7 maunds
<i>Zamindar's</i> share	- 125.8 maunds
<i>Hari's</i> share	- 125.8 maunds
Artisans' share	- 15 maunds

Value of outturn @ 14 annas per maund - Rs 233-6-0

Value of *zamindar's* share

Zamindar's expenses:

Canal clearance	-	Rs 5-0-0
<i>Taqavi</i> owed to Govt.	-	Rs 6-0-0
Ploughing	-	Rs 25-0-0
Assessment	-	Rs 26-9-0
Total expenses	-	Rs 62-9-0

Balance of *zamindar's* share - Rs 47-10-0

Value of *hari*'s share - Rs 110-3-0
Value of artisans' share - Rs 13-0-0

Estate No. 4:

5.4 acres of second class rice laud in *taluka* Sukkur (1874)

The produce was divided on the same terms as Estate No. 3. If the *hari* cultivated 10 acres, then:

Total outturn - 185 maunds
Zamindar's share - 89 maunds
Hari's share - 89 maunds
Artisans' share - 7 maunds

Value of outturn @ 12 annas per maund - Rs 138-14-3

Value of *zamindar*'s share - Rs 63-6-11

Zamindar's expenses:

Canal clearance - Rs 3-11-4
Taciavi owed to Govt. - Rs 4-6-5
Ploughing - Rs 12-11-10
Assessment - Rs 27-1-5
Total expenses - Rs 47-14-10

Balance of *zamindar*'s share- Rs 15-8-1

Value of *hari*'s share - Rs 63-6-11

Value of artisans' share - Rs 12-0-8

Sources: Estates 1,2,4: C.E. Fisher, Settlt. Offr., 17 March 1874 Papers relating to the Revenue Survey in Sindh (Bombay, 1875), 519 - 521).

Estate 4: T.J. Mountford, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, 27 March 1900 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1900 (July - Dec.), 1235).

APPENDIX VIII
LARGE HOLDERS IN SINDH
(Zamindars holding estates of 500 acres and over)

Taluqa	Year	No. of large-holders	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	% of total occupied area held by large-holders
<u>Upper Sind Frontier</u>				
Jacobabad	1885-86	44	2,384	76
	1893-94	59	2,445	82
	1903-04	59	2,733	92
Kandhkot	1894-95	66	1,762	63
	1902-03	83	1,627	66
Kashmore	1894-95	37	1,737	50
	1902-03	49	1,983	69
Thul	1893-94	78	1,944	75
	1902-03	91	1,898	73
<u>Shikarpur</u>				
Ghotki	1885-86	5	1,177	8.5
	1893-94	10	1,469	15
Kakar	1881-82	8	1,056	15
	1890-91	7	1,096	12
Kambar	1882-83	13	1,346	16
	1886-87	14	1,532	19
	1891-92	15	1,314	18.5
Larkana	1869-70	16	1,178	15.5
	1880-81	12	979	14
	1891-92	13	1,265	19
Mehtar	1892-93	12	898	11
	1900-01	18	1,213	20
Nasirabad	1882-83	8	784	11
	1895-96	16	793	15
Naushahro Abro	1884-85	20	1,273	29
	1897-98	21	1,347	28
Ratodero	1882-83	8	1,479	18
	1891-92	19	1,344	32
Sukkur	1889-90	9	1,567	24
	1897-98	13	1,759	31

Taluqa	Year	No. of large-holders	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	% of total occupied area held by large-holders
Hyderabad				
Badin	1898-99	22	910	14.5
	1906-07	28	888	17
Dero Mohbat	1887-88	15	1,063	23
	1907-08	17	1,328	22
Guni	1882-83	31	1,791	41
	1892-93	43	1,188	38
	1904-05	33	1,678	44.5
Hala	1883-84	42	1,309	54
	1892-93	59	1,198	59
Hyderabad	1896-97	7	679	5
	1904-05	9*	2,264*	21*
Johi	1887-88	17	1,034	25.5
	1896-97	27	988	19
Kandiaro	1881-82	16	687	11
	1894-95	21	796	15.5
Moro	1881-82	9	994	12.5
	1894-95	19	817	15
Naushahro Feroze	1881-82	20	885	10
	1894-95	44	11,195	22
Shandadpur	1892-93	26	1,370	25
	1904-05	37	1,328	29
Tando Allahyar	1890-01	21	1,379	18
	1904-05	26	1,511	22
Tando Bago	1898-99	34	1,420	42
	1906-07	34	1,517	38
Thar and Parkar				
Sinjhor	1892-93	7	1,205	27
	1904-05	7	1,262	27

Taluqa	Year	No. of large-holders	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	% of total occupied area held by large-holders
Karachi				
Ghorbari	1888-89	24	669	33
	1902-03	15	862	27
Jati	1887-88	18	1,021	33
	1897-98	19	972	34
	1913-14	16	1,196	27
Kotri	1889-90	4	915	26
	1897-98	4	1,047	29
Manjhand	1885-86	8	1,074	26
	1893-94	11	1,484	44
Mirpur Bathoro	1883-84	3	747	3
	1895-96	12	1,034	19
	1913-14	8	1,699	19
Mirpur Sakro	1888-89	24	975	40.5
	1902-03	11	809	19
Shahbandar	1886-87	19	905	29
	1897-98	17	946	39
	1913-14	15	1,312	34
Sujawal	1883-84	12	1,084	25
	1895-96	9	1,682	29
	1913-14	8	2,277	32
Thatta	1882-83	10	1,093	22
	1898-99	10	1,022	22
	1902-03	7	1,102	19

*Includes one *jagir* estate which lapsed to Government and was re-granted to the heir as *zamindari* land. Without this, the average size of a large holding in Hyderabad in 1904-1905 would have been 612.5 acres.

Source: Calculated from nominal lists of large holders which were appended to some Settlement Reports.

APPENDIX IX
MUSLIM AND HINDU LARGE HOLDINGS IN SINDH
(Zamindars holding estates of 500 acres and over)

Taluqa	Year	<u>Muslims</u>		<u>Hindus</u>	
		No. of large-holders. (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	No. of largeholder (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder
Upper Sind					
Frontier.					
Jacobabad	1885-86	35	2,523	7	2,375
	1893-94	50	2,569	9	1,755
	1903-04	49*	2,941	9*	1,801.50
Kandhkot	1894-95	55	1,858	11	1,279
	1902-03	66	1,712	17	1,295
Kashmore	1894-95	37	1,617	4	1,106
	1902-03	44	2,123	5	751
Thul	1893-94	68	2,054	10	1,196
	1902-03	80	1,971	11	1,366
Shikarpur					
Ghotki	1885-86	5	1,469	0	---
	1893-94	10	1,479	0	---
Kakar	1881-82	7	982	1	1,567
	1890-91	6	1,061	1	1,308
Kambar	1882-83	13	1346	0	---
	1886-87	14	1,532	0	---
	1891-92	15	1,314	0	---
Larkana	1869-70	16	1,178	0	---
	1880-81	11	785	1	3,116
	1891-92	10	840	3	2,682
Mehtar	1892-93	7	951	5	816
	1900-01	12	1,191	6	1,257
Nasirabad	1882-83	6	684	2	1,083
	1895-96	13	809	3	728
Naushahro Abro	1884-85	17	1,280	3	1,236
	1897-98	17	1,316	4	1,478
Ratodero	1882-83	5	1,609	3	1,262
	1891-92	14	1,323	5	1,403
Sukkur	1889-90	9	1,566	0	---
	1897-98	11	1,967	2	1,234

Taluqa	Year	Muslims		Hindus	
		No. of large-holders. (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	No. of largeholder (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder
Hyderabad					
Badin	1898-99	14	887	8	949
	1906-07	17	933	11	816
Dero Mohbat	1887-88	11	1,174	4	757
	1907-08	11	1,634	6	768
Guni	1882-83	20	1,477	11	2,362
	1892-93	28	1,118	15	1,319.50
	1904-05	18	1,728	15	1,617.50
Hala	1883-84	37	1,351	5	997
	1892-93	49	1,238	10	1,002
Hyderabad	1896-97	4	760.5	3	570
	1904-05	5**	3,641**	4	542
Johi	1887-88	16	987	1	1,776
	1896-97	24	984	3	1,019
Kandiaro	1881-82	13	664	3	785
	1894-95	16	754	5	929
Moro	1881-82	9	994	0	---
	1894-95	18	810	1	938
Naushahro Feroze	1881-82	14	859	6	944
	1894-95	33	1,121	11	1,416
Shandadpur	1892-93	15	1,421	11	1,301
	1904-05	20	1,163	17	1,521
Tando Allahyar	1890-91	17	1,430	4	1,161
	1904-05	19	1,499	7	1,546
Tando Bago	1398-99	22	1,505	11	1,380
	1906-07	21	1,536	13	1,486.5

Taluqa	Year	Muslims		Hindus	
		No. of large-holders. (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder (acres)	No. of largeholder (acres)	Ave. area of estate of each largeholder
Thar and Parkar					
Sinjhoru	1892-93	6	1,306	1	597
	1904-05	5	1,432	2	835.5
Karachi					
Ghorabari	1888-89	17	576	4	895
	1902-03	10	748	7	1,091
Jati	1887-88	14	901	5	1,464
	1897-98	12	912	4	1,075
	1913-14	8	1,355	7	1,037
Kotri	1889-90	3	617	8	1,811
	1897-98	3	559	1	2,058
Manjhand	1885-86	7	1,131	1	674
	1893-94	7	1,614	4	1,257
Mirpur Bathoro	1883-84	3	747	0	---
	1895-96	9	1,143	3	708
	1913-14	5	1,886	3	1,388
Mirpur Sakro	1888-89	13	1,061	11	875
	1902-03	7	725	4	954
Shahbandar	1886-87	15	973	4	652
	1897-98	13	1,002	4	765
	1913-14	10	1,439	5	1,060
Sujawal	1883-84	10	1,121	2	895
	1895-96	8	1,799	1	743
	1913-14	8	2,277	0	---
Thatta	1882-83	9	1,077	1	1,288
	1898-99	9	1,046	1	805
	1902-03	6	1,182	1	623

* In addition, one Parsee held 889 acres in 1903-1904.

**Includes *jagir* land resumed by Government - cf. note in Appendix VIII.

Source: Calculated from nominal lists of large holders which were appended to some Settlement Reports.

**APPENDIX X
LANDHOLDINGS IN SINDH**

	Number of holders		
Size of holding	1880-81	1890-91	1894-95
5 acres and under	25,873	25,716	28,974
5 - 25 acres	43,728	50,055	54,760
25 - 100 acres	21,066	20,514	23,285
100 - 500 acres	4,738	6,885	7,810
Over 500 acres	1,132	1,216	1,297
Total	96,537	104,386	116,126
Proportion of holders to total:			
Size of holding	1880-81	1890-91	1894-95
5 acres and under	27%	25%	25%
5 - 25 acres	45%	48%	47%
25 - 100 acres	22%	19.50%	20%
100 - 500 acres	5%	6.50%	7%
Over 500 acres	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: H.E.M. James, Commr., Sindh, to Govr., Bombay, 12 Aug. 1896, Note A (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1899 (July - Dec.), Confl. Pr., 797).

APPENDIX XI

LARGE HOLDERS IN *TALUQA* LARKANA

Name of zamiadar	Size of holding (acres)		
	1869-70	1880-81	1891-92
Shah Nawaz Abro	4,077	1,182	1,111
Mohammad Panah	2,727	---	---
Gokuldas	---	3,116	3,096
Mir Khan Abro & sons*	1,845	600	442
Pir Bakhsh Kalhoro & sons*	936	493	76
Mohammad Saleh Khizmatgar	904	175	188
Dost Mohammad Lahori	722	966	1,115
Tharo Khan Lahori	562	880	2,210
Lutaf Ali Abro & sons*	571	422	247
Ghulam Shah	650	1,11	1,267
Ghulam Allah Abro	646	521	1,193
Sher Mohammad Sangi	447	511	459
Ghulam Ali Isran	177	652	1,990
Nangar Sangi	533	284	97
Shah. Mohammad Kalhoro	1,597	691	376
Taj Mohammad Kalhoro*	530	274	151
Pir Sher Mohammad	675	138	574
Khalikdad Abro & other	569	569	964
Sardar Khan Abro	1,300	---	---
Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto**	---	919	238
Usman Ali Abro	---	---	560
Lakhasing Amil	---	---	1,043
Pritamsing	---	---	811
Mohammad Fazal Sangi	---	---	516

*Decreases in the sizes of these estates may be due to partition among heirs of the original incumbents. The estate of Pir Bakhsh Kalhoro, for example, was held by his son in 1880 - 1881 and by his grandson in 1891 - 1892.

**In 1884, the Bhutto estate was divided between Dodo Khan Bhutto and his two sons. This way account for the decrease in the size of the Bhutto holding. (Commr., Sindh,

memo., 10 Apr. 1884 - P.G.B., R.D.L., 1884 (Jan. - June), 550). In 1880 - 1881, Dodo Khan held 758 acres in Larkana but it was not included in the above list because it was under the management of the Manager, Encl. Estates. (T. Hart-Davies, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., 31 May 1883 -B.N.S. no. CC, Larkana S.R., 83).

Source: G.F. Mathieson, Actg. Sup., Sindh Rev. Survey, to Commr., Sindh, 8 March 1892 (B.N.S. no. CCCXV, Larkana S.R., 36).

APPENDIX XII

REVENUE HISTORY OF *TALUQA* LARKANA

Year	Cultivated area (acres)	Net revenue (Rupees)	Ave. rate per acre		
			Rs.	a	p
'Rough settlement'					
1856-57	53,123	1,26,243	2	6	0
1857-58	55,450	1,35,480	2	7	1
1858-59	51,088	1,32,411	2	9	6
1859-60	57,365	1,50,137	2	9	11
1860-61	63,487	1,61,185	2	8	7
1861-62	74,288	1,79,859	2	6	9
1862-63	76,203	1,87,924	2	7	5
1863-64	90,561	2,25,387	2	7	10
1864-65	95,445	2,35,452	2	7	6
1865-66	79,475	2,17,200	2	9	9
1866-67	85,042	2,33,126	2	11	10
1867-68	74,413	2,06,362	2	12	4
1868-69	71,683	1,97,743	2	12	2
1869-70	71,833	1,73,860	2	6	9
Average	71,389	1,83,026	2	9	0
'Original' settlement (' diffused rate')					
1870-71	92,947	2,46,535	2	10	5
1871-72	92,395	2,39,043	2	9	5
1872-73	89,862	2,29,247	2	8	10
1873-74	79,358	2,18,759	2	12	1
1874-75	80,305	2,06,209	2	9	1
1875-76	79,321	2,05,074	2	9	4
1876-77	85,951	1,79,550	2	1	5
1877-78	72,178	1,94,547	2	11	2
1878-79	85,085	2,06,448	2	6	10
1879-80	88,037	2,13,202	2	6	9
Average	84,544	2,13,861	2	8	6

Year	Cultivated area (acres)	Net revenue	Ave. rate per		
			Rs.	a	p
'Revision settlement'					
1831-82	84,435	3,30,160	3	14	8
1882-83	90,261	3,40,717	3	12	5
1883-84	79,439	3,06,381	3	13	10
1884-85	86,703	3,29,122	3	12	10
1885-86	71,643	2,47,239	3	6	8
1886-87	75,821	2,67,494	3	8	6
1887-88	69,873	2,71,965	3	14	4
1888-89	81,184	3,12,125	3	13	7
1889-90	83,741	2,84,376	3	6	5
1890-91	86,964	3,31,376	3	12	13
Average	81,006	3,01,774	3	11	8
'Irrigational settlement'					
1893-94	Not Available	3,96,656	Not Available		
1894-95		3,84,554			
1895-96		1,99,052			
1896-97		3,34,318			
1897-98		3,90,582			
1898-99		2,97,597			
1899-00		3,13,202			
1900-01	90,747	3,70,469	4	1	4
1901-02	89,359	3,74,827	4	3	2
1902-03	78,154	3,30,045	4	3	8
1903-04	90,051	3,79,979	4	3	7
1904-05	84,750	3,54,235	4	2	12
1905-06	89,545	3,82,116	4	4	4
Average	87,101	3,46,741	4	3	1
<i>Source: Larkana S.R.s</i>					

**APPENDIX XIII
PRICES IN LARKANA**

Year	Rice (in husk)	Juari	Wheat
	Rs a p	Rs a p	Rs a p
1863-1869	1 5 0	1 4 0	1 15 0
1881	111 0	2 8 0	3 0 0
1882	0 15 0	1 3 0	2 6 0
1883	1 0 7	1 5 0	2 4 0
1884	1 6 7	1 7 0	2 4 0
1885	1 6 0	1 6 6	2 1 0
1886	1 7 0	1 8 0	2 1 6
1887	1 7 7	1 7 6	2 9 6
1888	1 9 7	1 6 6	2 9 0
1889	1 12 0	1 10 0	2 8 0
1890	1 10 3	1 9 0	2 8 0
1891	0 13 10	1 2 0	2 15 0
1892	1 11 6	2 4 0	3 1 0
1881-1892	1 3 13	1 7 9	2 3 11
1894	111 6	2 8 0	2 13 0
1895	1 12 0	1 14 0	2 13 0
1896	1 14 7	1 14 0	2 11 0
1897	1 11 7	1 14 0	2 11 7
1898	1 11 7	1 12 0	2 11 0
1899	1 9 7	1 12 7	2 12 0
1900	1 9 0	1 12 7	2 11 7
1894-1900	1 11 5	1 13 8	2 10 12
1901	1 10 0	1 11 0	2 10 7
1902	1 10 7	1 13 0	2 13 0
1903	1 10 0	1 14 0	2 13 0
1904	1 9 0	2 0 0	2 13 0
1905	1 11 7	2 2 0	2 11 0
1906	1 14 0	2 2 0	2 9 0
1901-1906	1 10 12	1 15 0	2 11 8
Sources: M.P. Haig, Settl. Offr., 5 Feb. 1881 (B.N.S. no. CC, Larkana S.R., 48).			
C.G. Henderson, Settl. Offr., to Commr., Sind, 30 Apr. 1907 (B.N.S. no. CCCCLXXXII, Larkana S.R., 6, 42).			

APPENDIX XIV

LARGE HOLDERS IN TALUQA SUKKUR

Size of holding			
(acres)			
Name of zamindar	1889-90	1897-98	Remarks
Usif Mahar	2,058	2,535	Took up new land
Ghaos Bakhsh Mahar	3,306	5,629	Took up new land
Sayed Nadir Shah	1,384	2,122	Took up new land
Abdul Rahman Pirzado	804	737	Forfeited fallow land
Lal Khan Pathan,	1,891	2,677	Took up new land
Khair Mohammad Pathan	1,443	---	Transferred land*
Sabal Hindu	357	356	
Motumal Hindu	282	249	Family partition
Khan Mohammad Mahar	915	884	Family partition
Hayat Phulpoto	1,256	2,110	Took up new land
Sayed Ali Shah	310	359	Took up new land
Gulabrai Hindu	286	686	Took up new land
Ghulam Nabi Pirzado	247	1,394	Took up new land
Gelaram Hindu	264	342	Took up new land
Kimatsing Hindu	---	548	Purchased land
Rahim Khan Khoso	441	338	Forfeited fallow land
Motial Mahar	378	738	Took up new land
Dipo Hindu	167	367	Took up new land
Faiz Mohammad Pathan	---	1,667	Purchased land*
Ghulam Haidar Khatian	354	1,118	Took up new land
Kazim Khan Mughal	1,042	1,419	Took up new land
*Khair Mohammad Pathan transferred his holding to Faiz Mohammad Pathan.			
<i>Source: S. Ali, Depy. Colir., Sukkur, to Actg. Commr., Sindh, 23 Dec. 1898, App. XXII (B.N.S. no. CCCXXVIII, Sukkur S.R., 85).</i>			

APPENDIX XV
LARGE HOLDERS IN *TALUQA* MIRPUR SAKRO

Name of zamindar	Size of holding		Remarks
	(acres)		
	1889-90	1902-03	
Fatehchand	1,203	835	Forfeited fallow land
Chuto	720	264	Forfeited fallow land
Teju	590	355	Forfeited fallow land
Chato	680	11	Sold land
Ahmad	561	---	Sold land to Josting
Jotsing	1,395	1,409	Forfeited 1,034 acres of fallow land, bought 1,048 acres
Vario	1,210	791	Forfeited fallow land
Gul Hassan	1,541	265	Sold land
Khilandas	699	56	Sold land
Umar	726	352	Sold land
Ghazi Khan	728	920	Bought land
Chato	646	613	Forfeited fallow land
Bhim	720	252	Sold land
Jan Mohammad	1,401	555	Family partition
Mataro	1,689	418	Family partition
Saleh Mohammad	1,049	602	Forfeited fallow land
Mohammad	1,352	189	Forfeited fallow land
Mariam	620	240	Sold land & forfeited fallow land
Kadu	1,515	101	Sold land & forfeited fallow land
Mangharam	691	173	Forfeited fallow land
Nanikram	886	128	Forfeited fallow land
Akil	1,695	1,010	Forfeited fallow land
Shivandas	566	384	Forfeited fallow land
Achar	506	252	Forfeited fallow land
Basarmal	---	958	Bought land
Imam Bakhsh	---	628	Bought land
Ibrahim Shah	---	573	Took up land
Source: W.F. Hudson, Settlt, Offr., to Commr., Sind, 22 June 1904 (B.N.S. no. CCCXXXII, Mirpur Sakro S.R., 15).			

APPENDIX XVI
LARGE HOLDERS IN TALUQA SUJAWAL

Name of zamindar	Size of holding (acres)		
	1883-84	1895-96	1913-14*
Asiat & Mitial (1)	2,016	---	---
Basarmal (2)	991	---	---
Mohab Ali Miano	---	3,273	3,328
Sayed Mohammad Kamil Shah	1,379	2,385	3,067
Khair Bakhsh Kham Laghari	585	1,929	2,825
Umed All Khan Laghari	783	487	287
Sohrab Khan Laghari	503	340	344
Pir Bakhsh Khan Talpur (3)	3,238	509	678
Shaikh Gahi Khan	83	2,088	1,541
Shaikh Pinial	773	796	790
Mohammad Pario Khizmatgar	542	185	307
Navalrai	799	333	366
Sayed Kaderdino Shah	645	2,548	4,507
Gul MohamMad Sumro	750	864	1,480
Devan	---	743	9
Sayed Haji Hashim Shah (4)	---	---	180
Damoderdas (5)	---	---	474
*Original holders were dead by 1913-1914; figures in this column refer to the holdings of their heirs.			
(1) Wife & daughter of Saleh Mohammad Shah; sold land to Mohab Ali Miano.			
(2) Sold land to Mohammad Kamil Shah.			
(3) Sold land to Gahi Khan.			
(4) Bought land from heirs of Umed Ali Khan Laghari.			
(5) Bought land from heirs of Devan.			
Sources: H.S. Lawrence, Asst. Collr., Shahbandar, 8 Nov. 1897, App. XXIII(B.N.S. no. CCCXXVI, Sujawal S.R., 54).			
M.N. Asardas, Settlt. Offr., to Commr., Sind, 29 March 1915, App. XVII (B.N.S. no. CCCCXCVII, Sujawal S.R., 133).			

APPENDIX XVII

INCOMES OF TWO PEASANT FAMILIES IN TALUQA SUKKUR

Family no. 1:

2 brothers, 2 wives, 1 young son, 2 young daughters. Property: 4 bullocks, 2 cows, 1 cart, 7¼ acres of land.

Cultivation:

Superior crops - ¾ acre
Wheat- 4 acres
Juari - 2½ acres

Produce:

Wheat - 52½ maunds
Juari - 29 maunds
Sugarcane - 30 maunds
Tobacco - 18 maunds

Annual consumption of cereal - 60 maunds
Cereal required for seed - 9½ maunds
Cereal remaining for sale - 12 maunds

Agricultural income:

Cereal @ Rs 1½ per maund - Rs 18
Sugarcane @ Rs 6 per maund - Rs 180
Tobacco @ Rs 5 per maund - Rs 90
Total income - Rs 288

Agricultural expenses:

Seed, manure, assessment, etc. - Rs 144
Provisions (fish, meat, condiments etc.) - Rs 31
Clothing - Rs 35
Total expenses - Rs 230

Net income from agriculture - Rs 58

Non-agricultural income:

Sale of butter @ 1 anna per day - Rs 11½
Spinning by women @ ½ anna each per day - Rs 24
Carting for two months @ 8 annas per day - Rs 30

Total income - Rs 64¹/₄
Net income from all sources - Rs 123¹/₄

Family no. 2:

2 men, 1 wife, 2 young sons, 2 young daughters, 2 working daughters.

Property: 6¹/₂ acres of land

Cultivation:

Superior crops - ³/₄ acre
Wheat - 3 acres
Juari - 1³/₄ acres

Produce:

Wheat - 39 maunds
Juari - 36 maunds

Annual consumption of cereal - 57³/₄ maunds
Cereal required for seed - 7³/₄ maunds
Cereal remaining for sale - 12¹/₂ maunds

Agricultural income:

Cereal @ Rs 11 per maund - Rs 18³/₄
Tobacco and sugarcane* - Rs 270
Straw - Rs 10
Total income - Rs 298³/₄

Agricultural expenses:

Seed, manure, assessment, etc. - Rs 146
Provisions - Rs 46
Clothing - Rs 30
Total expenses - Rs 222

Net income from agriculture - Rs 76³/₄
Non-agricultural income: Butter - Rs 11
Spinning - Rs 12
Total - Rs 23
Net income from all sources - Rs 123³/₄

*Outturn of tobacco and sugarcane not given.

Source: M.R. Haig, Settl. Offr., to Collr., Shpur., - Sept. 1873 (B.N.S. no. CCI, Sukkur S.R., 56 - 57).

**APPENDIX XVIII
DEBTORS' ACCOUNTS**

1. Account of Chakar Khan Suhrani									
	Principal			Interest			Payments		
	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>
12 Jul. 1877	1,694	1	0	22	0	0	755	10	0
26 Jul. 1878	1,046	2	6	379	8	0	123	12	0
20 Oct. 1879	930	13	6	820	8	0	1,012	8	0
20 Jan. 1880	294	12	6	202	0	6	---	---	---
28 June 1880	603	10	0	410	0	0	97	0	0
10 Apr. 1881	1,004	8	9	635	8	0	530	14	0
11 Mat 1883	2,424	15	9	3,106	0	0	1,531	6	6
20 Mar. 1885	116	4	6	---	---	---	12	0	0
TOTAL	8,115	4		5,578	8	0	4,030	3	0

2. Account of Angara Nabi Bakhsh Gachal									
	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>P</i>
15 June 1886	183	15	6	32	15	6	45	0	0
27 June 1886	33	6	6	65	4	6	62	8	0
21 July 1890	26	8	0	77	0	0	61	8	0
10 July 1892	---	---	---	59	12	0	117	4	0
8 Apr. 1895	1	0	0	56	12	0	24	8	0
TOTAL	244	14	0	291	12	0	310	12	0

3. Account of Shah Nawaz Khan Jatoi									
	Principal			Interest			Payments		
	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>
14 May 1887	160	0	0	---	---	---	---	---	---
1 Nov. 1333	---	---	---	80	8	0	---	---	---
22 Mar. 1891	---	---	---	128	8	0	200	0	0
28 Mar. 1891	1	8	0	---	---	---	---	---	---
21 Dec. 1892	---	---	---	74	13	0	2	0	0
7 Apr. 1893	80	0	0	---	---	---	---	---	---
11 Apr. 1894	---	---	---	89	6	0	2	3	0
16 Mar. 1895	12	0	0	104	2	0	30	0	0
TOTAL	253	8	0	476	13	0	234	3	0

4. Account of Chuto Khan Panah									
	Principal			Interest			Payments		
	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Rs</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>p</i>
2 Nov. 1888	30	0	0	10	12	0	3	0	0
17 Aug. 1891	38	0	0	35	0	0	---	---	---
17 July 1894	80	0	0	141	4	0	1	2	6
TOTAL	148	0	0	187	0	0	24	2	6

Source: L.J. Mountford, Manager, Encl. Estates, Sindh, to Commr., Sindh, 4 Sept. 1900 & 22 Oct 1900, App. A (Sindh Encumbered Estates Annual Administration Report, 1899-1900, 9, 125-126).

APPENDIX XIX
DEBT IN SINDH, 1876

(Debts of zamindars paying over Rs 500 p.a. as revenue assessment and jagirdars)

Collectorate	No. of debtors	Zamindars' debts (Rupees)	Jagirdarst debts (Rupees)	Total debt (Rupees)	Average debt per debtor (Rupees)
Karachi	291	520,120	93,640	613,760	2,109
Hyderabad	77	278,015	844,093	1,122,108	14,575
Shikarpur	98	692,750	41,100	733,850	7,488
U.S. Frontier	93	364,605	17,650	382,255	4,110
Thar & Parkar	110	123,681	---	123,681	1,124
Total	669	1,979,171	996,483	2,975,654	4,474 (Sindh)

Source: Bombay Govt. Resn. no. 7628, 29 Dec. 1876 (P.G.B., R.D.L., 1676, 1005).

FIG. I
POSITION OF SIND

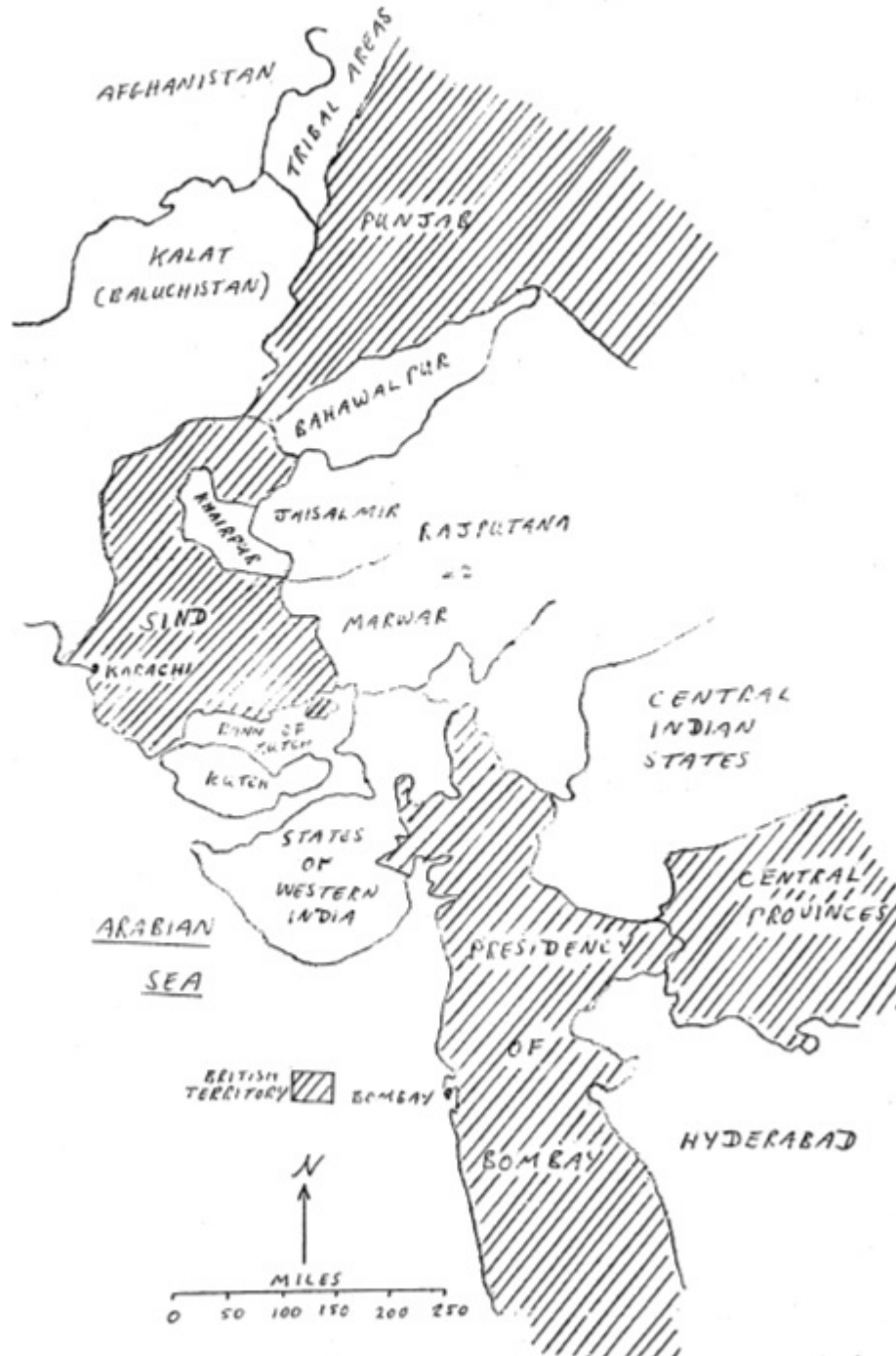


FIG. II
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS OF SIND



FIG. III
PRINCIPAL TOWNS IN SIND
 (and railways - 1907)

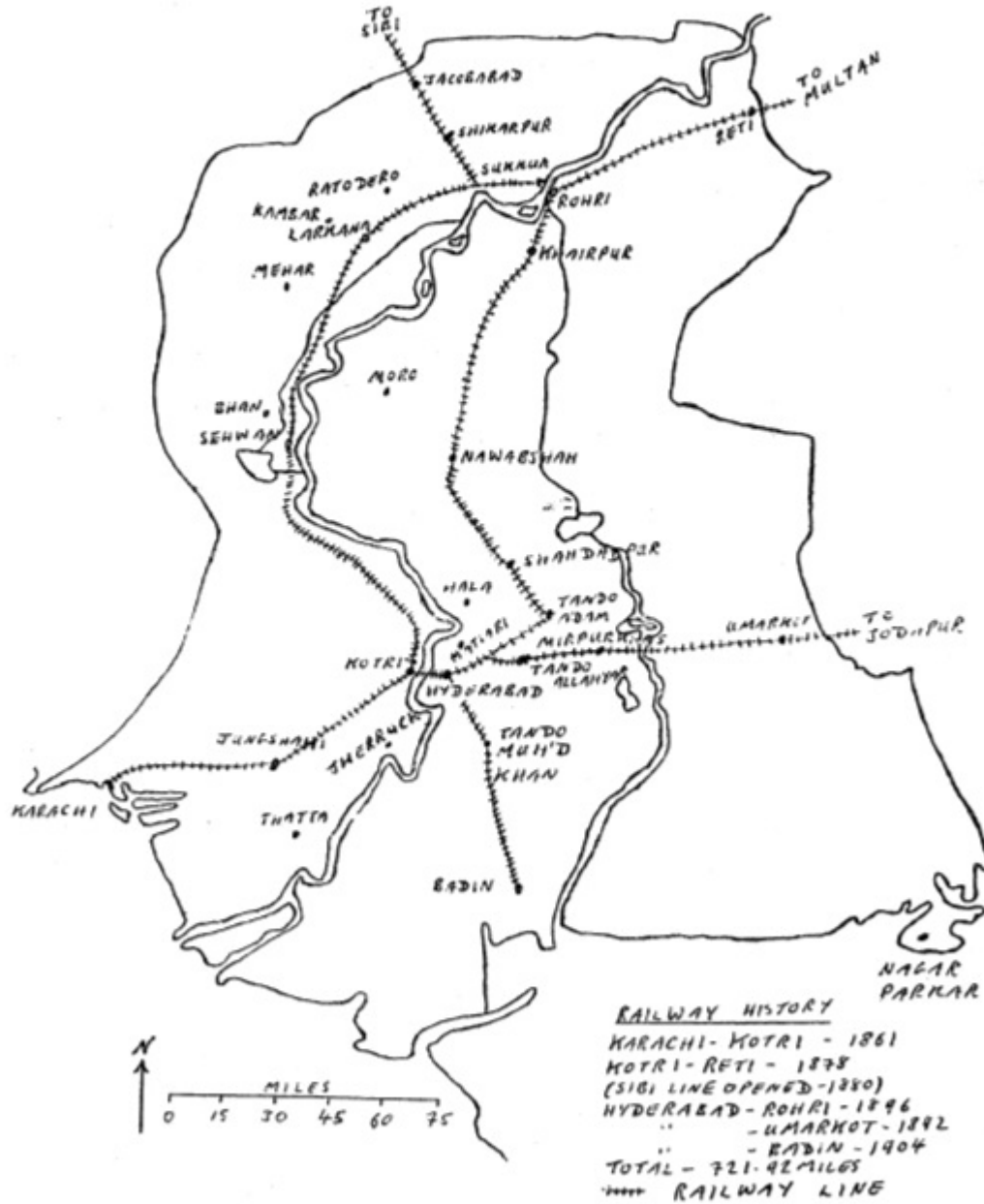


FIG. IV
PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS OF SINDH

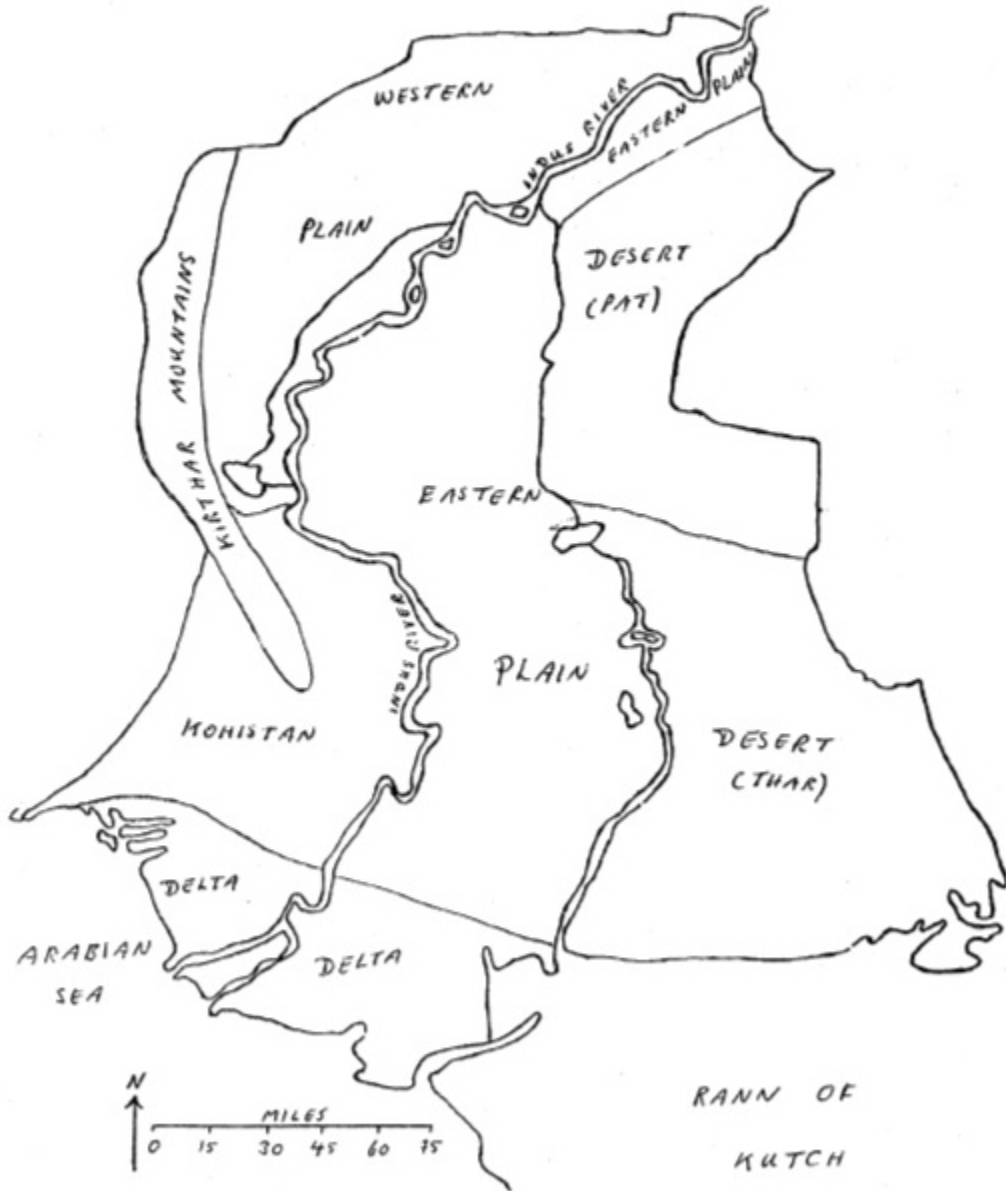
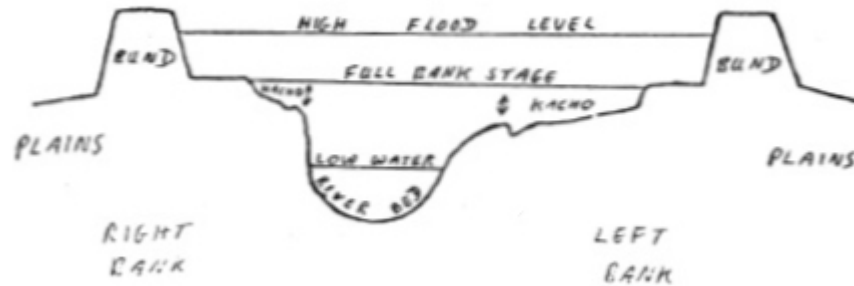


FIG. V
PROFILE OF INDUS RIVER

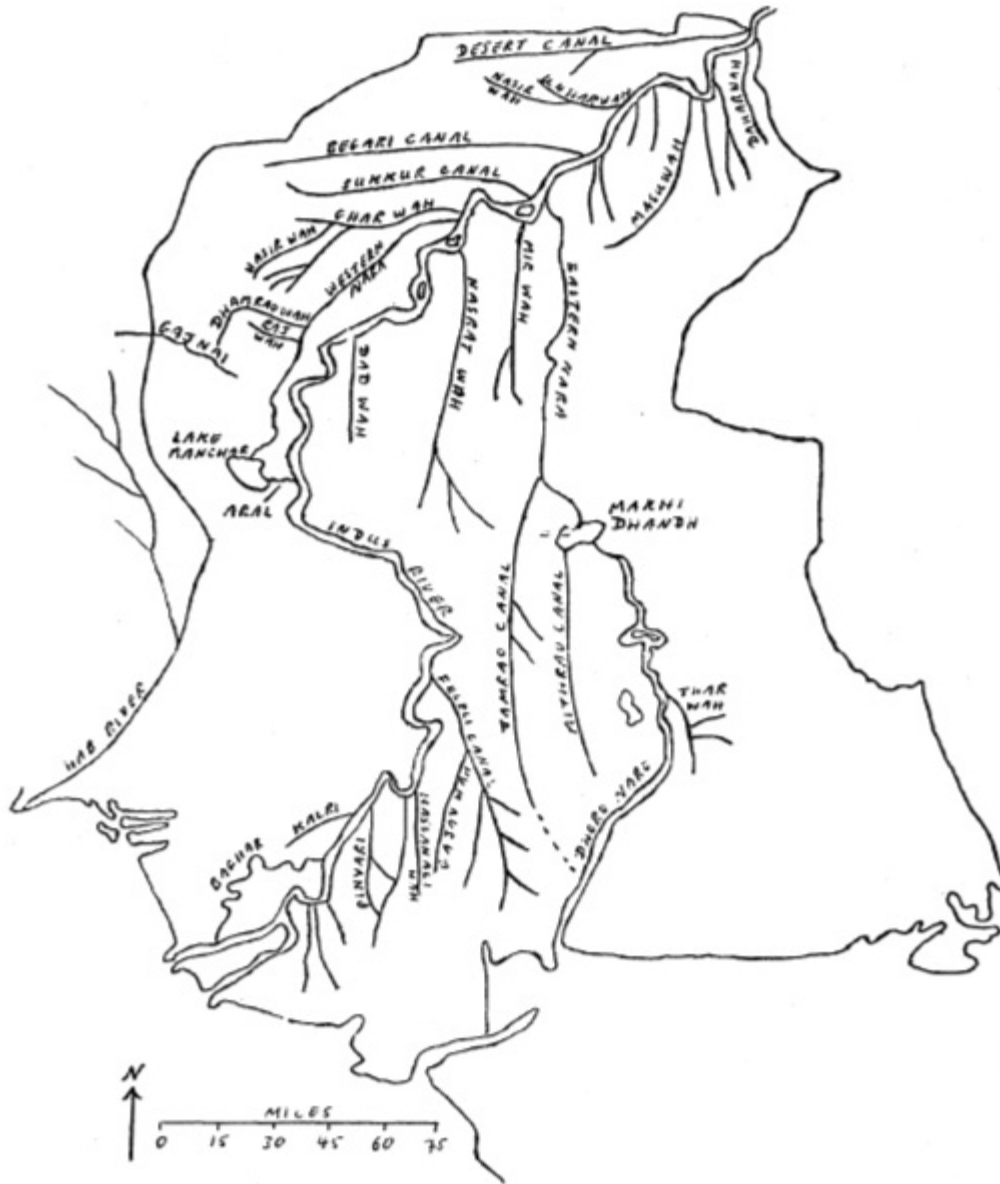


Typical cross section at a straight reach

As a result of the westward trend of the river, kacho land is more extensive on the left bank (east) than on the right bank. Kacho land is normally flooded during the inundation, and is exposed after the inundation subsides.

Source: Govt. of Sindh, Public Works Dept., Bund Manual (Karachi, 1954), Fig. 1.

FIG. VI
PRINCIPAL CANALS IN SIND
(1907)



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