

An historical re-reading of evolving land-man  
relationship in the Princely State Cooch Behar  
(1772-1949): Contextualizing political economy of  
regional history in perspective

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of  
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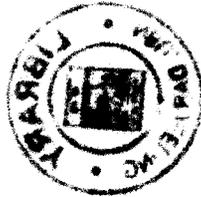
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## Preface

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At the out set, let me submit my compulsions and convenience in undertaking this academic exercise what I have attempted to make for nearly a decade. Being born and brought up in Cooch Behar, presently the district town of Cooch Behar-the erstwhile capital of the Princely State Cooch Behar, my sense of history did gradually grow in a positive social and academic ambience which helped to develop an insight in me to understand both academically and conceptually the history of our region. The present study has attempted to unravel an unexplored area of Cooch Behar State (1772-1949). The Princely State Cooch Behar occupies an important place in the eyes of the contemporary historians specially dedicated to the cause of regional history. Because of its chequered past and an objective recorded history of continuous 500 years dynastic rule as well as the relevant documentation of records of administration which are available and accessible. The balance of convenience, for me, tilted to concentrate on the study of Cooch Behar especially its land –man relationship.. Indeed the present study is based on regional-national continuum and more precisely would unfold the micro – specificities of history in the regional frame to understand further the macro-specificities of history. The lens used in the study is “National History Localised”.

The history of the State of Cooch Behar triggered an academic intervention of diverse interests. While the central preoccupation of the researchers in the colonial phase was to explore 1) the dynastic history of family, 2) the beneficial economic and administrative reforms undertaken by the State of Cooch Behar under the aegis of the colonial Residents, the central concern of the researchers in the post- colonial phase appeared to be to construct the different shades of interrelationships between the State of Cooch Behar, its neighbouring states and the British India at different points of time.

Until recently, agrarian studies on colonial India have been basically the policy studies. However, the official debates on revenue settlements have provided ample academic space for numerous regional studies. Studies on the structure of agrarian relations in their regional variations, the internal matrix of the economy,

the processes of productions, trends in productivity, rents, prices, land-man relationship, inter alia, have still been relatively scarce. Over the years the focus of analysis has also changed within the policy studies. In addition, what is being realized now that the issues of land alienation, land-control structure, socio-economic de-stabilization, and social dynamics of land-man relationship, impact of prices, market mechanism, and agricultural productivity of the Princely State of Cooch Behar have not been seriously explored by the contemporary wisdom of regional historical research. The proposed study is addressed to the issues mentioned above, hitherto remained unaddressed.

The present study could not have been completed without the ceaseless inspiration and continuous academic support of my supervisor Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh. In fact he has taught me the basic lesson of history. He has made me to understand the different aspects of the history of our region by his thorough wisdom and deep insight in the subject. I express my gratitude and indebtedness to my research supervisor. I owe to all of my teachers in the Department of History, University of North Bengal. I extend my gratitude to the respective supportive staff and librarians of the State Library, Cooch Behar, North Bengal University Library, State Central library, Kolkata, National Library Kolkata, State Archives Kolkata, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, National Archives, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, for their kind cordial co-operation. Most importantly I owe to my parents and my uncle for their continuous support and encouragement.

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## Glossary

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Abwab	: Illegal exactions.
Adhi	: Half share of the produce.
Adhiar	: Share croppers who pay half of the produce as rent.
Ahilkar	: A native officer.
Ahutali	: The land used for the cultivation of local variety of paddy known as Ahu.
Assal	: Original rent.
Baotali	: Low land where Bao paddy was sown.
Bigha	: A measure of land varying in extent in different parts of India. (One Bigha= 14,400 sq. feet or one third acre approx.).
Bish	: Land measurement equivalent to thirteen standard bighas.
Brahmottar	: Land donated to the priest.
Bujharat	: Local explanation of enlisting of land
Bundar	: Riverrine trade centre.
Chaklah	: A territorial demarcation for revenue and administrative purpose.
Chittis	: Small patch of land.
Chukanidar	: Under tenant of a Jotedar.
Dar-Chukanidar	: Under tenant of a Chukanidar.
Dara-dar-Chukanidar	: Under tenant of a Dar-Chukanidar.
Debutter	: Land dedicated for worship or maintenance of the deities and for other religious purposes.

Dewan	: The Chief Minister of an Indian Prince.
Dewani	: The revenue collecting rights.
Durbar	: The meeting place.
Ekwai Jamabundies	: The Settlement rent-rolls.
Estafasar	: Forms i.e. the stamped applications for maps.
Fauzadari Ahilkar	: Native officer invested with the ordinary power of a magistrate in the regulation provinces.
Halisa	: land measurement like those of equivalent to one bigha.
Hustabood	: Annual revenue statement of the State.
Hustobund	: Investigation and survey or detailed inquiry.
Izara	: Tax Farming.
Izaradari	: Lease of land
Jagir	: A grant of land in exchange of service.
Jagirdar	: Holder of Jagir.
Jagirs	: Service tenure system.
Jama	: Rate of revenue.
Jamabandi	: Revenue roll.
Jhum	: Slash and burn methods of cultivation/ shifting cultivation
Jote	: A unit of land.
Jotedar	: Landlord.
Kabuliyat	: A written agreement.
Khangi	: Expenditure for Royal Household.
Khas	: The possession of an individual indicating his authority on something.
Khatian	: Record-of-right.

Kistwar	: Cadastral Survey.
Khanapuri	: Preliminary record.
Krishiprojas	: Cultivating ryots.
Lakhiraj	: Exemption from paying revenue.
Maghuwatali	: land for the cultivation of Rabi crops.
Mahajan	: Moneylender.
Mahal	: A revenue paying unit.
Mal	: Land revenue.
Mal-guzari land	: Revenue paying land.
Mauza	: A village or group of villages having separate name in the revenue records- a fiscal division.
Mokarari	: Permanently settled land.
Naib Ahilkar	: A native officer who tries petty offences in the rank of sub-divisional officer.
Narayanee Rupee	: The currency introduced by Cooch Behar raja.
Nazir Deo	: Commander-in-chief.
Nuzzer	: Type of tax imposed by the Mughals.
Paik	: Soldiers who had to work for the State by offering their free manual labour.
Pargana	: Territorial and administrative division of Mughal ruled areas.
Patit	: Fallow land.
Patit-Charch	: Fallow land Settlement.
Petbhata	: The tax free estates given to the relatives of the king.
Pirpal	: Lands dedicated to Muslim Pir
Raikat	: Umbrella bearer of the king.

Raiyat	: Tenant.
Rakam Charcha	: Classification of Land.
Rupit	: Lands for cultivation.
Sali	: Transplanted rice.
Sajwals	: Revenue collector.
Sannad	: The Royal order.
Sannyasi	: Hindu saint.
Suba	: Province.
Tali-Chukanidar	: Sub tenant of tashya Chukanidar.
Tashya- Chukanidar	: Sub tenant of Dara-dar chukanidar.
Tehsildars	: Collector of revenue appointed by the British Government.
Terijes	: Final record of rights of land.
Zilla	: District.

# Map of India 1805-1910



# Map of Princely State of Cooch Behar



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## Introduction

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This research venture on “An Historical Re-readings of Evolving Land-man Relationship in the Princely State of Cooch Behar: Contextualizing Political Economy of Regional History in Perspective” traces the history of the specifics and inherent undercurrents of political economy evolving out of land-man relationships that the Cooch Behar State witnessed under pre-colonial and post-colonial situations. While analysing the history of land settlements and land revenue administration evolving out of land-man relationship in the changing context of political-economy of pre-colonial and colonial situations of the Cooch Behar State, the researcher intends to emphasise on the deductive method rather than the inductive method of analysis which means the history of aggregates (mega narrative) must be preceded by the history of the specifics. Although the macro-setting would not be ignored, an attempt will be made to look to the fact that the micro- local ambience is not overlooked.

One of the aspects of the pre-colonial discourses which appear to be well-suited for the purpose of this study is the question of land-man relationship that is to be seriously changed in an atmosphere of colonial economic penetration. A good number of studies have been undertaken by the historians and scholars of economic histories on the land problem in different pre-colonial and colonial situation. We now have a fair mount of historical literature on agrarian structures in India during the Muslim period and the British period. From a somewhat different point of view, agricultural economists have also given their attention to the problem. The level of academic perception that has been augmented to locate the problem of land is undoubtedly a major issue very central to the colonial studies now. To move forward, a synoptic view of historiographies belong to different school of thoughts becomes necessary. It is equally important to delineate the thought perception on which the present study is based on. The process involves argument, counter argument, thesis/antithesis of different discourses to reach and rely on specific discourse on which our research questions are based on.

Between 1870 and 1930, agrarian India assumed its modern intellectual appearance and acquired its own historiography. Old orientalist and official knowledge from the days of Company Raj were still basic. But the conjuncture of

famines (and, in Bengal, devastating cyclones) with the rise of the national intelligentsia in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s made a deep, lasting impression. Agrarian localism and diversity dissolved into a national history of endemic village distress, calamity, and poverty that demanded urgent attention from progressive agents of development.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1840s, we notice the early beginnings of a modern development discourse (which would provide a strong narrative centre for agrarian historical studies) in petitions by critics of the East India Company against excessive, coercive taxation, and in petitions by Arthur Cotton for increased government irrigation expenditure. In 1869, Lord Mayo argued for the foundation of an imperial department of agriculture in terms that indicate the tone of public discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Nationalists used Mayo's argument against his government. They argued that Indian prosperity had become poverty under the British. Famine deaths had increased. Excess taxation had ruined agriculture. Land settlements had punished investors. Deindustrialisation had forced workers onto the land. State expenditure for improvement was trivial and the government's claim to be working in the interest of the people was at best deceitful. The national agrarian scene became a ground for debate, research, and political action and they also developed an original theory of Indian economics, which stimulated the first round of village studies in the 1920s. The science of Indian economics was described authoritatively by Radhakamal Mukherjee, in 1916, in a textbook that began with a model of traditional village economy disrupted by heavy tax demands, private property laws, voracious money lending, and capitalist commercialism, all imposed by the British. Commercialisation loomed large for the early economists and, drawing on data going back to the 1840s, their studies often focused on problems of coercion. This focus was logical because their model of a traditional village economy did not include any indigenous commercial impulse or history, so that coercion would seem necessary to initiate agrarian commodity production and taxation. Forced sales, bonded labour, coerced revenue collections, and excess land alienation were seen as colonial pathologies, producing poverty and needing to be studied and remedied. Freedom from colonialism became widely identified with freedom from all the coercion and disruption of capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

By 1930, historians had also nationalised agrarian India. But they took a different path. A century before the convocation of the Indian National Congress, Indologists and Orientalists Indians and Europeans were composing texts that would inspire the national imagination. R.C.Dutt responded to W. W.Hunter's (1868) call for 'rural history' with his own study of Bengal peasant conditions (1874); he wrote a serious study of ancient India (1896); and also wrote the first nationalist history of colonial agrarian policy (1908). With Dutt, history joined the national movement, and in the 1920s it became a national ground for debate and exhortation.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, in 1929, William Moreland published the first academic monograph on agrarian history, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*. Dutt and Naoroji had set the stage by recounting the greatness of classical India and the depredations of British rule, and Moreland confronted the nationalist critique of British land policies with a study of pre-British north India, going back to the fourteenth century, to argue that old elements from India's past explained its agricultural backwardness, not British rule. He countered the national glorification of Indian tradition with an account of pre-colonial oppression, which put Muslim rulers specifically in a bad light. "Development", he said, 'was already present in the fourteenth century, but the political and social environment was unusually unfavourable to its fruition'. Specifically, he said, from the Delhi sultanates (1206-1526) through the Mughal empire (1556-1707), 'two figures stand out as normally masters of the peasants' fate . . . the [revenue] farmer and the assignee' who together waged 'a barren struggle to divide, rather than . . . to increase, the annual produce of the country', a 'legacy of loss, which Moslem administrators left to their successors and which is still so far from final liquidation'<sup>5</sup>

By 1930, agrarian history entered national policy debates and, ever since then, the writing of agrarian history has meshed with political disputation. Moreland pushed a line of argument against landlordism that was just gaining momentum when Jawaharlal Nehru became President of the All-India Congress Committee in 1930. He announced a radical turn in politics by writing this:<sup>6</sup>

"The great poverty and misery of the Indian People are due, not only to foreign exploitation in India but also to the economic structure of society, which the alien rulers support so that their exploitation may continue. In order therefore to remove this poverty and misery and to ameliorate the condition of the masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities."

With Independence, new questions within this stream of historiography were generated. As the direct compulsions of debate with British imperialism receded, there developed a greater readiness to study the factors of change and stagnation in our past and to identify various internal economic, social and ideological contradictions. Inevitably, Marxist influences began to be felt, especially under the impact of the Soviet Union's role in the Second World War and the lifting of the colonial ban on Marxist classics. In his *Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956), Kosambi fitted the medieval polities headed by Muslim rulers in his interpretation of "Indian feudalism", by special reference to the process that he designated "feudalism from above". To the cultural consequences of the Islamic intrusion he added the technological one, crediting "Islamic raiders" with "breaking hide-bound custom in the adoption and transmission of new techniques". Almost simultaneously, in a notable 102-page text (1952), Mohammad Habib offered an interpretation of the Ghorian-Turkish conquests of the 13th century and the early Delhi Sultanate in economic terms, with much use of Marxian concepts. Although the numerous insights of both these historians remain of lasting value, their major achievement was really to pioneer the exploration of a practically virgin domain.<sup>7</sup> In the subsequent period, possibly owing to the difference in the main source-languages, there were two points to which Marxist-influenced research came separately to be directed. In his *India Feudalism* (1965), R. S. Sharma studied in detail the basic relationships in early medieval society down to the eve of the Ghorian conquests.<sup>8</sup> He argued in favour of a "feudalism largely realising the surplus from peasants mainly in kind through superior rights in their land and through forced labour, which is not found on any considerable scale... after the Turkish conquest of India."

The other attempt was directed to establishing what the later medieval class structures were like, whether different from those of the earlier period or not. Satish Chandra made an initial attempt to delineate the main features of the Mughal Indian political and social order (1959).<sup>9</sup> Irfan Habib presented (1963)<sup>10</sup> a detailed study of the agrarian system of Mughal India, in which he argued that there were two ruling classes, the centralised nobility and the dispersed landed gentry (*zamindars*); and that the Mughal Empire collapsed because of agrarian uprisings in which the *zamindars* utilised the desperation of the oppressed peasantry. In later writing (1969),<sup>11</sup> he

denied that the Mughal Empire had any potentialities for capitalistic development, despite a considerable presence of commodity production. The last thesis has been contested by Iqtidar A. Khan (1975),<sup>12</sup> while S. Moosvi (1987)<sup>13</sup> has patiently reworked the basic statistics in the *Ain-i-Akbari* on which all work on Mughal economic history must necessarily rely. M. Athar Ali (2001),<sup>14</sup> emphasising the centralised nature of Mughal polity, and the ethnic and religious compositeness of the nobility, has argued against Irfan Habib's thesis of an agrarian crisis in that Empire.

There is no suspicion that Marxist work has added considerable dimension to our study of economic and social history. By regarding itself especially with mode of exploitation and the struggles of the oppressed, it has helped the historian to identify with the mass of the people, who have been regarded more as the objects rather than the subjects of history. Mainly under Marxist influence one has learnt to look more closely than ever at the sweat strained ploughman or the oppressed woman slave, and set in their place the throne and the pulpit.

During the half-century after 1947, agrarian India changed dramatically. During the 1950s and 1960s, state institutions charged with national development dominated politics and thinking about agrarian history. In these decades, historians focused primarily on state policy. Ranajit Guha's *A Rule of Property for Bengal*<sup>15</sup> and Irfan Habib's *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* both appeared in 1963, and they represent a historical perspective from which official statements of state ideology seem to determine state policy and to generate logical effects everywhere that policy reigns. The nationality of the countryside under British rule its national unity as agrarian territory seemed to be self-evident in these decades; and it was described beautifully in A. R. Desai's<sup>16</sup> *The Social Back-ground of Indian Nationalism* (1948), and many other books. But during the 1960s the decade of Nehru's death, of the early green revolution, and of continuing struggles for land reform arguments began to gain ground among historians to the effect that dominant state ideologies do not necessarily determine the content or conduct of state policy; and, in addition, that states do not dictate the course of history. How ideas about history changed so radically in the 1960s and 1970s remains to be studied.

By 1980, agrarian history had moved away from the State towards society. When Ranajit Guha's first volume of *Subaltern Studies*<sup>17</sup> appeared in 1982 and his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* arrived in 1994,<sup>18</sup> it was

clear that a major shift in historical thinking had occurred since 1963. In the 1980s and 1990s, the study of the state was further displaced by studies of social power. This trend was not confined to South Asia. The historical profession in general turned away from politics and economics toward society and culture. In these decades, national states also lost power in their own national territories as structural adjustment and economic liberalisation changed the role of the state in development. Nationalism became an object of academic and cultural criticism. State-centred development strategies came under attack; people-centred, grassroots development became prominent. Environmentalism, feminism, and indigenous people's movements challenge old development agendas. Historians began to look at both capitalist and socialist states with a new critical eye, "from the bottom up", which gave the state a new kind of theoretical meaning.<sup>19</sup>

Though the subaltern voices are dynamic but they pinpoint historical situation rather than describing agrarian change and they have said very little about the patterns of diversity. Everyday life obscures patterns of change across generations. As we accumulate more accounts of local experience, we need to step back periodically to assess the patterns of change, and that is my intention here.

There is a continuous debate among the historians about the impact of the British rule on the Indian rural society. The traditional view postulating a qualitative transformation of the rural society has recently been questioned. The opposing view is that what looked like transformation is really largely a continuation of pre-colonial system.<sup>20</sup> The nationalists blamed certain aspects such as the high pitch of land revenue demand, the cash payment mode of the British land revenue administration which resulted in increasing impoverishment of Indian agriculture. Later writers thinking in terms of structural change in the rural society emphasized other factors, such as the establishment of private property in land, the creation of "parasitic" landlords, the increasing burden of rent and rural indebtedness. But the opposite view is that the old agrarian society was stratified, the considerable redistribution of landed property rights which the British brought marginally affected the rural society.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most important aspects of change which was subjected to critical assessment was the *zamindari* system. It was argued by the critics of Company rule that the Permanent Settlement on the pretext of maintaining the old order had actually destroyed it. The elevated rate of revenue and the resultant sale of many *zamindaries*

had shifted the focus of power in the rural areas from the traditional *zamindars* to the representatives of the merchant capital, or the *banias* of the Company officials, who had artificial link with the peasantry and who were interested in making quick profits.<sup>22</sup>

Against this background the first major work on the theme of continuity and change in Bengal appeared in the late 1970s. Ratnalekha Ray<sup>23</sup> arguing against the dramatic change pointed out the continuities in the Bengal countryside. She argued that the real power in the countryside was held by the rich peasants called the *Jotedars* and their powers had continued unabated in the post-permanent settlement era. Recently the arguments of Ray have been opposed by Rajat Dutta.<sup>24</sup> He argued that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century it was the *zamindars* and the marchants and not the *Jotedars* who dominated the countryside through their control over production. But he accepted that this class may have emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The recent studies of Kumkum Chatterjee and John Mclane argued that big businessman as well as large landed magnates continued to thrive in certain areas of eastern India even after the decline of Mughal Empire.<sup>25</sup>

Irrespective of their different names in different parts of Bengal the *Jotedars* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century obviously evolved from a position of power he had in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. After the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century he may have been a *Chukanidar* or *Dar-chukanidar*. But more importantly, the nature of the *Jotedar's* power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was of different type: its basis was different, as was its function.<sup>26</sup>

To substantiate this line of argument, the case of princely State of Cooch Behar is important. A long-term study of the changes introduced under colonial rule thus necessitates a venture into the socio-economic organisation of the pre-colonial period of the area. It is also important to reflect on the current debates over the nature of continuity and change between the pre-colonial and the colonial periods. The role of British Government in reframing the peasant society of Cooch Behar at the expense of all other forms broadens the perspective from which the 18<sup>th</sup> century is to be scanned, and helps to understand the change-over from the pre-colonial to the colonial era more distinctively.

Cooch Behar, the former Princely state was situated in the far eastern part of northern West Bengal surrounded by Bangladesh, Assam and the Jalpaiguri district of

West Bengal. The political status of the district has kept on changing, from a Koch Kingdom to a Princely State, then to a revenue paying state to the British, and finally it became a district town of West Bengal by its merger with India in 1949. The geographical boundary of modern Cooch Behar could be traced back to the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa, which was ruled by the Khen Raja Nilambar of Kamtapur. This has its reference in Hunter's Report.<sup>27</sup> It is said that Raja Nilambar had been defeated and was captured by Hussain Shah, one of the Afghan kings of Gour in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It marked the end of Khen dynasty. Since then, the kingdom of Kamrupa was broken up into numerous small principalities under local rulers and was frequently being attacked by tribal chieftains from the north-east region of India. In the meantime the Koch chiefs gradually rose into power. The political metamorphosis of conquest, superimposition, and assimilation ultimately led to the formation of Koch kingdom or the Cooch Behar state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The successors of the Koch rajas ruled this tiny State till its merger with India in 1949.<sup>28</sup>

From the very beginning of its birth, Cooch Behar State had to experience frequent attacks at different period of time and by several conquerors such as Muslim rulers of Bengal, the Mughals and sometimes by the rulers of Bhutan. Being threatened by frequent Bhutanese attacks during the period of 1771-72, the officials of the state sought the military help from the East India Company when the then Maharaja Dhairyendra Narayan was captivated by Bhutanese soldiers. The appeal was granted by East India Company on condition that the State will pay the half of the share of its revenue to the Company. The East India Company had accepted it as a golden opportunity to expand their territorial boundary as well as authority in the Cooch Behar State. Accordingly the Anglo-Koch Behar treaty was signed in 1773 and the State became a feudatory of the East India Company. After the intrusion of the Company in the State, the land revenue system had experienced a perceptible change in terms of its nature and its applicability.<sup>29</sup>

No accurate information regarding the Settlement of Land Revenue was available prior to Anglo-Koch Treaty of 1773.<sup>30</sup> Though it appears that the land was divided into two categories-1) Revenue paying and 2) Revenue free. The unit of land was *bish* which equals 12 *bighas* and 16 *kathas*. The persons holding the first kind of land had to pay revenue to the state and were called *Jotedars*. Lands were also granted to persons for rendering personal services to the state, and these were called *Jagirs*.

*Jagir*, *Brahmattar* (donated to the brahmanas) *Debattar* (donated to the deities) *Mukarrari* lands were all revenue-free lands. No regular *patta* (lease), however, was given to *Jotedars*. The settlement was renewed from year to year and the assessment was not fixed and based on the qualities of land. The mode of assessment and the system of the collection were both irregular and exploitative in nature which caused great sufferings to the people. The harassed and oppressed tenants left the State in large numbers. As a result the amount of the state revenue decreased.<sup>31</sup>

Looking at the sorry state of the State exchequer, Douglas, on behalf of East India Company, introduced the *Ijaradari* system in 1790 to obtain the highest possible revenue for a short period. The country was divided into small parcels and put up to auction and the highest bid was accepted.<sup>32</sup> As this system gave rise to greater abuses, steps had to be taken to put a stop to the evil effects of the system. As a remedial measure, a general survey of the whole State was initiated. Accordingly, under the supervision of O'Donnell first survey of the State was completed in 1870 and the first settlement was concluded in the whole state in 1877. The *Jotedari* system was the dominant pattern of the agrarian relation in Cooch Behar State. According to the Settlement the *Jotes* or revenue paying estates were demarcated. The *Jotedars* were to pay their revenue to the sub divisional *kutcharis*. Default of payment entailed annulment of the *patta*. Later the defaulting *jotes* were to be put to auction and sold for arrears of revenue.<sup>33</sup> As a result of this settlement the amount of the revenue increased. In order to enhance the revenue and maximise the profit, measures like land- revenue reforms, rent-revisions, and waste - land settlements took place a number of times in the course of little less than hundred years. The Second settlement locally called "*Rakam Charcha*" settlement took place in 1888.<sup>34</sup> In between the first and second settlement another petty settlement known as the *Patit charcha* (fallow land) had taken place between 1884-86. The third settlement addressed to rent-revision was completed between 1912-1920 and the final settlement was completed during 1920-1927. Due to this settlement activities revenue of the Cooch Behar state went up from 1.5 lakh to 17.5 lakh approximately.<sup>35</sup>

This quantum jump was achieved by conversion of waste-land into arable land, reduction of tax-free land grants and reclamation for revenue purpose a good part of *Debottar* (land donated to the deities), *Brahmattor* (land donated to the priests), *Mukarrari* and other service grants. The reclaimed lands were mostly being purchased

by the migrants of neighbouring areas. Besides the changes that were taking place in the economic sphere as a result of First World War, subsequent great depression of 30s and famine in Bengal also severely affected the existing pattern of land ownership in the Princely Cooch Behar. A crisis in rural credit that followed the depression compelled many small *Jotedars* to sell their lands. The beneficiaries from the crisis were the merchants, moneylenders and speculators who invested their capital in land. The net result of this development was the transfer of land from the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis.<sup>36</sup> Alienation of land of Cooch Beharis was, therefore an unavoidable corollary of the process. Further urgency to introduce commercial crops to boost revenue income necessitated new class of revenue farmers. It is needless to say that the burden of rent-escalation has caused a number of structural disorders in the peasant society of Princely State of Cooch Behar. It was seen that the small Rajbansi *Jotedars* had transformed into under tenants, subservient to a new class of immigrant landed gentry. The process of land transfer from the hands of the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis generated a sense of grievance among the dispossessed Rajbansi gentry in course of time. The proposed research is an attempt to investigate the degree of linkage between land-alienation caused by revenue reforms, migration of non-Rajbansis in the Princely State of Cooch Behar and the subsequent socio-economic changes in the State.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In the context of some major changes in the methodology as well as the objectives of both the ideographic and nomothetic social sciences and due to the interruption at the conceptual level among the different social science disciplines, the study of colonial situation at the micro level too requires methodological updated ness. The Cooch Behar studies require conceptual reframing in terms of an appropriate "Paradigm". So this micro-level analysis of local history needs to be contextualised on a strong theoretical framework. According to Marx's 'materialistic interpretation of history' all historical events are the results of a continuous struggle among different classes and groups in the society and the root cause of this struggle is the conflict between the 'mode of production' and 'the relations of production'. The mode of production relates to a particular arrangement of production in a society that determines its entire social, political and religious way of living. Marx calls these relations as the relations

of production, which are continually changing.<sup>37</sup> The changing land-man relationship and the structure of the society of the then Cooch Behar State may be tested in the light of Marxian historiography.

Economy, State and society are intimately interconnected. A change in one brings about changes in the others. Marxian analysis sums up the three aspects of society into two categories, namely, the economic aspects into economic base and political and social aspects into the superstructure. Thus superstructure refers to the non-economic aspects of the socio-economic formation. It includes social relations and supporting institutions and associated socio-political behaviour patterns and value systems that protect and promote the interests of the ruling classes of the dominant mode of production. It embodies the social consciousness, the social ideas and social-psychological attitudes, in brief the social ideology that underlines social relations between people. The state is an important part of the superstructure. The superstructure contains the ideas and systems of authority (political, legal, military, etc) which support the class structure of that society- that is, the property and privileges of the ruling classes. It is an instrument of class rule.<sup>38</sup>

The economic base or the modes of production covers economic social relations between the people while the superstructure envelopes non-economic social relations between them. Both these are ultimately affected by the state of productive forces in society. The mode of production is the outcome of three basic components-i) The productive forces, ii) the form of ownership of the means of production, and iii) the economic relations arising in the production, exchange and distribution of goods and services. Specifically, it refers to the social relations between the people in a society in the context of the functioning of the economy. The mode of production shaped the nature of the mode of distribution, the mode of circulation and the mode of consumption, all of which together constitutes the economic sphere of the society. The three components of the mode of production are necessarily interdependent. The change in any one or more of the components causes changes in the other components.<sup>39</sup>

The Marxian approach to the study of changes in the socio-economic formation in a country is called dialectical historical materialism. It is dialectical as it recognizes that change is the inevitable outcome of the interaction between forces that make up the socio-economic formation. It is materialistic because it gives primacy of

place to the mode of production in the schema of dialectical change. It is historical because it studies the development of society over time. The dialectical process of change is summarised as thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. The process of change involving thesis, anti-thesis and syntheses operates simultaneously: the thesis is negated through contradictions to it, the syntheses in its turn negates this contradiction or negation by postulating a new thesis, in which the opposites which constituted the old thesis are replaced by a new thesis, a new unity of opposites which represents a higher stage of development of society. The Marxist analysis recognizes that change in socio-economic formations can originate at any of the three planes-productive forces, production-distribution relations, super structural factors (particularly the role of the state). The emergence of contradictions, the series of adjustments they induce and the changes they cause in the system in an effort to re-establish a realignment of forces cause some groups losing their pre-eminent positions that they held in the earlier social system. This realignment of group power can take place only through struggles between the opposing classes within a mode of production, on the one hand, and the dominant classes in the old and new modes of production, on the other. These struggles are class struggles: historically the transition from one socio-economic formation to another has taken place through violent revolutionary class struggles.<sup>40</sup>

As we all know that the analysis of mode of production is central to the Marxian analysis, the knowledge about the essential features of the different modes of production is necessary in order to understand how, when and why the change occurs, and how they interact with state of productive forces, on the one hand, and the nature and character of the superstructure, on the other. The modes we describe are those as described by Engels and Marx<sup>41</sup>-Marx was primarily concerned with the capitalist mode and therefore only briefly deals with the other modes. The socio-economic formation of a country is described in terms of the mode of production dominant at that time. Thus, the socio-economic formation where the primitive communal mode is dominant is called primitive communism. Ancient civilization is the socio-economic formation where the slave mode dominated. Similarly, feudalism is one where the mode of production is feudal and capitalism is one where the dominant mode is capitalist. Socialism is based on the socialist mode. The transition from one socio economic formation to another necessarily involves the mode of production. The mode of production can change either because of changes state of productive forces or

because of super structural forces. The reasons for the transition from one mode to another are complex and controversial: the controversies arise due to the lack of historical data and due to the fact that different countries have different pasts and are different stages of development.

Marx referred to another mode of production which could succeed or existed simultaneously with the primitive communal mode, namely, the Asiatic mode. Marx and Engels also discussed the Asiatic mode of production as an alternative follow up to the primitive communal mode. The characteristics of the Asiatic mode<sup>42</sup> are as follows: The Asiatic village was self-sufficient since it combined agriculture and handicrafts. They therefore also tended to be isolated from the rest of the state. These communities were for geographical and climatic reasons dependent on irrigation. This required a centralised administrative apparatus to coordinate and develop large-scale hydraulic works. Production methods were simple and tended to be tradition oriented. Private property was absent-there was no private ownership of land. As Oscar Lange points out,<sup>43</sup> "Such state ownership of land existed in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, China, Ceylon and other eastern countries." Lange quotes Marx as saying, "Here the state is the supreme owner of land. Sovereignty depends on the ownership of land concentrated at the national level. For this reason there is no private ownership of land though the possession of land may be both private and common."

Relations of production were in many instances on a caste basis-this was viewed as a primitive form of class relationship. The Asiatic mode was regarded to be static and unchanging. However, the concept of Asiatic mode of production is problematic. It is used to describe any society based on communal ownership and self-sufficient villages where capitalist relations are absent. The absence of private property and the fact of communal appropriation of the surplus ruled out the development of social classes as agents of social change. Further, it is difficult to visualize a state of generalised slavery.

Irfan Habib<sup>44</sup> points out that, "the mode of production in medieval (pre-colonial) India had the two important features, village community and tax-rent equivalence, that Marx thought to be the basic elements of the 'Asiatic' form, but... It also had extensive elements of the petty mode of production...based on individual commodity producers.(rural and urban)." Irfan Habib again points out, "The fairly well developed system of commercial credit, deposit-banking, brokerage and

insurance, further demonstrated that a fairly extensive commercial apparatus had been constructed on the basis of petty production. It is difficult to see how such a degree of development of merchant capital can be accommodated in any variant of Marx's scheme of the Asiatic Mode". He adds, "It is indeed important to realise that the society of Mughal India was not only class-driven, but also as replete with class-struggles as other societies of the time. The widespread peasant and agrarian revolts was a noticeable feature of its political history. Thus, the "passive sort of existence" which Marx postulated for the pre-colonial Indian countryside is not historically borne out."

According to Marx's observation feudal mode of production was the dominant mode in the Western Europe in the middle ages. The characteristic features of the feudal mode of production are summarised below.<sup>45</sup>

a) Production was for the immediate need of the household or village community, for the use-value of the products and not for a wider market or for gain. It was largely non-market production. b) The instruments of production are simple and generally inexpensive and the act of production is largely individual in character. c) Production relations were based on extra-economic force and not on economic forces, on customs and traditions, both being inextricably tied up with the feudal superstructure. d) The surplus was small and could have been consumed by the direct producers or labourers because of their lower level of consumption. e) The manor was the basic unit of rural organisation throughout the middle ages over the greater part of England. A manor was a large estate which consisted usually a single village and an extent of land surrounding it, often enclosed by a hedge. Every manor had a lord who, though not the owner, was granted assured fiefdom over the land in return for feudal service on condition of military service. f) Though production was predominantly subsistence, a market system also existed and grew as productivity and surplus grew. g) Production relations in the feudal mode were based on extra-economic force. This was the only way that surplus from direct producer could be extracted at a time when productivity of labour and hence consumption levels was low. The relationship between the feudal lord and the serf as well as the feudal lord and the free peasants under his fief were non-contractual and communal. h) While the characteristic unit of economic organization in the villages was the manor, the characteristic unit in the urban areas was the guild. In the feudal economy towns did exist because of

administrative reasons, religious and economic reasons. i) The feudal mode was inextricably linked with the super structure. The ownership of land, vested with the feudal lord, was conditional on some kind of service tenure, in terms of armed personnel, or in terms of monetary contribution or attendance in the king's court. In return the lord was entrusted with judicial or quasi-judicial powers in relation to the dependent population. j) The feudal system was obviously an exploitative system. Physical or military force enabled the ruling classes to appropriate much of the surplus from the serfs, peasants and artisans.

On the other hand the fundamental features of capitalism are private ownership of the means of production or private property, the existence of a proletariat dependent on wage labour and the pursuit of private individual benefit as the guiding principal of production and distribution relations. Land, labour and money become commodities. Capitalist production is commodity production, or production for exchange and private gain. Labour and capital are free to choose occupation and industry under capitalism.<sup>46</sup>

The reasons for the transition from one mode to another are complex and controversial. The focus of the transition is a change in the mode of production, whether the change is because of growth in productive forces or is brought about from the superstructure. Despite the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England in particular and western Europe in general, considerable difference of opinion exists about the prime causes that caused the change. There are two major debates on this matter- Brenner Debate and Dobb-Sweezy Debate.

Brenner critiques the demographic and commercialisation models, both of which stress economic factors to the exclusion of political factors.<sup>47</sup> Instead, he puts forward his class-based analysis of the transition. M.M. Postan's demographic model uses the changing demand-supply relations to explain the effect of population changes. He argues that the growth of population in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries weakened the position of peasantry in Europe. But in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the decline of population led to a rise in share of labour incomes and fall in rent. It also reduced the lord's ability to restrict peasant mobility and peasant's freedom in general. Ultimately demand-supply factors due to demographic factors were responsible for the decline of the feudalism. But Brenner criticises the demographic model on historical grounds and for its faulty analysis. Thus, he points out that "there were different outcomes

from similar demographic trends at different times and in different areas of Europe.” He also argues that the situation of different outcomes in different places and times are because of difference in class relations. Secondly, the commercialization model was accepted by Henri Pirenne’s thesis which showed the role of commerce in the development and decay of feudalism. He adds that expansion of market, towns, exposure of the inefficiencies of feudal production, expansion of the quantum and variety of consumption demand raised the demand for labour relative to its supply. This weakened feudal ties. Brenner believed that any analysis to the transition must explain two phenomena, namely, i) why serfdom declined in Western Europe but was intensified in eastern Europe and ii) why was there a rise of capitalism and agricultural productivity in England but not in France despite serfdom declining in both. The answer to both these questions according to Brenner is to be found not in economic factors but on class relations. He added that the difference in class structures in France and England is dramatically evident from the different sorts of peasant revolts. The economic development had taken place in England much earlier because of different types of property rights which also precipitated the growth process of feudalism.

The Dobb-Sweezy debate<sup>48</sup> centres on the fundamental nature of feudalism. Was the feudal mode of production essentially conservative and resistant to change so that its dissolution required an external factor or did feudalism carry within itself the seeds of its own destruction?

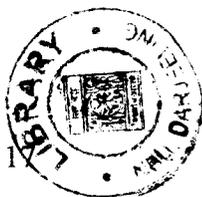
Sweezy recognises serfdom as the dominant feature in Western European feudalism and emphasises production predominantly not for exchange but for self-consumption. The growth of population worsens the instability and insecurity in the country but feudal society was intact.<sup>49</sup> But Dobb had asserted that serfs deserted the manor because they were over-exploited by the lords whose need for revenue was growing. These growing needs were attributed by Dobb to factors which according to him were internal to the feudal system. On the other hand, per capita productivity of agriculture was falling towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century because of the increase in population on a limited land supply and more importantly, because of increasing extraction of surplus by the landlords.<sup>50</sup>

Sweezy argues that all these factors existed in the past as well without causing feudalism to collapse. He draws attention to the phenomenon of the flight of serfs being more or less simultaneous with the growth of towns, especially in the 12<sup>th</sup> and

13<sup>th</sup> centuries. These towns, to quote Sweezy, offered them 'liberty, employment and improved social status.'<sup>51</sup> In short Sweezy attributed the decline of feudalism to the growth of long distance trade and consequent growth of towns-both of these are external factors. These factors relate to the growth of towns, the growth of production for exchange and changes in consumption patterns. Exposure to foreign goods and foreign cultures had a demonstration effect on consumption patterns of the lords causing an increase in their demand for revenue and hence increased exploitation of the serfs. The new production relation under which commodity production took place had in built tendency to increase efficiency because it continually sought to reduce costs through improved techniques, division of labour and specialisation and more rational exploitation of human and material resources. Feudal production suffered in comparison because it was based on custom. So obviously, feudal order had to sooner or later succumb to the new types of production relations and new forms of organisation.

Dobb, on the other hand, argued that the decline of feudalism was due primarily to internal causes. Dobb emphasises production relations, specially their coercive nature, as the distinctive feature of feudalism. Coercion in production relations takes the form of direct labour services from the serfs or tributes from the peasantry in kind or in cash through various devices. Dobb argued that the feudal period witnessed considerable changes in technique: the later centuries of feudalism showed marked differences from the earlier systems. The emergence of three-fold system in agriculture, the rise of capitalist farmers, the enclosure movement, the use of horses in agriculture, introduction of the four-wheeled wagon contributed to the process of increasing social differentiation which eventually to shake loose the peasant from the feudal exploitation. All this led over time to diluting the coercive nature of production relations under feudalism. This paved the way for the emergence of the pre-condition of capitalism and the growth of a class hostile to the feudal aristocracy. Towns emerged because of internal conditions. Thus these favourable conditions already existed for a transformation of the economy and hence of society. If these favourable conditions were not existent then the growth of long distance trade would only have caused a further accentuation of the production relation characterising the pre-existing system.<sup>52</sup>

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But Irfan Habib in an article “Capitalism in History”<sup>53</sup>, argued that the spread of the petty mode of production would not by itself bring about capitalism even if the labourer is the private owner of his own means of production. Manufacturing activity under the petty mode would only amount to “proto-industrialisation” He argues that technological discoveries by themselves do not bring about capitalism. The basic cause for the emergence of feudalism in Europe was according to Irfan Habib, thus external. The two major sources of primary accumulation were internal exploitation and external plunder linked to colonial dominance. Habib also points out that the major source of industrial capital has been colonial plunder.<sup>54</sup>

The Dobb-Sweezy debate and the Brenner’s observation about feudalism relates to mediaeval Europe. But Kosambi is the first historian who began to apply Marxism to Indian history. He told, “Marxism is not a substitute for thinking but a tool of analyses.” In the first place, Kosambi profoundly redefined the message that Marxism had for historians. In an attempt to impart to the Marxist perception of class struggle and its different forms the colour of universal application had led to the conclusion that the unilinear succession of modes of production, primitive community-slavery-feudalism-capitalism, was followed in practically all countries, except for those with very recent immigrant populations.<sup>55</sup>

Taking the case of India, Kosambi summarily rejected the view that it had ever passed through a phase of slavery. Rather it was the construction of caste-society that happened here—a cruel form of bondage, but different, nevertheless, from slavery. He argued that the term “Asiatic” occurring in Marx’s passage in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* should be taken to cover a case like India’s and, for this reason, the term should not be ignored. This did not mean that he accepted for the “Asiatic” the sense of a stagnant despotic system, as some of Marx’s own words would suggest. Indeed, Kosambi directly contested Marx’s observations about the “unchangeable ness” of Asiatic societies. What Kosambi set out to do in his introduction was, therefore, to investigate both the economic basis (he means and relations of production) and the changing beliefs, customs and culture (“superstructure”) and their mutual relationships.

Kosambi accepted the stage of feudalism spanning the period from that of the Guptas to the Mughals. Kosambi recognised that the elements of demesne farming and serfdom, crucial to the Marxian perception of feudalism as a mode of production,

were missing here, but he believed that the other features were common between the Indian and European forms, viz. low level of production techniques, growth of rusticity and decline of urban life, political decentralisation and service tenure, and that these justified one to designate the mode of production in India for well over a millennium as “feudal”.<sup>56</sup> In the political and fiscal spheres, he discerned two different processes of feudalisation: (i) “From above”, when centralised states created local rights by grants and concession, (ii) “from below” when landowners developed from within the village [to stand] between the state and the peasantry.”<sup>57</sup>

Irfan Habib through his extremely valuable writing<sup>58</sup>, “The Peasant in Indian History” showed that the origin and evolution of peasant agriculture in Ancient India depends on technology. ‘Technology played the crucial role in bringing about changes in the nature and organisation of the concrete labour process and the structure of social relation.’ Thus “with the introduction of sericulture by the 15<sup>th</sup> century made Bengal one of the great silk-producing regions of the world in the 17<sup>th</sup>,” “after the discovery of the New World, India received important new crops, such as maize and tobacco”, ‘grafting practices spread too in the same century, resulting in the improvement of some fruits, notably the oranges’. “Further, the argument that changes in techniques caused changes in the organisation of the labour process is entirely functional. Thus conditions of forest clearance also necessitated at the same time a form of non-peasant agriculture”.

But there were some basic questions- such as who changed techniques? What were the social forces which discovered and initiated changes? Was there not a process- a political process-through which changes had to be made in the organisation of the labour process? Were all available techniques necessarily adopted, even if they were improved techniques? -which were never asked. “It is equally possible that the question have not been asked, since the functional interpretation of the connection between forces and relations of production finds a satisfactory explanation as soon as it can be established that ‘improved’ techniques have been introduced into the real appropriation process and the ‘corresponding’ changes brought about in the relations of production.”<sup>59</sup> The crucial explanatory criterion is always provided by the assumption that “the productive forces tend to develop throughout history”. But Partha Chatterjee said that “what is missed here is the crucial historical question of the political process of struggle through which, in a given structure of the social relations

of production, changes can be brought about in techniques, and the conditions of reproduction of social relations set on a new basis. This process cannot be understood if changes in the productive forces are seen as given exogenously, productive forces and production relations must be seen as changing in their specific forms of combination.”<sup>60</sup>

That is why Irfan Habib finds it so difficult to characterise the nature of changes brought about in the structure of social relations by changes in agricultural technology. Many of such problems of the Marxist historiography have now been clarified as a result of the so-called ‘structuralist’ intervention of Louis Althusser and his associates. The structuralists have argued that the set of social relations which characterise any given social formation can be analytically looked at in terms of three instances: the economic, the legal-political and ideological-cultural.<sup>61</sup> The basic premises of my research hypothesis are mainly supported by above mentioned argument. In subsequent chapters an attempt would be made to explore the influence of change in “mode of production’ (if any) on land-man relationship of the Princely State of Cooch Behar under the colonial intervention. Simultaneously, it will also be scrutinised that whether change in “mode of production” was having any impact on various attributes of superstructure.

## **Conceptual Framework**

To analyse the land-man relationship of the Cooch Behar State at micro level the discussion on Land-man relationship of pre-colonial and colonial India and the Land-man relationship of Princely States under administrative purview of the British administrators should be taken into accounts to understand the conceptual framework of the research hypothesis.

Relations of production are a Marxian concept defined as the relations obtaining between different human agents around the act of production. But the most interesting fact is that most of our historical sources define the acts of revenue collection and not to the act of production. So definitely the land-man relationship of pre-colonial India is basically surrounded to the nature and magnitude of “land revenue” (*Mal, Kharaj*), since it accounted for the large part of the agricultural surplus of the country. <sup>62</sup> But it is very important to note that ‘mal’ was not a land tax it was

tax on the crop and from this point of view it was different from the British revenue as the “land revenue” under British land system was tax on the land irrespective of what grew on that land.

Now the question comes that who were the owner of the soil in pre-colonial India? Was there any communal cultivation or individual cultivation? According to Irfan Habib, in the Mughal period when peasants deserted old lands and settled in new ones they did so communally. But regarding the question of ownership of land different historians argue differently. European travellers who visited the country during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, commonly described the king as the owner of the all land in India, for he so obviously appropriated what seemed to be the rent of the soil <sup>63</sup> but this idea has now been largely questioned and rejected. Likewise, another idea inherited from the pat is that land was held in common and cultivated jointly. But this idea has also been questioned.

According to Neale, however, in some areas, in the *zamindari* villages, “the land owners claimed the land jointly and their respective shares were determined by the laws of inheritance” though “in the *Bhaiachara* village each family owned its own lands separately, as a rule each of the original settlers or conquerors received an equal share of land”<sup>64</sup> On the question of communal ownership Neale says that “the question whether the land was owned by the *raja*, *the talukdar*, *zamindar*, the cultivator or the king was not a real question Each had claim based upon custom or upon grants made by the king or a *raja*, or upon grants made by a *Talukdar* or *zamindar*. Actually the village did not hold its land in common. Common were its officials and servants. Though the idea of king as the owner of land has been rejected it does not mean that the king did not have ownership rights over some lands. King was the owner of all the waste lands” <sup>65</sup>

There were different system of land assessments for different regions under Mughals such as *ghalla-bakhshi*, *kankut* and *Nasq*. The *Kankut* system became transformed into *Zabt* system which involved annual measurement. Crop sharing was prevalent under Mughals. But the revenue could be paid in cash also. But the major aim of the Mughal administrators was to obtain bulk of peasants’ surplus. But at the same time the peasants were also helped by the loans called ‘*taqavi*’ in time of distress and crop failure.<sup>66</sup> Another question arises in the mind that whether tax should be collected from individual collector or from few intermediaris. According to Irfan

Habib the basic unit of assessment was village and the intermediaries were the real assesseees.<sup>67</sup> We got the name of *Zamindar, Talluqadars, muqudams, patils* as intermediaries. The Mughals depended largely on the *zamindars* for the collection of revenue and in the process, reinforced their rights and powers which derived originally from outside the imperial system. The *zamindar* class was highly stratified: some *zamindars* paying tribute, some *zamindars* got *jagir* land while others acquired non-hereditary rights by royal order. The *zamindars* often claimed their right from settling a village and distributing its land among the peasantry. Not only that they were often credited with the right to evict peasants at will.<sup>68</sup> Historically, the *zamindari* right had close association with caste or clan dominance. *Zamindars* of a locality often belonged to the same caste. He got the support of his kinsmen and this way the *zamindars* formed a semi-military class<sup>69</sup>. Another question haunts that what is the position of peasantry in pre-colonial India? Is there any agricultural labour force? That we all know about the existence of self-sufficient peasants producing for their own consumption in the traditional village society, Habib writes, "To astute observers like Bernier, the Indian peasants, labourers, appeared an undifferentiated mass, all living miserably under a blind and increasing oppression. The picture was not an unfair one, it does not also conflict with the concept, developed later, of the Indian rural population divided up horizontally among 'village communities' each a self-sufficient entity, left to its own devices by the despotic regime of the court so long as the heavy land-tax was paid."<sup>70</sup>

"Speaking of average yields per cultivator, we ought not to overlook the fact that the Indian peasantry was economically highly stratified, on the one hand, there were the big peasants, or headmen (*muquddam*) who organize "*Khud Kasht* (cultivation under their own management)". They employ labourers as their servants and put them to the tasks of agriculture and making them plough, sow, reap and draw water out of the well, they pay them their fixed wages, whether in cash or grain. At the opposite end, were small peasants (*rezariaya*), who engaged in cultivation but depended wholly, borrowing for their subsistence and for seed and cattle."<sup>71</sup> About the position of the menial castes, we have very limited knowledge. According to Habib the menial population formed a reserve to be called upon to work in the fields; during harvests they were also uniformly liable to render forced labour (*begar*) for carrying baggage etc of the higher classes. Agrarian relationship in the South had many points of

similarities as well as dissimilarities with their northern counterpart. At any rate the *zamindari* system of the north Indian type was generally absent in the Deccan. Though the *zamindar* and holder of revenue-free grant (*inamdar*) were familiar features of the agrarian system as were the agriculturist with hereditary superior rights in lands (*mirasdar*), and tenants holding lands from all these three groups on the basis of a variety of arrangement, but the entire character of the agrarian economy of the south is totally different in regard to specific agrarian institutions, rights in land, rights of sale, land transfer and mortgage dependent on the growth of land market—were more fully articulated than in the north, on the other, the agrarian structure in the south appears to have been bound up far more closely with social institutions in general, caste in particular.

After colonial penetration, the question of land and land administrative arrangement in rural India received sea changes. The colonial interest over the issues of land and rural social system had been guided by the mercantile zeal of the Europeans. That is to say in other words, the question of land became economically rewarding soon it had been brought under the fold of systematic revenue administration, which helped the British to extract maximum amount of economic return in the form of revenue from the isolated agrarian fields of the countryside. The three land revenue arrangements promulgated by the British in this sense were of paramount significance. Each variety of legal-administrative arrangement had attempted to systematise the issue of land as a form of resource associated with different segments of rural social structure. For example Permanent Settlement, *Ryotwari arrangement*, and *Mahalwari* system attempted to systematise the issue of land associated with the *zamindars*, the peasants and with the village community respectively keeping in tact the interest of the ruling class in the entire system of colonial political economy.

The policy of maximising land revenue, however, necessitated certain institutional changes which eventually affected the composition of the agrarian society. The land revenue experiment in Bengal and Bihar would probably have fundamentally altered the composition of the landed society as the government superseded very many old *zamindars* and the land was given to the highest bidders at the public auction.<sup>72</sup> This new group of *zamindars* made their fortunes through the association with new administration and the new economy. The British policy of

maximization of revenue also increased the hardships of the peasants. The composition of the landed society in Eastern India was also affected by the growth of land market with the growth of the land market the prices of the land also increased simultaneously. The immediate cause of the rise in land prices since 1855 was because of the rise in agricultural prices in Bengal and Bihar and disappearance of the agricultural depression in Orissa at the same time. The population growth and the resultant pressure on land, the increasing cultivation of the cash crops-jute and sugarcane made the grounds for rising agricultural prices as well as *zamindar*'s rental income. The competition for land among the peasants enabled the *zamindars* to exact a bigger amount of rent from the peasants.<sup>73</sup> The exploitation level reached so high that the background was ready for the peasant movement. This was the common feature of all over India under British domination.

This mega narrative has some sort of similarities with the case study of micro level analysis of Princely State of Cooch Behar. Details about the land administrative system under the Koches are, however, lacking. But certain references in their chronicles and also in the records of the British officers throw some light in this matter. From these accounts it appears that lands were usually divided into two kinds – cultivable and uncultivable. Cultivable land<sup>74</sup> was again divided into two groups-taxable and non taxable. Assessment varied depending upon fertility of soil, amount of produce or number of ploughs used. There is no record to show that any survey of land was undertaken before the Mughal invasion. Although the actual procedure collection of revenue and rate of assessment in the Koch Kingdom is not known it appears that some sort of Paik-system, not similar in all respects with that of the Ahoms of upper Brahmaputra valley, existed there.<sup>75</sup> The *Durrang Raj Vamsabali* makes mention of *Paiks* attached to the royal officers of the state. These *paiks* had to serve the state with manual works, and to go to war as soldiers when necessary. In return they enjoyed some plots of lands free of revenue. Besides, the *zamindars* like the *Bhuyans* and other high state officials like *Dewan, Kajri, Choudhury*, collected revenue from the peasants in their own way who were directly under their control, and sent a certain amount of their respective collection to the centre.<sup>76</sup> After the Koch kingdom had been annexed to the Mughal Empire, the system of collection of revenue was changed. The royal princelets and other *zamindars* deposited with the imperial treasure a certain amount of their collections from the peasants. The settlement in such cases was made annually

and the procedure was to “settle the *jama* agreeably to that of the preceding year.” Revenue was collected in cash or kind although the first was preferred. The *Katha Guru Charit* appears to inform us that the peasants were to pay 1/4<sup>th</sup> of their produce as rent to the royal treasury.<sup>77</sup> The king was the actual owner of the soil, but the cultivators’ right over their hereditary possessions was never questioned by him. The estates given to the relatives of the king (*petbhata*) were subject to be taken over by the king after the guarantee’s death. The *jagir* lands were allowed to be held by the state officers during the period of their service only and were thus transferable.<sup>78</sup> As the Koch rajas retained the Mughal land revenue system; naturally the survey of the land was made.

So if we analyse the indigenous land revenue system of the Koch kingdom before the coming of the Mughals and after that from the above discussion it appears that the Koch revenue system was an admixture of both Ahom and Mughal land revenue system. Like the Ahoms they were habituated with shifting cultivation, *paik* system, and cultivating *Ahu* rice and later followed like the Ahoms the wet rice (*Sali*) cultivation. On the other hand when they were influenced by the Mughals, they started to collect the land revenue in cash instead of kind.

But after being the feudatory State under British in 1773 the land administration of the State was controlled by the British administrators. As it was settled through the treaty of 1773 that the British will get the half of the revenue so the one and only objective of the Company was to maximise the revenue of the State at any cost. By introducing the *Ijaradari* system in 1790 the British administrators wanted to obtain the highest possible revenue for a short period. But it was in vain. After that the settlement was made in 1877. As the *Jotedari* system was the dominant pattern of the agrarian relation in Cooch Behar State, it was settled that the *Jotedars* were to pay their revenue to the sub divisional kutcharis. Default of payment entailed annulment of the *patta*. Later the defaulting *jotes* were to be put to auction and sold for arrears of revenue. As a result of this settlement the amount of the revenue increased. In order to enhance the revenue and maximise the profit, measures like land- revenue reforms, rent-revisions, and waste - land settlements took place a number of times in the course of little less than hundred years. As a result of these settlements the revenue of the State increased. This increase was achieved by conversion of waste-land into arable land, reduction of tax-free land grants and reclamation for revenue purpose a good part

of *Debottar* (land donated to the deities), *Brahmattor* (land donated to the priests), *Mukarrari* and other service grants. The reclaimed lands were mostly being purchased by the migrants of neighbouring areas. Besides the changes that were taking place in the economic sphere as a result of First World War, subsequent great depression of 30s and famine in Bengal also severely affected the existing pattern of land ownership in the Princely Cooch Behar. A crisis in rural credit that followed the depression compelled many small Rajbansi *Jotedars* to sell their lands. The beneficiaries from the crisis were the merchants, moneylenders and speculators who invested their capital in land. The net result of this development was the transfer of land from the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis. Alienation of land of Cooch Beharis was, therefore an unavoidable corollary of the process. Further urgency to introduce commercial crops to boost revenue income necessitated new class of revenue farmers. It is needless to say that the burden of rent-escalation has caused a number of structural disorders in the rural society of Cooch Behar.

### **Overview of Literature:**

Before initiating the discussion on agrarian studies on Cooch Behar State, some major works on agrarian studies on India as well as studies on micro regional scale should be highlighted. At the very beginning of the modern study of India's past by James Mill, in 1817, agrarian policy was given major eminence as a theme of Indian history.<sup>79</sup> Mill justified the British rule over earlier forms of rule in India. But on the other hand he condemned Cornwallis reforms i.e Permanent Settlement with *Zamindars* for its judicial and revenue provisions.

But the successors of Mill elaborated the imperial historiography of India and they could not criticise the British rule, perhaps because many of the writers were serving or former members of the Indian Civil Service. Thus John Malcolm in his "*Political history of India from 1784 to 1823*," discussed only in his two volumes the land revenue policy of the East India Company.<sup>80</sup> W. W. Hunter's historical volume of *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, entitled the Indian Empire, also put light on the policies and administrative institutions of the Raj. But Hunter also criticised the agrarian and revenue policies of the Raj in his other works and made an impact. His small volume,

“*England’s Work in India*” is full of criticisms, accusations against British land policies. He questioned about the success of the British agrarian policies.<sup>81</sup>

But the superiors of Hunter started to neutralize the criticisms of agrarian policies. In 1888 Sir Edward C’ Buck, the Secretary to Government for revenue and agriculture, decided that Hunter’s charges had to be answered. Accordingly each of the Presidencies of British India was instructed to enquire into rural poverty. One result of this attempt to eliminate the poverty issue from Victorian India was a massive apologia by the Indian Official Seshiyar Srinivasa Raghavaiyanger.<sup>82</sup> *Administration of Land Revenue and Tenure in British India* by B.H. Baden-Powell, 1907, attempts to describe the Land Revenue Administration of British India and the forms of Land-holding on which that administration is based. Indeed, the magisterial three –volume compendium on the land revenue systems of British India by B.H. Baden-Powell in 1892 provided nothing but a detailed manual of established practices which was meant to inform land- revenue officials.<sup>83</sup>

By then the other Indian voices were being heard on the subject of agrarian policies and distress. The most famous of these was R.C.Dutta, a retired Indian official of Bengal. In his ‘*The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age (London 1908)*’ and “*The Economic History of India under early British rule (London, 1916)*”, he criticised the British agrarian policies.<sup>84</sup> Others who wrote critically from this perspective were William Digby- ‘*Prosperous’ British India, a Revelations from Records*,<sup>85</sup> and Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. These works confronted the notions of earlier British writers about a chaotic pre-colonial era that was made principled and systematic by the British rule. These texts became the classic texts for Indian nationalists. They view colonialism as an economic and political disjunction.<sup>86</sup>

Before the work of Eric Stocks, *The English Utilitarians and India* and Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*, British land–revenue settlements were often seen as the outcome of a series of experiments. Reacting against this kind of historical analysis, historians in the late 1950s and early 60s emphasized the ideological roots of agrarian policy. ‘British policies moved within the orbit of ideas primarily determined in Europe’ wrote Stokes. And he proceeded to analyse the ways in which utilitarianism, liberalism, and the doctrine of rent developed by Multhus, James Mill and Ricardo shaped British legislation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>87</sup> Ranajit Guha views the

introduction of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal as an indispensable measure to ensure private property right in land. Based as it was on critique of the earlier revenue policy, particularly revenue farming, it was said to have inaugurated a clear break with the past.<sup>88</sup>

Another group of scholars those who are not guided by an informing nationalist sensibility covered the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century by representing in the second volume of the Cambridge Economic History of India.<sup>89</sup> The writers of this book provide valuable information on the economic and agrarian backgrounds to many policy questions, and several relevant aspects of agrarian policy. But it shifts the debate on agrarian and other policies, in fundamental ways, away from the manner in which imperialist historians and nationalist historians treated them. Large parts of CEHI are devoted to statistical analyses of income and agricultural prices, based upon assumptions no more convincing than those of nationalist or imperialist writers and therefore no better able to illuminate agrarian policies, their determination and their effects. The studies of B .B.Chaudhury and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, under this volume without diluting the focus on the political imperative of colonial rule, shift the discussion to the process of economic changes that early British rule initiated. They argue that early British rule initiated important changes both in the agricultural and as well as non- agricultural sectors. Whereas earlier labourers were low-caste domestic servants and victims of chronic indebtedness, now their social base expanded to include people who had suffered loss of land or gradual diminishing of per capita holdings, and impoverished sections of small peasants. At the same time, the famine of 1769-70 caused rural depopulation and a price rise, and added to the declining trend to the economy.

The economic trends in Bengal became the basis of a more general argument about the economic impact of early British rule. Irfan Habib, for instance, argues that the trading operations of the English East India Company dislocated and disrupted indigenous economies which caused large-scale de-industrialization.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, in some other regional studies the political economy of Indian States provides an explanation for the early phase of British expansion. Bayly,<sup>91</sup> Stein,<sup>92</sup> and Washbrook<sup>93</sup> through their regional studies on agriculture, merchants, and European trade attribute its success to the remarkable ways in which it grafted itself over the networks of the indigenous economy and infrastructure.

When Ranajit Guha and Eric Stokes focus on the “innovative” character of the Permanent Settlement, in contrary, Ratnalekha Ray, on the basis of local records from districts such as Rajshahi, highlights the limitations of the settlement in introducing any major transformation in the pre-colonial order. Changes were happened in the upper strata of rural society; at village level both landholdings as well as the agricultural base remained unaltered. Even at the upper levels of rural society, it was not land that changed hands but rather perpetual rights in revenue management. Proprietary rights were conferred on *zamindars* that already held such rights over revenue collection on land. Pre-colonial rights were thus given exact definition. Ray thus makes a strong case for “continuity” within the traditional agrarian order.<sup>94</sup> In the similar way, N.Mukherji and Robert Eric Frykenberg emphasise continuity within the traditional agrarian order in the implementation of the Ryotwari Settlement in South India.<sup>95</sup>

Recently, the arguments of the Rays have been subjected to critical assessment by Rajat Dutta.<sup>96</sup> The basic point of Dutta’s argument is that in the late-eighteenth century it was the *zamindars* and the merchants and not the *Jotedars* who dominated the countryside through their control over production. Dutta explicitly denied the domination, or even the existence, of this class of rural gentry in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but appears to have implicitly accepted that this class may have emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (due to the operation of the colonial revenue laws

Amit Bhaduri’s article,<sup>97</sup> attempts to interpret some broad historical trends in the evolution of the *Zamindari* System in the light of analytical economic argument. Biplab Dasgupta in his paper<sup>98</sup> critically examined the two dimensionally opposite view points regarding the pre-British Bengal society. Two recent studies by Kumkum Chatterjee<sup>99</sup>, and John Mclane<sup>100</sup> show their assertion that big business as well as large landed magnets continued to thrive in certain areas of eastern India even after the decline of the Mughal empire.

In the most popular world-view of India under colonial regime, i.e the left-nationalist interpretation of Indian economic history, it is suggested that the decline outweighed growth, and that growth and decline derived mainly from colonial policies. But the study of Tirthankar Roy<sup>101</sup> deals with the economic history of colonial India and shows how history can explain the roots of economic growth and stagnation in South Asia. He argued that there was no quantitative evidence to prove

that decline outweighed growth. Throughout the colonial period Indian real incomes were growing. There was no strong ground to believe that the dominant source of economic transformation was colonial policy. Direct governmental intervention was limited in most sectors other than agriculture.

However, the aim of this study is not simply to show that colonial revenue policy in the mid-nineteenth century could dramatically transform a tiny princely state. Rather the intention is to use Cooch Behar State as a case study to examine the validity of recently popular models of sub-regional agrarian typologies developed to understand the “agrarian question” of Bengal.

The earliest attempt at delineating regional agrarian sub-structures in Bengal was by A Ghosh.<sup>102</sup> Ghosh classified Bengal into four regions on the basis of differentiation among the peasantry. Ghosh’s study did not intend to relate the nature of pre-independence peasant politics to the nature of agrarian class structure. In fact, given the inclusion of such “dissimilar” districts as the 24 parganas and Dacca within the same region, and such “similar” districts as Dinajpur and Rangpur in different regions, Ghosh implicitly argued against the construction of any regional typologies, preferring to address the issue district wise. In 1982 Partha Chatterjee, in a seminal essay on the agrarian structure of Bengal, concluded that his findings confirmed Ghosh’s analysis.<sup>103</sup> Chatterjee showed in his essay that it was possible to directly link the regional typologies of agrarian structure with the regional peasant politics of Bengal. He warned that the course of Bengal politics was not pre-determined by its agrarian structure. But his observations were limited to eastern and western Bengal only.

Sugata Bose in his study<sup>104</sup> applies this model to whole of Bengal. He attempted to explain the different types of peasant movements in late colonial Bengal, by arguing that the peasant politics took in the eastern, western and northern regions of Bengal had their roots in the particular type of rural economy of each of these areas. Bose identified three typologies in the agrarian social structure of colonial Bengal. The village landlord/rich farmer- sharecropper system predominated in the north, the peasant small-holding system prevailed in the east, and the peasant small-holding-demesne labour complex was the most common pattern in West Bengal. The crucial feature of all these sub-types was the symbiotic relations between various classes through a network of agrarian credit.

Bose's assumption was that the peasantry of East Bengal was relatively undifferentiated. But Nariaki Nakazato<sup>105</sup> by his quantitative research showed that the east Bengal *raiyats* were stratified even before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A new phase in the process of stratification began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most significant aspect of this process was that the poor raiyats turned into *Bargadars* and the rich upper strata of *raiyats* and some section of land owners into *Jotedar* type landlords. In a recent study Nakazato has extended his research on whole of Bengal and on the basis of volume and frequency of transfer of occupancy holdings between 1881 and 1947 and he divided Bengal into three regions.<sup>106</sup> It is true that the dominant pattern of the land tenure system of North Bengal was the *Jotedari-Adhiari* system as mentioned by Bose. The Cooch Behar State was not an exception. But that does not necessarily mean that the agrarian structure of the Cooch Behar State was wholly comprised of *Jotedars* and *Adhiars*. Besides there were many intermediaries and their interaction with the colonial revenue structure, market mechanisms makes the agrarian history of the small State of Cooch Behar.

Studies particularly on Cooch Behar may be categorised into: 1) Autobiographic studies, 2) Biographical studies, 3) Ethnographic studies, 4) Demographic studies, 5) Socio-cultural studies, 6) Descriptive historical studies, 7) Political studies including movement studies etc. Some of the studies may be focussed as under:

Among them the *Rajopakhyana* by Jaynath Munshi<sup>107</sup> is the first book to deal with the royal family matters. Maharaja Harendra Narayan had taken the initiative for the writing of this book. The writing of this book was completed in the year 1845 but it was published by the State Press in the year 1938. It was written in Bengali language. This book is considered not only the first historical document of the history of Cooch Behar but the first step to write the regional history of Bengal. Jayanath Munshi was in a responsible position in the royal administration. Naturally he got the opportunity to use the important official letter, *Dalil*, old books to build his argument. So the importance of this book can be understood. Through his study we got a perfect dynastic list of the Royal family in chronological order. Not only that, the socio, economic religious, political condition of the country, the relation between the foreigner and the Koch Behar Raj, the cultural development of the state-all were highlighted by him in an excellent manner. Another important document regarding the

history of Cooch Behar State is “Koch beharer Itihas”<sup>108</sup> (The history of Cooch Behar) written by Ananada Chandra Ghosh, the son of Jayanath Munshi. The date of this book is 1865 and it was written in Bengali. This book is a brief description of his father’s writing. He only added some important geographical information in it. Bhagabati Charan Bandhayapadhay’s book Koch Beharer Itihas<sup>109</sup> (the History of Cooch Behar.) was written in three parts. But no particular theme of history of Cooch Behar was discussed by him. From geographical description of the State to the administration of the State - everything was discussed by him. The book deals with the account of soil, cultivation, revenue reforms under different Commissioners of Cooch Behar State. The next important book about Cooch Behar was, “The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement” by Harendra Narayan Chaudhury.<sup>110</sup> It was published in 1903 by the Cooch Behar State Press. Though he discussed the history of the state but his main interest of discussion was the land tenure system of the royal Cooch Behar and the Land Revenue structure and the land settlements.

But the above mentioned books except the “*Rajopakhyana*” can not be considered as the wholesome documentary of the history of the Cooch Behar State. Perhaps the book written by Amanatullah is able to make up the gaps. He followed the scientific method of writing history to write this book. His book “Cooch Beharer itihas”<sup>111</sup> was first published in the year 1936. The book is very modern in outlook. Most important thing is that being a Muslim he had written about the Hindu Raja of Cooch Behar and he was not a bias writer too. The dynastic history of the state, the Muslim invasion, the currency system of the state, the relation between the Cooch Behar Raj and the other princely state all were nicely discussed by him. He was able to show the downfall of the feudal character of the state and the elite conflict which was common to the history of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century India in a very easier manner. He also discussed the British Intervention on the State and their interference in state matter. But the book is not flawless one. Still the importance of the book can not be denied. This study on the Koches was done by E.A. Gait. His book *The Koch Kings of Kamrupa*,<sup>112</sup> is a documented history of the Koches of Kamrupa. He discussed about the dynastic history of the Koch kings, their political situation and the administration of the kings of the Kamrupa. The study of Charu Chandra Sanyal on the Rajbansis of North Bengal<sup>113</sup> gives us the idea about the socio political life of the Rajbansis. He critically analysed different parts of their life. But he remained silent

about the cultural change among the Rajbansis under the colonial penetration. Koch Biharer Itihas, 1981<sup>114</sup>, by Hemanta kumar Roy Burma is another necessary book to depict the history of the State. As he was an important royal officer we can know from his writing about different type of judicial law and administrative law. S.C. Sanyal's book<sup>115</sup> The History of Cooch Behar also added the valuable information about the history of Cooch Behar.

Besides there are some works on the political economy, the merger of the Cooch Behar State, the modernization of the Cooch Behar State, and the social mobility of the Koch-Rajbansis which categorically defined their different aspects of life. Mostly these are doctoral dissertations or monographs.

### **Research Gap**

In the light of the aforementioned studies so far conducted by the scholars, it may well be argued that the problem of the proposed study, as specified, has still been unattended. Precisely, issues and implications involved in the land-man relationship in pre-colonial and colonial Cooch Behar resulting in the face of changing political economy has not been investigated by any scholar of history. The present study has attempted to bridge this academic gap with a potentiality of academic meaningfulness and would definitely logically find place.

### **Research Objectives**

To adumbrate, the present study seeks to explore the evolving land –man relationship in the princely state Cooch Behar (1772-1949) in the perspective of the political economy of the region. The objectives may be specified as under:-

- i) To study the overall profile of the princely Cooch Behar under the pre-colonial situation and the nature of land-man relationship resulting out of propriety over land as well as related indigenous system of land administration,
- ii) To study the changing profile of land–man relationship and related politico-administrative arrangements e.g. land revenue and land settlement of the princely state Cooch Behar under colonial domination,
- iii) To study the emerging socio-economic orders of the princely State Cooch Behar during its pre-colonial and colonial formations,

- iv) To study the society, economy and polity of Cooch Behar both during pre-colonial and colonial situations contextualising the political economy after keeping the regional history as a frame of reference.
- v) To study the nature and issues of land –settlements in Cooch Behar both in pre-colonial and colonial situation.
- vi) Finally, the proposed study would attempt to reach a conclusion to understand the nature of political economy of a princely state and to argue whether such nature of economy basically feudal in nature would ultimately graduate to a capitalist formation or would remain static thereby giving birth to an abortive formation of capitalist economy due to pre-matured formation of its society, economy and politics.

### **Research Hypotheses**

It is proposed that the under mentioned hypotheses would be dealt with through the different chapters for necessary verification for their required validation or invalidation. Arguably, the hypotheses are of assumptive value, at present, drawn out of available records, information and readings of the relevant literature.

- That the tiny principality of Cooch Behar in its pre-colonial formation witnessed an indigenous system of land propriety along with the Mughals' land revenue administration resulting thereby an indigenous political economy distinctively different from other native states of pre-colonial India.
- The colonial Cooch Behar has experienced unique features of society, economy and politics evolving out of an admixed land settlements and land revenue administration after keeping the major remnants of indigenous land settlements and land revenue administration injecting thereby the colonial features of land settlements and land revenue administration.
- The pre-colonial Cooch Behar in the face of colonial situation has undergone a tremendous metamorphosis affecting thereby the land man relationship and the nature of political economy.
- The mega narratives on the societal development do not match with the experiences of Cooch Behar both under pre-colonial and colonial stages.

- The specificities of Cooch Behar need to be constructed to explain the largely agreed discourse on “national history localised” frame.
- While dealing with the experiences of agricultural history of Cooch Behar both during pre-colonial and colonial formation, it is assumed that a unique kind of feudalism aborted the way to pre-capitalist formation in Cooch Behar till the decolonization was taken place.

## **Research Questions**

In order to test the validity of the hypotheses so formulated and to realise the objectives of the study, inter alia, the following research questions have been developed.

- i) What are the distinctive features of the primary sector of the economy of the State of Cooch Behar under pre-colonial and colonial formations?
- ii) What had been the nature of proprietary rights over land?
- iii) What have been the distinctive features of land revenue administration and land settlements as well as land-man relationship?
- iv) What had been nature of political economy in two different formations resulting out of indigenous system clubbed with Mughal system of land revenue and land settlements and British indoctrinated system of land revenue administration?
- v) What have been the unique features that Cooch Behar held during the period under study and what made Cooch Behar a distinctively different society, economy, polity from mainstream states of the under study?
- vi) What are other factors and forces, issues and events involved in the development process of Cooch Behar State?
- vii) Did the land relationship, production relation give rise to different intermediaries?
- viii) Had land alienation procedure any impact on the society, economy and politics of Cooch Behar State?
- ix) What was the distinctiveness of such land alienation?
- x) Did Cooch Behar State undergo from feudal formation to capitalist formation?

## **Study Methodology**

The study is based on purely on library research, archival supports of the Government Departments and individuals' personal collection of the old documents since the universe of the study is the erstwhile Cooch Behar State documental investigation has been restricted in order to meet the requirements of scientific historical investigation .The design of the study has been mostly referential, observational, explanatory and analytical in nature. To make the study provocative and attractive, a cultural-ethnographical approach dovetailed politico-economic approach has been adopted.

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### **An Historical Outline of the Princely State Cooch Behar**

Situated in the north-eastern part of West Bengal, and surrounded by Bhutan, Assam, Bangladesh and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal has its own identity itself. Until the year 1949 Cooch Behar was an Indian Princely State ruled by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar who had been a feudatory prince under the British Government. Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan of Cooch Behar ceded his territory to the Dominion Government of India in 1949 and on the first day of January, 1950, Cooch Behar was transferred and merged with the province of West Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Since then Cooch Behar is being administered as a district of West Bengal.

The documented history of this region provides us the fact that this tract once formed part of the ancient and independent Rajya (state) named Pragjyotishpur which was formed composing of geography of present day Assam and a part of early Bengal. Different Regional tribal groups such as Danaba, Kirat, and Asur ruled either whole or part of this region.<sup>2</sup> With the passage of time Pragjyotishpur became known as Kamrupa. At a later stage Ahom, Khen, Koch and such other tribal groups dominated the region at different points of time. These tribal groups used to fight with each other to keep their political hold and had come to a relationship under dominant-dominated continuum.<sup>3</sup> They had to experience with different kind of socio-political interactions and had to come across different stages of inter-relations such as conquest, super-imposition, assimilation and amalgamation.

It is known from the sources that Kamrupa was under the domination of the Pala kings for several years. But whether these Palas were the same as the Pala kings of Bengal is controversial.<sup>4</sup> The founder of the line seems to have been Dharmapala, whose city was in Dimla in Rangpur.<sup>5</sup> He governed a large country, extending as far as Tezpur in modern Assam. His brother was Manikchandra on whose death Dharmapala overthrew his son, Gopichandra. But a battle ensued between Dharmapala and Gopichandra's army in which the former disappeared never to come

back again.<sup>6</sup> Gopichandra and Bhabachandra were the next rulers respectably. Bhabachandra is said to have been overthrown by the first ruler of the Khen dynasty.<sup>7</sup>

It is not known how the rule of the Pala kings of Kamrupa came to an end. It is probable that the last of the Pala kings having died without an heir, the part of Kamrupa, west of Brahmaputra remained in a state of anarchy for some time, and was overrun by several tribes of Koch, Mech, Garo, Kachari and Hoar.<sup>8</sup> This period of disturbance and disintegration of power was most favourable for the rise of the Khen tribe.<sup>9</sup> They acquired the power and Nilwadhwaaja became the king. He built his capital at Kamatapur on the west bank of Dharala about 14 miles southwest of modern Cooch Behar. He was succeeded by his son Chakradhwaja who was also succeeded by his son, Nilambara who was the third and the last king of this line. But he was a most successful ruler as he included the greater part of Goalpara, and Kamrupa, the whole of Rangpur and Cooch Behar and portions of Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur under his dominions. He tried his best to improve communication system by making roads and established temples in different parts of his kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

King Nilambar met with a tragic end at the hands of Sultan Hussain Shah, the Afghan ruler of Gaur in 1498. The Khen dynasty came to an end after the great defeat of Nilambara.<sup>11</sup> Later the Assamese expelled the Mussalmans and a sort of anarchy prevailed in the country. The kingdom of Kamrupa was then broken up into numerous principalities under local rulers called *Bhuiyas* and was frequently being attacked by tribal chieftains from the north-east region of India.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime the Koch chiefs gradually raised into power.<sup>13</sup> The political metamorphosis of conquest, superimposition, and assimilation ultimately led to the formation of Koch kingdom or the Cooch Behar State in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Ahoms occupied the eastern zone of Kamrup and the Koches became masters of the western zone of Kamrup and ultimately centred round Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur.<sup>14</sup> The Koch tribe under their leader general Hajo defeated the Khens and ruled the Western portion of Kamrup from 1510 and the successors of the Koch rajas ruled this tiny State till its merger with India in 1949.<sup>15</sup>

The name Cooch Behar is of comparatively recent origin. The territory of modern Cooch Behar originally formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa and had no separate existence of its own as distinct principality prior to the division of the country into two parts between king Naranarayan and his brother Shukladhwaja, in the

middle of the 16th century.<sup>16</sup> The name Cooch Bihar appears to have been first used in relation to this country in *Shah Jahan Nama* about the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

In his *Statistical Account of Koch Behar*, W.W.Hunter attempted to derive the name from the Sanskrit "*Vihara*" meaning recreation, especially applied to a Buddhist monastery.<sup>18</sup> Considering the fact that the name Cooch Behar is of recent origin, connection with any Buddhist monastery seems unlikely. In the absence of any concrete evidence of the existence of a Buddhist monastery, the main word Behar must be etymologically derived as a place or abode or sport. Cooch Behar thus is an abode of the Koch tribe.<sup>19</sup> It came to be called Cooch Behar after the Koch kings had come to the power in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, long after all Buddhist influence had died out in Bengal.<sup>20</sup> The name Cooch Behar is a compound of two words: Cooch and Behar. The term 'Cooch' is a corrupted form of Cooch or Koch, being the name of a race of people, inhabiting a large tract of country to the north-east of Bengal, and Behar or more properly *Vihara* denotes abode or sport. 'Cooch Behar' means the abode or the land of the Koches.<sup>21</sup> The Cooch Behar Royal Gazetteer of 1896 first used the name Cooch Behar instead of Koch Bihar.<sup>22</sup>

A divine parentage is ascribed to the Koch kings. The tradition is that the God Siva fell in love with Hira, the daughter of a Koch chief named Hajo and the result of their intimacy gave birth of two sons named Bisu or Biswa Singh and Sishu or Sisya Singh.<sup>23</sup> Hira and her sister Jira both were also got married with a Mech people named Hariya Mandal. Jira was also blessed with two sons-Chandan and Madan.<sup>24</sup> Accounts differ as to who became the first king of the Koch line in Cooch Behar. According to the contemporary account it is known that Chandan, son of Jira founded the kingdom in 1510 and his cousin brother, Biswa Singh, succeeded him.<sup>25</sup> But according to Khan Chaudhury Amanatulla Ahmed, the author of the *History of Cooch Behar* (in Bengali) the first king of Cooch Behar was Biswa Singha. But the contemporary source also varies regarding the date of accession of Biswa Singha. Harendra Nayan Chaudhury gives the date of accession of Biswa Singha as A.D.1522 which appears more probable. E.A.Gait in his *History of Assam* depicts A.D 1515-1540 as the duration of Biswa Singha's reign. The most of the contemporary sources agreed with the fact that Chandan founded the Koch kingdom in 1510 and Biswa Singha succeeded him in the year 1522 A.D.

## 1.1. Cooch Behar State under the Independent Koch Rulers

Biswa Singh proved himself to be a mighty conqueror and brought under his rule the whole tract from the Karatoya on the west to the Baranadi on the east. Under his strong hand the government began to be systematically administered.<sup>26</sup> His brother Sisvu Singha became his chief minister. At the coronation of the king Biswa Singha, Sisva Singha held the Royal umbrella over his head and assumed the title of *Raikat*, which means the head of the family and the hereditary chief minister.<sup>27</sup> Biswa Sinha appointed twelve ministers from the 12 chief families of the Meches.<sup>28</sup> He also introduced a regular state organization. He also marched to the subjugation of Gaur. He succeeded in reducing the country round Gaur, but failed to conquer the capital. But he snatched away the Western portion of modern Jalpaiguri District from the king of Gaur.<sup>29</sup> Though he was a mighty warrior and successful conqueror he was very much religious at the same time. After a reign of 31 years he meditated upon relinquishing the world. He spent his last days of life to close meditation and prayer.<sup>30</sup>

After the death of Raja Biswa Singha his eldest son Nara Singha sacrificed the throne in favour of his younger brother Naranarayan ascended the throne in the year 1555A.D.<sup>31</sup> Coins were struck in his name both in gold and silver and came to be called after new king Narayani coins. Soon after his accession to the throne the Mahamedans of Gaur attacked the Koch kingdom. But the large army of the king defeated the governor of Gaur and the country as far as the Ganges was conquered.<sup>32</sup> Naranarayan led his victorious army into Assam and not only conquered that country but also reduced the neighbouring countries of Kachar, Manipur, Jaintia, Tipperah, Dimuria and Sylhet into submission. The kings were made feudatories who paid the conqueror a yearly tribute. Thus in his time Cooch Behar was an extensive kingdom comprising almost the whole of Northern Bengal, Bhutan and Assam as well as the modern state of Kachar, Jaintia, Manipur and Tipperah and extended up to the coast of the Bay of Bengal.<sup>33</sup>

During his tenure the country was divided into two portions and he had given the portion of the kingdom east of the Sankos River to his brother Sukladhvaja or Chila Rai who thenceforth became the ruler of Assam or Eastern Kamrup.<sup>34</sup> Thus Maharaja Naranarayan was the last of the Koch kings who ruled over the vast territories comprised by the old kingdom of Kamrupa. His descendants held the sway over the western part of Kamrup for the next two centuries.<sup>35</sup>

This event of partition of the kingdom led to the downfall of the Koch kings. Nar Narayan died in 1584 and his son, Lakshmi Narayan, who succeeded him, having quarrelled with the descendant of Chila Rai, appealed for the aid of the Mughals and declared himself a vassal of the emperor of Delhi.<sup>36</sup> Laxmi Narayan reigned for 35 years and died in 1621 A.D. His successors were not strong enough to keep the country under their strongholds. The Ahoms gradually absorbed the eastern kingdom, while the western part was captured of its outlying possessions by the Mughals on the south and west and by the Bhutias on the north, until at last only the modern state of Cooch Behar remained in the precarious possession of Biswa Singh's descendants. He was succeeded by his son Biranarayan.<sup>37</sup>

Maharaja Biranarayan's tenure was marked by further loss of power and lands. During the reign of Biranarayan, Bhutan broke her allegiance and stopped the payment of tribute and the *Raikat* ceased to be a tributary and did not hold the umbrella over the king's head at the time of coronation.<sup>38</sup> He removed his capital to Atharakotha, near modern Cooch Behar. He established schools in different parts of his country and did much to promote knowledge and learning. His 5 years reign had hardly any significance and he died in 1626 after appointing his son Prananarayan as his successor.<sup>39</sup>

The 40 years rule of Prannarayan was marked by humiliation and defeats. During his reign, in 1638, Islam Khan the governor of Chittagong invaded the territories of Cooch Behar. But it was not confirmed whether he penetrated in to the State or not. Mirjumla, the Governor of Bengal also entered into the country in the year 1661 and took possession of the capital.<sup>40</sup> Prananarayan had to take refuge in the forest. Mir Jumla appointed a governor, ordered the destruction of all Hindu temples, and gave instructions to erect mosques in their place. No other damage was done to the town, and plundering was not allowed. Mirjumla had settled the revenues of Cooch Behar at 10 lakhs of Narayani rupees and left an army to look after the administration of the State before he marched to Assam. During the absence of Mirjumla, Prananarayan gathered momentum and with the help of the people of Cooch Behar returned to his capital and suppressed the Mughals. Thus the attempt of Mirjumla to conquer the State had gone in vain.<sup>41</sup>

The King Prannarayan re-established himself in his capital. He was a learned and accomplished man and a great Sanskrit scholar. He was also an expert in singing and dancing, and wrote a treatise on those subjects. He left many works on various subjects, but these have unfortunately been destroyed by fire. He also encouraged religion, and built the temples of Jalpeswar, Baneswar, and Kamateswari, he also repaired the temple of the goddess Gosanimari, the famous presiding goddess of old Kamatapur. The Maharaja made a liberal endowment for the maintenance of the shrine. After a reign of 39 years Prannarayan died in 1665.<sup>42</sup>

On the death of Maharaja Prannarayan the internal rivalry started for the acquisition of the power of the State. Internal affairs also fell into deplorable confusion. In accordance with the course of the Hindu political system three families, all scions of the royal stock, the *Nazir Deo*, the *Diwan Deo*, and the *Raikat* of Baikuntpur each claimed a hereditary position, which was inconsistent with unity of administration, and did not hesitate to call in the foreign foe to support their pretensions. The Maharaja Madannarayan, after a disturbed reign of 15 years, was died practically heart-broken, and without issue.<sup>43</sup>

The *Raikats* now placed Basudevvarayan, the third and only surviving son of Maharaja Prannarayan, on the throne. Two years after another attempt was made on the part of the sons of Mahinarayan, the *Nazir*, with the assistance of the Bhutias, to attack the capital. A battle ensued, in which the king's troops were routed. The king fled to the palace and was beheaded. Maharaja Prannarayan's great-grandson, an infant of the name of Mahendranarayan, was now made king by the *Raikats* in 1682.<sup>44</sup> After some years both the *Raikats* died and the young king was left practically helpless. After a reign of 11 years the king died in 1693 at the age of 16. After his death Rupnarayan, *Nazir's* nephew, became the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.<sup>45</sup>

During his time the Mughals renewed their attack on Cooch Behar territory and their suzerainty over the *Chaklas* of Boda, Patgram and Purvabhag was accepted. Maharaja Rupnarayan removed his capital to Guria Hati on the eastern bank of the Torsa. He was noted for his profound religious knowledge. After a reign of 21 years he died and succeeded by his son Upendranarayan.<sup>46</sup>

Systematic expansion of Bhutanese power in the plains began when Cooch Behar State lost its rich territories of Boda, Patagram and Purbabhag to the Mughals

in 1711. Maharaja Upendranarayan was not powerful enough to oppose them. Nar Singha, the king's brother is said to have taken refuge in Bhutan due to his expulsion from Cooch Behar and in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Bhutanese became the real king maker.<sup>47</sup> After the death of Maharaja Upendra Narayan, the Chief Minister of the State carried on the government for some time. The Bhutanese became so powerful during this period that they had started keeping resident at the capital with a force of Bhutan's soldiers. The Bhutanese resident practically ruled the State.<sup>48</sup> Gradually they started interfering in the court intrigues. Upendranarayan was succeeded by his son Devendranarayan who was assassinated in 1765.

During this period the *Subas* of Bengal lost their authority and the *Dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was conferred on the East India Company by Shah Alam, Mughal Emperor of Delhi. The revenue of the Cooch Behar *Chaklas* was henceforth paid to the Company.<sup>49</sup>

After the assassination of Maharaja Devendranarayan, the boy king, *Nazir* Rudranarayan attempted to place his brother's son on the throne, but this was objected by the Dewan Deo Ramnarayan. After a while Ramnarayan's third brother, Dhairjendranarayan, was elected as king. Shortly after, in 1769, the *Nazir* died, and his brother's son, Khagendranarayan, was appointed to the *Nazirship*. But the leading man of the State was the *Dewan*. His power was enormous, being supported by the Bhutanese representatives. The officers around the king, being jealous of the *Dewan's* power, conspired against him, and he was treacherously murdered. The king's younger brother was then made *Dewan*.<sup>50</sup>

The Dev Raja of Bhutan was furious at the murder of the Dewan Deo, and caused the king and the new Dewan to be carried off as prisoners to a hill fort, the Dewan however was escaped. The Bhutias in 1770 placed the king's brother Rajendranarayan on the throne. His nominal reign lasted for two years and he died in 1772. On hearing the king's death Nazir Deo Khagendranarayan hastened to the capital and elected Dharendranarayan, the son of captive king, and he was installed king<sup>51</sup>. The Deo Raja of Bhutan objected to this and sent an army against Cooch Behar. The Nazir Deo, however removed the young Maharaja and his mother and the royal family to Balarampur, and prepared to oppose the Bhutias. A battle ensued, in which the Nazir Deo was defeated and driven out of the country. The Bhutias occupied the whole of the country, with the exception of Rahimgunge, and built forts

in various parts. Even the palace of the town was occupied by a large section of the Bhutia soldiers.<sup>52</sup>

In this emergency, the king's party headed by Nazir Deo appealed to the East India Company for help which was promised on certain conditions. It was under these circumstances that the attention of the East India Company was first attracted to Cooch Behar and its affairs.<sup>53</sup>

This led to the conclusion of the treaty, on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1773, between East India Company and Cooch Behar State. This treaty was signed, sealed, and concluded by the Honourable the President and Council at Fort William, on the one part, and by Dharendra Narayan, son of Dhairyendra Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, on the other part. Maharaja Dhairyendra Narayan was freed by British force. The following conditions are mutually agreed on:<sup>54</sup>

1st.- That the said Raja will immediately pay into the hands of the Collector of Rangpur Rs. 50,000 to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him.

2nd. That if more than Rs. 50,000 are expended the Raja make it good to the Honourable the English East India Company, but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back.

3rd. That the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the will of the English East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies, and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the Province of Bengal.

4th. That the Raja further agrees to make over to the English East India Company the one half of the annual revenues of Cooch Behar for ever.

5th. That the other moiety shall remain to the Raja and his heirs for ever, provided he is firm in his allegiance to the Honourable United East India Company

6th. That in order to ascertain the value of the Cooch Behar country, the Raja will deliver a 'hustabud' (revenue statement) of his district into the hands of such person as the Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for that purpose, upon which valuation the annual Malguzari (assessment) which the Raja is to pay, shall be established.

7th That the amount of Malguzari settled by such person as the Honourable East India Company shall depute shall be perpetual.

8th-That the Honourable East India Company shall always assist the Raja with a force when he has occasion for it, for the defence of the country, the Raja bearing the expense.

9th-That this treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the Court of Directors empowering the President and Council to ratify the same for ever.

As a result of signing of this treaty the Bhutanese aim of political predominance in Cooch Behar State had been successfully checked. Maharaja Dhairyendra Narayan and his brother, the Dewan Deo, were freed from the hands of the Bhutanese. The Bhutias were not only driven beyond the frontier, but followed

into their own territory, and three of their forts were captured.<sup>55</sup> At the same time this treaty opened the doors of the State for the colonial penetration.

From the above discussion a question may be raised why did East India Company interfere into the affairs of a small north-eastern State like Cooch Behar? The answer to this question can be given from different angles. Firstly, it was guided by political interest of the British. It is evident from the subsequent report of Walter Hamilton (1820) that, "the peace and security of the adjacent British territories were more to be considered than any pecuniary advantage to be derived from the new acquisition, as prior to this period the Rangpur District had been much exposed to incursions from Bhutan".<sup>56</sup> The protection of the northern flank of the company's expanding empire in Bengal was their main concern.<sup>57</sup> Secondly, they had their economic motive too. The Company's commerce in the Himalayan region was so long carried on through Nepal, but during this time the political atmosphere of Nepal badly hampered the commercial interests of the British East India Company.<sup>58</sup> The Company as a result was eager to open trade route to Tibet through Bhutan, Assam and Cooch Behar and Warren Hastings's policy in this regard was to bypass the Gurkhas of Nepal.<sup>59</sup> But the relation between the East India Company and Bhutan was not even established and cordial. Naturally, the annexation of Cooch Behar by Bhutan would prevent their commercial interest in this region. To obtain free access for trade routes it was essentially important on the part of the East India Company to clear the trade routes and the war with Bhutan was necessary.<sup>60</sup> Thirdly, the strategic position of Cooch Behar was very much important for the British. Placed as it was geographically, Cooch Behar was constantly involved in the expansionist schemes and political intrigues of Bhutan, Sikkim and Assam, which in their turn were involved with Nepal and Tibet. So it was important for the British to have a foot-hold in this troubled and strategically important area.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the Company was very much irritated by the activities of the Sannyasis in the neighbouring areas of Cooch Behar State. The problem to tackle the Sannyasis became the concern of the British authority.<sup>62</sup>

According to the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty of 1773, it is also noteworthy that the half of the revenue to be paid to the English Government is clearly marked out as a tribute and not as a tax. The collector of Rangpur collected this tribute agreed to be paid to the British Government by this treaty.<sup>63</sup> Unto 1780 the tribute was

realized by committing the total collections of the state to *Tehsildars* appointed by the British Govt, and from the total collections the *Tehsildars* deducted the half share of the British Government and paid over the other half to the State. Thus collection was made twice from each *Jotedar*, once by the East India Company's *Tehsildars* for half the amount and second time by the revenue collections of the Maharaja for the remaining half.<sup>64</sup>

## 1.2. Cooch Behar State under the Feudatory Chiefs

Cooch Behar became a feudatory State to the East India Company by the virtue of the treaty of 1773 and Maharaja Dharendranarayan was the first ruler who acknowledged his loyalty to the Company.<sup>65</sup> But after his untimely death again his father Dhairyendranarayan became the second feudatory chief. But he could not live for a long time. Harendranarayan, the second son of Dhairyendranarayan was 3 years and 9 months old when his father was died. After his death the State was internally divided into two parties-one headed by Maharani and other was headed by *Nazir Deo*, Khagendranarayan. By the support of the Company's officials the *Nazir Deo* became very much influential in the State and had sent the supporters of the Maharani into prison. He also kept the Maharani and infant Harendranarayan into confinement and declared himself the king. But at last with the help of the Collector of Rangpur Maharani recovered her power and seized all lands belonged to the *Nazir Deo* and had driven out him from the State.<sup>66</sup>

Taking account of this disturbed situation Lord Cornwallis appointed a Commission under the supervision of Messrs Lawrence Mercer and John Lewis Chauvet to report on the real motive of both the parties and on various matters connected with the administration of the State. The Commissioners recommended "full sovereignty in favour of the Raja, granting small concessions to the *Nazir Deo* and the *Dewan Deo* and the appointment of a Commissioner or Resident."<sup>67</sup> With the appointment of the Commissioners the interference of the Company in the matters of the State expanded. Commissioner Douglas introduced reforms in administrative system of the State. He also introduced the *Izaradari* System for the collection of the revenue of the State and abolished the duties on *ganjes* and hats.<sup>68</sup>

Maharaja Harendranarayan did not like this type of interference of the Company. In the year 1801 when he ascended to the throne the Commissioner was withdrawn and he took the charge of the administration in his hands fully.<sup>69</sup> But afterwards several attempts were made again and again by the British Government to re-establish the post of Resident Commissioner at Cooch Behar, but the Raja objected. From 1805 to 1813 the Collectors of Rangpur were ex-officio Residents of Cooch Behar and carried on their duties connected with the State at Rangpur. But this arrangement led to the intrigue and trouble. At last the Government determined on exercising a thorough and efficient supervision of the State. The post of Resident Commissioner was renewed in 1813. But during his long reign of 56 years he always tried to resist the introduction of the East India Company's regulations in the Cooch Behar State.<sup>70</sup>

A "Governor-General's Agent" was appointed on the North-Eastern Frontier in 1822, and the representation of Cooch Behar was henceforth vested in that officer. He only supervised important affairs and did not interfere in social or petty matters connected with the State. In 1834 Captain Jenkins was appointed as the Agent to the Governor-General in Cooch Behar State.<sup>71</sup> The reign of Maharaja Harendranarayan marked a period of transition from the old to the new system of the government and formed a critical epoch in the history of the State. During this period the policy of the Government was finally decided upon, and it was through the tact, patient and ability of the Maharaja that the State did not sink into an ordinary Zamindari. But during his time the Bhutias constantly made raids into Cooch Behar territory. A boundary was laid down by order of the Government in 1851.<sup>72</sup>

On his death his eldest son, Sibendranarayan became the Maharaja of the State in 1839 and ruled till 1847. Improvement and modifications in administration was viewed during his reign. The extravagances of the late Maharaja had left the State in a very embarrassed condition, but the new Maharaja, by great care and attention, in the course of a few years brought the finances of the State into order. His attention was chiefly devoted to the internal administration of the State, and several boundary disputes were settled. His administrative farsightedness was more superior to those of any of his predecessors.<sup>73</sup>

After his death his adopted son Narendranarayan became the Maharaja. From the time of Narendranarayan the colonial interference in every sphere of state affairs

started. When he became the Raja he was only 5 or 6 years old. He was placed under the tutorship of Mr. Moore.<sup>74</sup> Though the *Dewan* and his party was against the English education of the Maharaja but the Government had taken the step to give the western education to Narendra Narayan to fulfil the dying wish of the late raja of Cooch Behar in regard to the education of his son. He was sent to Krishnagar to finish his College education.<sup>75</sup> During his reign the trouble with Bhutan flared up again and there was a series of disputes. This problem was handled by the British Government but failed to bring any permanent solution. Disputes with Rangpur also had taken place during his time. The disputes arose as the *rayots* of Cooch Behar and Rangpur were trespassing on each other's land. To solve the problem a topographical survey of the State was made under Mr. Pemberton, Revenue Surveyor in 1859. His map was the first regular map of the country. At last the problem was patched up<sup>76</sup>

He was a benevolent king. He introduced some reforms in the administration. He had taken initiatives to bring English Education in the State by establishing Jenkins School in Cooch Behar town. During his time the initiatives for expansion of communication was taken by the Government. The most important thing is that the management of the territory of Cooch Behar was placed under the jurisdiction of Government of Bengal from his period.<sup>77</sup>

Narendra Narayan died a pre-mature death at the age of 22 in the year 1863 after a short reign of 4 years only. His legitimate son Nripendra Narayan succeeded him.<sup>78</sup> He was a minor at that time and East India Company appointed Colonel Haughton to be the Commissioner of Cooch Behar State. Haughton was vested by the Government with the full authority of the ruler of the State. But soon he was put in charge of the Second Bhutan war, a Deputy Commissioner was appointed to assist him in the matter of administration of Cooch Behar.<sup>79</sup> The Maharaja received a wholly European training and education, and has at various times visited England. In 1878 he married the eldest daughter of the great religious reformer Keshab Chandra Sen, and in 1883 he assumed charge of the administration of the State.<sup>80</sup> But he did not bring any change in the administrative structure of the State. A Council of State was established in 1883 with the king and three other members. The Maharaja is entitled to a salute of 13 guns. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan never tried to deny the British control from the State although in 1891 he lightly modified this administrative structure.<sup>81</sup>

During his rule all branches of administration were reorganised and public welfare activities were increased. Several salutary reforms were introduced. A complete survey and settlement of land was made, and the various departments of the State were put upon the firm and substantial basis. Nripendra Narayan was a great builder who had given a modern shape of the town of Cooch Behar and built beautiful private and public buildings.<sup>82</sup>

Maharaja Nripendranarayan died in 1911 in England and was succeeded by his eldest son Rajendranarayan who died a pre-mature death in 1913. During his two years reign there was no change in the political affairs of the State.<sup>83</sup> He was succeeded by his younger brother, Jitendranarayan who died in 1921. He tried to modernize the State including the development of transport, education, sanitary service, and had done many welfare works for the subjects.<sup>84</sup> After his death, Maharani Indira Devi became Regent of the State during the minority of the then present ruler-Jagaddipendra Narayan. So the Regency Council guided by the queen mother Indira Devi managed the political affairs of the State.<sup>85</sup> He was the last Maharaja of Cooch Behar. On September 12, 1949; he signed the Instrument of Accession. The State was transferred into Indian Government on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1949. But he remained silent about the future of the State after the end of the British control.<sup>86</sup>

The Koch Kings (Appendix-1) ruled Cooch Behar kingdom for nearly 450 years. Over a span of 400 years or so, the political status of the present Cooch Behar has kept on changing. From a Koch kingdom it became a princely State, then to a revenue paying State to the British, and finally it became a district of West Bengal after the merger of the State in India in 1949. The Koch or Rajbansis are the major ethnic group which over a long period of time has been living with other immigrant social groups in the State of Cooch Behar. But as the Koch or Rajbansis were the dominant group in the State naturally the socio-economic life of the Rajbansi community denoted the socio-economic life of the State.

### **1.3. The People of the State of Cooch Behar**

The population of Cooch Behar is of a mixed origin. The Rajbansis or Koches undoubtedly predominated over all the other tribes. The root of the Koch tribes lied in the influence of Astromongoloid tribal groups.<sup>87</sup> Some Historians and Anthropologists

have expressed the view of Dravidian-Mongoloid admixture and have stressed the Mongoloid element. However the Pre-history and mythology of this region indicate the existence of Aryans in this region who used to live only river side of Karatoya. In fact we don't have any definite information about the Koch tribe before 16<sup>th</sup> century. The initial identification of Koch tribe could have been made as a part of extended Boro tribe.<sup>88</sup> According to the view of famous Anthropologist Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, "Koches are Non-Aryan in origin. Some of them adopted Hinduism and became the Rajbansis. These Rajbansis later on claimed to be Kshatriyas"<sup>89</sup> But a section of the local Rajbansi intelligentsia denied the argument and they claimed that the Rajbansis do have certainly *Kshatriya* origin of northern heartland of India. They had taken the resort of the old Hindu scriptures and mythologies to substantiate their view.<sup>90</sup> Thus the ethnic origin of the Rajbansis has been some what uncertain amidst opposing arguments. The continuous process of assimilation and integration of Hindu religion gave rise to a new social group called Rajbansi which was formed as a major breaking away group of the Koch Tribe. Besides Koch or Rajbansis, there have been some tribal groups which are still in existence such as Mech, Rava, Kachari and others.<sup>91</sup> They are all grouped under the Hindus. So the people are generally composed of two elements: Hindus and Muslims. There are some well-to-do Muslim families, some of whom have been honoured by the State with titles and distinctions, and seats in the Durbar.<sup>92</sup> The Brahmans are mostly of the *Vaidic* class, and are the descendants of those who were from time to time brought into the country by the Khen kings of Kamatapur and by the Rajas of the Koch dynasty, from Oudh, Tirhoot and Assam.<sup>93</sup> Attracted to remain in the country by the grant of the *Brahmattar* lands and stipends, they have settled in and near the metropolis, and not differing much from the Brahmans of lower Bengal in their religious and social customs. Besides this *Brahmanas* there were small number of *Khatriyas*, *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas*.<sup>94</sup>

The internal demographic formation of Cooch Behar underwent a distinctive transformation due to certain movements arising out of internal social dynamics. The semi-feudal aboriginal state of Cooch Behar from its early social formation formed a social relationship based on community and clan wherein both the ruler and the ruled belonged to the same clan named the Koches. The administrative discourse and the recorded history suggest that Koches are autochthonous tribe having a Austro-Mongoloid decent. That during the last many decades of colonial Cooch Behar, the

socio-cultural mobility movement gave rise to a different kind of identity formation of the indigenous people of Cooch Behar called Rajbansis. The Rajbansi social leaders claiming themselves as *Kshtriyas* were distinctively different from the Koches. However, from the four consecutive Census reports beginning from 1901-1931 revealed that the population profile of the Rajbansis have always been on a higher side and for the Koches, marginally non-existent. It can be stated that in the process of absorption, assimilation and the pressure of social movements most of the Koches of Cooch Behar got themselves registered as Rajbansis, for the convenience of the Study and to imply the indigenous people in the whole course of this study Rajbansis and the Koches are synonymously used without semantic variation.

#### **1.4. The Pre-colonial Social, Economic and Political Structure of the State of Cooch Behar**

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Rajbansi community. In matters connected with agriculture they were very traditional in outlook.<sup>95</sup> New modes of cultivation or the rearing of new crops are regarded with fear as being injurious. A common saying among the natives is “what *bapdada*(father and grandfather, ancestors) have not done I can not do”.<sup>96</sup> So the system of agriculture of the Cooch Behar State remains unaltered. The indigenous system of shifting cultivation was followed by them.

A Rajbansi land owner (*Jotedar*) does not like to build his house on the land of another *jotedar*. Thus a Rajbansi village consists of comparatively a bigger house of a land landholder and a group of smaller houses of his share-croppers (*adhirs* or *bargadars*). The *adhirs* have practically no land of their own; they work as agricultural labourers receiving half share of the crop they grow. They depend solely on the assistance given by the *jotedar* in the shape of advancing paddy for their food and sometimes money for other expenses.<sup>97</sup>

In the early sixteenth century, the process of state formation of the Koch-Rajbansi tribe had started.<sup>98</sup> In fact the process of state formation within a tribe could have had started only when it had, to a considerable extent, moved from shifting to permanent cultivation, with or without the use of plough. For a quantum of surplus was necessary to maintain even a rudimentary state apparatus.<sup>99</sup>

Details about the land administrative system under the Koches are, however, lacking. But certain references in their chronicles and also in the records of the British officers throw some light in this matter. From these accounts it appears that lands were usually divided into two kinds –cultivable and uncultivable. Cultivable lands were again divided into two groups-taxable and non-taxable.<sup>100</sup> Assessment varied depending upon fertility of soil, amount of produce or number of ploughs used. There is no record to show that any survey of land was undertaken before the Mughal invasion.<sup>101</sup> Although the actual procedure and rate of assessment in the Koch Kingdom is not known it appears that some sort of *Paik*-system, not similar in all respects with that of the Ahoms of upper Brahmaputra valley, existed there.<sup>102</sup> The *Durrang Raj Vamsabali* makes mention of *Paiks* attached to the royal officers of the state. These *Paiks* had to serve the State with manual works, and to go to war as soldiers when necessary. In return they enjoyed some plots of lands free of revenue.

Besides, the *zamindars* like the *Bhuyans* and other high state officials like *Dewan*, *Kajri*, *Choudhury*, collected revenue from the peasants in their own way who were directly under their control, and sent a certain amount of their respective collection to the centre.<sup>103</sup> After the Koch kingdom had been annexed to the Mughal Empire, the system of collection of revenue was changed. The royal princelets and other *Zamindars* deposited with the imperial treasure a certain amount of their collections from the peasants. The settlement in such cases was made annually and the procedure was to “settle the jama agreeably to that of the preceding year.”<sup>104</sup> Revenue was collected in cash or kind although the first was preferred. The *Katha Guru Charit* appears to inform us that the peasants were to pay 1/4<sup>th</sup> of their produce as rent to the royal treasury.<sup>105</sup>

The king was the actual owner of the soil, but the cultivators' right over their hereditary possessions was never questioned by him. The estates given to the relatives of the king (*petbhata*) were subject to be taken over by the king after the guarantee's death. The *jagir* lands were allowed to be held by the state officers during the period of their service only and were thus transferable.<sup>106</sup>

Before the introduction of the *pargana* system following the annexation of Koch Kingdom to the Mughal Empire in 1612 A.D, the Koch Kingdom was broadly divided into certain administrative units called *Chakla* which was a collection of several villages. Each *Chakla* was placed under the control of a *Bhuyan* who was by

and large a governor who collected revenue of his *Chakla* and deposited it to the *Dewan* or the king.<sup>107</sup> In between the *Chaklas* and the villages there were other administrative divisions called *Kuthi* and *Tapa*. It appears that a *Chakla* was equivalent to 1/6<sup>th</sup> of a Mughal *Sarkar*.<sup>108</sup> The Mughal occupied portion of the kingdom of Koch Behar was formed into a *Sarkar* called Sarkar Cooch Behar or *Kuchwara*. This was divided into six *Chaklas* namely –Boda, Patgram, Purbabhag, Fatepur, Kajirhat and Kakina. It also appears that for administrative convenience, the Koch Kingdom was broadly divided into two parts, each called a *Dewani*.<sup>109</sup>

In brief, the Koches adopted an elaborate system of administration. The nature and designations of most of the officers like *Dewan*, *Ujir*, *Nazir*, *Sikdar*, *Piyada* and others indicate the influence of the Turko-Afgans or the Mughals in their administrative set-up which was but a natural one.<sup>110</sup> The basic principles of Koch Administration were based on the Hindu religious texts, and with the *Chatra*(umbrella) over his head and the *Danda* in his hands, the Koch King represented a typical Hindu ruler of ancient India. Although tribal preponderance in the administrative set-up of the founder of the kingdom was marked, this was gradually replaced by the non-tribal in the later period.<sup>111</sup>

With the imposition of the Mughal revenue administration on the Koch territories and the increasing role of money in economic life since the close of the sixteenth century, profound changes began to take place in the Koch Kingdom. The Mughal administration demanded revenue in cash from the *paik* allotments in lieu of the traditional militia service. As the Koch rajas retained the Mughal land revenue system, naturally the survey of the land was made.<sup>112</sup>

The society was feudal in character. It appears that the Koch Kings would try to imitate the style of living of the Bengal Sultans or the Mughal Governors.<sup>113</sup> The nobility was in second position in the hierarchy who derived its income mainly from the lands cultivated by peasants' proprietors. They monopolised all the high offices in the administration. On the whole differences between the king and the nobility and the commoners were always maintained.<sup>114</sup> At the bottom was the peasantry who also formed the militia of the kingdom. Though the peasants generally enjoyed his land right undisturbed, but the land holdings of the peasants were not equal. The *Katha Guru Charit* informs that while some peasants had only one *Bigha* of land and no granary at all, there were others who had as many as twenty six *puras* of lands with

three or four granaries and a number of ploughs. In between the privileged aristocracy at the top and the labouring peasantry at the bottom, there was another class of people who had formed a class of landed gentry.<sup>115</sup> The *Bhuyans* or the landlords, the tribal chiefs, the junior officers in administration like the *Thakuriya*, *Saikia* and *Hazari*, the village headman and such other petty officials constituted this class. They collected the land revenue of the villages under their jurisdiction and received a share of it from the government. Though Koch kings established their supremacy over the *Bhuyans* but they were very powerful class.<sup>116</sup>

However, as the all people of the Koch Kingdom were directly or indirectly associated with the agriculture so it may be said that the agriculture was the mainstay of occupation. The Persian chronicles testify to the fertility and productivity of the soil of the Koch kingdom. The *Alamgirnama* also speaks of the productivity of the Brahmaputra valley.<sup>117</sup>

Rice formed the staple crop. It had three main varieties: *Ahu*, *Sali*, and *Bao*. Shifting was the usual method of *Ahu* cultivation. *Sali* or wet rice cultivation required transplantation and hence such fields which could retain water or could be artificially irrigated from the adjacent streams.<sup>118</sup> But the Koches were adept to hoe-culture and to use of *Ahu* rice. The cultivation of *Sali* was therefore, not extensive in the Koch kingdom. The *Bhuyans*, however, appear to be interested in wet rice cultivation and it was their initiative that the wet rice cultivation and the use of plough became prominent among the tribes including the Koches. It may be also noted that even after the hoe was replaced by the plough, the Koch tribes used shifting type of cultivation as late as the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>119</sup>

So if we analyse the indigenous land revenue system of the Koch kingdom before the coming of the Mughals and after that from the above discussion it appears that the Koch revenue system was an admixture of both Ahom and Mughal land revenue system. Like the Ahoms they were habituated with shifting cultivation, paik system, and cultivating *Ahu* rice and later followed like the Ahoms the wet rice (*Sali*) cultivation. On the other hand when they were influenced by the Mughals, they started to collect the land revenue in cash instead of kind.

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- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.xxix.
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- <sup>28</sup> H.N.Chaudhury, opcit. p.227
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.228.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.229
- <sup>31</sup> C.C. Sanyal, opcit p.6, Mr Gait in his "Koch Kings of Kamrupa fixes 1534 A.D. as the year of Naranarayan's accession to the throne. He does not accept 1555 A.D. as the true date, although, this is supported by the Cooch Behar chronicles. It is argued by him that the last

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mentioned date may be at once rejected on the testimony of a silver coin which was found some years ago in the Garo Hills and published in the J.A.S.B for 1875, page 306.

<sup>32</sup>The Musalman rulers of Bengal, however, do not appear to have ceased to give trouble. In 1569 Soliman Shah Kerany is said to have invaded and plundered Cooch Behar-Stewart's History of Bengal, p. 150. Again in 1578 A.D., Hoossin Koly Khan, it is said, compelled the Raja of Cooch Behar to pay a tribute and to acknowledge himself a vassal of the Mughal Empire-ibid,p.166. The Cooch Behar chronicles are silent on these points. Mr. Gait speaks of two invasions of Gaur by Naranarayan. In the first Chilarai was not fully successful, although the Ganges was fixed as the boundary between the two kingdoms.

<sup>33</sup> H.N.Chaudhury opcit.p.232.

<sup>34</sup> C.C.Sanyal,opcit.p.6

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p.6

<sup>36</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit.p.234

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,p.235

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,p236.

<sup>36</sup> Durgadas Majumdar, opcit, p.32.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,p.32

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,p.33

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.p.33

<sup>36</sup> A,Mitra, opcit, p.xxxi.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,p,xxxii

<sup>36</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit,p.34.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid,pp33-34.

<sup>36</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit.p.234

<sup>37</sup> Ibid,p.235

<sup>38</sup> Ibid,p236.

<sup>39</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit.p.32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid,p.32

<sup>41</sup> Ibid,p.33

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.p.33

<sup>43</sup> A,Mitra,opcit,p. xxxii.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid,p,xxxii

<sup>45</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opci,p.34.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid,pp,33-34.

<sup>47</sup> H.N.Chaudhury, opcit,p.242.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.243.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid,p.243.

<sup>50</sup> A.Mitra.opcit.p.xxxiii

<sup>51</sup> Ibid,p,xxxiii

<sup>52</sup> A.Cladue Campbell, *Glimpses of Bengal*. Vol.I, Calcutta, 1907.p.295

<sup>53</sup> A.Mitra.opcit.p.xxxiii

<sup>54</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit,p.245

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- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.p.246.
- <sup>56</sup> N.N.Acharya, *Assam and the Neighbouring States: Historical Documents*, New Delhi, 1983, p.97.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.p.98
- <sup>58</sup> Samuel Turner: *An account of the Embassy to Teshoo Lama*, Reprint, Manjushree, New Delhi, 1971, p viii
- <sup>59</sup> John Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971
- <sup>60</sup> Amanatulla Khan Chaudhury, *Cooch Beharer Itihas*,(in Bengali), Cooch Behar State Press, 1936, pp. 344-345.
- <sup>61</sup> Gayatri Devi and Santa Rama Rao, *The Princess Remembers*, First Indian Edition, Vikash Publishing House Limited, Ghaziabad, 1982, p.39.
- <sup>62</sup> N.N.Acharya,opcit. pp.119-120.
- <sup>63</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit,p.248
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.p.248.
- <sup>65</sup> W.W.Hunter.opcit.p.415
- <sup>66</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit.p.249
- <sup>67</sup> W.W.Hunter,opcit. p. 417.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid p.420.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid p.421
- <sup>70</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit. 254.
- <sup>71</sup> W.W.Hunter,opcit,pp 423-424
- <sup>72</sup> H.N.Chaudhy,opcit p. 280
- <sup>73</sup> W.W.Hunter.opcit,p.424
- <sup>74</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit.p.39.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid ,p.39
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid 39
- <sup>77</sup> W.W.Hunter,opcit,p.424
- <sup>78</sup> C.C.Sanyal,opcit,p.7
- <sup>79</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit,p,39
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid.p.40
- <sup>81</sup> A.Mitra,opcit,p.xxxv
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid,p.xxxv
- <sup>83</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit.p.40
- <sup>84</sup> A.Mitra.opcit,xxxv
- <sup>85</sup> Durgadas Majumdar,opcit 40
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.p.40
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.p.51
- <sup>88</sup> C.C.Sanyal.opcit.p.10.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid,p.13
- <sup>90</sup> Mausami De Sarkar,“*Social Welfare Administration of Schedule Caste in West Bengal*”unpublished Ph,D Dissertation under North Bengal University, 2002, pp.8-9
- <sup>91</sup> D.Nath,opcit.p.134.

- <sup>92</sup> A.C.Campbell, opcit p. 285
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid.p.285.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid p.285.
- <sup>95</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit.p.158.
- <sup>96</sup> Ibid.p.158
- <sup>97</sup> C.C.Sanyal, opcit.p.20.
- <sup>98</sup> Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib(ed),*The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol-1, Orient Longman Ltd, New Delhi, 1982, p. 478.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid p.180
- <sup>100</sup> H.N.Chaudhury,opcit, p, 441.
- <sup>101</sup> D.Nath,opcit.p.125
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid,p.125
- <sup>103</sup> Amalendu Guha, '*Assamese Peasant Society in the late Nineteenth Century:Structure and Trend*, Occasional Paper, no.25, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, August, 1979, p.2
- <sup>104</sup> D.Nath, opcit ,p126.
- <sup>105</sup> U.C.Lekharu, (ed), *Katha Guru Charit*, Nalbari, 1952.p.237.
- <sup>106</sup> D,Nath, opcit.p.126
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid,p 127.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.p.127
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.p.127
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid,p,128
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid,p.128
- <sup>112</sup> Dharma Kumar, opcit p.485
- <sup>113</sup> H.Blochmann, *Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Assam in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries according to the Akbarnamah, the Padshahnamah and the Fathiya-i-Ibriyah*. Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1872.vol.LXI.Part.I,p,66
- <sup>114</sup> J.N.Bhattacharyya (Ms) *Koch Rajer Buranji*, in Assamese language, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati p.92
- <sup>115</sup> U.C.Lekharu, (ed).opcit, p,128
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid,p.65
- <sup>117</sup> Munshi Muhammad Qasim, *Alamgirnamah*, A summary of the account of Assam and her people given in the work was translated by Vansittart,*Asiatic Researches*, vol.II, New Delhi, 1979,p.130.
- <sup>118</sup> D, Nath. opcit,p.147.
- <sup>119</sup> A.Guha, *Ahom-Migration: Its Impact on Rice Economy of Medieval Assam*, Artha Vijnama, vol.9, 1967, Issue no.2, p. 138.

### **History of Land Settlements in India: A Regional Perspective**

Established by Zahiruddin Babar in 1526 and flourished to its full form of glory by Emperor Akbar in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Mughal Empire imposed on the greater part of the sub-continent a fair measure of political unity. Centralized administration, a uniform revenue policy, a network of inland trade fostered by Mughal peace and an expanding overseas commerce created conditions in which economic stimuli travelled fast enough from one part of the empire to another.

For the preservation of a powerful state like the Mughal required sound finances. And obviously the land revenue formed the back-bone of the Mughal finances. The rulers derived largest income from this source. Briefly, it is a historical fact that from very ancient times, long before the Mughal Empire, the kings or Rajas and other lesser chiefs were accustomed to take from the cultivators of the soil in their dominions, a certain share of produce of every cultivated area, unless, that share was remitted.<sup>1</sup>

#### **2.1. Pre- Colonial Land Management System in India**

Our Knowledge of the land system in the ancient period of the Indian History is very scrappy. Casual reference in the Vedic texts afford only stray glimpse. It may be concluded from the instances, that land belonged to him who first cleared it for cultivation. So it may be assumed that peasant proprietorship was recognised. He also had the right of transfer.<sup>2</sup> Whatever its real origin, there can be no doubt about the fact that the levy of a produce –share became general at a remote period. It is mentioned, as a thing long known and established, in the “Laws of Manu”. The share was one-sixth of the gross produce, and Manu notices that the sixth might be raised to one fourth in time of war or other emergency.<sup>3</sup> From Megasthenes’s *Indica* we came to know that the Mauryan king Asoka reduced the state share of crops produced from one-sixth to one-eighth.

One of the most interesting topics that engage the attention of the student of Indian history and economics is the nature of relationship between the sovereign and the actual tiller of the land in mediaeval India.

The land revenue system during Mughal era was formalised and got definite shape during the reign of Akbar. The ideal form of the original Hindu system of land tenure with a few foreign elements survived till his time. All that was done was that a few greedy sovereigns distorted the original ideal system by engrafting certain undesirable elements upon it. But the basic principles of Manu's Code were never totally lost sight of, nor were they not in any faint degree even recognized.<sup>4</sup>

Under the Sultanate of Delhi true it is that several changes were effected in the system of administration along with the parcelling of the empire under new denominations and consequently the revenue system too underwent a change. Even though the Government's share of produce increased and new taxes were imposed upon the people, their lot was not so appalling like the conditions that prevailed at the break-up of the Mughal Empire.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly the changes for the worse innovated by Sultans like Firuz Shah Tughlak entailed several hardships upon the people. But instances like this are few. Even a highly centralized autocracy conferred benefits, as the institution of such a system of government meant the removing of the precariousness of security and peace during the mediaeval ages notorious for the scrambling for empires, and the people were content. Nicolo de Conti, travelling about the year A.D. 1420 attests to the fact that the state of India was flourishing with beautiful gardens and opulent cities. Ibn Batuta's impressions about the reign of such a cruel and scheming autocrat are nothing but generous, and it is a tribute paid to the satisfactory state of things then prevailing.

Babar and Humayun did not introduce any changes into the existing nature of things.<sup>6</sup> They were the first conquerors in their dynasty and were mainly occupied with subduing the land and maintaining peace and order. Their time was pre-occupied with suppressing internecine quarrels and open rebellions, and consolidating the Empire. So, when we come to the end of the reign of Humayun, we find relief in the benevolent reign of Sher Shah.<sup>7</sup>

Sher Shah is the real inaugurator of Mughal land revenue policy, even though the statement looks technically inaccurate. The short period of his reign was marked

with many improvements shaped by him in the administration of the country. He found the coinage had degenerated and reformed it by the issue of an abundance of silver money, excellent both in design and purity. Money is the medium of exchange among the people as well as the means for the realization of State revenue.<sup>8</sup>

Sher Shah did many other things for the benefit of the people. The Ain stated "Sher Khan or Selim Khan, who abolished the custom of dividing the crops, used this Guz for that purpose."<sup>9</sup> The Guz referred to was one of thirty-one fingers in length which consequently falls short of the Ilahi Guz of Akbar. From the passage quoted above, it is evidently clear that Sher Shah anticipated Akbar in ways more than one. He made use of a definite unit of measurement; he abolished crop division and adopted a fixed rate of assessment which is beneficial to the *ryot* in as much as he is in a position to know definitely about his dues to the State; and made a survey or measurement of all cultivated land.<sup>10</sup> Akbar followed the policy of Sher Shah with greater precision and correctness, and then extended it to the various provinces of the country.<sup>11</sup>

The objectives of Akbar was to eradicate the evils innate in the existing order of things resolve themselves under three heads: correct measurement of the land under cultivation, ascertaining of the produce per *Bigha* of land and the fixation of the state's dues that each *Bigha* ought to pay coupled with the rate of commutation in money. The legislation of Akbar as regards the land revenue system was directed towards the realization of these objects.

Besides political purposes, in order to estimate the exact amount of revenue of the empire, Akbar parcelled his empire into fifteen *Subahs*, one hundred and eighty-seven *Sarkars*, and three thousand three hundred and sixty-seven *Mahals*; or rather, his empire consisted of so many divisions and sub-divisions.<sup>12</sup> Then, a Settlement was ordered to be made and a standardization of units of measurement effected. First, what was known as the Ilahi *Guz* was made a definite unit of measurement. It consisted of forty-one fingers and its modern equivalent varies from twenty-nine to thirty-two inches. Akbar also reformed the *Tanab* which is a chain of measurement consisting of sixty Ilahi *Guz*.<sup>13</sup> The *Tanab* which was in use throughout Hindustan before the time of Akbar was made up of rope which left large scope for injustice being done to the *ryots* since it was subject to variations of length owing to dryness or humidity in the atmosphere. Akbar ordered that the *Tanab* be made of pieces of

bamboos joined together by iron rings, which guaranteed the integrity of the chain throughout the year. The third change that Akbar effected was the definite measurement given to the *Bigha*. It consisted of three thousand six hundred squares *Ilahi Guz* and corresponds in modern measurement of something more than half an acre. Several *Bighas* went to make a *Mahal* or *Purganah* and several *Purganahs* which followed the same code were grouped into *Dasturs* (rate list).<sup>14</sup> The *Purganah* answers to the lordships of hundred towns in the revenue divisions of *Manu*.

After obtaining the correct measurement of land, Akbar next turned to the ascertainment of the amount of produce per *Bigha* and the state's share in it. For the purpose of making a comparative estimate of the produce of lands, Akbar divided them into four kinds and fixed different revenue to be paid by each.<sup>15</sup> *Polej* is the ideal and the best sort of land throughout the empire which was cultivated always and was never allowed to lie fallow. *Paraity* is the land that was kept out of cultivation for a short period in order to regain its lost fertility. *Chachar* is a kind of land allowed to lie fallow for three or four years and then resumed under cultivation. *Banjar* is the worst kind of land that was left out of cultivation for five years or upwards. *Polej* and *Paraity* lands were divided for purposes of assessment into three sorts, viz. good, fair and bad.<sup>16</sup>

Akbar next proceeded to fix the rate of assessment. An aggregate of the rate of revenues from A.D. 1570 to 1579 was made and the decennial average was fixed as the state demand of revenue. The evolution of the revenue system under Akbar, leading to what is called the *dahsala* or ten year system, was the logical evolution of the system of measurement (*zabt*) adopted by Sher Shah.<sup>17</sup> Henceforward the collections were made with certainty and the people were satisfied as we know from the statement of the official historian of Akbar's reign, Abul Fazl.

We may now turn to the Government's share of produce under Akbar. Akbar took one-third of the *Mahsul* as tax.<sup>18</sup> But the ideal rate of assessment in the Hindu period of Indian History is only one-sixth. Akbar was not unconscious of the excessive demands he was making when he demanded one-third of the produce as the rate of assessment. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentioned that twenty-nine taxes were abolished by Akbar in order to give compensation to the peasant for the greater proportion of revenue demanded by the state. There is no direct evidence whether Akbar's orders for the abolishing of those cesses were carried out to the fullest extent. But this much is

certain that the payment of the revenues was lenient, and remissions many.<sup>19</sup> The constructive revenue system of Todar Mal has two aims in its view: the increase of revenue ostensibly, of course, not by extortion but by the increase of cultivation and the security of the peasant.

We may now turn towards the different means of realizing the State's proportion of the produce and those systems legalized by Akbar. We may broadly divide the various systems of revenue collection into three heads: the *Ghallabakhsh*, the *Zabti* and the *Nasaq* systems.<sup>20</sup> Let us now consider the nature of the separate systems and their merits and demerits. The *Ghallabakhsh* is the original Indian system where an actual division of crop was made between the cultivator and the state. This system was prevalent in parts of Sind, Kabul and Kashmir. The *Zabti* system is the alternate system chiefly used by Akbar in order to eliminate the uncertainties and difficulties inherent in the system of crop-division. Under this system one third of the produce was fixed as the state demand. This system was applied to the heart of the empire from Sind, Berar, Malwa, Ajmir and part of Gujrat. *Nasaq* assessment is the third and last kind of revenue collection. Under this system the revenue was fixed by arrangement or contract. This system was in force in Bengal, Bihar, part of Kashmir and part of Gujrat.

However, many historians preferred to be critical on Mughal administration and precisely the land management system. Mughal administrative system was imported ready-made from outside India. As Prof. Sarkar puts it, "it was the Perso-Arabic system in Indian setting". It may be curious for us to notify the chronic antagonism between the tax-payer and the tax-gatherer of the day.<sup>21</sup> The prevalence of *Abwabs*, perquisites and presents is another striking feature of the Mughal land revenue system. *Abwabs* were illegal cesses collected throughout the empire. The *Ain* mentioned that Akbar abolished twenty-nine illegal cesses and taxes.<sup>22</sup>

Looking critically, the appearance of intermediaries is another feature to be noted. Akbar recognised the necessity of such men and when conditions required gave them a commission to the extent of 2 per cent of the State revenues for their labours. This system seemed to be broadly congenial to the government as well as to the people in as much as the collection was speedy and effective.<sup>23</sup>

Another prominent feature to note is the State's sole proprietorship of the lands throughout the empire. Besides, there was no hereditary peerage in Islam. The property which was accumulated by the exertions of an ambitious and diligent nobleman reverted to the State at his death.<sup>24</sup>

Under the Mughals, the *Sarkar* was the territorial unit while the *Mahal* was a revenue division; or, to put it in another way, the *Mahal* was the fiscal unit while the *Parganah* is a fixed historical division. All the revenue documents of the Mughal time reaffirmed their avowed objectives, the extension of cultivation on the one hand, and the improving of the crops on the other. But both were so designed to accelerate the revenue collection of the State. Above all, it should be noted that the revenue system need not necessarily be uniform throughout a *Subah* or a province, but was subject to the determining elements of local conditions.<sup>25</sup>

Amidst the complexity of arrangements for assessment and collection, one major aim of the Mughal administration was to secure the bulk of the peasant's surplus. In Mughal India the land revenue was usually collected in cash. Akbar left it optional with the cultivators to give grain or cash as they preferred.<sup>26</sup> In Kashmir and Southern Sind; crop-sharing was prevalent for collection of revenue but in Bengal the revenue was levied in cash.

There was a contradiction in the revenue system of the Mughals. The contradiction was to assess the revenue upon the individual cultivator or the convenience of collecting the revenue from a few intermediaries (*Zamindars*, *taluqdars*, *muqaddams* etc). The individual assessment was preferred more because it enabled the administration to have a more accurate figure of land revenue and it was supposed to prevent an unfair distribution of the financial burden among the revenue payers by the intermediaries. In Mughal India the village was the basic unit of assessment and the intermediaries were the real assesses.<sup>27</sup>

The collection of revenue was enforced by severe methods. Eviction was in vogue but the more usual methods were imprisonment and torture of the headman.<sup>28</sup> So from the above discussion it can be concluded that the Mughal land revenue tax was a regressive one. Because the per-unit of area varied according to the crop, and not according to the size of the taxpayer's holding. Thus the fiscal burden rested more heavily on the small cultivator by intensifying the differentiation among

the rural population. The Mughal revenue system tended to subvert superior cultivation and simultaneously it increased the distance between the rich and the poor.<sup>29</sup>

On communal cultivation in Mughal India the question was raised by Ashok Rudra 'was there any collective cultivation of land or was cultivation carried out individually and separately as now?'<sup>30</sup> There was very little evidence about communal cultivation. The only references to such activities we find are of the nature of the settlement of new areas and reclamation of new land or forest land. As to an earlier period, we have from Irfan Habib that in the Mughal period when peasants deserted old lands and settled in new ones they did so communally.<sup>31</sup> The question of private ownership of land in the pre-colonial period is a debatable issue among the historians. As is all too well known, during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries some European Travellers originated a long lasting myth by describing the king as the sole owner of land in India. As is also well known, this idea has now been very largely rejected. Like wise, another idea inherited from the past is that land was held in common and cultivated jointly. But this idea has also been largely rejected.<sup>32</sup>

On the question of communal ownership the generally accepted view is that, "the question whether the land was owned by the Raja, the *Talukdar*, *Zamindar*, the cultivator or the king was not a real question. Each had claim based upon custom or upon grants made by the king or a raja, or upon grants made by a *Talukdar* or *Zamindar*. But in addition to these claims each did or did not have the power to enforce his claims or to enlarge his claims. There was no appeal if a usurper had the power to usurp." "The village did not hold its land common. Common were its officials and servants".<sup>33</sup>

On the question of peasant differentiation there was an idea that in the traditional village society there was a single class of self sufficient peasants producing for their own consumption, Irfan Habib writes, "The Indian peasants, labourers, appeared an undifferentiated mass, all living miserably under the blind and increasing oppression. The picture was not an unfair one, it does not also conflict with the concept, developed later, of the Indian rural population divided up horizontally among village communities, each a self-sufficient entity, left to its own devices by the despotic regime of the court so long as the heavy land-tax was paid."<sup>34</sup> But this idea was unanimously refuted by the most of the historians. Quoting Habib we can say

that, "economic differentiation had progressed considerably among the peasantry. There were large cultivators, using hired labour, and raising crops for the market, and there were small peasants, who could barely produce food grains for their own subsistence. Beyond this differentiation among the peasantry, there was the still sharper division between the caste peasantry and the menial population."<sup>35</sup>

More specific references to peasant differentiation goes as far as following when we get the mention in the Mughal literature of *Khud-Kashta* or owners of the land in the official documents, *pahi* or *upari* or outsiders who came from the other villages to cultivate the land and lastly there were the *muzarian* or share-croppers who rented land from the *Khud-kast* peasants or the *Zamindars*. There was also a small class of landless peasants who were also enrolled as casual labours at times of harvest and sowing etc.<sup>36</sup> From the writings of Moreland and Bernier it was seen that there were also the agricultural labourers also.

Now the question comes that what is the role of the *Zamindar* class in the production process in rural India during the pre-colonial India. We do get some information about the way they controlled the rural society from the writings of B.B. Chaudhury. He provides us evidences to draw the picture of the rural society of Bengal where the *Zamindars* constructed and maintained the irrigation works and reclaimed the waste lands. The *Zamindars* also collected rents. So we can come to the conclusion that the *Zamindars* were existed in the pre-colonial period and it was not a modern phenomenon. In pre-colonial India the revenue-collection process was highly stratified and complex involving a number of tiers of colonial agents. In different parts of the country these agents were designated by the different names but their roles were more or less the same.<sup>37</sup>

By the middle years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Mughal Empire was started crumbling. The government began to lose its grip on the civil administration. The resultant chaos had its inevitable effects on agriculture and revenue. The imperial treasury had standing instructions to advance capital for improvements. But the work was not done. The imperial governors did not formally deny their loyalty to Delhi, but one after another they had asserted their autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Thus within fifty years of time Delhi lost its glory as the power centre of whole northern India. Among the newly emergent regional states mention should be made about Bengal, Maratha kingdom,

Hyderabad, Awadh, Sikh kingdom and Trevancore, which politically denoted the decentralization of Mughal power.<sup>38</sup>

The recent historiography of the 18<sup>th</sup> century India showed that there were regions with considerable amounts of resources, which actually attracted the European traders in India and pushed them off an open competition for the mastery over the land. Out of this open contest the British East India Company emerged by overpowering the other European trading companies.<sup>39</sup>

The expansion of the empire in India in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marked, according to P.J.Cain and A.G.Hopkins, an extension of the “Gentlemanly capitalism”, upheld by an alliance between landed interests and financial power that was in ascendancy in London after 1688, and that was the reason why “the revenue became and remained the central preoccupation of imperial policy”<sup>40</sup> But the other factors such as search for revenue; the quest for trading privileges and the imperatives of military exigencies-all determined the specific course of territorial expansion.

The first step of this process of territorial expansion was the Grant of Aurangzeb’s *farman* by which they got the right of duty free trade in Bengal in return for an annual payment of Rs.3000.<sup>41</sup> The condition of the British traders became more stable after getting the grant through a *farman* by the Mughal emperor Farruksiyar in 1717 which granted the Company the right to carry on duty free trade and the right to rent 38 villages around Calcutta and to use the royal mint. But the then autonomous ruler of Bengal-Murshid Kuli Khan did not like all these privileges of East India Company. The result was the continuous and consequent conflict between the next rulers of Bengal and the Company which took its final shape in the Battle of Plassey. Through this battle the British East India Company sowed its seeds of political supremacy in India as Siraj-ud-daulla, the ruler of Bengal was defeated in this battle and put to death. The new *Nawab* Mir Jafar became a puppet in the hands of the English.<sup>42</sup>

But a sincere attempt of defeating the Company was made on the part of next Nawab of Bengal, Mir Kasim with the help of Mughal emperor Shah Alam II and Shuja-ud-Daula of Awadh. But their combined army was routed by the Company’s force at the Battle of Buxer in 1764. The result was that the Company got the Grant of *Diwani* (revenue collecting rights) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Mughal

emperor Shah Alam II in 1765. Thus by 1765 eastern India almost came under the control of the Company.<sup>43</sup>

And by the period of almost over a century, from 1757 to 1856, the English East India Company annexed the Indian territories that came to constitute British India. After Awadh was annexed in 1856, more than 60 percent territories of present India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh came under British control. And after this date no further conquests had taken place as the Mutiny had taken place in 1857 as a response to the annexations. But the British maintained close control over the affairs of the princely state. This relationship has been called “indirect rule”.<sup>44</sup>

**Table-1: Major Annexations of Indian Territories by the East India Company (1757-1857)**

Year	Territories annexed	Area (,000 square miles)
1757	Bengal and Bihar	15
1765	Carnatic	4
1766	Northern Sarkars	2
1775	Benares	1
1792-9	Dindigul, Malabar, Canara etc.	4
1801	“Ceded Districts”	7
1803-18	Maratha Territories	19
1825-42	North-east and Burma	15
1843	Sind	5
1848	Satara	1
1849	Punjab	10
1853	Jhansi, Nagpur, Hyderabad assigned	13
1856	Awadh	2
<b>Total</b>	Annexation	98(62%)
	Indian States remaining	59(38%)
	India	157

Source: Michael H. Fisher, *The Politics of British Annexation of India 1757-1857*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993, p. xvi

## 2.2. Land Management System of India under Colonial Rule

Since the Grant of *Diwani* for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, the major aim of the East India Company was to collect as much as revenue as possible. Agriculture being the main basis of economy and main source of income, both before the British rule, and during it, several land revenue experiments were introduced to maximise

extraction. Though the native officials were in charge of collecting taxes and the supervisors were the European officers, but their corruption as well as lack of understanding of the local situation and languages led to complete disorganization of the agrarian economy as well as the rural society in the *Diwani* provinces within a couple of years. As a result of severe demand of land revenue and devastating famine in 1769-70, the one third of the population of Bengal was wiped off.<sup>45</sup>

Viewing the condition of the *Diwani* provinces the Company appointed Hastings as Governor of Bengal to regularise the process of revenue collection. In 1772 he introduced the farming system, which suggested the revenue collecting right was farmed out to the highest bidders. But this system ultimately failed to improve the situation as the farmers tried to squeeze as much as possible without any concern for the production process.<sup>46</sup> The peasants were over-burdened with taxation resulting in the complete ruination of agricultural population. Lord Cornwallis was therefore sent to India with a specific motive to streamline the revenue administration.

On his arrival in India, Lord Cornwallis found it impossible to continue with the existing system of land revenue as he realised that system was impoverishing the country and was not producing large surplus for which the Company expected for. In addition, the decline in agriculture also affected the Company's trade as it depended on agriculture for its raw materials. It was thought, therefore, that the only way to improve the situation was to fix the revenue permanently. But it should be mentioned here that before Cornwallis's arrival, number of Company officials were in favour of permanent land revenue settlement. Their advices and ideas had given the birth of Permanent Settlement of 1793, which introduced the policy of 'assessment for ever' in Bengal.<sup>47</sup>

The servants of the East India Company in India always wanted to adopt a system which had roots in the soil, which the people knew and were accustomed to follow and which would create minimum difficulties for the new rulers. The East India Company with certain modifications adopted the Mughal system of land revenue and it forms the basis of the agrarian administration of British India.

The Pitt's India Act of 1784 and the appointment of Lord Cornwallis as the Governor General marked a new era in the social and economic history of Bengal. It was felt by the British government that absence of private proprietorship on land was

major deterrent towards agricultural development which in turn would ensure higher revenue for the State. The Permanent Settlement was an agreement between East India Company and the *Zamindars*. Every part of land in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa became part of *Zamindari* system and the *Zamindars* had to pay the tax fixed upon them. He was the owner of his *Zamindari* and he could sell, mortgage and transfer it and his *Zamindari* became hereditary. But if he failed to give that fixed amount his land was liable to be confiscated by the Government and would be put on auction for sale. The new buyer will become the new owner of that land. Thus this settlement created the private propriety over land, which ushered improvement in agriculture. The Permanent Settlement vested the landownership right in the hands of *Zamindars*, who had previously enjoyed only revenue collecting rights. The *Zamindars* were declared as the proprietors of the soil.<sup>48</sup>

But most surprisingly in this settlement the interests of the peasants were overlooked. The peasants were left at the mercy of the *Zamindars*. Their customary occupancy right was ignored and they were reduced to the status of tenants. The *patta* or the written agreement which was made between the *Zamindars* and peasants providing a record of given amount was often violated by the *Zamindars*. Thus the peasants were overburdened by excessive taxation and sometimes by illegal taxes. After 1799 the *Zamindars* also got the right to seize the property of the tenants due to non-payment of taxes without the permission of Court of Law. Thus the peasants or tenants were not the beneficiaries of the settlement.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand though the settlement was pro-*Zamindar*, but they too had to face number of difficulties. The old *Zamindars* in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa suffered greatly. As Daniel Thorner has argued, creation of private property in land was a misnomer, as the absolute ownership was retained by the imperial authority<sup>50</sup>. But the other factors such as *Zamindars* had to pay a fixed amount of revenue by a particular date (the so-called 'sun-set' law), failure of which led to the sale of his *Zamindari* land. Between 1804 and 1818, 51% of the original *Zamindars* were alienated due to auction sales.<sup>51</sup> Their officials and rich tenants bought their estates. Another big result of these settlements was the beginning of the process of sub-infeudation.<sup>52</sup> The subsequent tenancy legislation in 1859 and 1885 somewhat protected the rights of the tenants by recognizing their occupancy rights. But the

powers of the *Zamindars* remained unchanged and there was no alteration in the relation of Raj with the powerful *Zamindars*.

The new legal reforms failed to heal the poor cultivators. These reforms on the other hand gave more power to the rich peasants and the *Jotedar* who were the real landholders at the village level while the *Zamindars* enjoyed only the revenue collecting right.<sup>53</sup> Beneath all the changes effected by colonial policies, the Rays argue, the power of this class and their control over the rural society remained unaffected and allowed the basic rural social structure to be continued in colonial Bengal.

The Permanent Settlement however did not mean a complete freezing of the land revenue, and the Company could secure an increase in it time to time. The numbers of estates of defaulting *Zamindars* and the large portion of the waste lands which were not included in the *Zamindar*'s estate at the time of the settlement became increasingly profitable with the growth of cultivation and rising prices.<sup>54</sup> The Bengal model was, however, rejected in Orissa and Assam because of the growing feeling of the freezing of the land revenue demand. Both in Orissa and Assam the revenue demand was increased from time to time.<sup>55</sup>

Lord Cornwallis wanted that the Permanent Settlement system should extend to other parts of India. Lord Wellesley and Henry Dundas of the Board of Control equally shared the same view i.e. the extension of the *Zamindari* system to Madras Presidency. But the problem they faced was that they could not find the sizable section of *Zamindars* like Bengal. But in spite of that they introduced the Permanent Settlement system in large areas under their control. The local *Poligars* were recognised as *Zamindars*, and in other areas, where the *Poligars* were not found, villages were aggregated into estates and were sold in auction to the highest bidders.<sup>56</sup>

But after some time the British officials were disillusioned with the Permanent Settlement, as it did not raise the income of the Government from the Madras Presidency. Then the Scottish officials like Thomas Munro and Elphinstone had taken the initiatives to change the land revenue administration. On the other hand David Ricardo's rent theory also helped the officials to change the system.<sup>57</sup> But the real reason for a new type of settlement was the financial crisis of the Madras Presidency

caused by the rising expenses of war. This was the background of the implementation of the *Ryotwari* Settlement in Madras Presidency.<sup>58</sup>

The *Ryotwari* experiment was taking place in Baramahal in 1792 by Alexander Reed and was continued by Thomas Munro from 1801 when he was in charge of the revenue administration of the ceded Districts.<sup>59</sup> Under the *Ryotwari* system they began to collect revenue directly from the peasant. It created the individual proprietary right in land. But this system created distinction between the public and private ownership.<sup>60</sup> By this system the annual agreements were to be made between the peasants and the Government after a general survey of the lands. Peasants were free to take decision to accept or refuse the agreement. If he agreed he was given a *patta*, which would become a title to private property. But after sometime the revenue was fixed without the detailed land survey and as a result the Government often failed to collect the revenue as the peasants denied paying the unjust revenue imposed on them. Thus the *Ryotwari* system did not last long in Madras Presidency after Munro's departure in 1807.<sup>61</sup>

But after 1820 the situation changed as Thomas Munro came back to India and became the Governor of Madras. He argued that *Ryotwari* was the ancient Indian land-tenure system and therefore best suited to Indian conditions.<sup>62</sup> He also argued that historically land in India was owned by state, which collected revenue from individual peasants through a hierarchy of officials paid through grant of *inam* land. So through the *Ryotwari* system the Government should collect land tax directly by eliminating the over mighty *poligars*. The British government in London was also supported the view of Munro as this system would give direct authority and power in the hands of the British officials.<sup>63</sup>

The Madras Government was under drastic economic pressure and decided to introduce the *Ryotwari* Settlement in most part of the presidency. As a result the revenue of the government increased but it put the peasants in great distress. In many areas no survey was carried on and the taxes were fixed arbitrarily based on village accounts. Contrary to Munro's argument the *Ryotwari* system failed to wipe out the intermediaries between the Government and the peasantry. The existing village power system was not changed and in some cases was more strengthened by the new system. But after 1855 some reform measures were undertaken to improve the situation of the peasants.<sup>64</sup> But these measures actually could not solve the problem of the peasants.

The micro-level studies on *Ryotwari* Settlement in Madras Presidency revealed the fact that the Settlement actually strengthened the power of the village magnates by accentuating the process of social conflict. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the rich landlords controlled the large farms and leased out the surplus lands to landless peasants and sharecroppers. The economic condition of the intermediaries was though satisfactory but creditors and the intermediaries did not waste the chance of exploiting the poor peasants. As a result the peasants had to be satisfied with small plots of lands.<sup>65</sup>

The British frontier in Western India rapidly advanced under the Marquis of Hastings, and whole of the Deccan came under British rule in 1817. After analysing the valuable reports on agriculture and peasantry of the newly acquired territories the *Ryotwari* Settlement was implemented in the Bombay Presidency. Initially the British had been collecting the revenue through the *Deshmukh* and village headman. But the amount of the revenue could not satisfy the authority. So after 1813 they started collecting the revenue from the *ryots* directly. But *Ryotwari* Settlement ended in failure.<sup>66</sup> The government demand for rent was fixed at 55% of the produce. As the rate of the land tax became very high the peasants had to mortgage their lands to the money-lenders or abandon the cultivation due to crop failure or migrate to neighbouring princely states where rates were low. A re-survey was commenced by Goldsmid and Lieutenant Wingate in 1835. And both in Bombay and Northern India, Settlements have been made for long period of 30 years from these dates. But it failed to give any relief to the cultivators.<sup>67</sup> Riot broke out in Deccan in 1875 as the cultivators were unable to pay the enhanced demand of land revenue. A commission was then appointed to look into the matter. The Bombay Revenue jurisdiction Act was accordingly passed in 1876.<sup>68</sup>

The region comprising the north and north-western India which was once the heartland of the Mughal Empire, including the Ganga-Jamuna Doab, formed the North-Western provinces. The agrarian structure of this region was controlled basically by the two magnets – *Zamindars* and the *Talukdars*. According to the description of Nurul Hasan the *Talukdars* were “intermediary *Zamindars*” who “contracted with the state to realise the revenue of a given territory”. The *Zamindars* were “the holders of proprietary rights over agricultural as well as habitational lands.”<sup>69</sup>

Initially the British Government proceeded to collect the land revenue of this region from the *Talukdars*. But this short-term settlements were based on artificial and faulty estimates of the productivity of the newly conquered lands, and therefore the revenue assessment was abnormally high. The *Talukdars* refused to pay the increased revenue demand and were liquidated with utter ruthlessness. Many were driven off and defaulting estates were sold off by the government. As a result, by 1820, “many of this magnate class of upper India”, as Eric Stokes described them, had “either lost their position entirely or were left in a shrunken condition”.<sup>70</sup> The land sold in auction was often bought by the *amlas* and *tehsildars*. These people came to constitute “a new class of landlords” who were outsiders to the village community and had different attitudes to the land.<sup>71</sup> The situation created nevertheless a alarm that land was passing into the hands of the non-cultivating classes.

So from *Taluqdars* British preference now shifted to the “primary *Zamindars*” and village communities. Now settlement was to be made with the village community or with a *Taluqdar* where available, and in addition to the rights of the proprietors, the rent to be paid by the resident cultivating peasants was also to be ascertained and recorded. Thus the *Taluqdars* were not completely eliminated, but where possible joint proprietary right in land were vested in the village community. This settlement was known as *Mahalwari* (village or *Mahal*) Settlement.<sup>72</sup> But this settlement was full of confusion and corruption from its very beginning. In practice it was virtually impossible to implement because of complex existing administrative machinery. The net outcome was the over-assessment. The situation was worsened by the agricultural depression of 1828. After this situation some reforms came by the Regulation XI of 1833. Two thirds of the net income of the land was fixed as revenue and the settlement was made for thirty years. But this settlement also resulted in the over-assessment as it was based on imperfect surveys. The peasants were compelled to sale their lands which in many cases passed into the hands of the moneylenders and merchants. The grievances of the rural society of north India were soon to be expressed rather violently in the revolt of 1857.<sup>73</sup>

Thus from the above discussion it can be said that by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British East India company was able to make three different plans to extract maximum revenue from land by creating private property in land and conferring that proprietary right on three different groups- the Permanent Settlement

was made with the *Zamindars*, *Ryotwari* Settlement with the peasants and the *Mahalwari* Settlement with the village community. The latter system was extended to Punjab and central India when those regions were conquered subsequently, while the *Ryotwari* system was introduced in Sind, Assam and Coorg. The *Zamindari* system was tried in the northern districts of the Madras Presidency where *Zamindars* could be found. According to a rough estimate, in 1928-29 about 19 percent of the cultivable land in India was under *Zamindari* settlement, 29 percent under *Mahalwari* settlement and 52 percent under *Ryotwari* system.<sup>74</sup>

So by analyzing the land administration of the different provinces of India during the first 13 years under Crown Administration it can be said that many real reforms were affected. Protection was given to the cultivators of Bengal, Oudh, and the Punjab, against unjust increase of rent by private landlords. The system of settlements in Northern India was improved and assessment was made on the tangible basis of the rental of villages. Relief was given to Madras cultivators by the introduction of the Thirty Years settlement rule. Help was given to Bombay cultivators by the Agricultural Relief Act and by the Revenue Code, both passed in 1879. And in the Central provinces, the recognition of proprietary rights in *Malguzars*, and the long term settlement begun in 1863, were a boon to the harassed population. The cardinal defects as argued by R. C. Dutt from which agriculture still suffered are:<sup>75</sup>

1. Enhancements were not limited by definite and specific rules at Revision Settlements.
2. Assessments were not made according to the half Rental rule, but often absorbed the whole rental in Madras and Bombay.
3. No independent tribunals watched the enforcement of rules.
4. Special cesses on land, in addition to the land revenue, violated the half Rental Rule.

As the process of maximization of land revenue was pursued with great determination under the British Rule, so the common feature of all the settlements was the over-assessment because the one and only motive of the Company was to maximise the land revenue income. A number of tax-free tenures were subject to taxation. Taxes were collected more efficiently than before. The net results of the excessive taxation

were- raising indebtedness, increasing land sales and last the dispossession of the peasants. But contrary to this argument, the modern research has established that the effects of these changes were less specular than once imagined, and had significant regional variations, as the land transfer could not fundamentally alter the structure of landholding everywhere. The agrarian society thus proved to be more resilient than once thought to be. But the groups and classes that survived had substantially different rights, obligations and powers. These changes and grievances generating from these dispossessed peasants were largely reflected in the series of agrarian disturbances in the later part of the British rule.

### **2.3 The Land- man relationship of India under Colonial Rule**

The exact impact of British rule on the Indian rural society continues to be a debatable issue. The traditional view postulating a qualitative transformation of the rural society has recently been questioned, the opposing point of view being that what looked like a transformation was really largely a continuation of the pre-British system.<sup>76</sup> The main point of disagreement relates to what may be called the “social fabric of Indian agriculture”, since both the views agreed that ‘the basic process of production and the level of technique’ were nearly everywhere left “virtually unaffected”, with the small peasant economy largely persisting as the basis of the organization of agriculture and with capitalistic farming affecting the rural economy only in isolated pockets. Even with regard to the view that ‘the net effect of British rule was to change drastically the social fabric’, one notices a shift in the arguments over the years.<sup>77</sup> For instance, the nationalists who assumed an increasing rural impoverishment blamed it mainly on certain aspects of the British land revenue administration, such as the high pitch of land revenue demand, the insistence on its payment in money and its relative inflexibility which by preventing accumulation of agricultural capital, inevitably impoverished agriculture. Later writers, thinking in terms of a structural change in the rural society, emphasized other factors, such as the establishment of private property in land, the creation and proliferation of a class of “parasitic” landlords, the increasing burden of rent and rural indebtedness.<sup>78</sup> All these, it is argued in the context of the growth of a cash economy and of an increasing commercialization of agriculture, caused large-scale alienations of peasant holdings, with the result that peasants ceased

to be “ self-possessing, self-working and self-sufficient” producers and increasingly depended for their subsistence on agricultural wage labour and sharecropping.<sup>79</sup>

According to the opposing point of view mentioned above, the old agrarian society was far from egalitarian, the considerable redistribution of landed property rights brought about by the British revenue laws only marginally affected the old system of land control at the village level. Also, the pre-British agrarian society was not necessarily one of self-possessing, self-working and self-sufficient producers, since it included a sizable group of agricultural labourers and sharecroppers whose number did not appreciably increase during British rule, and the system of rural credit to which the alleged increase in rural inequalities and landlessness of peasants has been attributed was scarcely a novel development during British rule.<sup>80</sup>

Identification and characterization of the agrarian changes that occurred over the vast area of Eastern India during a period of about 200 years is reasonably a difficult task, and we do not expect to recommend any conclusive answer to this debate by analysing some of the major changes that happened in Eastern India.

The first vital contact between British rule and the rural society occurred mainly through the initiatives of the Company for maximising the traditional share of the state in the produce of the country in the form of land revenue. Trade and commerce affected the rural society in various ways and it should be noted here that the primary concern of the Company to increase the land revenue was necessitated primarily for the needs of trade and commerce. The British policy of maximization of land revenue, however, necessitated certain institutional innovations which eventually considerably affected the composition of the agrarian society. Such innovations related at first to the choice of the social groups to which the collection of the increased revenue could be dependable.<sup>81</sup> The new *Zamindars* replaced the old *Zamindars* because the land estates were given to the highest bidders in many cases. The continuation of such a system for long would perhaps have exposed the old landed society to an increasing penetration of alien elements, eventually affecting the old method of estate management.

The new composition of the landed society in Eastern India was also affected by the growth of land market. The British attempts at integrating the old landed aristocracy into the new fiscal system in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa also only partially

succeeded. The group could scarcely prosper under the conditions of the new system, particularly the distress sales of estates of defaulting *Zamindars*, and very many of its members were eliminated in the process of the growth of a land market. The following reasons are attributed for the growth of the land market.<sup>82</sup>

- a) the insistence by the government on public sales of defaulters' estates as the chief means of ensuring the security of revenue,
- b) the inability of many *Zamindars* under the circumstances to cope with the increased revenue,
- c) and the eagerness on the part of the moneyed persons to transfer part of their fortunes to the purchase of estates.

With the growth of the land market the prices of the land also increased simultaneously. The immediate causes of the rise in land prices since 1855 were the improvement in the agricultural prices in Bengal and Bihar and the complete disappearance of the agricultural depression in Orissa by 1855. The population growth and the resultant pressure on land, the increasing cultivation of the cash crops-jute and sugarcane made the grounds for rising agricultural prices as well as *Zamindar's* rental income. The competition for land among the peasants enabled the *Zamindars* to exact a bigger amount of rent from the peasants. The exploitation level reached so high that the background was ready for the Peasant movement.<sup>83</sup>

The view emphasised in this study is that despite certain elements of continuity the pre-British agrarian society and system was not quite the same as that which evolved during British rule. The continuity of the small peasant economy as the basic organization of agricultural production, and the continuities in terms of certain agrarian institutions, and of the numerical sizes of some economic groups, such as sharecroppers and agricultural labourers, concealed a significant process of change. The nature of the decisive influences on the agrarian society during British rule considerably changed over the years. Some of them derived directly from the immediate administrative policies and the related institutional innovations.

At first the policy caused a great deal of dislocation in the rural society-in the form of diminished power of the old *Zamindars* and of the increased misery of the peasants in very many regions, though the decision of the government to depend on the old *Zamindars* in connection with the collection of land revenue arrested this

immediate process. The urban groups purchased estates, and indeed the number of purchases by traders, merchants, moneylenders and bankers tended to increase over the years, but they could not dominate the land market, at least in the initial phases of its growth, when auction sales were far more numerous than later. The main beneficiaries at the time were the frugal and the astute *Zamindars*, persons belonging to the *Zamindari* bureaucracy and also to the official bureaucracy.<sup>84</sup>

Remarkable changes were also found in regard to the position and powers of *Zamindars* in relation to peasants. The Settlement of 1793 did not necessarily reduce the old owner peasants, as was once argued, to wretched tenants at will. It is not valid either to argue that the large increase in the gross rental of *Zamindars* over the years occurred mainly at the cost of peasants producers. However, relations between *Zamindars* and peasants changed. Where European indigo planters were the *Zamindars* the methods of estate management were drastically revised.<sup>85</sup> The new *Zamindars* were also invariably more careful about increasing their rental income, and gradually refined the existing machinery towards ensuring this. The superior legal powers of *Zamindars*, both old and new, were considerably reinforced by the developments leading to an increased demand for land among the peasants. Apart from the promotion of new cultivation the land control structure was also changed in the rural society. The public or private sales of estates leading to the replacement of old *Zamindars* by auction-purchasers affected the nature of land control at the village level. Though it is very difficult to conclude whether the rural indebtedness has increased in the British period in Eastern Indian or not. Changes also had taken place in the composition of money lenders, in the organization of credit and in the forms of appropriations by the creditors. However the general debt situation and the kinds of the creditors' appropriations inevitably affected the economic performance of the dispossessed peasants, where they were not driven out of their lands by the creditors.<sup>86</sup>

Western India comprises roughly the long narrow coastal area from the Rann of Kutch to north Kanara, the wide flat Gujrat plains and the Deccan plateaus. The British conquered western India in two main stages in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The differences of history and geography led to marked regional variations in land tenures and land revenue, and the British themselves evolved a uniform system of land revenue only in 1847.<sup>87</sup> These territories were annexed at a time when no clear model

for the land revenue was available-neither the *Zamindari* system in Bengal nor the early experiments in *Raiyatwari* in Madras seemed satisfactory. The government intended to follow the principles of the Maratha system of land revenue system and Elphinstone in particular wanted to protect the established rights of headmen and *mirasdars*. But the collector and their subordinate officials were opposed to the self-rule of village communities. At last the *Raiyatwari* system was introduced in the western part which may have weakened the solidarity of the village and undermined the position of the headman and other officials.<sup>88</sup>

From the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, western India began to emerge from the sustained depression. The growth of cities and the improvement of transport widened the markets for food crops. There was a series of good harvests and the reduction of land revenue encouraged the cultivation.<sup>89</sup> The first beneficiaries of this situation were the traders and the money lenders but it also helped the peasants too. Many cultivators were able to repay their debts. On the other hand the new legal system introduced by the British had given the village money lenders more freedom than before. By the middle of the century land had a high sale value and the courts would now enforce the transfer of land for recovery of debt. According to some accounts, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the money-lenders (*vanis*) controlled nearly all the internal trade in the Deccan and it was this control which they wished to preserve. It was true that the money-lenders generally won their cases, but this was a way of tightening the moneylender's hold over the debtor-rather than transferring the land, the raiyat preferred to sign a new bond for a higher amount of debt. The amount of land that actually changed the hand was very small. The Gujrati and Marwari money-lenders against whom the riots were directed, captured only 5% of the cultivated land. But the changes occurred in the class of moneylender's class itself.<sup>90</sup> As a result of agricultural expansion many village *vanis* moved to larger village and small town for trade and the most of the villages were left without their traditional *vanis* or moneylender. In their place, prosperous members of the traditional cultivating caste, the *Kunbis* took to money-lending. These cultivator-cum-moneylenders naturally had a much greater appetite for land than the mercantile castes. So the process of land transfer within the *Kunbis* may have been of greater importance rather than the transfer to the money-lenders.<sup>91</sup>

The price of land increased in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to rise in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it was not the *vanis* and the *sahukars* who bought these lands, so much as the rich farmers who had been able to seize the new markets opportunities. The rise of the rich peasants resulted the growth of highly stratified peasant society. The government itself increased stratification by its loan policy. It is certainly true that some peasants grew much richer and others lost their lands. But what is not at all clear is how widespread and permanent the process of stratification was, but the land was certainly very unequally distributed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the number of agricultural labourers did not grow rapidly in western India. Moreover, the number of landless labourers is reported to have declined in British Gujrat as the Census data suggest.<sup>92</sup>

South India is also a region of great social, historical and physical diversity. South Indian agrarian relations were complex and enormously varied. There were innumerable historical and geographical reasons for these variations. Villages differed greatly in size and in their relations with the outside the world. Trade was much brisker in the rich agricultural areas. Some large landholders engaged in the grain trade. One special feature of the South Indian scene was the existence of the communal system of landholding, specially the Brahmin settlements. The large landholders were called as *Mirasdars*.<sup>93</sup> The *Mirasdars* of each village originally belonged to the same caste, in Tamil areas they were usually Brahmins. There was no rule of village exogamy and marriages frequently occurred within the village. The dominant *Mirasdars* or the landholders dominated practically every aspect of village life-in irrigation or perhaps in temple affairs. Brahmins were forbidden to touch the plough, so the lands of Brahmin landholders were cultivated by others. The system of sharecropping was a dominant feature of agriculture in South India. There were day labourers who might belong to the same caste as the landholders, some were in lifetime debt bondage to their employers, others managed to become sharecroppers or small cultivators.<sup>94</sup>

As the British expanded their hegemony over South India through different types of land system, they were faced with three types of problems- to maximise the land revenue, whom to settle with for the land revenue, and how the Company should arbitrate between different interests to consider the issues of land law and rights. The

first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of hectic and sometime unsuccessful experimentation for the British to collect the land revenue.<sup>95</sup>

But the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was on the whole a period of agricultural prosperity, probably for most agricultural classes.<sup>96</sup> But this period of relative agrarian prosperity was interrupted by the widespread famine of 1876-78. As usual it was the agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and small cultivators were worst sufferers. Gradually traditional ties were loosened in some areas. The landed and the landless both became more mobile. The rich farmers widened the sphere of their activities and invested their capital to industries. They extended their money lending business. The non-cultivating landlords specially the Brahmins, sold out or leased out their land to cultivators and moved to the cities or took to trade and money lending in the village. Labourers moved in response to new demands to newly irrigated area. Emigration to Burma, Malaya and Ceylon continued to be substantial. The depression of 1930s hit not only the richer men but also the labourers and artisans and the sharecroppers. There was a return of the migrants in 1930s. But the less affected were the middle farmers.<sup>97</sup> We don't have enough statistics to substantiate the view that land was increasingly passing into the hands of richer farmers and the moneylenders. But the village surveys show that large land-holdings were broken up. This resulted the break-up of the joint-family system especially in the Tamil areas. Most interesting point is that as admitted by S.Raghavaiyengar that in the 19th century the dependence of *Raiyats* on professional money lenders had actually fallen because of the growth of the money economy.<sup>98</sup>

The money value of the debt must have continued to increase over the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the depression the burden of debt became so pressing that the government was forced to take action. A survey made on Hyderabad shows that there were far fewer land transfers during the war than in the depression years and it was probably true of other regions too.<sup>99</sup>

The upper Gangetic region, which today falls largely within the boundaries of U.P, exercised a primary influence on the evolution of the Indian landholding system in the colonial period. Here the key-stone of the arch of the British revenue settlements was formed by the "village republics". From the *Doab* or Mesopotmia of the Ganges and Jumna, constituting the heart of the North Western Provinces, the settlement system which accorded modern proprietary title to holders of jointly-

owned or jointly-managed village estates was extended after 1849 when the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab came under British rule. In the southern portion of Jumna, the village *mahalwari* system was equally influential in instituting a form of village proprietorship under very different tenurial conditions from 1862 throughout much of the region brought within the Central provinces. The key question lies here that how far without the technological changes in agriculture, the fiscal and the legal apparatus of the settlement system prompted a decisive structural change in agrarian society of the Northern and Central India.<sup>100</sup>

For the necessity of academic analysis we have to reduce the difficulty of the hierarchy of traditional rights over land into two broad divisions, according to whether a holder may be classified as “primary” or a “secondary (intermediary) *Zamindar*”. The rights of the latter extended solely to land revenue collection at a superior level. The primary *Zamindar* was the land holder having immediate ‘proprietary’ dominion over the soil. Some form of joint extended-family management and partial ownership was by far the most common tenurial form. The primary *Zamindars* were generally to be found settled as dominant lineages in a number of continuous villages. Their grip was most tenacious where the primary *Zamindars* were identical with the cultivators. But in the 18<sup>th</sup> century we can see that the dominant position of the Rajput over the primary *Zamindari* rights was steadily eroded, but the more immediate significance was the partial loss of village landholding rights to local intermediaries.<sup>101</sup>

When the British annexed the upper Gangetic region, they initially made considerable use of the magnate element for local revenue collection purposes. Apart from utilizing the agency of the local magnets, the British employed as revenue officials the so-called “contract tahsildars,” who were remunerated with a percentage commission on what they paid in the Government treasury.<sup>102</sup>

The extent to which transfer of proprietary title carried with it more than a mere change in revenue management and afflicted the internal constitution of the village depended under the British, as it had done before them, on the strength of the primary *Zamindari* group. In the Central *doab* and Eastern districts agriculture was sufficiently secure. In the joint *Zamindari* tenure, primary *Zamindars* were a single joint family, and the profits were divided on ancestral shares after meeting the government revenue demand. The financial advantages of proprietary right were here

more limited. Excessive revenue pressure could, of course reduce the village *maliks* to a virtual equality of payment with subordinate cultivators and so obliterate the tributary right. But the same situation occurred in the place where the agriculture was insecure. The pressure on the land revenue compelled the peasants to migrate elsewhere. While the *malgur* or the revenue engagement right could undergo frequent transfer over the heads of the village communities, it was impossible to introduce an alien landlord element among them because there was nothing corresponding to landlord rent to support a non cultivating owner.<sup>103</sup>

Although revenue farmers were employed extensively in the early administration of the upper Doab and Rohilkhand there was also absence of the large-scale transfer of proprietary rights to outsiders. But from the early 1850 there was a change in the land control structure. Land control was passing steadily into the hands of the non-agricultural classes i.e. *bania* and *mahajans*. There was, therefore, a constant dualism between proprietary and cultivating rights, the one yielding rental income, and the other agricultural profits. Once the proprietor had been forced to embark on direct cultivation, it was always question how far he should retrench the one and enlarge the other. Transfer of proprietary title was, therefore, a very different thing from a man losing his land. Indeed a man could part with title in all but his sir land and still leave his actual cultivating holding entirely unaffected. He might indeed be prepared to sell off his rental rights in order to supply himself with the means to enlarge his own direct cultivation.<sup>104</sup>

The rise in the value of proprietary titles from 1840 was not achieved at the expense of the tenant. Proprietary profits had been increased not by raising rent rates but by letting out the arable waste land by expanding the irrigated area. The Mutiny of 1857 had a great impact on the landlord-peasant relationship. The automatic extension of the Bengal Act x, 1859 had established the occupancy right for any cultivator who could show the twelve years' unbroken possession. This act cut across the traditional distinction between the non-resident *pahi* cultivators and the resident cultivators.<sup>105</sup>

While village *maliks* and larger *Zamindars* alike became aware of their interest in preventing outsiders from establishing a foothold in this way, they also became gradually aware that the law armed them with powers to raise occupancy rents if they chose to do so. Hitherto such rents had been recorded at the time of settlement and had been recorded at the time of settlement and had remained

unchanged during its thirty-year currency. The growth of tenant right did not appear to hold back the growth in the value of proprietary right.<sup>106</sup>

The land holding structure was pyramidal in nature. Instead of conforming to the received image of a land of village proprietors, by far the greater part of the United Provinces was held by a relatively small group of large landholders. The rural society was strongly polarised. On the one hand, the number of middle-sized properties held by a 'gentry' class tended to diminish and to leave little between the large-revenue payer and the cultivating holder. On the other hand, the growth in what were in effect sub-proprietary rights meant that the upper landholding elite were confronted not by a body of tenants but by a mass of peasant sub-proprietors. The crucial economic divide was not, therefore, between land and tenants but between the absentee rent-receiver and the cultivating landholder. The British policy was aimed at resuming all revenue-free grants wherever possible and at remunerating the village elite class by a proprietary profit on a long-lease revenue engagement.

As a whole it can be suggested that there had been a grave upheaval in agrarian relations and tenures in north western provinces as a result of British rule. But the statistics of the land transfer showed that the land was not transferred into the hands of the non-agriculturists. Certainly there was no massive change in the rural society. But behind the problem of alienation and mortgage lay the much larger problem of indebtedness. But there was no simple relation of cause and effect. How far the rural society of the United Provinces underwent increasing stratification it is not easy to say.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of mounting British concern over indebtedness revenue officers were instructed to take into account the condition of the tenants in the official adjustment of rents. The last half of British rule in the United provinces witnessed a sharp intensification of agrarian difficulties and an increasing responsiveness of the land revenue administration to political pressure. By the beginning of the century the net cultivated area reached almost its maximum extent. But simultaneously the price level became high resulting unprecedented severity during the inflationary period of the First World War. As a result some sort of agrarian unrest touched the eastern and south-eastern Avadh. *Zamindari* Abolition appeared to complete the work of dismantling the British land revenue system. At

independence the land tenure holding system of the Northern and Central India was totally changed.<sup>107</sup>

To understand agrarian policy-formation it is necessary to consider several major questions other than how historians of British rule have seen the matter. An obvious first question pertains to the impact of British initiatives on pre-colonial agrarian production and the welfare of rural peoples. This has always been difficult to answer because comparisons with the pre-colonial past can be nothing except imprecise, and because the evidence for making estimates of cultivation, yields and-most especially-per capita output did not become available before the middle of the nineteenth century. Until recently, imperialist and nationalist readings of the pre-colonial period have presumed a decline in agricultural production caused by the dissolution of the Mughal order and by the wars which helped to establish the new British order. However, an historiographical view of a different sort has recently emerged, arguing that the pre-colonial 18<sup>th</sup> century rural economy was generally a healthy one, partly so because the state regimes of this period were directly and constructively involved in the promotion of agrarian production, and that this vigour continued well into the colonial age.<sup>108</sup>

Several scholars have contributed to this revision of early modern Indian history<sup>109</sup> According to these scholars, the rural economy of 18th century India enjoyed substantial if uneven growth, notwithstanding the destructiveness of wars which culminated in British rule, and notwithstanding the breach of large zones of supposed political order. The Mughal order-whose collapse an older generation of historians argued must have plunged the north Indian rural economy into decline and chaos by the middle of the eighteenth century-is now seen to have been replaced by another order. Now, smaller states and their consuming and tax-gathering regimes replaced the Mughal imperial order. Market networks proliferated and became to a degree interlinked in what the historian Tapan Raychaudhury call it a layer effect.<sup>110</sup> Revenue farming, though regarded by some scholars like Raychaudhury as an 'evil', is seen by others as one of the driving forces of agricultural commodity production which was led by the rural investments of the *Ijaradar* (revenue farmers) of the age.<sup>111</sup>

To some of these revisionist scholars, the economic dynamism continued well into the colonial period. This view conflicts with that of most "nationalist" historians,

who have assumed that the imposition of British rule in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a determining economic and political disjuncture. According to the latter conception, the uneven agrarian as well as commercial growth of the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to a close in about the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the consequences of the earliest colonial policies began to produce the distortions with which colonial domination in India has generally come to be identified.<sup>112</sup>

This formulation has been criticized by some historians; Neeladri Bhattacharya is one among them. His objection to an argument about the fundamental continuity of agrarian policies and conditions over the colonial divide is that elements which appear to be continuous are actually restructured, and should therefore be understood differently.<sup>113</sup>

If our knowledge about the impact of colonial policies on productions are inaccurate the same thing can hardly be said about the impact upon the welfare of a major part of the Indian rural population<sup>114</sup> The Madras official S.Srinivasa Raghavaiyengar finally admitted that “the great majority of the agricultural classes was very poor...(though) there certainly has been an improvement in the material condition...of the upper strata of society and a reduction in the percentage which the lowest grades bear to the total population.”<sup>115</sup>

What this rural “upper strata” of beneficiaries of British rule might have consisted in during pre-colonial times is another question of importance when evaluating agrarian policies. In this regard Thomas Munro’s report on social stratification in the Ceded districts of Madras was important. This report showed the fact that this sort of stratification developed during the pre-colonial era. The same may be said of the distinction between rich and poor peasants reported elsewhere in early British India.<sup>116</sup>

It has been observed from the discussion above that among the three land settlements, there were bewilderingly wide variability on who were deemed the proper payers of land revenue, on what was the proper unit of assessment, and on whether revenue liabilities were to remain ‘temporary’ (as in most of British India) or were to become “permanent’(as in Bengal). Making an threadbare accounting of the extent of the degree of variability was not easy.<sup>117</sup> A major factor was political, in the sense that these were systems of revenue collection seen as desirable or necessary

means of establishing British dominance in different places and times. Another factor was historical, i.e. an adaptation of procedures encountered by the founders of British systems in various parts of the subcontinent and modified to their purposes of conquest. <sup>118</sup>

But whatever the reasons for the various agrarian policies and land-revenue schemes established in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the level of extraction decreased as the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was therefore less consequential in monetary terms. In real terms, land revenue began to retreat from the punishing high pitch set in the early part of the century, before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of rising agricultural prices. Agricultural credit and debt had become major causes of rural poverty and exploitation for the poor. <sup>119</sup>

A long-lasting and perplexing debate on land revenue extended throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century without being resolved. Efforts to define a justified land-revenue policy failed for another reason: because from the beginning to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all sort of commercial, military and political problems dictated that a large “surplus” ought to be appropriated for imperial needs in India, in Britain, and in extending the British empire in Asia and Africa. In none of this was the welfare of the rural population of India as important as the interests of colonialism. <sup>120</sup>

Therefore, it can be argued that a general objective of colonial policy was to enhance agrarian commercialization and to link it to world trade. The following changes are widely agreed among scholars to have been directed towards this objective:

1. the establishment in law of private, alienable property, not only in Bengal, with the *Zamindari* settlement, but everywhere in British India and its client “princely” regimes,
2. The reinforcement of class differentiations among rural people through legal and administrative protection to the richer section by privileged ownership-rights and local administrative offices,
3. The monetization of the heavy revenue demand and the timing of its collection in such a way as to require a massive expansion in rural credit and money-lending by professional lenders and rich peasants, which resulted in crisis borrowing, debt-traps, and disadvantageous cash cropping arrangements for small producers,

4. direct compulsion in the cultivation of indigo and opium, but even more widespread indirect pressure for the cultivation of jute, sugarcane, oil-seeds, and very important, irrigation schemes intended to increase the acreage under the cash crops, the cash returns to the state and some private investors.”<sup>121</sup>

This deepening capitalist infiltration generated agrarian crises and challenges to the stability and legitimacy of the colonial state later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it led to the quest for appropriate agrarian policies. Modest relief measures were undertaken, including subsidized grain distribution and public works, and especially, the restoration of small scale irrigation.<sup>122</sup>

As the English Company extended its political control throughout India, it annexed the most economically productive areas, both agriculturally and commercially. Thus it began in Bengal, one of the richest Indian provinces, and then it quickly gobbled up most coastal areas to facilitate commercial enterprises and gradually grabbed the fertile Gangetic plain to Punjab. When Queen Victoria renounced any further British annexation, the princely states were located mainly in less economically productive areas. Jammu and Kashmir encompassed desolate mountains, Rajputana was a rain-deficit area, some Rajput-ruled states of Gujrat had unhealthy and unproductive tracts, the Orissan states stretched across the inaccessible jungle hills and the large block of central Indian States was riven by the deep defiles of the Bindhya Range.

But notable exception with extensive natural resources included the coastal states of Travancore and Cochin with a small but lush agricultural base in both food and cash crops, the cis-Sutlej Punjab states possessing fertile soils and early access to canal irrigation, and Hyderabad and Mysore with diverse economies. Unfortunately the economic landscape of the princely states remains clouded by a lack of scholarly research. So most of the overview is impressionistic and calls attention to the need for intensive research on the economic structure and development of the princely states.

As in the British Indian provinces, the economies of most princely states were mainly agricultural with widely varied patterns of land control, land revenue assessment and tax collection. The general types of settlement- with prominent individuals, with landlords, and with individual share-holders, took its appearance with minor variations in other regions of India including the Princely States. Local

conditions were the main factors behind the choice of proprietary body. The British administrators did never make abrupt changes in the land administration of Princely states. In the areas of Gujarat under the Marathas, which the British acquired, settlements were made with a group of warrior chiefs around Ahmedabad whom the British called *talukdars*, with shareholders called *patidars* in Kheda district, and with individual cultivators in Broach. Pre-British Kerala had a system of tenancy where upper caste non-cultivating land-lords rented out land to a hierarchy of tenants with different degrees of occupancy rights and under different forms of contracts.<sup>123</sup> The British in Malabar readily granted proprietary rights to the land-lords. Until 1850s in Hyderabad both the revenue farming and the *Ryotwari* settlement were followed by the British. In Awadh, the former revenue collectors or *Zamindars* became proprietors of land in legal terms. As a result they lost various perquisites and status. Many members of their extended families claimed rights to the lands resulting subdivision of the estates. On the other hand, many forms of customary tenants found their claim to tenure under proper legal protection. Many rulers monopolised a significant portion of their states as *khalsa* or crown lands but frequently more would be under the jurisdiction of *jagirdars*, as in the Rajputana states such as Alwar and Jaipur. In some princely states there were powerful cultivator-owners. Many observers claimed that princes extracted more from their peasants than did the British Indian Government, but that the peasants in princely states were “happier” than those under colonial rule.<sup>124</sup>

The condition of the Princely state of Cooch Behar was not different from the other Princely States as far the revenue administration was concerned. Though the territorial boundary of this state was not so vast like the Maratha State but the strategic importance of this state was no less important because it was surrounded by Bhutan, Nepal, and Ahom Kingdom. Cooch Behar was historically as well as culturally connected with the western plains of North-east. As a result, in designing the land revenue administration, the Koch Bihar state was strongly influenced by the land administration system of the Ahom kingdom. Maharaja Naranarayan had introduced the Paik-system, quite similar in many respects with that of the Ahoms in Upper Brahmaputra Valley.<sup>125</sup>

After the fall of the great kingdom of Kamrupa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, many petty tribal kingdoms emerged in this part of India. These kingdoms were

mostly tribal infested and tribal social system as well as land management systems had dominated those regions. Therefore, Koch Behar had cultural and social synergies with those regions. The ruling class of these kingdoms began the process of embracing Hinduism since the 15<sup>th</sup> century when their kingdoms attained sufficiently large production base through the introduction of advanced system of production or through extension of territories by conquering the neighbouring countries. These developments helped the ruling elites of the tribal kingdoms to become independent of both tribal military forces and the community-based production system of agriculture. Changes in their agrarian system from shifting cultivation to settle one certainly brought about changes in land ownership.<sup>126</sup> These economic changes had brought remarkable changes in tribal society and culture. The situation in the tribal state of Cooch Behar was not a different one.

Among the surveys and reports which threw light on the socio-economic characteristics of the Koches during British Period, Buchanan Hamilton's description in 1809 was certainly worthy to mention. Therefore, his accounts provided us inputs regarding the structure of the land administration and the agrarian conditions found among the Koches or Rajbansis who certainly formed majority of population of this place. Buchanan describes about the Koch Kingdom in this way, "The lands are let by the plough, and each person who has a plough has a certain proportion of land fit for transplanted rice, and may occupy besides whatever he requires for his house... and sugar fields. Those two portions are fixed. He may besides cultivate as much of the high land that is fallow as he pleases, and it is usual to take from one field a succession of pulse, mustard, and summer rice, and then occupy another, that has been allowed some years of fallow".<sup>127</sup>

The agricultural conditions so described above suggested that a transition took place from the shifting cultivation to the settled agriculture. Thus a shift in the form of land settlement from the plough tax (*Haldhori*) to the regulated rates occurred in 1788, when the British colonial government introduced measurement of lands into the district.<sup>128</sup>

Buchanan also made observation on the internal conditions of the peasantry. He has showed that out of 62 villages of Patgong estate about half of the villages were leased by 30 large farmers (*Jotedar*) who directly paid their rents to the *Zamindari* office, and the remaining half was directly administered by officers to whom the

villagers paid their rents. The *Jotedar* hired out part of their holdings to the under-tenants and had cultivated half of the portion with the sharecroppers (*Adhiars*). Thus the wealthier section of the Koch peasants became *Jotedar* who had strong influence in rural areas and differences of economic condition between *Jotedars* and the Koch (Rajbansi) peasants were clearly visible by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>129</sup>

Though Cooch Behar had been an independent state till 1773, it had adopted the features of revenue administration of Bengal Subha under Murshid Kuli Khan to make its own structure. The feudal structure of revenue collection through the *Izaradars* seems to have been a direct adaptation of the *malzamini* system of Murshid quli Khan. After the Anglo-Koch Behar Treaty, the Company's government from time to time tried to control the administration of the Koch Behar State and repeatedly attempted to introduce the Bengal Regulation System into this kingdom. The land revenue system of the Koch Behar State in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be characterized as *Izaradari* System which was first introduced into this kingdom by the Commissioner Amuty of the East India Company.<sup>130</sup> He observed that the process of direct collection of revenue from the *raiya*s was plagued with corruption, oppression and inefficiency. Amuty advised the young Raja to adopt the Public farming system all over the Country. Accordingly, the *Izaradari* System was introduced in the Koch Behar Kingdom. Initially the contract was made annual but the duration gradually extended to 5 years. But it failed to bring any good result and became a source of great oppression to the tenancy.<sup>131</sup>

Most of the land in this kingdom was farmed by *Izaradars* who were 100 to 125 in numbers and they obtained farms through a process of auctions. Influential persons such as the Queen, members of the royal family, high ranking officers and the spiritual guide (*guru*) of the Raja usually secured the farms. But they did obtain this *Izara* in their dependent's name instead of their names. Most of the time, the *Izaradars* were subletting their *Izaras* to the subordinate people. The *Izaradars* collected their rents either directly from the peasants or through the *Patwaris* and *Bosneas* of the villages.<sup>132</sup> The *Izaradars* were entitled to collect one twelfth of the *Jama* as their commission (*Izaradari Haq*) and another twelfth as the expense of collection (*Saranjami*), in addition to the Raja's share. Besides, the peasants had to pay additional cesses to the high ranking officers of the State. Such cesses were collected by the *Izaradars* and passed on to the respective officers.

According to the Jenkins's Report it was known that, by this time, "All the officers but one are from the Bengal Provinces...even the interior situations are all neatly held by foreigners." For example, "The Sepoys and Barkandazes are Hindoostans... none of these employments being held by natives." And outside the Public offices, the principal Merchants are Marwari Shoroffs" whose main business lay in the exchange of Narayani Rupees.<sup>133</sup> Thus the State Administration was almost entirely manned by foreigners, except some top offices which were held by the members of the Royal family. Many of these outsiders after obtaining public offices secured lucrative *Izara* for themselves. Thus the process of land alienation was started by oppressing and dispossessing the original inhabitants of the country. During his stay in Koch Behar, Jenkins received many petitions from the people who had titles of either Nishya or Doss, complaining of over exaction, false claim of arrears, turning out of houses, looting, confined eviction of family, and taking away of *Jotes*. These malpractices were committed by persons with the titles of Chowdhury, Sanyal, and Lahiri." Thus intrusion of Bengal caste Hindus into the country was effected through the working of the state mechanism and revenue farming in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup>

Thus the *Izaradari* system introduced in 1790 became an instrument of oppression on the peasantry. The British administrators who played the role of the guardian of the raja of Cooch Behar during 1860-1870 felt the need of the fundamental land reform in the State. After receiving the reports on the various evils of the *Izaradari* System, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir George Campbell, ordered its abolition in 1872. The *Izaradars* consequently disappeared from the agrarian scene of Koch Behar and the Government began to collect revenue directly from the *Jotedar*.<sup>135</sup>

On the ill effects of the *Izaradari* system, we shall quote Beckett's excellent report (dated 30 May, 1872):

"It is generally understood that originally the *Jotedar* were the cultivators of the soil and resident of the state, but by degree there was an influx of foreigners from other districts, who, being more intelligent than the residents of the place, began to usurp all real power, and under a weak government they managed so that many *jotes* gradually passed into their hands..... With respect to the *jotes* which passed into the hands of the influential foreigners, the former resident *Jotedar* become *Chukanidars* and their *Chukanidars* went down a lower and became *Dar Chukanidars*, the number of *Chukanidars* has greatly increased." In the same record Beckett mentioned, "54% of the lands were possessed by foreign *Jotedar*, 31% by the non-cultivating resident *Jotedar* and only 15% by the cultivating *Jotedar*. Thus there can be no doubt that the acquisition of the Jotdari rights by the foreigners or the land alienation or the dispossession of rights

in land of the Rajbansis had already reached an alarming height before the abolition of the *Izaradari* system in 1872.”<sup>136</sup>

From this time onwards, the colonial administrators were very much eager to reform the land administrative system of the Cooch Behar State. But the real breakthrough in the whole system came with the coronation of the Raja Nripendra Nararyan to the throne. The administrative machinery of the state was created on the model of British District. The land revenue system became scientific after rearrangement and resettlement. The state was thoroughly surveyed and all tenures and rights were recorded. To ensure the steady income from the land revenue they now felt the need of the Land Settlements in the State. Accordingly the Four successive settlements such as First Settlement (1877-83), *Patit Charcha* Settlement (1884-1886), *Rakam Charcha* Settlement (1886-1891), Re-settlement (1912-1927) were taken place in the State. Every encouragement was given for the extension of cultivation. Production of commercial crops like jute and tobacco was given priority. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan went to the extent of hiring the services of two tobacco experts-Mr. Paterson of America and Mr Montford of Manila. A scientific Agricultural farm was established to train cultivators so that they could produce good quality tobacco on a large scale. Kumar Gajendra Narayan was sent to the Royal Agricultural College in England. Kumar Nityendra Narayan too was sent to learn agriculture in the U.S. After completion of their education they returned home and devoted themselves to the expansion of tobacco cultivation. These facts substantiated the view that the Maharajas of the State were concerned about the expansion of the agriculture as well as the agricultural products in the state.<sup>137</sup>

These Settlement operations had brought some important changes in the rural society in Cooch Behar State. The settlement was made with the *Jotedar*. The First Settlement changed the land tenure structure of the rural society in Cooch Behar. In the first place it checked the absentee *Jotedar*. Secondly the village *Jotedar* became the proprietors of lands. Thirdly, the system of under tenures had been acknowledged and the right of these intermediaries was recognized by the state.<sup>138</sup>

The Sub-infeudation Act was passed in 1888 to check the further development of Sub-infeudation in the State and to prevent the creation of new rights in place of existing ones when they lapsed or became extinct, under the existing Tenancy Act, there must be exchange of Registered *Patta* and *Kabuliyat* at the time of creation of every new under-tenancy, and *Jotedar* and *Chukanidars* alone can create such under

tenancies by letting out *Khas* lands. Large number of new tenancies has been actually created in contravention of the aforesaid provisions of the law and generally at very high rates.<sup>139</sup>

The *Krishiprojas* who formed a large number of cultivators got the favour of the State authority. Special steps were taken to protect their rights over the lands they possessed and *Pattas* were issued against their names in the successive settlements.<sup>140</sup>

To improve the condition of the *Adhiars* and to safeguard their rights over the land, significant steps were taken in the Settlement operation Accordingly it was ordered that any *Adhiar* who cultivates the same land with his own cattle for consecutive 12 years would acquire a right of occupancy in respect of such land. In 1910 this occupancy right was made heritable but not otherwise transferable<sup>141</sup>

Thus from the period of First Settlement to the Final Settlement, the land revenue administration had experienced number of changes by adopting modern methods and techniques. The revenue was fixed on the basis of regular settlement and was periodically revised in different operations in which the Bengal provisional rules followed.

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### Land Settlements in Cooch Behar State: An Overview

The earliest information about the land revenue system of Cooch Behar State was not available before 1773. A regular history of land revenue administration of the State begins from that year as the State came into contact with the British through the Treaty of 1773. The dearth of any accurate records except the “*Rajopakhyana*” or the account of the kings of Cooch Behar written during the time of Raja Harendra Narayan, about the settlement of land revenue of the State does not give us the opportunity to know about the accurate revenue administration of the country. Naturally to get the account of the old institutional structure we have to depend on the sources based on surmises and speculation.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1. Pre-Colonial Land Management System of the Cooch Behar State

From the very beginning of its date it appears that the land of the state had been divided into two parts: revenue paying and revenue free. Persons holding the first kind of the land had to pay the revenue to the State. The holders of the rent-free land, on the other hand, were private individuals who obtained them for special purposes and enjoyed them free of any charge. The rent-free land was held for various purposes, such, as, the performances of religious rites, the maintenance of Brahmins and men of learning, reward for good services done to the state, and maintenance of the relations and connections of the ruling family.

The revenue paying lands were originally divided into *Mal*, *Debutter*, and *Khangi*.<sup>2</sup> The revenue from *Mal* directly went to the royal exchequer of the State. The second one was dedicated for worship or maintenance of the deities and for other religious purposes. And the third one was set apart for the maintenance of the Maharaja’s household. The *Khangi* lands were gradually vanished as a separate class when Colonel Houghton incorporated them with *Mal* lands in 1864. *Debutter* lands were also brought under the *Mal*. Thus these two kinds of land formed the two big sources of state revenue under *Mal*.

Simultaneously, there were some revenue-free tenure in the State such as *Brahmatter*, *Mukarrari*, *Petbhata*, *Bakshis*, *Debutter*, *Pirpal* and *Jagirs*<sup>3</sup>. *Brahmatter* lands were given to *Brahmanas* by the ruling raja for their support (Appendix-2). These grants were hereditary and transferable. *Mukarrari* grants are lands given at a fixed rate, free from all *abwabs* (extra cess) with the exception of *Batta*. These land grants were hereditary but on the case of failure of heirs lands were escheated to the state. *Petbhata* lands are rent free holdings generally given by a raja for the maintenance of his relatives. A *Petbhata* grant lapses at the death of the original grantee and his heirs must apply to the raja for a renewal. This land is not transferable. *Bakshis* land grants were given to some people for their extraordinary performance for the State. These grants are hereditary and transferable. These grants are escheated to the State on failure of heirs. This type of grant was same like *Lakheraj* grant. *Debutter* grants are lands given for the maintenance of an idol. They cannot be sold or alienated in any way. This land grant was not hereditary. In Cooch Behar State there were two types of *Debutter* lands- State *Debutter* and Private *Debutter*. *Pirpal* resembles *Debutter*, being land granted to *pir* or Muslim saints.

In *Jagirs* or service tenure system, the persons holding *jagirs* are bound to give certain pre-defined personal services for the land they hold. If they fail to do so, or if their services are no longer required, the land is liable to be seized by the State. *Jagirs* are not saleable or transferable. The right of the *Jagirs* can be inherited but State used to enjoy the discretionary power to bestow the right<sup>4</sup>

For revenue purposes rented lands were classified according to the nature of the produce.<sup>5</sup> There are references to the *Baotali* (very low land where *Bao* paddy was sown), *Maghuwatali* (land for the cultivation of Rabi crops), *Ahutali* (where *Ahu* paddy was cultivated), *Rupit* (lands for cultivation of *Sali* or transplanted rice) etc. Assessment varied depending upon fertility of soil, amount of produce or number of ploughs used.<sup>6</sup> There is no record to show that any survey of land was undertaken during the period of our study. But certain units of land measurement like those of *halsa* or *halisa*<sup>7</sup> equivalent to one *bigha*, and *bish* equivalent to thirteen standards *bighas* of land were prevalent. Besides, there was another unit called *pura*<sup>8</sup> consisting of four *bighas* of land. So it appears that there was variation in land revenue assessment based on variation in productivity of land. The First grade of land was

assessed at Rs. 20 per bish and second grade of land was assessed at the Rs 15 per bish. The peasants used to pay Rs 10 per bish for the third category of land.<sup>9</sup>

Although the actual procedure and rate of assessment in the Koch kingdom is not known it appears that some sort of *Paik*-system existed there. These *Paiks* had to serve the State with manual works, and to go to war as soldiers when necessary. In return they enjoyed some plots of free of revenue. Besides, the *Zamindars* like the *Bhuyans* and other high state officials like *Dewan*, *Kajri*, *Choudhury*, collected revenue from the peasants in their own way who were directly under their control, and sent a certain amount of their respective collection to the centre.<sup>10</sup> After the Koch Kingdom had been annexed to the Mughal Empire, the system of collection of revenue was changed. The royal princelets and other *Zamindars* deposited with the imperial treasury a certain amount of their collections from the peasants. The settlement in such cases was made annually and the procedure was to “settle the *jama* agreeably to that of the preceding year”<sup>11</sup>

Revenue was collected in cash or kind although the first was preferred. Khan Chaudhury points out to a tradition which states that in an inscription of the Kamata king Nilambar the king advised his successors to realise only a very few *Kowris* as revenue for each plough. By this reference it appears that during the rule of the early Koch kings the rate of the assessment was low, and the amount in terms of *Kowris* had been taken from the cultivators as revenue.<sup>12</sup> The *Katha Guru Charit* appears to inform us that the peasants were to pay  $1\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of their produce as rent to the royal treasury.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that the small revenue officers collected more than the original rate<sup>14</sup> and made the life of the peasant sometimes miserable. The contemporary literature informs us that sometimes the poor peasants had to fall in recurring arrears of revenue as a result of which they had to mortgage their labour to the affluent neighbours.<sup>15</sup>

But the rate of the revenue assessment of the Koches was lower than the Mughals. This was substantiated by the fact that when Mirjumla left Cooch Behar for Assam, the peasants of Cooch Behar rose in revolt against Mughal revenue system introduced by Mirjumla. The reason behind the revolt was the new rules and regulations imposed by the Mughals for the collection of the revenue. The demand of revenue in cash might have antagonised the peasants of Cooch Behar against the Mughal rule.<sup>16</sup> The process of collection of land revenue in the Koch kingdom

changed so many times from the time of Biswa Singha to the period of Dhairyendra Narayan. Biswa Singha could not introduce any new method for revenue collection. Nara Narayan allowed the former revenue collectors like *Bhuiyas* to collect revenue from the peasants.

For the dearth of sources it is very difficult to enumerate the exact amount of land revenue collected by the state both in the form of cash and kind. Early Koch rulers had collected the tribute through warfare. But the beginning of the Mughal-Ahom intervention in the State had increased the demand of revenue in cash when the tribute collection through warfare was stopped. From the contemporary literature an idea can be made about the amount of the collected revenue from the State. Annual tribute (peshkash) paid by Laksmi Narayan to the Mughal emperor was Rs. 100000 or 80000 *Narayani Tanka*.<sup>17</sup> The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* claims that king Raghudev Narayan had a hard cash of Rs 3 crores in his treasury.<sup>18</sup> Similarly Prana Narayan paid Rs. 550000 to Shaeista Khan, the Mughal Governor of Bengal in 1665 A.D. as an indemnity. After the Grant of Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company in 1765 revenue of the *Chaklas* of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhug had been began to be deposited to the Company's treasury as the Mughals had conquered these three from Rup Narayan in 1711.<sup>19</sup>

Cooch Behar State became a feudatory State to the East India Company by virtue of the Anglo-Cooch Behar treaty of 1773.<sup>20</sup> According to this Treaty of 1773; it is also noteworthy that the half of the revenue to be paid to the English Government is clearly marked out as a tribute and not as a tax. This tribute agreed to be paid to the British Government by this treaty, was collected by the collector of Rangpur<sup>21</sup>. Upto 1780 the tribute was realized by committing the total collections of the state to *Tehsildars* appointed by the British Govt, and from the total collections the *Tehsildars* deducted the half share of the British Government and paid over the other half to the State. Thus collection was made twice from each *Jotedar*, once by the East India Company's *Tehsildars* for half the amount and second time by the revenue collections of the Maharaja for the remaining half.<sup>22</sup>

The persons paying the charge on the land immediately to the State, or to the persons authorised to receive the same, were called *Jotedars* and formed the first grade in the tenancy of the country.<sup>23</sup> Originally these men were perhaps the cultivators of the soil and residents of the State, and the different grades of under-

tenures did not probably exist.<sup>24</sup> When Mr Purling made the *Hastabood* or account of the revenue in 1774, he found that the revenue payable by the *rayat* consisted of two parts, namely *assal* or original rent, and *abwab*, or additional cesses, which were then consolidated into one.<sup>25</sup>

Prior to the year 1773 the settlement was made with the *Jotedars* who paid revenue to the State. No regular *patta* (agreement deal) appears to have been granted and the land had never been measured.<sup>26</sup> The settlement was renewed from year to year and the assessment was not fixed. There were three different rates for assessment for different qualities of land. The mode of assessment and the system of collection were both irregular. The practice which was generally followed was to settle the *Jama* agreeably to that of the preceding year, and representations as to heavy assessment were attended to and remissions allowed afterwards. How the first and earliest settlement was made must, however, rest for ever in oblivion.<sup>27</sup>

### **3.2. The Colonial Land Management System of Cooch Behar State**

The collection was made by the State through its own officers called *Sajwals*. Over and above the rentals and *abwabs*, the *Rayats* had to pay certain charges called *maffasil khurcha*, which were not included in the public accounts. These formed about a fifth of the whole revenue. They consisted principally of *nuzzar* or *selami* to the State officers, of interest on money borrowed on the part of the *rayats* by persons employed in collections at a most exorbitant rate to make good arrears of rent and of *talabana* or allowance to peons.<sup>28</sup>

The dishonesty and greed of the State officials caused great hardship to the people. Large portions of the land were alienated, new and irregular exactions were imposed and the administration of justice was not up to the mark to secure gratification.<sup>29</sup> The harassed and oppressed tenants left the State in large numbers. The income from revenue was reduced a lot. So after deducting large amount as tribute of the East India Company very little was left for the management of the State.<sup>30</sup> The number of the *Jotedars* as could naturally be expected was large, and stood in the way of successful *Khas* collection of revenue under a system of government not well organised and not properly administered. It was found more

convenient to farm out the revenue-paying estates to outsiders who were made responsible for the State revenue.<sup>31</sup>

Taking account of this disturbed state of affairs Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General of India appointed a Commission in 1788. On the basis of the report of the Commission Henry Douglas was appointed as the commissioner in 1789. He introduced the *Ijaradari* system in Cooch Behar for the collection of revenue in 1790 and to control the irregular affairs of the State.<sup>32</sup> In fact it was a necessity of the time for securing large amount of State revenue. The measures adopted under this system are the following:

1. The country was divided into small parcels and put up to auction and the highest bid with approved security was accepted.
2. The *jamias* payable by the *Jotedars* to these farmers were generally settled agreeably to that of preceding year. When the lands were measured the farmers made their assessments according to certain fixed rate.
3. The settlements were at first made annually. From Mr Ahmuty's time they were for 5 years.
4. The *Ijaradars* used to collect from the *ryots* two charges called *Ijaradari* and *Saranjami* each forming one twelfth, and two together one sixth as their authorised share of profit.

But the *Ijaradari* system was unsuccessful and had given rise to greater abuses than the earlier one. In fact the defects lay at the root of the administration. Firstly, The ladies of the royal seraglio, the relatives of the king and the *amlahs* of the State used to take out the *Ijaras benami* and by virtue of their position they could easily made the exactions from the *ryots*<sup>33</sup> Secondly another evil result of this system was the extensive sub-infeudation. It is not known from what period the under-tenures, such as *Chukanis*, *Darchukanis*, and so forth have their origin. But it is also a fact that the oppressions and undue influence exercised by the official farmers converted many *Jotedars* into *Chukanidars* with a corresponding lowering of the status of the under-tenants below the *Jotedars*. Thirdly, the peasantry ruined by short term settlements.

Douglas was succeeded by C .A. Bruce in 1791 and the latter by W.T. Smith in 1795, who made over charge to R. Ahmuty in 1797. When Ahmuty was the

commissioner a regular register of the lands of the State was made. The only change Ahmuty brought about was to enhance the period of these farming leases to five years from one year as originally introduced by Douglas. In the meantime Maharaja Harendra Narayan came of age in 1801 and the matter remained stuck up there. And Mr. Ahmuty was directed to make over the administration to him. On the removal of the Commissioner in 1801 it appears that the administration and the superintendence of the police in Cooch Behar State had been transferred to the collector of Rangpur, but in January 1803 it was again found necessary to appoint a Commissioner, for the purpose of carrying better administration.<sup>34</sup>

In subsequent years attempts were made by the British administrators to introduce regulated administration in the State but the refusal of the Maharaja prevented any further interference to the affairs of the State. Further improvement in revenue administration had to await another minority of the Raja in 1864.<sup>35</sup>

To know the further details of the Land Settlements we have to know the tenurial condition of the State. The king was the actual owner of the soil, but the cultivator's right over their hereditary possessions was never questioned by him. The estates given to the relatives of the king were subject to be taken over by the king after the guarantee's death. The *Jagir* lands were allowed to be held by the State officers during the period of their service only and thus transferable. Available cultivable lands were distributed among the peasants and their records were kept by the concerning officers without allowing them to exercise their hereditary rights over them.<sup>36</sup>

The revenue paying estate in the country was called the *Jote* and the holders of this estate were called *Jotedars*<sup>37</sup>. They formed the first grade in the tenancy of the country. Originally they were the cultivators of the soil and residents of the State and the different grades of under-tenures did not probably exist. But after the contact with the British the land tenure structure had undergone a rapid change. It was not so much complicated like the system prevailed in the rest of Bengal. We got the information about the later structure of the land tenure from the report made by Mr W.O.A Beckett, Assistant-Commissioner in charge of the Cooch Behar Settlement, dated 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, 1874. According to his report it was seen that the *Raja* was the owner of the soil. The different classes of tenants found in the State were as follows:

*Jotedars, Chukanidars, Dar-Chukanidars, Dara-dar-Chukanidars, Tashya-Chukanidar, Tali-Chukanidar, Adhiars.*<sup>38</sup>

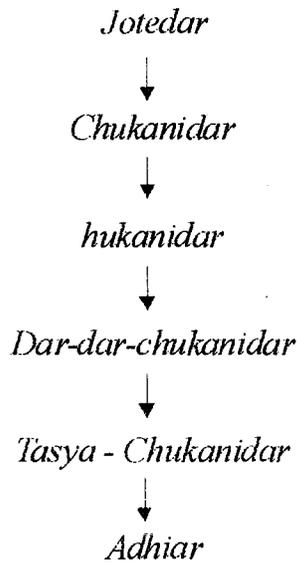
Persons holding revenue-paying land immediately under the *raja* was called *Jotedars* or proprietors of *Jotes*. A *Jote* was hereditary, transferable and divisible by the customary law of the country. It was liable to be summarily sold for its own areas of revenue; although the law on the subject was more lenient than Act XI of 1859 of British India.<sup>39</sup> The State always recognised the right of ownership, subject to the payment of revenue at the prevailing rate. The rent payable by *Jotedars* was liable to enhancement.<sup>40</sup> The *Jotes* were of two kinds-a) *Mukarari* or permanently settled and b) *Sarasari* or temporarily settled. The revenue of the former is fixed permanently and no increase can be made by the State unless the quantity of land in possession of the holder is found to be in excess of the original grant.

*Chukanidar* was a holder of a certain portion of the *Jote* or farm such holding being known as a *chukani*. He was the immediate under tenant of the *Jotedar*. He had the rights of occupancy. His portion was also hereditary. A *chukani* was a saleable under-tenure, but the consent of the *Jotedars* must be obtained to the transfer.<sup>41</sup> He paid to the *Jotedar*, as rent, a sum not exceeding 25 per cent over the rates that the *Jotedar* was used to pay to the State.

A *Dar-Chukanidar* was the under tenant of a *Chukanidar*. This under tenure was hereditary and transferable, with the consent of the *Chukanidar*. A *Dar-Chukanidar* had to pay 50 per cent over the *Jotedar's* rates. A *Dar-dar-Chukanidar* is an under tenant of a *Dar-Chukanidar*. He had same rights as a *Dar-Chukanidar*, the rate of rent payable being 75 per cent over the *Jotedar's* assessment. In few cases *Dar-a-dar-Chukanidars* were again under-tenants of their own, styled a *Tasya-Chukanidars*, but this was a very rare occurrence. An *adhiar* or *praja* was a person who cultivates lands on the condition that he gets half of the produce of the crop; he is, in fact, a hired labourer, paid in kind. The *adhiars* had no rights on the soil. Each class of tenants usually cultivated portion of his land through *adhiars*. Thus there were *adhiars* under *Chukanidars, Dar-chukanidars* as well as *Jotedars*.<sup>42</sup>

Thus the agrarian structure of Cooch Behar State showed that the *Jotedar* was at the top of the hierarchy. Another important thing should be mentioned that, while in Bengal, under the rulings of the High Court, only one class of holders under a

Zamindar can have occupancy rights; all classes of under tenants in Cooch Behar have these rights <sup>43</sup>



After the death of Narendra Narayan, his minor son Nripendra Narayan was become the king. Again the East India Company started interfering in the administration of the State. Thus, when Government took charge of the State one of the first steps taken by the Commissioner Col. J.C.Haughton was to rectify the abuses prevailed in the farming system. With this end in view he proposed and carried out a survey of the State under O'Donnel, the Deputy Superintendent of Revenue Survey, who was specially deputed by the Government to maintain a systematic procedure of revenue collection.<sup>44</sup>

While bent upon reforming the *Izaradari* system Colonel Haughton was not doing away with it altogether. He wanted to create a middle class in the country like the *Zamindars* and *Talukdars* of Bengal, 'who should' to quote his words, "form the bones and sinews of the country"<sup>45</sup>. He, therefore, proposed a measurement by *Taluks* and that the *Taluks* should be offered to the existing farmers after they had been properly demarcated. The Government, however, on receipt of his report declared themselves in favour of a *Khashrah* measurement and the settlement with the *rayats* directly.<sup>46</sup>

O.Donnel divided the State into six *parganas* within the *parganas* the *Taluks* were geographically demarcated. These were named Mekhligunj, Mathabanga, Lalbazer, Dinhat, Cooch Behar and Tufangunj. The survey was concluded in 1870

and from 1872 under the orders of Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal the *Ijaradari* System was abolished.<sup>47</sup>

In order to finalize a Comprehensive Settlement in the state, initiatives were taken in 1872. The entire settlement operations in the six *parganas* of the state are generally known as First Settlement. Mr. W. O.A Beckett, Assistant-Commissioner, had lately carried out the settlement operation. The work of the First land revenue settlement of Cooch Behar was concluded by 1877.<sup>48</sup> The features of the Settlement operation were:

1. It fixes the rates of rent payable by all classes of tenants.
2. This settlement was made for a period of 12 years.
3. The *Jotedar* pays direct to the State at rates fixed as follows: For bastu, ud-bastu, garden land and betel-nut land, Rs. 2.8 per *bigha* for bamboo land, Rs. 1.2 per *bigha* for bils or marshes, 8 anna per *bigha* for fallow land and jungle, 1 anna per *bigha*. These rates, which seem very favourable to the tenants, were sanctioned by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal in 1872. It should be mentioned that the *Jotedars* are strictly prohibited from taking more than an increase of 25 per cent, on these rates from the *Chukanidars*, and the same proportional increase is allowed to each successive under-tenants.
4. Another important feature of this Settlement was the resumption of the invalid rent-free lands- *Mukarrari*, and *Jagirs*. During the unsettled condition of the state beginning from the minority of Maharaja Harendra Narayan, large areas of lands had been illegally alienated and turned into rent-free land and *Jagir mehals* by the clique in power. All these cases were subjected to a close scrutiny during the settlement operations and those held invalid were resumed.
5. One important feature of the operations was to record all the different grades of under tenures of which there were no less than six at the time. The holdings immediately below the *Jotes* were called *Chukanis*, and the successive lower grades were the *Dar-Chukanidar*, *Dar-dar-Chukanidar*, *Tasya-Chukanidar*, *Tali-Chukanidar* and *Tasya-tali-chukanidar*. Not only were these noted in the papers, but the amount of profit payable by each grade of tenants was also appointed, and the rental of each class fixed beyond contention.

6. The measurement was made in standard *Bighas*, *Kattas* and *Dhurs*.<sup>49</sup> It was conducted with the compass and the chain. Each *Jote* was mapped to scale, and showed the different fields held by the different grades of tenants. The area of the State was computed to be 24, 82,183 *Bighas*, excluding the big rivers which were not measured.

During his work as an Assistant Commissioner for settlement operations in Cooch Behar State Mr. Beckett was assisted by the five Deputy Collectors. The work of the First Settlement was concluded by 1877. The general rates for the different classes of lands adopted for the Settlement were as follows:

**Table-2: Rent (per *bigha*) of Different Categories of Lands**

Categories of Land	Rs.	Annas	Paise
For homestead lands and gardens	2	8	0
For Bamboo lands	1	2	0
For other cultivated lands including thatching grasslands and small bils of less than 2 <i>bighas</i>	0	8	0
For fallow and jungle lands	0	1	0

Source: W. O. A. Beckett, *Mekhligunge Settlement Completion Report*.

The State of Cooch Behar comprised six *parganas*, the boundaries of which correspond with those of the six main circuits namely *pargana* Mekhligunge, *pargana* Mathabhanga, *pargana* Lal Bazar, *pargana* Dinhata, *pargana* Cooch Behar and *pargana* Toofangunge. By analysing the details of the Settlement in different *parganas* it can be concluded that the rates of the rent payable by all classes of tenants have been defined by the First Settlement. Rent-free lands like *Brahmatter*, *Debutter*, *Mukarari*, *Petbhata* and *Jagirs* had been brought under tax system. This has been resulted in an increase in revenue in absolute as well as in percentage terms. The total amount of revenue secured by the First Settlement was Rs.9, 38,610 that showed an increase of Rs. 5, 74,471 over the old *jama* of Rs 3, 64,139.50. The total amount of revenue secured by the First Settlement from different *parganas* was as detailed below:

**Table – 3: Amount of Revenue (in Rs.) Collected during First Settlement**

<i>Pargana</i>	<i>Old Jama</i>	<i>First Settlement Jama</i>	<i>Increase</i>
Mekhligunj	54169	129555	75,386
Mathabhanga	71246	172904	101658
Lalbazar	74476	134198	59722
Dinhata	76451	174034	97583
CoochBehar	71520	232040	160520
Tufangunj	16277	95879	79602
<b>Total</b>	<b>364139</b>	<b>938610</b>	<b>574471</b>

Source: H N Chaudhury, *The Cooch Behar State and Land Revenue Settlement*, p.453

The amount of increase obtained by the State did not, however, represent the increase which developed upon the *Jotedars*. Under the *Izaradari* system they had to pay two charges of *Izaradari* and *Saranjami* amounting to a sixth of the revenue, which were not charged under the *Khas* collection system. The actual increase of *Jotedars* had now to pay was the amount of the increase shown above, minus a sixth of the former revenue which amounted to Rs.60690 or a net total of Rs5, 14,781.<sup>51</sup> As already noticed large quantities of invalid rent-free, *Mukarari* and *Jagir* lands were resumed in the course of the settlement operations and brought under assessment. *Khas* lands newly cultivated, and incorporated with, but forming no part of, the old *Jotes*, were also assessed with the lands of the *Jotes*. The revenue obtained from these two sources was independent of the assessment of the lands formerly comprised within the *Jotes*. The *Jotedars* paid nothing for these two descriptions of lands before the settlement, and the *Jamas* derived from them did not thus actually represent any part of the increase due to the assessment of the old *Jotes*. The *Jotedars* had now to pay this increase because they held so much land more than what was comprised within their original holdings. The net increase which could be attributed to the new settlement was Rs.3,85,996, of which Rs.66,739 was obtained in Mekhligunge, Rs. 75,905 in Mathabhanga, Rs49,518 in Lalbazar, Rs73519 in Dinhata, Rs11,16,104 in Cooch Behar, and the balance, namely, Rs 4211 in Tufangunge. The whole increase was distributed over 5 years. Of the total amount of revenue secured by the First

Settlement Rs 7,188 was on account of the *Mokarari mehals* or permanently settled estates, which were not subject to future enhancement.<sup>52</sup>

After the completion of the First settlement some rent-free lands had been resumed and some new grants had been made. Many *Khas* lands had been settled and an equally large extent of settled area had *Khas* by relinquishment or resumption. In this way the extent of *Khas* and rent-free lands as ascertained during the first settlement had suffered a change. The re-settlement papers show how it stood at the time of the subsequent operations.

The First Settlement was concluded with the *Jotedars* for a term which varied from 8 to 13 years for different *parganas* expired in 1883-84. An extension of 5 years on the same terms was made by the ruler of the State. Measures were, however, ordered to be taken for the assessment of *Patit* land (fallow lands) brought under cultivation since the last settlement and the recording of all changes in the rights of the several grades of tenants and under-tenants, which had taken place since that time.<sup>53</sup>

Operations were started under two Deputy Collectors Babus Govinda Charan Dutt and Rarkrishna Das, who had hitherto been employed in Chaklajot Estates, early in December 1884, and completed in two years and a half. All the *patit* lands included within the *Jotes* during the First Settlement and brought under cultivation since, were measured and assessed at the rate of cultivated lands prevailing in the tract in which the *Jote* was situated. In cases where the quantity of the *patit* land shown in the papers was small, namely, 10 *bighas* and under, it was assessed as cultivated land without further enquiry. This settlement is known as the *Patit Charcha* Settlement.<sup>54</sup> The *Patit -Charcha* (fallow land) Settlement had taken place between 1884-86. The settlement was taken in hand to assess the fallow or waste lands which had come under cultivation since the First Settlement. *Patit* or waste lands did not pay any revenue, because still it was unoccupied. In Cooch Behar State there was no rule for the Settlement of waste land. The increase of revenue obtained by it was Rs. 68,824 for the whole State.<sup>55</sup> For special reasons certain tracts of the State were exempted from the *Patit Charcha* operations. These tracts were:

1. The portion of Pargana Tufangunj (east ) of the Raiduk known as Bilat Bishguri.
2. The western portion of Pargana Mekhligung called Rahimgung.
3. The detached pieces of land called Telhar, Kotbhajni and Dahala-Khagrabari.
4. The Baishchalla *Jotes* in Pargana Mograhat within the Western Duars.

Term of extension of the First Settlement granted by the His Highness expired with 1888. The term of the *Patit Charcha* Settlement also expired in that year. The temporarily settled estates were thus open to resettlement from the beginning of the next year 1889. A general survey was not necessary, the whole country having been measured only 15 years ago. During the General Re-settlement of 1886-91 (known as the *Rakam Charcha* owing to the introduction of detailed classification of lands), the old paper of the First Settlement and the *Patit Charcha* Settlement were taken as the basis and such changes, whether in possession or classification of lands, as had taken place since those settlement were recorded in the Chittas.<sup>56</sup> The following measures were taken in this Settlement:

1. For the equal distribution of the increase and to avoid hardship from over assessment, the *Taluks* were divided into three classes according to the nature of the soil, their means of communication, and their advantageous position, such as, vicinity to markets and centres of trade and three different schedules of rates for the cultivated lands were fixed for them.
2. A detailed mode of classification of land was also adopted.

Following the old practice a deduction of a fourth in the rates was allowed in the case of *Girds Chowra* and *Shandara*. A departure was, however, made from the practice of setting the *Baish Challa Jotes* at the rates obtaining in the Western *Duars*, and the lowest schedule of the *Chowra* and *Shandara* rates were applied to them. The operations were concluded and the papers made ready by the end of April 1897. Only two tracts of country, one in the west of *Gird Chowra*, comprising nine *Taluks*, and the north- eastern portion of Pargana Toofangunge called *Bilat Bishguri*, as also a few *Jotes* in *Taluk* Daikhata in Gird Teldhar were , owing to their backward condition and thinness of population, exempted from the resettlement operation for 10 years from 1889. After 1889 these tracts were resurveyed and a new set of maps and *chittas* were prepared for them.

Before 1864, there was a seven-fold classification of the soil in the State. The entire cultivated area had not the same productive capacity and a variety was necessary according to the richness of the soil <sup>57</sup>

The classification of soil accordingly proceeded thus:

1. Betel nut garden,
2. Homestead-a) of *Jotedars*, b) of under-tenants
3. Garden
4. Bamboo,
5. Cultivated lands,
6. San or thatching grass land,
7. *Patit* or waste land.

At the time of the First Settlement the old classification was simplified and lands were brought under the following seven broad divisions: <sup>58</sup>

1. Homestead,
2. Bamboo,
3. Garden,
4. Cultivated land,
5. *Jala*,
6. San or thatching grass land,
7. *Patit* land or wasteland

In the course of the re-settlement operations the old operations the old classification of the pre-settlement period was revised. To begin with, the distinction made between homestead lands of *Jotedars* and those of the under-tenants was done away with. This was only an artificial distinction, for there was no difference between these two kinds of homesteads. It was, therefore, not retained. Land adjoining the house of a farmer, though not built upon or brought under cultivation, has a distinct use of its own, and can not be said to be as useless as the *patit* (fallow) land. It is used for the thrashing of corn, drying of grains, feeding of the cattle, and many other house-hold purposes, and is in fact as useful as the homestead land itself.

This description of land was thus made into a separate class under *Ud-bastu* or lands similar or adjoining to *bastu* or homestead land. The omission of the first classification is not recognizing the small fisheries were rectified, and a distinct class brought into existence under '*Jalas*'. All *patit* lands are not of equal value or use. Some are capable of cultivation, while others, such as private ways, burial grounds, places of rural worship, and so forth, can never be cultivated. *Patit* lands were thus classified into *laik* and *Gurlaik*, i.e., fit and unfit (for cultivation).<sup>59</sup>

The most important feature of the *Rakamcharcha* (classification of land) Settlement was the adoption of several sub-divisions for the cultivated lands. The productive power of the cultivated area can not be the same everywhere and a system of classification which did not recognize this fact could never pretend to be comprehensive. The division of cultivated lands according to the richness of the soil was necessary not only for the purpose of consistency, but also for affording relief to the tenants by making the rent varying according to the nature of the soil.<sup>60</sup>

The two main divisions created in the cultivated land were, -tobacco lands, and lands other than tobacco lands. Tobacco is a highly paying crop and differs from other crops in point of actual profit. Then, it does not grow equally well on every soil, or every part of the State. There are particular tracts which can grow tobacco infinitely better than others, even if the amount of labour and skill bestowed on the cultivation is the same in both. A good deal of the success no doubt depends on proper manuring of the field, but this does not negative the presumption regarding the natural fitness of the soil for such a crop. Tobacco lands thus came to be differentiated from other cultivated lands. Every plot of land does not, again, grow tobacco equally well; accordingly tobacco lands were sub-divided into three classes according to the quality of the tobacco it grows. Similar sub-divisions were like wise made for other cultivated lands, which were divided under four sub heads according to the richness of the soil.<sup>61</sup>

The following sixteen-fold classification was thus adopted for the re-settlement of the State:<sup>62]</sup>

1. Betel nut land.
2. *Bastu* or homestead.
3. *Udbastu* or land adjoining to *Bastu* or homestead.
4. Garden.

5. Bamboo.
6. Tobacco first class.
7. Tobacco second class
8. Tobacco third class.
9. *Awal* or first class cultivated land.
10. *Duium* or second class,
11. *Saium* or third class,
12. *Chaharam* or fourth class,
13. *San* or thatching-grass land,
14. *Laik Patit*(fit for cultivation)
15. *Garlaik Patit*. (unfit for cultivation)
16. *Jala* or fishery.

This scale of classification was not applied to whole of the assessed area, but only to such estates or *Jotes* as was open to re-settlement. It is to be noted that there are *Mukararis* or permanently settled estate which had been in existence from before, and which were settled permanently at the time of the First Settlement. Some of the *Mokararis* and rent-free holdings, which were resumed in the course of the First Settlement, were settled at half rates for a fixed number of years or until a future contingency, such as, the death of the holder, should arise. These were not open to enhancement when the re-settlement of the temporarily settled *Jotes* was taken up. Some special tracts namely Chowara, Sandara, Bilat Bishguri were owing to their backward condition assessed differently. The table of rates applied in the Re-settlement or *Rakam Charcha* was as follows:

**Table-4: Land Rent for Different Types of Land as Decided in *Rakam Charcha* Resettlement in 1888**

SL. No	Classes of land	First class Taluk			Second class Taluk			Third class Taluk		
		Rs.	As	P	Rs.	As	P	Rs.	As	P
1	Betel nut land	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0
2	<i>Bastu</i> or homestead	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
3	<i>Udbastu</i> or land adjoining to <i>Bastu</i> or homestead	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
4	Garden	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
5	Bamboo	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
6	Tobacco first class	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8	0
7	Tobacco second class	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0
8	Tobacco third class	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
9	<i>Awal</i> or first class cultivated land	1	0	0	0	14	0	0	13	0
10	<i>Duium</i> or second class	0	12	0	0	11	0	0	10	0
11	<i>Saium</i> or third class	0	9	0	0	8	0	0	7	0
12	<i>Chaharam</i> or fourth class	0	7	0	0	6	0	0	5	0
13	<i>San</i> or thatching-grass land	0	7	0	0	6	0	0	5	0
14	<i>Laik Patit</i> (fit for cultivation).	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
15	<i>Garlaik Patit</i> . (unfit for Cultivation)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
16	<i>Jala</i> or fishery	0	8	8	0	8	0	0	8	0

Source: West Bengal District Gazetteer-D. Majumdar 146

The total revenue obtained by the Re- settlement or the *Rakamcharcha* Settlement was Rs.12, 41,060<sup>63</sup> (ibid-147). The old *Jama* on the eve of the this settlement was Rs.9,52,642, the increase therefore came up Rs. 2,88,418. This increase, the details of which will appear later on, was distributed over 5 years, as in the case of the First Settlement. The re-settlement has been concluded for 30 years ending in 1928. Of the six parganas the re-settlement had effect from 1890.

Classes of land	Before the first Settlement of 1870-72						First settlement of 1870-72						Resettlement of 1889						
	Old Nirikhnama Rates						Classes of land	Rate		Classes of land	Rate in first class taluk		Rate in second class taluk		Rate in third class taluk				
	Schedule I (for the southern part of pargana Dinahata alone)			Schedule II (for the rest of the ordinary tracts)				Schedule III (for the special tracts, chowara, sandwa and Bilat Blahguri)			Rs.	A.	Rs.	A.	Rs.	A.			
1. Betelnut land	6	1	5	6	1	5	6	1	5	1. Betelnut land	2	8	Betelnut land	4	0	4	0	4	0
2. Jotedar's homestead	3	12	1	3	0	8	2	4	6	2. Homestead	2	8	Homestead (Bastu and udbastu)	3	0	3	0	3	0
3. Undertenant's homestead	3	0	8	2	4	6	1	14	5	3. Garden	2	8	Garden	3	0	3	0	3	0
4. Garden	3	12	1	3	0	8	2	4	6	4. Bamboo	1	2	Bamboo	1	2	1	2	1	2
5. Bamboo	1	8	4	1	2	3	0	12	2	5. Cultivated land	0	8	Tobacco 1 <sup>st</sup> class	1	8	1	8	1	8
6. Awai 91 <sup>st</sup> class cultivated land)	1	2	3	0	12	2	....	....	....	6. Thatching Grass	0	8	Tobacco 2 <sup>nd</sup> class	1	4	1	4	1	4
7. Doem (2 <sup>nd</sup> class cultivated land)	0	14	4	0	9	1	0	7	7	7. Patit (fallow)	0	1	Tobacco 3 <sup>rd</sup> class	1	0	1	0	1	0
8. Some (3 <sup>rd</sup> class cultivated land)	0	12	2	0	7	7	0	6	1			Awai 1 <sup>st</sup> class ordinary cultivated land	1	0	0	14	0	13	
9. Chaharam (4 <sup>th</sup> class cultivated)	0	9	8	0	6	1	0	3	7			Doem 2 <sup>nd</sup> ordinary class cultivated land	0	12	0	11	0	10	
10. Thatching grass	1	2	3	0	12	2	0	9	1			Soem 3 <sup>rd</sup> class ordinary cultivated land	0	9	0	8	0	7	
11. Laik-pati (Culturable fallow)	0	7	7	0	4	6	0	2	5			Chaharam 4 <sup>th</sup> class ordinary cultivated land	0	7	0	6	0	5	
												Jala (Fishery)	0	8	0	8	0	8	
												Thatching grass	0	7	0	6	0	5	
												Laik-pati (Culturable fallow)	0	2	0	2	0	2	
												No-Laik-pati (Unculturable fallow)	0	1	0	1	0	1	

Source: K.C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-27.*

At the *Rakamcharcha* Settlement, verbal settlements and settlements by unregistered documents were recognised. Under Section 3 of the Sub-Infeudation Act (Act 1 of 1888) the letting of land by any one but the *Jotedar* was prohibited. Verbal contracts of payment of rents were also prohibited in 1888.<sup>64</sup> The Cooch Behar Tenancy Act (act v of 1910) came into force in 1910 and sections 4 and 25 of this Act prohibited the letting of land by an under tenant lower than a *Chukanidar* and a *Chukanidar* might let only land which was in his *Khas* possession.<sup>65</sup>

At the First Settlement no uniform rates for cultivating *rayats* were fixed. All that was done was to fix the rates for *Jotedars* and to provide that each class of landlords was to obtain 25 per cent as its share of profit. The result was that the rent demandable from *rayats* increased with the number of middlemen.<sup>66</sup>

During the resettlement of 1889, the *Jotedar's* profit was raised to 35 per cent of his revenue and the total profit of the rent collecting under tenants was fixed at 25 per cent whatever the number of such under tenants might be. Thus where the *Jotedar's* revenue was fixed at Rs. 100, the rent assessed for the cultivating *raiyat* i.e, the last in the scale, was Rs 135 if he was a *Chukanidar*, add Rs. 160 if he belonged to a lower grade. The table below shows the percentage of profits allowed to the different grades of under tenants in the scale under different circumstances, the *Jotedar* getting a profit 35 per cent in all these cases-<sup>67</sup>

**Table-6: Percentage of Profit Allowed to be earned by Different Categories of Tenants**

Last undertenant in the scale	<i>Chukanidar</i>	<i>Dar-Chukanidar</i>	<i>Dara-dar Chukanidar</i>	<i>Tasya Chukanidar</i>	<i>Tali Chukanidar</i>
<i>Dar Chukanidar</i>	25	.....	.....	.....	.....
<i>Dara-dar Chukanidar</i>	15	10	.....	.....	.....
<i>Tasya Chukanidar</i>	10	10	5	.....	.....
<i>Tali Chukanidar</i>	10	5	5	5	.....
<i>Tasyatali Chukanidar</i>	5	5	5	5	5

Source: Karali Charan Ganguly Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar state 1913-27, pp14

Under section 28 of the Cooch Behar Tenancy Act, only the *Jotedar* and the cultivating under-tenant were benefited by the lapse of an under-tenure under Section 25 of that Act though the rents of several under tenants might have to be revised on account of such a lapse.<sup>68</sup> Practically, however, the cultivating under tenants very seldom derived the benefit owing to their ignorance and helplessness. Notwithstanding the provision regarding proclamation in Section 40(f) of the Act, the *Jotedars* can get information in but a small percentage of cases. Generally the immediately superior landlord of the lapsed under tenancy appropriates the extra profit. The provisions regarding lapse were meant for diminishing the number of intermediate under tenancies and also for discouraging sub-infeudation. In view of the creation of the innumerable illegal tenancies by verbal contract and of their recognition at successive settlements of the State, it must be said that the provisions in the existing Tenancy Act, though good in theory, failed to produce the desired effect. The propriety of the retention of the sections relating to lapse might, therefore, have to be considered during the next amendment of the Tenancy Act.<sup>69</sup> At this resettlement no reductions were, however, made in the rents already paid by contract, and the parties were left free as regards future contracts.

In all previous settlements rents were settled for all the legal under-tenants of the 6 grades in *Jotes* held directly under the State as well as for all tenants and under-tenants in revenue-free and *Mokarari* estates. According to the recognised principle in the State, the tenures and under-tenures comprised in the revenue-free and *Mokarari* estates are assessed under the rules applicable to other tenures and under-tenures, and copies of the final record-of rights and distributed among all tenants and under-tenants. Thus the resettlement of land revenue is accompanied by settlement of fair and equitable rents for all tenants in the revenue-free and *Mokarari* estates and for all grades of under-tenants in the State.<sup>70</sup>

The areas were revised at the new settlement, wherever necessary. The total revenue-free area was 66,194 *Bighas* at the First Settlement and it came down to 56,952 *Bighas* at the *Rakamcharcha* Settlement.<sup>71</sup> There was an increase at *Lakhiraj* area in all the Parganas excepting *Mekhliligang*.

Of the invalid grants resumed some were, on special grounds, settled with the holders at half rates either in perpetuity or for a fixed period. In cases, on the expiry of

the period originally fixed, the land has been assessed at three-fourth rates for another fixed period.<sup>72</sup>

The service tenures or *Jagir* were created for the performance of service and were liable to be resumed when the services were no longer required, or the grantees refused or failed to perform them. Such tenures were not saleable or transferable. These tenures could not be overloaded by the creation of under-tenures. Some *Jagirs* were resumed at the First Settlement while a large number had been resumed and settled in *Jote* right since the *Rakam Charcha* Resettlement. The duties formerly discharged by the holders of the resumed *Jagirs* were being done by the paid servants.<sup>73</sup>

There are some areas for which the revenue payable was fixed in perpetuity. These were known as *Mokarari Mahals* or Estates. Sometimes the *Mokararidars* had permanently let out lands at fixed rents, and the tenure thus created are called *Dar-Mokarari*.<sup>74</sup>

Under the orders passed by the late ruler in council on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1915 and the *Estaharnama* of that date, each holder of a recognised interest was to get *Terij* (Final record of rights) with the numbers of plots (*dags*) constituting the interests mentioned in the *Terij*, together with a copy or copies of the sheets, in which the interest was represented.<sup>75</sup> Under those orders it was obligatory for each recognised tenant to provide himself with a copy of map containing the plots constituting his interest and the applications for such maps were to bear a stamp of Rs.2 for each sheet, in which the applicant's interest or portion of interest might be comprised. It was also laid down that if such interest was distributed over more sheets than one, then for each additional sheet, a stamp paper of Rs. 1 would have to be supplied. In these applications, for which a prescribed form was adopted on the lines of the *Estafasar* (stamped applications for copies of maps) and form (written and verified Statement of rights) filed in the *Rakamcharcha* resettlement, the holders of recognised interests were to set forth the nature of such interests.<sup>76</sup>

The *Rakamcharcha* Settlement concluded for a period of 30 years expired in Parganas Mekhligung and Lalbazar in 1918-1919 and in the other Parganas in the following year. In order that the next re-Settlement might come into force soon after the expiration of the above period, the operations in connection with the present re-

Settlement were started in 1912-13 and was to have been completed by 1921. The Final Report of the Survey and Settlement operations in the Cooch Behar State 1912-1927 submitted by Sreejut Karali Charan Ganguly, B.A., B.C.S, Settlement Officer, Cooch Behar State.<sup>77</sup> Babu Rajkrishna Das, I.C.E. was placed in immediate charge of the Settlement operations when they commenced. After his retirement in 1915 the direct charge of the operations developed upon the *Dewan* of the State.

Owing to various causes extensive changes had taken place in the topography of the country. In respect of the holdings also the maps prepared in 1868-70 in connection with the Revenue Survey of the State had become out of date and could no longer be relied upon. It was therefore decided to have a Traverse Survey as well as Cadastral Survey of the State on the lines adopted by the Government of Bengal. The Traverse Survey was accordingly began in 1912-13 and completed in 1916-17.<sup>78</sup>

*Kistwar* (Cadastral Survey) and *Khanapuri* (preliminary record writing) began in 1913-14 and were finished in 1916 and 1917-18, respectively, but *Khatians* were not prepared in the field. Only the *Khasras* were filled up during *Khanapuri* and the *Khatiwans* of Parganas Cooch Behar and Mathabhanga were written up in Office in 1917-18.<sup>79</sup> Notes were made in the *Khasras* in the course of *Khanapuri* in respect of the illegally settled tenants, now recognised as *Krishiprojas* (cultivating ryots), and *Khatians* for these tenants were prepared in office for all the parganas.

After the distribution of *Terijes* (final record of rights) in two parganas in 1919, the late ruler Jitendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, received several complaints regarding the grave errors and omissions in the records.<sup>80</sup> Mr J .A. Milligan, I.C.S, who was formerly the Settlement officer of Jalpaiguri, enquired into the grievances of the tenants, and ultimately took over the charge of the Settlement department from Mr N.N.Sen, the Dewan of the State.<sup>81</sup>

In January 1920 the State took the services of an Assistant Settlement Officer, Sreejut Jaladhar Ghosh, from the Government of Bengal and the enquiries made by him showed that the complaints made regarding errors and omissions in the records were well-founded. A requisition was then made to Government by the State for the loan of the services of an officer with Settlement experience and Sreejut Karali Charan Ganguli. B.A., a Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector of Bengal, was deputed to this State in June 1920 as Settlement Officer.<sup>82</sup> He started revisional

operations November 1920 and began field Bujharat(local explanation of entries) with partial attestation and disposal of all objections.

Mr. Milligan was relieved by Mr. H.J.Twynam, I.C.S., in March 1920. After Mr. Twynam had taken over charge, the Director of Land Records, Bengal, with the assent of the Government, visited Cooch Behar and after making an inspection of the field work gave his approval to the procedure followed.

Mr Twynam's letter no 565, dated the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1922, containing the Settlement proposals regarding the Re-settlement of the Land Revenue of the State, and is reproduced below.<sup>83</sup>

"1. It was brought to your Highness' notice in 1919 that some apprehension existed among the Jotedars that the Settlement record, which was supposed to have been completed in 1919, was in many respects inaccurate and was also tainted by the arbitrary enhancement of revenue known locally as the " Rent Test". With a view to enquire into these complaints, Your Highness obtained from Government the loan of the services of a Settlement Officer and a trained staff who joined here in June and November 1920, respectively. During the Field Season of 1920-21, *Bujharat* (local explanation of entries) on an extensive scale accompanied by Attestation and the hearing of objections was undertaken in Pargana Lalbazar. The result of this investigation indicated clearly that the old record is in many respects defective.

"2. For the sake of clearness, a brief explanation of the so called "Rent Test" is given here. The Settlement *Khasra* or Chitha and Khatiyān show that in respect of a large number of plots of land in Parganas Lalbazar, Dinhatā, Toofangunge and an entry made in red-ink of a higher classification. It has been proved, beyond possibility of doubt, that these red- ink entries have no relation to the actual character of the soil. Thus, I have myself seen instances of uncultivated plots of jungle which have been classed as "awal" (first class paddy land) or land actually. Producing paddy under the most unfavourable circumstances and low land or Khal, which could hardly produce paddy under the most favourable circumstances, has been classed as "Awal".

In the Resolution of Your Highness in Council, dated the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1920 published in the Gazette of the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1920, Your Highness ordered the elimination of all red-ink entries and the restoration of the original classification of soil. It was represented, however, that even after the elimination of those red-ink entries, the Settlement record was vitiated by a large number of errors made by the *Amins* in the field. Further, investigation showed that the representation was, in fact, correct. In pargana Lalbazar, the result of the field operations has been as follows:

**Table-7: The Result of Field Operations in Lalbazar Pargana**

Soil-classification raised	...	...	...	8 per cent
Do lowered	...	...	...	34 per cent
Percentage of change	...	...	...	42 per cent
As regards fields in respect of which red-ink entries had been made:				
Retained	...	...	...	30 per cent
Raised	...	...	...	5 per cent
Original classification restored	...	...	35 per cent	
Intermediate classification ordered	...	...	12 per cent	
Classification lowers than original Khanapuri classification			18 per cent	
				100 percent
Black-ink (original) entries not affected by 'Rent Test'				
Raised	...	...	...	10 per cent
Lowered	...	...	...	23 per cent
				33 per cent

*Source: Karali Charna Ganguly Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-27, p.27.*

In dealing with about 24000 tenancies, the field-staff detected as many as 19400 mistakes (mostly of possession) in addition to 13,415 changes subsequent to Khanapuri, which it must be observed, was completed as far back as 1915-16. These figures make it clear that the elimination of the red-ink entries alone can not meet the requirements of the situation.”

“3. The existence of a large percentage of errors even after the elimination of the red-ink entries renders it imperative that the Settlement record should be thoroughly revised. It has been argued that the restoration of the original classification of the soil as made by the Amins in the year 1913 to 1917 would be sufficient and would save Your Highness the expense of carrying on Revisionary work for two more years. With that view I am compelled to differ for reasons given above. Moreover the Revisionary work now proceeding will tend to make the incidence of land revenue more equitable.

Under section 49 of the Cooch Behar Tenancy Act, the Terij is prima facie evidence of little and conclusive evidence of possession, whereas in Bengal, where the Record of Rights is prepared with great care and where every entry made by an Amin is checked by a specially trained cadre of Kanungos.”

“4. Having attempted to explain the reasons necessitating the continuance of the Revisionary operations, I now propose to deal with the question of assessment.

In Letter No. 1331, dated the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1919, from the Registrar, State Council, to the Dewan of the State, Your Highness in Council ordered that in view of the instability of the then economic situation the rates per *bigha* at which land revenue is levied from the *Jotedars* would, until further orders, remain as at the *Rakamcharcha* Settlement of 1889 but the distinction then made between 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> class *Taluks* would be done away with.”

Major C.T.C Plowden, I.A., took charge of the Department in November 1923 and drew up the final proposals for the Settlements after consultation with Mr, A .K.Jameson, the director of Land Records, Bengal. The director inspected both field and Office work and recorded his opinion on certain difficult problems connected with the Settlement. The proposals were then submitted to the Government of Bengal in April 1925 and their sanction was received in July 1925.<sup>84</sup>

His Highness the late Maharaja Sir Jitendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur desired that the Settlement should be made for a term of 99 years and he intended to make a definite announcement on the subject after his return from England. But his death took place in England before he could carry out his intention.<sup>85</sup>

The Regency Council which was formed after His Highness' demise drew up proposals for the re-settlement of land revenue of the State. These were submitted to the Director of the Land Records whose suggestions were embodied therein. The proposals were then published for any representations which the subjects of the State might make.<sup>86</sup>

A conference at which the commissioner of the Rajshahi Division and political Agent for the Cooch Behar State was present was held by the Regency Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1925 for discussing the proposals with the principal *Mokararidar*, 2 selected *Jotedars* and 4 representatives the Landholders' Association on whose behalf a counsel and a pleader also attended.<sup>87</sup>

The representations both oral and written were considered by the Regency Council and their final report containing two alternative proposals viz. one for a 99years' and the other for a 30 years' Settlement, the former involving higher rates of revenue than the latter, was submitted to Government with all connected papers. Government accepted the second alternative proposal for a 30 years' Settlement and on receipt of Government orders at the end of June 1925, the Re-settlement Notification, dated the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1925, containing the final orders of the Regency Council was published in the Gazette for general information.<sup>88</sup>

The final orders are reproduced below:-

1. The period of Settlement for 30 years was fixed for all lands except *Payasti* lands, lands in the towns and *bunders*. The term of settlement in respect of *Payasti*

lands, unsettled *Khas* lands and lands in town and *bunders* was fixed at 10 years but the Settlement of *Khas* lands was to be subject to such terms and conditions as might be decided upon from time to time.

2. a) The provisional rates of assessment per *bigha* for *Awal*, *Doem*, and *Soem* land sanctioned on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1922 and published in the State Gazette dated the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1922 are confirmed. The rates are:

**Table – 8: The Provisional Rates of Assessment per *bigha* *Awal*, *Doem* and *Soem* (April 1922)**

Class of land	Class of <i>Taluk</i>					
	First		Second		Third	
	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas	Rs.	Annas
<i>Awal</i>	1	3	1	1	0	15
<i>Doem</i>	0	14	0	13	0	12
<i>Soem</i>	0	11	0	9	0	8

Source: Karali Charan Ganguly Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-27, p. 30

b) The old rates for all the other 12 classes of land shall remain unaltered for the whole period of the Settlement.

3. Girds Chowra, Sundara and Bilat Bisguri –In case of these Girds:

a) the old rates for laik *patit* and nalaik *patit* land, viz., 2 annas 1 anna per *bigha*, respectively, shall be retained; and

b) the rates for all the other 13 classes of land shall be 7/8ths of the rates applicable to the *Jotes* in ordinary tracts. The table below shows the rates to be applied to the 13 classes of land in these three Girds:-

**Table-9: Rates to be applied to the 13<sup>th</sup> Classes of Land in Three Types of Girds**

Sl. No.	Classes of land	First class Taluk			Second class Taluk			Third class Taluk		
		Rs.	As	P	Rs.	As	P	Rs.	As	P
1	Betel nut land	3	8	0	3	8	0	3	8	0
2	<i>Bastu</i> and Udbastu	2	10	0	2	10	0	2	10	0
3	Garden	2	10	0	2	10	0	2	10	0
4	Bamboo	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
5	Tobacco first class	1	5	0	1	5	0	1	5	0
6	Tobacco second class	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
7	Tobacco third class	0	14	0	0	14	0	0	14	0
8	<i>Awal</i> or first class cultivated land	1	0	0	0	15	0	0	13	0
9	<i>Duium</i> or second class	0	12	0	0	11	0	0	10	0
10	<i>Saium</i> or third class	0	10	0	0	8	0	0	7	0
11	<i>Chaharam</i> or fourth class	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	4	0
12	<i>Sankar</i> or thatching-grass land	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	4	0
13	Jala	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	0

Source: Karali Charan Ganguly Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar state 1913-27, p 32.

4. The rates and period of Settlement mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs for *Mal* and *Debutter Mehals* shall apply to the holdings in *Mukarrari* and *Lakhiraj* Estates.
5. Fair and equitable rents shall be settled for all grades of undertenants, including the *Krishiprajas* (illegally settled under tenants now recognised under the title of cultivating raiyats) on the basis of the classification of the soil and, as far as possible, according to the scale of profits hitherto in force and now slightly modified in order to provide for the cases of *Krishiprajas* (vide paragraph 7(e))

In the cases, however, in which the rents paid were in excess of the rents payable in accordance with the sanctioned scale of profits the procedure laid down below should be followed<sup>89</sup>:

Where the existing contractual rent of an under tenure exceeds the rent calculated under the sanctioned scale of profits but did not exceed double that rent, the immediately superior landlord should be allowed either the existing profit or a profit of 50 percent in excess of that admissible under the sanctioned scale, whichever was less. Where, however, the contractual rent exceeded double the rent calculated

under the sanctioned scale of profits, the immediately superior landlord should be allowed double the sanctioned profit, provided that the contractual rent was realised for more than 10 years, the burden of proving which should be on the landlord. Failing such proof, the landlord should be allowed a profit only 50 percent in excess of that admissible under the sanctioned scale of profits.

6. In the case of *Krishiprajas*-<sup>90</sup>

a) The illegal tenancies discovered in the course of the present revision-operations should be recognised and except as regards rents payable which should be governed by the orders now passed, should possess the rights specified in the State Council Report dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1918, relating to illegal settlements. As already announced in paragraph 5 of the Notification dated the 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1925 published in the State Gazette (Extraordinary) dated the 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1925, no *Krishipraja* would be required to pay Rs. 5 stamp for the recognition of his rights.

b) Where illegally settled tenancies of more than one grade exist, those of the lowest grade alone should be recognised. If however, the intermediate illegal tenants held some lands in *Khas* possession they should be recorded as *Krishiprajas* under the legal tenants in respect of those areas alone and the old as well as the new rents should be split up on the basis of the areas under different classes in *Khas* possession of the occupants of each such holding.

c) Where an illegally settled tenant was sublet land by registered *patta* the tenant to whom the land was sublet should be treated as *Krishiprajas* provided that he holds lands in *Khas* possessions, and the case of the illegally settled tenant so subletting should be governed by the provisions of (b) above.

d) If in the case of verbal tenancy under a *Jotedar* or a *Chukanidar* there was an exchange of registered *patta* and *kabuliyat* since *Khanapuri*, such tenancy had to be treated as a legal *Chukani* or *Darchukani* respectively. The provision would apply also to those cases only of the nature described in which there may be an exchange of registered *patta* and *kabuliyat* within two months from the date of publication of this Notification.

e) The percentage of profits should be same in the case of the legal under tenant of the corresponding grades, i.e. for this purpose a *krishiprajas* under a *Jotedar* should be treated as a *Chukanidar*, one under a *Chukanidar* as a *Darchukanidar*,

and so forth. If any *krishiprajas* be found under a *Tasya-tali-chukanidar* the percentage of profit should be raised to 65 in the case of such a tenancy.

7. In the event of any under tenure being created contrary to the provisions of the Cooch Behar Tenancy Act and of this Notification such under tenure should not be recognised but should be annulled and the lease of the creator of such under tenure should be liable to be cancelled by the Revenue Officer of the State and all the right, title or interest of the creator of such under tenure in the lands covered by the lease should thereupon be extinguished, or if the Revenue Officer of the State sees fit he might inflict a fine not exceeding Rs. 500 in lieu of cancelling the lease of the creator of the under tenancy. Such fines should be recoverable under the Public Demands Recovery Act.

Where the creator of such under tenure was a co-sharer, his right, title or interest alone should be liable to be extinguished and he alone should be liable to the fine prescribed above.<sup>91</sup>

In the event of any tenure being created by the proprietor of a revenue- free of *Mokarari* Estate contrary to the provisions of the Cooch Behar Tenancy Act and of this Notification such tenure should not be recognised but should be annulled and the creator of such tenure should be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs. 500 by the Revenue Officer of the State. Such fines should be recoverable under the Public Demands Recovery Act.<sup>92</sup>

Failure to register *pattas* and *kabuliyats* within 12 months from the date of creation of tenure not paying revenue to the State or under tenure should be treated as an illegal settlement for the purpose of this paragraph.

*Naib Ahilkars* and Additional *Naib Ahilkars* were empowered to enquire into such cases as are mentioned above either on application or on reference from other Courts and they should forward the papers with a statement of the case and their recommendations to the Revenue Officer of the State for the passing of orders.

In cases in which the right, title or interest in lands were extinguished as provided for above, the lands revert to the immediately superior landlord.

8. *Pattas* and *Kabuliyats* should be presented for registration within 6 months from the date of creation of a tenure not paying revenue to the State or an under tenure. Failure to comply with this order should be punishable with a fine not exceeding

Rs. 50 for each month or part of a month commencing from the date on which the period of six months referred to above terminates. *Naib Ahilkar* and *Additional Naib Ahilkars* were empowered to deal with such cases either on simple petition or on reference from other Courts. The proceedings should be summary and the fines should be recoverable under the Public Demands Recovery Act. In accordance with the orders contained in paragraph 8 no *patta* or *kabuliyat* should be accepted for registration after the expiry of 12 months from the date of creation of a tenure or an undertenure.<sup>93</sup>

The classification of land made during the last *Rakamcharcha* Settlement was followed and the lands were divided into 15 classes each bearing a separate rate and the *Taluks* were also divided into three classes, each with a separate set of rates. Special rates were fixed for special 'Girds' or backward tracts with fixed profit for each grade of tenant.

As, since the completion of field *Bujharat*, numerous changes had taken place in land tenures, *Ekwal Jamabundies* (the Settlement rent-rolls) were published on the recommendation of the Director of Land Records and objections and appeals were heard before the records were finally framed.<sup>94</sup>

In November 1926, Major Plowden was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel W.G. Hutchinson, I.A., O, B, E, under whose supervision the operations were brought to a close.

Along with the Settlement of temporarily settled lands, records of rights were prepared for *Mukarari*, Revenue-free and *Jagir* lands and fair rents settled for all classes of tenants in such lands.

The Cooch Behar State had many *Chittis* in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri Districts and certain Government *Chittis* were likewise included in the Cooch Behar Territory. The total area of the State according to the Present settlement after adjustment of boundaries is 1318.35 square miles in place of 1307 square miles as shown in the previous Settlement.

Rights of *Krishiprojas* (cultivating ryots) were recognised in this Settlement, the rights being heritable and transferable and the rents payable have been recorded in the *Terijes*.

The enhancement of revenue and rent was made progressive in cases where the new *Jama* exceeded 75 percent of the old *Jama*. High contractual rents were disallowed, and only double the sanctioned profit was allowed in cases where the rent had been realised for 10 years, the burden of proving which would be on the landlord. Failing such proof the landlord would be allowed 50 percent, only, in excess of the sanctioned profit.

*Khatian* slips were distributed to all tenants throughout the State and the original records were left open for inspection for one month to facilitate the writing of objections. The tenants were also permitted to prefer oral objections.<sup>95</sup>

Wholesale *Bujharat* and partial attestation were undertaken to eliminate the mistakes and the Assistant Settlement Officers and *Kanoongoes* were authorised to make corrections in the records direct in the field.<sup>96</sup>

Rules were framed for different stages of office work on the lines of the rules in force in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa with modifications to suit local requirements.<sup>97</sup>

Revenue free lands were scrutinised so as to exclude additional or better class of land in place of lands originally granted. Excess of land up to 10 percent, was overlooked to allow for difference between the different system of measurements and the closeness of the Cadastral measurement. The same procedure was followed in the case of *Jagir* and *Mokarari* lands.<sup>98</sup>

The *Taluk* was adopted as the unit of survey and record in the present Settlement and old boundaries of *Taluks* were generally allowed to stand. The number of plots in this State covering 1318.35 Square miles is as many as 23 lacs.<sup>99</sup> The work of checking and correction necessarily took a long time. The Reserved Forests have been included in the *Taluks* in which they are situated. Cooch Behar Town was treated as a distinct *Taluk* and was separately dealt with from other towns and *Bunders*.<sup>100</sup>

The present form of *Terij* (final record of rights) issued to tenants differs from that issued at the *Rakamcharcha* Settlement to suit altered conditions and contains many more particulars.<sup>101</sup> Separate maps and records were prepared for all towns and *bundars*, Cooch Behar Town being treated separately from other towns and *bundars*.<sup>102</sup>

The Last Settlement or the Final Settlement was made on the basis of the new survey in 1927.<sup>103</sup> The then *Dewan* Mr. N.N.Sen, proposed to do away with the

classification of *Taluks* and to treat all *Taluks* as first class. As a result the land revenue increased. The raising of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class *Taluks* to the position of 1<sup>st</sup> class *Taluks* was equivalent to the enhancement of the rates in those *Taluks*. The old rates for all classes of land remain unaltered for the whole period of the settlement. Fair and equitable rents were settled for all grades of under-tenants. The rates and classification of land adopted in the Final Settlement of 1927 were as follows: <sup>104</sup>

**Table-10: The Rates and Classification of Land Adopted in the Final Settlement of 1927**

SL. No.	Classes of land	First class <i>Taluk</i>			Second class <i>Taluk</i>			Third class <i>Taluk</i>		
		Rs.	Annas	Paise	Rs.	Annas	Paise	Rs.	Annas	Paise
1	Betelnut land	4	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0
2	<i>Bastu</i> or homestead	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
3	Garden	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0
4	Bamboo	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2	0
5	Tobacco first class	1	8	0	1	8	0	1	8	0
6	Tobacco second class	1	4	0	1	4	0	1	4	0
7	Tobacco third class	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
8	<i>Awal</i> or first class cultivated land	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	15	0
9	<i>Duium</i> or second class	0	14	0	0	13	0	0	12	0
10	<i>Saium</i> or third class	0	11	0	0	9	0	0	7	0
11	<i>Chaharam</i> or fourth class	0	7	0	0	6	0	0	5	0
12	<i>San</i> or thatching-grass land	0	7	0	0	6	0	0	5	0
13	<i>Laik Patit</i> (fit ation).	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
14	<i>Garlaik Patit</i> . (unfit for Cultivation)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
15	<i>Jala</i> or fishery	0	8	0	0	8	0	0	8	0

Source: West Bengal District Gazetteer-D. Majumdar 148

After the *Rakam charcha* resettlement some *laik patit* (culturable fallow) lands were, from time to time, settle at the rates for cultivated lands with the consent of the

*Jotedars* with whom the settlements were effected. During these general resettlements, however, under council orders, all *Jotes* were assessed at the sanctioned rates and on the basis of the existing classification of lands. According to the new revenue survey and settlement the area of the State became 25, 52,299 *bighas* which was 24, 82,183 *bighas* under First Settlement.<sup>105</sup>

The total revenue demand secured by the Final settlement was a little over Rs.18 lakhs. This settlement was made for 30 years. The most important part of this settlement was that *Khatian* slips were also distributed to tenants of all the parganas in the State and to help them in identifying the plots of land, the separate possession of co-shares over individual were also shown in the *Khatian* slips.<sup>106</sup> The statement below shows the areas, *pargana* to *pargana* as ascertained at the different surveys.

**Table-11: The Areas, *Pargana* to *Pargana* as ascertained at the Different Surveys**

Pargana	First	Settlement	Present	Settlement
	Acres	Square Miles	Acres	Square Miles
Mekhligunge	124081	192.27	129442	200.58
Mathabhanga	140550	217.79	147919.6	229.22
Lalbazer	110522.3	203.87	112883	174, 93
Dinhata	131557.3	203.87	135523.3	210.01
Cooch Behar	200215	310.24	201759	310.65
Toofangunge	120468.6	186.68	123241.3	190.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>827394.3</b>	<b>1,282.11</b>	<b>850766.3</b>	<b>1,318.35</b>

*Source: K.C. Ganguly, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar state 1913-27. p.51*

The temporary settled areas according to the different settlements together with the number of *Jotes* and amounts of revenue are given below:

**Table-12: Temporarily Settled Areas, Number of Jotes and Revenue**

Pargana	First Settlement			Rakam charcha Settlement			Present Settlement		
	No of Jotes	Area Bighas	Revenue Rs.	No. of Jotes	Area Bighas	Revenue Rs.	No. of Jotes	Area Bighas	Revenue Rs.
Mekhligung	1783	2,99,789	1,29,555	2321	2,97,265	1,75,470	2415	3,05,327	2,30,689
Mathabhanga	2276	3,89,460	1,72,903	2529	3,82,172	2,38,979	3034	3,96,075	3,26,909
Lalbazar	2510	293584	134198	2604	2,87802	181176	2943	3,01,147	2,58,180
Dinhata	3720	3,68,101	1,74,034	3980	3,61,599	2,38,805	4309	3,68,049	3,30,972
Cooch Behar	4851	5,24918	2,24455	5337	508614	282556	6473	524334	437138
Tufangunj	1219	289768	95479	2065	286244	124074	2582	309170	215096
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,359</b>	<b>21,65,620</b>	<b>9,31,024</b>	<b>18,836</b>	<b>21,23,696</b>	<b>12,41,060</b>	<b>21,746</b>	<b>22,04,102</b>	<b>17,98,984</b>

Source: K.C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-1927*, p.52

The following Statement shows the areas of the revenue free estates and the numbers and the areas of *Jagirs* at the First Settlement, *Rakamcharcha* and the Present Settlement. The number of revenue-free Estates according to the Present Settlement is given in the statement:

**Table-13: Area of Revenue Free Estates and *Jagirs***

Pargana	First Settlement		<i>Rakamcharcha</i> Settlement		Present Settlement	
	Revenue Free Area Acre	<i>Jagir</i> Area Acre	Revenue Free Area Acre	<i>Jagir</i> Area Acre	Revenue Free Area Acre	<i>Jagir</i> Area Acre
Mekhligung	5138.66	.....	670.33	.....	1655.33	.....
Mathabhanga	869.66	977.33	2439.66	977.33	1543	56.33
Lalbazar	4936.33	297.66	5038.33	297.66	5072	.....
Dinhata	2229.66	112	2753.66	114.33	2630.33	93
Cooch Behar	3808.66	4566.66	5466.33	4518	5299.66	1900.66
Tufanganj	751.66	336.66	1615.66	463.33	1575.66	375.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17734.66</b>	<b>6290.33</b>	<b>18984</b>	<b>6370.66</b>	<b>17776</b>	<b>2425.66</b>

Source: K.C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in Cooch Behar State, 1913-1927, p.53*

**Table - 14: Khas Land of the State in Bighas**

Pargana					Rakamcharcha Resettlement				Present Resettlement			
	Roads etc.	Sal, Sisoo Forest	Jungles Swamps and other Khas lands	Total	Road etc.	Sal, Sisoo Forest	Jungles Swamps and other Khas lands	Total	Roads etc.	Sal, Sisoo Forest	Jungles Swamps and other Khas lands	Total
Mekhligunge	2653	327	11451	14431	3270	277	25038	28585	1205	207	32814	34226
Mathabhanga	1329	85	13066	14480	1941	30	27357	29328	1436	101	33204	34741
Lalbazar	1793	72	19486	21353	2484	156	26088	28728	1516	35	18480	20031
Dinhata	2893	129	12632	15654	4606	218	28255	33049	1987	12	24337	26336
Cooch Behar	3586	359	33196	37141	4955	9442	44104	58501	3583	9687	36458	49728
Toofangunge	794	1687	63329	65810	1446	19685	55352	76486	926	30474	21850	53250
Total	13050	2659	153160	168869	18702	29803	206164	25674	10653	40516	167143	218312

Source: K.C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-1927*

The number of *Taluks* of different classes and areas of assessed and unassessed land (excluding towns and boundaries) according to present Resettlement are given below:

**Table- 15: Number of *Taluks* of Different Classes and Areas of Assessed and Unassessed Lands**

Number of <i>Taluks</i> and Chhitis				Unassessed Area in Bighas				Assessed Area in Bighas				
1 <sup>st</sup> Class	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Total	<i>Khas</i> Land	Jagir (service land)	Revenue Free	Total (Bighas)	Mokarari Area	Land assessed at ½ rates and ¾ rates	Other temporary settled lands	Total	Total of unassessed and assessed areas in Bighas
Taluks Chhitis	Taluks Chhitis	Taluks Chhitis	Taluks Chhitis									
419 entire plus 10 partly 1 <sup>st</sup> class and partly 2 <sup>nd</sup> class 2	6.2 entire plus 1 partly 2 <sup>nd</sup> class and partly 3 <sup>rd</sup> class 69	133 87	1154 PLUS 11=1165	2,18,634	7,276	53,328	2,79,238	60,056	16,143	21,87,959	2264158	25,43,396

Source: K.C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-1927*

In 1773 during the conclusion of the treaty with the British Government, Mr. Purling ascertained the revenue of the state to be Rs. 1, 99,120-5-0 Narayani mudra equivalent to Rs.1, 33000 in modern currency. The tribute payable by the state is Rs.67, 700-15.

The following is a list of the total revenue at the successive settlements: <sup>107</sup>

**Table- 16: Amount of Land Revenue (in Rupees) for the Temporarily Settled Areas at Different Settlements**

1. On the eve of the First Settlement of 1870-72	3, 64,140
2. First Settlement of 1870-72	9, 31,024
3. On the eve of the <i>Rakamcharcha</i> Settlement of 1889	9, 59,830
4. <i>Rakamcharcha</i> Settlement of 1889	12, 41,060
5. On the eve of the Present Resettlement Operation	12, 62,154
6. The N. Sen Resettlement given effect to in 1991-20	18, 50,853
7. Present Revisional operation given effect to in 1927	<b>17, 98,984</b>

Source: K .C. Ganguly, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operation in the Cooch Behar State 1913-1927*, p.56

The total revenue demand secured by the 1927 Settlement was little over Rs.18 lakhs. Previous to 1934 lands which were surrendered or lands which could not be settled were held by the Dewan and settled by him. Such lands were called *Dewan-bos*. There were quite a few *Taluks* in Koch Behar bearing the name *Dewan-bos*. From 1934 the State decided to have a *Khas* Mahal department and all lands which were surrendered or made *Khas* at the revenue sales were transferred to this department to make *Khas* collection.

The Final land Settlement was in fact the last settlement of the Cooch Behar State during the tenure of the rule of the royal dynasty. It is to be mentioned that after the integration of the Cooch Behar State with independent India, the settlement operations had taken place through settlement operation of Jalpaiguri district. The Settlement of 1913-27 which was given effect to from the year 1927-28 was about to expire in 1956 when the Estate Acquisition Act was enforced in Cooch Behar.

After analysing the various Settlement reports, it was found that during a time of 55 years from 1872 to 1927 revenue of the State increased by about 394 per cent. The revenue income also registered an increase from Rs.3, 64,140 in 1872 to Rs.17, 98,984 in 1927. But the total land under cultivation and consequently having been settled with the *Jotedars* did not of course show a corresponding quantum change. From a total area of 24, 82,183 *bighas* in 1872 the area increased in 1927 to 25,

43,396 *bighas* i.e. an enhancement of 2.83 per cent only. Moreover the enhanced area under the First Settlement are partly explained by *Patit Charcha* Settlement and partly by resumption of land from the termination of the old service tenures and reclamation of unauthorised holdings under the tenants. The rise in land revenue therefore was caused by revision of revenue rates and the rental share of the tenants and under-tenants. By allowing 35 per cent profit to the *Jotedars*, 25 per cent profit to the *Chukanidars*, 15 per cent profit to the *Darchukanidars*, 10 per cent to the *Dardar chukanidars*, 5 per cent to the *Tashya-chukanidars*, 5 per cent to the *Talichukanidar* of the rental income the burden of rent borne by the cultivating *rayat* had gone up by 95 per cent and in some cases even to 150 per cent. So the burden of rent appears to have been raised to 194 per cent at the grass-root level of the *Krisiprajas* in successive settlements.

Under the circumstances it is likely that at every stage of revised settlement a part of the total *Jotes* had been surrendered by the erstwhile *Jotedars* on account of inability to pay enhanced revenue. The *Jotes* thus obtained had been settled with new *Jotedars*, many of them were immigrants from other districts. Originally the *Jotedars* were the cultivators of the soil and the residents of this state. Gradually there was an influx of the outsiders from other districts, they were more intelligent than the Cooch Beharis and they began to grab all real power in the State.<sup>108</sup> At the time of the Final Settlement more than half of the temporarily assessed area in the Cooch Behar State was owned by immigrant *Jotedars*. Even during the *Rakamcharcha* and *Patit Charcha* settlements, it is found that larger quantity of land in the State was included in *Jotes* belonging to foreigner than in those held by natives. The necessity of introducing effective rental law to prevent ousting of cultivating tenants by speculators was foreseen even during the First Settlement. Taking advantage of the backwardness of the local cultivators or poor *ryots*, the immigrant *Jotedars* began to exploit them.

Consequently, a number of critical issues had originated from drastic changes in the revenue reforms from the First Settlement to the Final Settlement. A number of areas of social unrest that caused a great deal of tension within the rural society of Cooch Behar might be attributed to the changes brought about in different Settlement operations.

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### **Regional Historiography: Political Economy of the Princely State of Cooch Behar**

#### **4.1 Regional Historiography, Regional History and (or) Local History**

The new regionally oriented directions in historiography are so recent that no generally recognised orthodoxy has yet been adopted. It becomes further complicated to correlate grand narratives of political economy and the political economy that exists or was in existence at regional and sub regional level. Therefore, many competing and opposite views regarding the definition and criteria of a region need to be considered first.

Sometimes regional history is portrayed as synonymous to local history. There are differences in the criteria by which the regions are defined. Naturally, a region may be differentiated on account of geographical details. In a way, this criterion is fundamental and sometimes it is even indisputable. Brian K. Roberts looks at geographical facts like climate, coastal profiles, forms of land and vegetation in order to define the region.<sup>1</sup> Roberts argues further that geography cannot be taken as the single frame of reference to define a region. Social, cultural and economic factors have been the other important determinants to define a region. For example Charles Phythian-Adams emphasises on the socio-cultural space to define a region.<sup>2</sup> Bill Lancaster provides an adequate list to perceive the notion of a region from a combination of pure socio-cultural factors: space, language, culture, economy, political movements, traditions and relationships vis-à-vis the concerned nation state. However a good number of scholars of economic history argues on the economic factor as the primary pre-condition to define a region.<sup>3</sup> According to Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, the basis of regionalism is also diverse: regions may be defined culturally (such as Jharkhand), linguistically (e.g. the Bhojpuri region), in terms of administrative units (like Madras Presidency), according to ecological classification (such as Gangetic delta), or ethnic identities (e.g. Nagaland).<sup>4</sup>

In order to differentiate regional history from local history and national history the regions may not be defined as divisions of states or as multiplications of localities. They may not assume a hierarchical unit between local and national. A region may be situated between them but they may not indispensably be situated there. A region may define itself autonomously. This means that neither national level nor local level may be given any primacy in historiography of regional phenomena. This also means that a historian ought to be careful while using statistical data produced by national authors; they may reflect unnatural projections of regional structure. This kind of top-down bias, uncritically utilized, may lead to secondary framing of questions and to false results in research work.

Nevertheless, it is evident from the above that region and its historiography subsume geography, economy (often as prime pre-condition), culture, language, traditions, ethnicity, political movements, and administrative units. These seemingly uncorrelated quantitative and qualitative variables help us to explore the niceties of political economy at regional, sub regional and local level. But what is political economy? Is it a homogeneous entity? Does it explain the economic behaviour of the society or encompass non-economic social attributes also? These questions have their relevance especially to explain politico-economic dynamics at regional context, that is, in contextualising the princely state of Cooch Behar precisely.

## **4.2. A Synoptic View on Political Economy**

Political economy is basically an approach which studies the social relations that evolve between people in the processes of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of the material benefits. Every society thus has definite system of production relations which depends on property. Adam Smith, the father of economics, did not use the term 'Political Economy' though all his disciples have invariably used the term for their treatises. However, Adam Smith considered political economy as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator and proposed two distinct objectives for it: first, to provide plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people and second, to supply the state or commonwealth with revenue sufficient for public services. <sup>5</sup>Political Economy thus proposes to enrich both the people and the sovereign. David Ricardo advocated that the purpose of the political economy is to

determine the laws which regulate distribution.<sup>6</sup> Marx in his introduction to the “Critique of Political Economy” (1859) outlined the order in which it is to be studied.<sup>7</sup> First, the general abstract definition, which is more or less applicable to all forms of society, second, the categories like classes, capital, wage labour, landed property and their mutual relations, third, the organization of the bourgeois society in the form of the state, fourth, the ‘International Organization of Production’ and fifth and finally, the world market and crises. According to Engels, “Political Economy is the science of the laws governing the production and exchange of the material means of subsistence in human society”.<sup>8</sup>

The emergence of subjectivism in the discourse of Political Economy is an extension of the essence of classical thought. The development of the Subjective School came in as a reaction to the ascendancy of organised socialism during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was a debate among the scholars about the definition of the Political economy. Marshall later tried to synthesize the views propounded by the classicists and the marginalists by saying that, “Political Economy or Economics is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life. It examines that part of individual and social action, which is most closely connected with the use of the material requisites of well-being.”<sup>9</sup>

Dissatisfied with the classical and neo-classical postulates of political economy, Lionel Robbins conceptualised political economy as a discussion of principles of public policy in the economic field assumptions which, in nature of things, lie outside positive science and which are essentially normative in character.<sup>10</sup> The science of political economy embraced all of economics, positive and normative and evolved into different schools. In nutshell, political economy has a purpose and analysis and discussion of power relations and the distribution of income and resources.

It becomes obvious that classical, neo-classical school while dealing with political economy remained preoccupied with production, consumption and distribution of resources of a nation and possible positive outcome that society derives out of those economic activities. Hence, it is hard to distinguish between economy and political economy. Normative aspects of society have grossly been bypassed to deal with political economy or economy per se.

### **4.3. Political Economy of Cooch Behar State in Pre-colonial and Colonial Period**

With these theoretical ambiguities here an attempt has been made to understand to realize the political economy of Cooch Behar State in pre-colonial and colonial period. While carrying on this micro-level analysis of local history of Cooch Behar, an attempt of contextualisation has also been done by taking different contested arguments in consideration. First, Marx's 'materialistic interpretation of history' has been explored. According to him, all historical events are the results of a continuous struggle among different classes and groups in the society and the root cause of this struggle is the conflict between the 'mode of production' and 'the relations of production'.<sup>11</sup> The mode of production relates to a particular arrangement of production in a society that determines its entire social, political and religious way of living. Marx calls these relations as the relations of production, which are changing continuously. The mode of production transforms primarily because of changes in the state of productive forces. It is a known fact that economic historians with Marxist pedigree are having an inherent penchant to delve deep into those factors and forces that determine the courses of the 'mode of production' or which they generically term and categorise as the 'base'. However, non economic factors like culture, ethnicity, governance, religion, those prevail at the level of super structure are ignored either for methodological reasons or for ideological overload. Dialectical process demands an interaction between base and superstructure to realise concomitant change within the society.<sup>12</sup> We intend to contextualize our study of land-man relationship of Cooch Behar State against the backdrop of these theoretical issues/ arguments. To unravel the political economy of the Princely State of Cooch Behar let us begin the analysis by keeping the issue of land as the focal point of our discussion. In the process, it has been scrutinised whether the Princely State of Cooch Behar (before and after the British intrusion) through a process of interaction between base and superstructure has transitioned from feudalism to capitalism or it continued to remain as a variant of pre-capitalist social formation with its own distinctiveness. Now to capture the impact of non-economic factors as determinants of economic activities, Althusser's argument finds its relevance here. To him, social formation as an outcome may not always be dictated by economic instances, political (state) or ideological instances (religion or

culture) may assume the dominant position in determining the courses of change in the 'mode of production' and 'relations of production'.<sup>13</sup>

Researches on the agrarian history of the princely State of Cooch Behar rarely draw our attention towards such crucial questions like land-man relationship, distribution and ownership of land, methods and techniques of production, indebtedness and the significance of the money lenders vis-à-vis the issue of change within the agrarian society. The present study is an attempt to explore all these issues in a single analytical thread of political economy approach. Although colonial administrators and the official surveyors made occasional references about the society, economy, religion and culture of the people of the state the most satisfactory study in this regard is perhaps the treatise on land revenue prepared by Dewan Harendra Narayan Chaudhury (*The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlements*). It discusses about the economic pattern, the revenue administration and the different land settlements of the Cooch Behar state starting from the pre-colonial period and ranging upto the colonial period.<sup>14</sup> But he remained silent about the effect of the land settlements on the poor people. Another elaborate study on the Rajbansis is the "Kirata Jana Kriti: The Indo-Mongoloids, their contribution to the history and culture of India" of Suniti Kumar Chatterji. He tried to prove the fact that the process of the cultural change of the Mongoloid communities including the Koch Tribe had started simultaneously with the process of the formation of the state. But he did not discuss about the process of social mobility.<sup>15</sup> The history of Cooch Behar written by Jayanath Munshi<sup>16</sup> (*Rajopakhyana*) and Ananda Chandra Ghosh (*Cooch Beharer itihās*)<sup>17</sup>, Bhagabati Charan Bandhyapadhyā<sup>18</sup> and Khan Chaudhury Amanatulla<sup>19</sup> and S.C.Ghosal<sup>20</sup> are all systematic studies on the social, economic and the political history of the Cooch Behar State. Sanyal's<sup>21</sup> ethnographic account on the Rajbansis of North Bengal enriches us regarding the cultural moorings of their society. But these studies remained to be deficient in conceptualising all the socio-economic, political and cultural issues in the realm of political economy approach and its relation with the changing, if so, in the rural society of Cooch Behar.

From the various accounts though not always consistent and very clear it appears that before the British started to intervene the Cooch Behar principality, and when they had already intervened, the Rajbansis who had formed the major ethnic group of the region, belonged to a semi-tribal community.<sup>22</sup> For a considerable period

of time they were settled agriculturist, with regional diversity, raising crops mainly using a plough drawn by bullock. But without knowing the social organization, cultural practices, and economic position of the Koch or Rajbansis we can't have a proper knowledge of the political economy of the Cooch Behar State.

Family was the basic unit of the Rajbansi community. They lived in the joint families which were patriarchal and normally the eldest male member was regarded as the head of the family.<sup>23</sup> The concept of the caste system was absent among the Rajbansi community. They were not divided into exogamous clans or *gotra*. They had only one *gotra*, i.e. *Kasyap* and marriage within the same *gotra* was therefore a common practice.<sup>24</sup>

A majority of the Rajbansis lived in the villages, which were very thinly populated and had developed around the house of a *Jotedar* or *giri*. A Rajbansi *Jotedar* does not like to build his house on the land of another *Jotedar*.<sup>25</sup> Thus a Rajbansi village consists of comparatively a bigger house of a land holder and a group of smaller houses of his sharecroppers or *adhiars*. The *Jotedars* or the *giris*, who generally stayed in villages with their sharecroppers, followed almost the same lifestyles and cultural practices followed by their sharecroppers, a majority of whom belonged the same community.<sup>26</sup>

The daily livelihood pattern of the common Rajbansis is very much similar with other rural masses. As agriculture was the basic means of livelihood most of the Rajbansis started their daily work early in the morning, either with ploughing or other kinds of related work in the field. A Rajbansi cultivator took his meal after returning home at noon.<sup>27</sup> The Rajbansi women had to more work rather than their male counterpart. Besides the management of the household work they have to assist their husband in cultivation work.<sup>28</sup> This importance of woman in the family encouraged men to marry more than one wife.<sup>29</sup>

The marriage system of the Rajbansis was not so much complicated like Brahmanical marriage. Marriage was arranged through professional matchmakers. There were both regular and irregular forms of marriage. The most regular form was called the *Phul biha*,<sup>30</sup> in which a boy was married to a virgin girl. Marriage was mainly viewed as a union between man and woman. But cross-cousin marriages between brothers and sisters were not allowed.<sup>31</sup> Similarly divorce was also a simple

affair and no claim of maintenance allowance was made after divorce.<sup>32</sup> Widow Remarriage is allowed in Rajbansi society.<sup>33</sup> As there was no clan organization among the Rajbansis, matrimonial alliances were determined by kinship and marriages were arranged within their 'cultural group'.<sup>34</sup> But outside the community the marriage was not objected but there were a preference for marriage with the upper caste Hindus rather than with the Ravas, Mechas.<sup>35</sup> Thus marriage practices among the Rajbansis were different from the existing marriage norms among the upper caste Bengali Hindus.

The religious practices of the Rajbansis also differentiated them from the upper caste Hindus of Bengal. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism were popular among the Rajbansis, though the latter was adhered to by more people.<sup>36</sup> *Kirtan* or collective singing of devotional songs had a special appeal for the Rajbansis and most of them took part in it. They did not worship any deity of the Hindu pantheon, nor did they worship clay images. They were the worshipper of nature, as represented in the form of *Stupa* which was worshipped for the welfare of the community.<sup>37</sup> The Rajbansis had their own priests known as *adhikari*, *deosi*, *deodha*, etc, who officiated in their religious ceremonies.<sup>38</sup>

Educationally the Rajbansis were very backward compared with the other parts of Bengal provinces.<sup>39</sup> The reasons behind it were the lack of interest on the part of the local Rajbansi people and the limited opportunities available for education. The centre of education, Calcutta was far away from the villages of the Cooch Behar State. Though the Maharajas of Cooch Behar State had taken initiatives for the growth of education among the Rajbansi community but they did not respond effectively to modern education. They had a belief that if their sons were educated, they would take to white collar jobs and abandon cultivation, their family occupation.<sup>40</sup>

This brief description of the socio- cultural practices of the Rajbansis clearly indicates that they had very little in common with the local upper caste Hindus and it was this distinction which defined the boundary that separated the Rajbansi community from the upper caste Hindu society of the Cooch Behar State. The economic condition of the Rajbansi community in the State also clarifies this point of differentiation. But analysing the facts regarding their political economy which we got from different sources it appears that their economy was feudal economy. Feudalism guided the economic base and super structure of the State. The question thus arises

what are the possible attributes of feudal economy found in the Princely State of Cooch Behar.

What is today identified by historians as feudal society in Western Europe began to take shape about the fifth century A.D.<sup>41</sup> The term 'feudum' came into use only towards the end of the ninth century. Interestingly, a systematic study of feudal society began only in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Scholars devoted themselves to analysing the factors leading to the rise of feudal society. Feudalism contributed to increase in ruralisation of economy, use of new technology of agriculture and emergence of a class of worker, the serf. The position of the serf was neither like that of the 'slave' in antiquity that was completely separated from the means of production, nor was it such that he could be absolute owner of the means of production. The serfs enjoyed an intermediate position between the slaves of antiquity and free wage labour of industrial capitalism. An elaborate system of rights and obligations characterised the relationship between 'Serf' and his 'Lord' to whose land he used to be attached.<sup>42</sup>

Feudal society in Europe had dynamism of its own. Expansion of agriculture increased food production. It contributed to population rise and invention of new technologies of waterwheel and windmill.<sup>43</sup> The surplus population spread out to remote parts of Europe, cut down forests and thus vast land reclamation took place. The small peasants took initiative in this process. Lords also began to release serfs from bondage by charging them 'commutation' fee. The free serfs turned into peasantry, but as agriculture was capital intensive, only a few succeeded, a vast majority lost their borrowed capital too. All this was alien to feudal economy and marked the beginning of capitalist farming.<sup>44</sup>

Feudalism in India, however, associated to a phase of history when trade declined, and currency became scarce. This motivated the state to give land to Brahmins and officials for economic expansion. These classes subjected peasants who cultivated their land to their own control, contributing to the growth of feudal relationships. Whether feudalism really existed in India, continues to be a matter of debate among the scholars.<sup>45</sup>

Before we reach the period of high feudalism from the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards, we can trace the genesis of feudalism in Indian society from 300. A.D.

Feudalism means not only a special type of land tenure; it means a system of private government based on land. Thus the widespread land grants of the Gupta period led to the rise of Brahmana feudatories who performed administrative functions independently.<sup>46</sup> One of the axioms of feudalism is the existence of a hierarchy of intermediate landlords. This is called sub-infeudation. Another important feature of the feudalism is that the system of paying the officers by land in lieu of salary during the tenure of office. The conversion of offices as a hereditary system and to hold the assigned land in hereditary right in lieu of remuneration is another feature of feudal economy.<sup>47</sup> In this type of economy local needs were locally supplied. All sections of primary producers lived in the villages. Another aspect of feudalism is the limited trade and commerce and lack of circulation of coins.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes this type of economy depends on barter system or the use of kowrie for transaction. Naturally the capital supply was too small. The rulers and feudatories did not invest their surplus income on trade and craft, it was spent in building luxurious homes and forts and the temples for god. In feudal agrarian society, labourers were forced to remain tied up with the land. Various coercive forces were in operation to keep the labourers tied with the land and concept of wage labour was virtually missing. If we analyse properly the economy of the Cooch Behar State in pre-British and British period the entire characteristic features of feudal economy would be visible in Cooch Behar State.

As the head of the State, the king was the pivot of all branches of administration in the State of Cooch Behar. Being the source of all power; he could, in theory, make his will a law. But in practice, there were certain restrictions upon his power.<sup>49</sup> It appears from the *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* that the Koch kings usually followed the tradition given in the *Kalika Purana*, a 10<sup>th</sup> century work, relating to state-craft and also regarding rights and duties of a king. This source further records that the relationship of the Kings with the people were like those of a father with his children. The king's first and foremost duty was to protect the life and the property of the people. The king was assisted by a council of ministers in administering the kingdom.<sup>50</sup>

Society was feudal in character. At the top was the privileged aristocracy consisting of the nobility, dependent upon the king.<sup>51</sup> The nobility derived its income mainly from the lands cultivated by peasant proprietors. It monopolised all the high

offices in the administration. While in office, a noble, got certain portion of crown land as his perquisites which was liable to be taken over by the king at his death. But in practice this had hardly ever happened. This hereditary succession made the nobility powerful enough to play the crucial role in the court politics. At the bottom was the peasantry who also formed the militia of the kingdom. But the land holdings of the peasants were not equal.<sup>52</sup>

The economy of the Cooch Behar State was mainly based on agriculture. Though there was no accurate information regarding the Settlement of Land Revenue of the Cooch Behar State prior to Anglo-Koch Treaty of 1773, it appears that the land was divided into two categories-1) tax paying and 2) tax free.<sup>53</sup> The persons holding the first kind of land had to pay revenue to the State and were called *Jotedars*. Hierarchy was prevalent among the tenure holders. *Jotedars* were at the top of the hierarchy and at the bottom there were *adhiars*. Lands were also granted to persons for rendering personal services to the State, and these were called *Jagirs*. *Jagir*, *Brahmattar* (donated to the brahmanas) *Debattar* (donated to the deities) *Lakheraj* and *Petbhata* lands were all revenue-free lands. No regular *patta* (lease), however, was given to *Jotedars*. The settlement was renewed from year to year and the assessment was not fixed and based on the qualities of land.<sup>54</sup> The mode of assessment and the system of the collection were both irregular and exploitative in nature which caused great sufferings to the people. The harassed and oppressed tenants left the State in large numbers. As a result the amount of the revenue of the Cooch Behar State decreased.<sup>55</sup>

But when the State became the feudatory State after 1773, Douglas, on behalf of East India Company, introduced the *Ijaradari* system in 1790 to obtain the highest possible revenue for a short period.<sup>56</sup> There were also *jagir* lands in the *Ijaradari* time. The *jagirdars* showed their loyalty by helping the Raja in period of war through the military assistance. In return they were paid by land in lieu of cash. The country was divided into small parcels and put up to auction and the highest bid was accepted. As this system gave rise to greater abuses, steps had to be taken to put a stop to the evil effects of the system. As a remedial measure, a general survey of the whole State was initiated and the first settlement was concluded in the whole State in 1877.<sup>57</sup> The *Jotedari* system was the dominant pattern of the agrarian relation in Cooch Behar State. According to the Settlement the *Jote* or revenue paying estates were

demarcated. The *Jotedars* were to pay their revenue to the sub divisional *kutcharis*. Default of payment entailed annulment of the *patta*. Later the defaulting *Jote* were to be put to auction and sold for arrears of revenue. As a result of this settlement the amount of the revenue increased. There were other three successive land settlements made by the British for the State to maximise their profit.<sup>58</sup>

During colonial period, the process of collection of rent became systematized, profit increased and naturally the process of sub-infeudation was accentuated. The intermediaries so created in the process were the *Chukanidars*, *Dar Chukanidars*, *Dara-dar-Chukanidar*, *Tashya-Chukanidar*, *Tali-Chukanidar*, and *Tashya-tali-Chukanidar*. All of them had their hereditary occupancy rights on the land belonged to them.<sup>59</sup>

The agrarian structure shows that the *Jotedars* was at the top of the hierarchy. He got land from the Raja or the Government; subject to the payment of rent at prevailing rates. The rent paid by the *Jotedars* was subject to enhancements.<sup>60</sup> Though the *Jotedars* were an exclusive group of land holders but there were differences in terms of the amounts of land held by the different *Jotedars*. A. Beteille has observed that *Jotedars* were not an economically homogenous group and there were both rich and poor *Jotedars*, owning and cultivating large as well as small lands.<sup>61</sup> There were enormous variations in the size of *Jote* in different parganas of Cooch Behar State. The *Jotedars*, as Hunter observed, "can underlet their holdings to inferior tenants or farmers, and also transfer all the rights and privileges to their under tenants. These subtenants or farmers have the power of again subletting their lands to holders of the third degree and so on." So below the *Jotedars* was the *Chukanidars* who paid a fixed rent to the *Jotedars* and the latter could not oust him from land if he paid the rent regularly. His title to his holding was heritable and transferable. The *Chukanidar* could again sublet land to *Dar-Chukanidars* and the *Dar-a-dar Chukanidar* was the under tenants of the *Dar-Chukanidars*. All these under tenants had occupancy rights in Cooch Behar State but not in elsewhere. An *adhiar* or *praja* is a person who cultivates lands on the condition that he gets half of the produce of the crop; he is, in fact, a hired labourer, paid in kind. The *adhiars* had no rights on the soil. But from the year of 1872 the *adhiars* got the occupancy right on land. Each class of tenants usually cultivates some of his land through *adhiars*. Thus there were *adhiars* under *Chukanidars*, *Dar-chukanidars* as well as *Jotedars*.<sup>62</sup>

Trade and commerce was limited in the State and the rulers did not show any kind of interest to promote the trade and commerce before the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This economic stagnation also refers the character of the feudal economy. The local needs of the people were locally satisfied. Sometimes *kowries* were also used as the mode of transaction in the State.<sup>63</sup> The agricultural surplus was used to maintain the luxurious life of the rulers and for the beautification of the cities.

From the tables below, a general idea can be developed on the pattern of income and expenditure of the State of Cooch Behar. It was predominantly, the land revenue that remained as the major sources of income. It was observed that more than 65 per cent of the income was coming from land revenue. Absence of manufacturing activities or presence of any form of industrial activities was eminently clear. However pattern of development carried on during the monarchic rule could be traced out from the pattern of expenditure. It was observed that in 1877-78, 14 per cent of the total expenditure was incurred on Privy Purse, Maharajkumaris & Royal family and if expenditure on royal ceremonies was added then the figure turned out to be 25 per cent. This implied that one-fourth of the state expenditure was spent for the royal family alone. This figure was further increased both in absolute and percentage terms in 1881-82. As a matter of fact the expenditure on Privy Purse, Maharajkumaris & Royal family was increased from 14 per cent in 1877-78 to 26 per cent (a rise of 12 per cent) in 1881-82. It was observed that a large percentage of expenditure was incurred on public works. In 1877-78, around 34 per cent of total expenditure was on public works and the figure came down to 25.5 per cent in 1881-82. High expenditure on public works had two implications. First, the Cooch Behar Royal Family was keen to create better urban amenities with a sense of beautification for the Cooch Behar town where the Royal palace was located and second, respective Rajas had remained pre-occupied to create their lasting impression among the public minds by erecting monuments, buildings etc. during their era. In addition, other than Cooch Behar town, no major expansion of infrastructure and urban amenities were visible in rest of the part of the State of Cooch Behar. However, expansion of infrastructure to promote trade and commerce and manufacturing activities were not the priority, had it been so, then that would have been reflected in the income from various sources. It was already mentioned that two-third of the income alone was coming from land revenue. From the tables, especially from the expenditure data, it was revealed that State's

expenditure on health was quite low, it hovered around mere 2 per cent between 1877 and 1881.

**Table- 17: Income from Various Sources (Between 1877-78 and 1881-82)**

Source/Year	1877-78	%	1881-82	%
Land Revenue	823403	67.2	878473	66.5
Stamps	93010	7.6	127539	9.7
Interest	84270	6.9	95691	7.2
Debutter	80495	6.6	84617	6.4
Others	63697	5.2	36201	2.7
Excise	48820	4.0	62635	4.7
Civil & Criminal Justice	5138	0.4	9145	0.7
Jail	6591	0.5	7550	0.6
Registration	3664	0.3	6334	0.5
Education	2989	0.2	2391	0.2
Public Works	13506	1.1	9810	0.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1225583</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1320386</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: data were taken from Bhagavati Charan Bandopadhyaya's 'Cooch Beharer Itihas (The History of Cooch Behar)', p.40, and percentages were calculated

**Table- 18: Expenditure on Various Heads (Between 1877-78 and 1881-82)**

Source/Year	1877-78	%	1881-82	%
Privy Purse, Maharajkumaris & Royal Family	189205	14.05	309494	26.61
Revenue	111909	8.31	115577	9.94
Education Dept	61575	4.57	62237	5.35
Civil & Criminal Justice	46062	3.42	53455	4.60
Administration	47441	3.52	46657	4.01
Jail	27649	2.05	16736	1.44
Police	43209	3.21	48080	4.13
Army	22075	1.64	15213	1.31
Misc. Expenditure	70434	5.23	87992	7.57
Pension and Other Charitable Works	30406	2.26	26624	2.29
Debutter	42025	3.12	35859	3.08
Medical Dept.	20486	1.52	24320	2.09
Registration	2441	0.18	3065	0.26
Excise	7842	0.58	6868	0.59
Press and Stamps	12311	0.91	13787	1.19
Public Works	456300	33.89	297070	25.54
Ceremonials	155054	11.52	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1346424</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1163034</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: data were taken from Bhagavati Charan Bandopadhyaya's 'Cooch Beharer Itihas (The History of Cooch Behar)', p.41, and percentages were calculated

Economically the Rajbansis were primarily agriculturists. The agrarian structures prevailing in different parts of Bengal varied widely. The Mughal Land Revenue system, the British land revenue reforms, the customary practices of

different areas, and the ecological conditions largely determined the patterns of agrarian relations in different parts of Bengal. Following the analysis of Sugato Bose, we may distinguish three broad categories in Bengal agrarian structure viz., a) the peasant small holding system in east Bengal, b) the prevalence in west and central Bengal of vast personal demesne of lands cultivated by landless labourer and c) the rich farmer-share-cropper system of north Bengal.<sup>64</sup>

Here our focus of discussion will only be on the agrarian structure of the Cooch Behar State within which the Rajbansis as a cultivating community are to be identified. The *Jotedari-Adhiari* system was the dominant pattern of the agrarian relations in North Bengal. However there were also variations in tenurial relationship in different parts of the region. There were regions like Dinajpur, Rangpur, parts of Jalpaiguri which were permanently settled areas, and where zamindari system existed. But in the western duars of Jalpaiguri and in Cooch Behar, where there was no zamindari system, land was given to *Jotedars* or rich farmers by the Government in exchange of an undertaking to pay annual rent.<sup>65</sup> There were also variations in the positions and privileges enjoyed by the *Jotedars* and other under-tenants in different parts of north Bengal. This was due to the number of variables, such as, local customs, administrative necessity, or ecological factors.

The *Jotedari-Adhiari* system dominated the agrarian relations in the Princely State of Cooch Behar too. There were reasons for the development of this rich farmer-share cropper system in this area. There were vast stretches of uncultivated land, which were given to the rich men at very low rents in order to motivate them to bring waste land under cultivation. These rich men gave the lands to poor cultivators, initially for no or minimum return. But once cultivation started regularly, the cultivators paid, generally in kind, half of the produce to the original title holder. Thus the cultivators who reclaimed the waste land became the share-croppers and the rich men by virtue of their economic supremacy became the landlords.<sup>66</sup> This system of leasing out land existed in north Bengal in pre-British times and during British rule it became much more popular among the substantial landlords.

The other reason for the growing attractiveness of the share-cropping system in this region was the paucity of labour compared to accessibility of land.<sup>67</sup> Certain other factors like rise in prices of land, purchase of land by money lenders and merchants, effects of the Second World War, and the World wide depression of 1929-

30, all contributed to the expansion of the share-cropping system. Landlords particularly those who had no link with land, like traders and money lenders, preferred share-cropping because it ensured good returns without any direct involvement in the agricultural process. Thus as a result of this gradual extension of the share-cropping system a highly stratified and complex agrarian structure developed in the State of Cooch Behar after the British penetration in this area.

Thus from the above discussion the main fact emerged is that the *Jotedars* were the most dominating class in local agrarian social structure of Cooch Behar. Another important factor should be noted here in this context is the absence of non-cultivating upper caste gentry in the State. In the east and the other parts of Bengal there was a class of upper caste gentry who owned substantial amounts of land. But they themselves did not plough because manual labour was a matter of contempt in society. They, however, enjoyed maximum power in society by virtue of their economic and social position. But this was not the situation in Cooch Behar State. Because till the advent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the land in this State was belonged to the local people i.e. the Koches or the Rajbansis. Unlike the upper caste gentry the local people did not have the problem of status inconsistency if they themselves cultivated the land.<sup>68</sup> But the situation began to change from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the migration of upper caste Hindu gentry in this area. Now the question comes why the upper caste Hindu gentry did suddenly enter to the Princely State of Cooch Behar from other parts of Bengal. In the preceding discussion an attempt is made to find out the answer of this query.

From analysing the results of four successive land revenue settlements of the Cooch Behar State one of the most important facts appears that the revenue of the State increased. Under the state of affairs it is likely that at every stage of revised settlement a part of the total *Jote* had been surrendered by the erstwhile *Jotedar* on account of inability to pay enhanced revenue. The *Jote* thus obtained had been settled with new *Jotedar*, many of them were immigrants from other districts. Originally the *Jotedar* were the cultivators of the soil and the residents of this State. Gradually there was an influx of the foreigners (not local) from adjacent districts of Bengal or other provinces of colonial India. They not only consolidate their position as non-cultivating gentry but also succeeded to form a middle class at the village level.

Taking opportunity of the backwardness of the local cultivators or poor *ryots*, they began to exploit them. As Rangpur Settlement Report noted:<sup>69</sup>

“These men, of whom one or two are to be found in almost every village, are the leaders of the local factions who by smattering of legal knowledge and ready wit have gained the confidence of their co-villagers. Often they are retained by the zamindar’s staff and in return for land at favourable rates of rent or even rent free they watch their interests.”

The most important part of this study is to situate the Rajbansis or the local people to the local agrarian structure of the Cooch Behar State. It is not possible to determine the exact numerical status of the Rajbansis in different categories of tenure holders due to the unavailability of data. From the available sources<sup>70</sup> it can be assumed that there was a fair representation of the Rajbansis among the *Jotedars* till about the late 19th century. They were the local people and since there were not many takers of the waste land at the initial stage, they could secure for themselves a dominant position in the local agrarian structure. There were, however, subsequent changes in the pattern of land control in the Cooch Behar State, with the result that the Rajbansis were gradually pushed out by the non-Rajbansi landholders from their position of importance.<sup>71</sup>

During the reign of Maharaja Harendra Narayan, Henry Douglas was appointed British Commissioner for Cooch Behar in 1789.<sup>72</sup> Thus the State of Cooch Behar came into direct contact with the British administration. But the real breakthrough in the whole system came with the accession of Nripendra Narayan to the throne in 1883. Under him the administrative machinery of the State was created on the model of a British district. The land revenue system became scientific after rearrangement and re-settlement. The State was thoroughly surveyed and all tenures and rights were recorded. As a result the land revenue increased. Both the civil and criminal courts were conducted by the best executive servants. The English law codes were introduced.<sup>73</sup> The police of the state had also been re-organised. The education of the people was given proper attention. Three schools and one college were opened to cater the needs of the people of the State.<sup>74</sup> Good carriage roads were built to connect the State with adjacent commercial centres. The rivers were bridged, and an efficient system of the postal and telegraphic communication was established.<sup>75</sup> Every

encouragement was given for the extension of agriculture. Production of commercial crops like jute and tobacco was given priority.

Under the British Administrative system the communication system was also geared up with the opening of the new roads and the Cooch Behar State Railway for traffic in 1894.<sup>76</sup> The development of transport and communication facilitated the movement of agricultural goods from the rural areas to the towns, market places or *bazars* and ports or *bundars* in increasing quantities. With the opening up of the country by roads and railways it was quite natural to expect that the export-import trade of the State would gradually expand. Thus Cooch Behar became an area of lucrative trade and commerce and hence an area that held out a good business prospects to any enterprising community in India. The rail link changed the entire pattern of the State's economy by creating variety of new avenues of employment. What is more important to be noted here that since most of the people of the area earned their subsistence livelihood from land, there never existed a native business community as such in this region.<sup>77</sup> There had always been a 'commercial vacuum' in the area. So as years rolled on, various merchant communities such as the Marwaris, Gujratis, Bengalis (*gandhabaniks*, *Subarnabaniks* in particular), and *Khattris* got attracted to the vast business prospects of the state and began to migrate and settle here to exploit the situation. The pioneers in this field were the Marwaris.<sup>78</sup>

In the Princely State of Cooch Behar, the Marwaris were the leading money lenders. The absence of any landed aristocracy<sup>79</sup> usually seen in the rural Bengal who lent money to the peasants in the Cooch Behar State and non-existence of any State regulation for agricultural loans to the peasants helped the Marwari *Mahajans* to become the money lenders. They usually lent money to the distressed peasants against the guarantee of land to be mortgaged to them. Gradually their early occupation i.e. money lending or banking helped them to a great extent to become *Jotedars*. It was so because in most of the cases the poor peasants failed to refund the money which they had taken in high interests from the Marwari money lenders. This helped the Marwari a lot to become proprietors of land-holdings.<sup>80</sup> That a large number of *Jote* in the Cooch Behar State was being alienated from the original inhabitants of the district and passing into the hands of the Marwari money lenders has been expressed in the various district Gazetteers and official records. But there was no record of any tension or strife between the local peasants and the Marwari money lenders. They

have little impact on the nature of the economy and society of the rural Cooch Behar. Though they came across the revenue set up in the State but they had added nothing to the internal forces of change in the socio-economic set up in the State nor had they introduced any external force of change.<sup>81</sup>

The changes that were taking place in the economic sphere as a result of Second World War, Depression of 1930 and famine in Bengal also affected the existing pattern of land ownership of Cooch Behar State.<sup>82</sup> A crisis in rural credit that followed the depression compelled many small *Jotedars* and middle peasants to sell their lands. The rise in prices of food grains and other necessities, following the World War II, also seriously affected the middle and poor peasants and this culminated in the great Bengal famine.<sup>83</sup> But in comparison to other peasants in the rest of the Bengal, the position of the Rajbansi peasants was better under the Cooch Behar Raj.<sup>84</sup> The beneficiaries of this crisis were the merchants, money lenders and speculators-those invested their capital in land. The net result of this development was the transfer of land from small *Jotedars* and middle peasants to rich farmers, moneylenders and speculators.<sup>85</sup> In the Princely State of Cooch Behar large scale transfer of land from the Rajbansis to the non-Rajbansis, which had started from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was accelerated further by these later developments.

Another important factor for the transfer of land to the non Rajbansis was the migration of a large number of outsiders from the different district of Northern Bengal to the Cooch Behar State.<sup>86</sup> With spar of immigration of caste Hindus, Bengalis, Beharis, and Marwaris as also of Muslim from the neighbouring districts such as Rangpur, Pabna, Noakhali and Kumilla, the Rajbansis of this area underwent a process of cultural assimilation and transformation through both Hinduization and Islamization.<sup>87</sup> The attractions of this region were the abundance of land, job opportunities in Government offices as the local people were not in a position to compete. The administrative and the judicial set up so created in Cooch Behar generated new employment opportunities especially for the Hindu upper caste people who had some formal English education. As the system of English education did not develop much in Cooch Behar, so for the clerical as well as administrative services in courts, schools and other establishments they required the services of the educated Hindus. This was one of the reasons of the migration of the upper caste Hindus from the south and east district of Bengal. As the Tenancy Legislation of 1910 of the Cooch

Behar State<sup>88</sup> was more pro-tenant in comparison to Bengal Tenancy act, because a *Chukanidar* by this act was also allowed to let out lands in his *khas* possession but the letting out of lands by under-tenants below *Chukanidars* continued to be banned. Naturally the agricultural labourers were also attracted to the State for job opportunities and for less exploitation. The Census figures on migration for the period between 1891 and 1921 in Cooch Behar State give us an idea of the volume of migration that was taking place in Cooch Behar (see the following table).

**Table-19: Migration to Cooch Behar State (1891-1921)**

Year	From Contiguous District		From other Districts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1891	12997	15192	3262	1201
1901	9165	12531	12668	2255
1911	11000	13000	5000	2000
1921	9000	12000	10000	6000

Source: A.Mitra, *West Bengal District Handbook, Calcutta, 1951, Cooch Behar, p.xxxvi*

This large influx of people led to the growing demand for land and a rise in land prices. The local people tempted by the increased prices soon began to sell their lands leading to the transformation of the local small and middle *Jotedars* into under-tenants, subservient to a new class of immigrant landed gentry. Thus in the Cooch Behar State, the people from outside those who were mostly in the administration and in the business of the State and were perceptively more resourceful than the local inhabitants, grabbed a large number of *Jote*. By 1872 in Cooch Behar 54% of the revenue paying land had passed into the hands of the outsiders.<sup>89</sup>

So from the above discussion it may be said that the ethnic composition of the land holding class in Cooch Behar State was changed and it also changed the rural economic pattern of the State. Before the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the economy of the State was self-sustained village economy.<sup>90</sup> Land was in surplus while cultivation was still being conducted in a traditional way. As the communication system of the State was less advanced different parts of the State were not well connected with the markets. As there was no existence of market economy naturally

the production need was determined largely by the need for the peasants' own consumption. For the rich cultivators life was easy because they can any time get the basic necessities of life but for the poor cultivators life was not easy due to their burden to the landlords and money-lenders.

This 'self sustained' village economy, however, began to transform with the process of commercialization of agriculture<sup>91</sup> and the introduction of railways in North Bengal as well as in Cooch Behar State. As the people of this State were all agriculturists, there was no regular manufacturing community in Cooch Behar.<sup>92</sup> Nearly all of the commerce of the State was in the hands of the Marwaris from Bikanir. The chief exports from the State were tobacco, jute, mustard-seed, rice and mustard oil. The gradual penetration of money-lenders, merchants and middle class as a part and parcel of a market economy, brought significant changes in the agrarian social structure as well. But the local Rajbansi people who mainly formed the bulk of the *adhirs* in the State did not benefit from the transformation. They were the worst sufferers and they were the people who were mainly affected by the changed ethnic composition of the State.

So the most important fact that emerged from the above discussion that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries some significant changes had taken place in the socio-economic structure of the rural Cooch Behar. The commercialization of agriculture, development in small scale industry, the introduction of railway lines, the development of trade and commerce, the introduction of the new job avenues all were indicative to the emergence of the capitalist economy.

On the other hand the fundamental features of capitalism are private ownership of the means of production or private property, the existence of a proletariat dependent on wage labour and the pursuit of private individual benefit as the guiding principal of production and distribution relations.<sup>93</sup> Land, labour and money become commodities under capitalist economy. Capitalist production is commodity production or production for exchange and private gain. Labour and capital are free to choose occupation and industry under capitalism. But all these characteristic features were not present in the economy of the State of Cooch Behar.

Capitalism, in Marxist terms, is not possible until the shape of the society and economy is largely determined by the exploitation of the property less wage workers by the Capitalist class. The process of transition from Feudalism to Capitalism is concerned primarily with this issue. But during the period of our study there were no significant class of property less wage workers in Cooch Behar State and there was no indication of class contradiction in the truest sense.

In Cooch Behar there is hardly any change of the society. The feudalism did not construct the path for the rise of capitalism. Rather the society in spite of having so many changes remained pre-industrial and pre-capitalist in nature. Therefore the theory which tells us that feudalism gives rise to capitalism has not proved to be right in the case of Cooch Behar or the society of Cooch Behar witnessed "transitional" phase. The spontaneous factor of the capitalist way of development did not supersede the stagnant factors of the economy of Cooch Behar. This is because capitalism or path of capitalist development hardly reaches the feudal society of Cooch Behar. After the coming of the British in Cooch Behar certain land laws were altered, a middle class based on landed aristocracy emerged but these were insufficient to bring about either industrialization or capitalism in the sense we understand in the western economy or even in the eastern part.

The fact remains that in Cooch Behar State feudalism as introduced by the British did not give rise to industrialization or capitalism. The feudalism of Cooch Behar remained virtually immobile with a few ornamental changes in the successive periods. There were no major industries, no mobility movement of the wage labourers and so there was no steady movement for change. Sweezy's interpretation of the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism may give us some sort of theoretical reasoning for understanding this phenomenon in Cooch Behar State.

Sweezy showed that the transition from feudalism to capitalism need not always be automatic. The internal contradiction and external factors may lead to change. One of the important factors that Sweezy categorises as external factor is the pace of urbanization.<sup>94</sup> If neither internal nor external factors are strong enough then feudal system will continue in a stagnant way. Perhaps, Sweezy's model of the transition economy may give us some ideas about the apparent stagnation of Cooch Behar and its imperfect development.

The internal factors were not really sufficient to give rise to new social order in Cooch Behar. The social order that existed was more or less continuation of the same system with periodic marginal changes. According to Sweezy, Feudalism declined because of the external factors. The factors were the consequence of the growth of long distant trade, growth of towns and changes in consumption pattern. The growth of towns provided a refuge to serfs escaping from oppressive exploitation.<sup>95</sup> The external factors namely urbanization or growth of cities was not sufficiently strong enough to give rise a new economy in the State of Cooch Behar. This is because the slow growth of urbanization in Cooch Behar. The cities or towns were not formed in the way Sweezy desired in the Cooch Behar State.

Besides education, rapid technological change also requires some business leaders who will introduce the new technology and they were commonly called as entrepreneurs. But it is needless to say that this industrial class who brought capitalism in England and other parts were surprisingly absent in the small principality of Cooch Behar. The educated middle class or the *babus* of Cooch Behar had hardly any skill to become the entrepreneurs. They preferred secured job instead of taking risks. Another middle class in the rural areas were *Jotedars* who were interested investing their capital in land rather than in the risk taking ventures. The Marwari class came from far away place and became virtually the shopkeepers of the area. They were not the local, spoke different language, have different customs and remained perpetually outsiders to the system of Cooch Behar.

Capitalism to be emerged and to be economically triumphant may require additional capital, changes in the magnitude of endeavour and trained and disciplined labour force. In an even deeper sense, they may require a society which is willing and able to adjust itself to economic changes. In societies like Cooch Behar, attitudes and institutions are necessarily geared not to what is new but to what is traditional. Hence, Cooch Behar State in spite of having some attributes of capitalist society primarily remained pre-capitalist society if not feudalistic in ideal sense.

The feudal society of Cooch Behar did not give any signal for change. Here Feudalism did not give rise to capitalism. Dobb discussed about the internal factors for the rise of Capitalism. He says about the changes in the techniques of production which ultimately led over time to diluting the coercive nature of production relations under feudalism. This paved the way for the emergence of the pre-conditions of

capitalism.<sup>96</sup> In Cooch Behar State there was hardly anything in the internal to the system which helped the Capitalism to be emerged. It was observed that in case of agricultural production hardly any technological changes had taken place. Sweezy talked about the external factors. There were no external factors which brought any transformation in the society of the Cooch Behar State because the absence of long distant trade, the slow growth of towns as well as business centres helped Cooch Behar to be remained an agricultural society and land still remained the principal productive assets. So from the womb of the Feudalism, Capitalism has not sprouted in Cooch Behar State. What ultimately emerged in the economy of this State was the abortive Capitalism where the feudal mode of production still prevailed.

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### Impact Study of Land Settlements in Princely State of Cooch Behar

From the accounts of the British administrator-historians it became prominent that prior to the British intervention in the Cooch Behar State, the economic condition of the State was miserable. Mr. Beveridge, Deputy Commissioner, made the following remarks on the government of Cooch Behar with reference to the Annual Report for 1865-67:<sup>1</sup>

“Before the appointment of a British Commissioner the government of Cooch Behar was in a deplorable condition. It neither had the small rigour which may be supposed to characterise the government of a thoroughly Native State, such as Nepal, nor had it the organization of a civilized state. It was in fact a mongrel government, being a cross as it was, produced by the Bhutia or Koch idea of government, and those which the Bengali amlah supposed to be ours. Hence the idea of the Raja being above the law, and of every thing in the country being his, existed side by side with the ideas of a Stamp Act, and of appeals, both regular and special, *ad infinitum*.”

The British historians further observed that it was the misrule of the Maharajas that was responsible for the sorry state of the economy. The sources of income were scanty in numbers. The only source of revenue worth mentioning was land, and even it was not properly taxed. The collection of land revenue was entirely carried on by the *Ijaradars*.<sup>2</sup> The land being the most important source of income and livelihood had been neglected during the initial phase of the British intervention. Vast portions of the cultivable land remained either uncultivated or were kept as fallow land. Most of the people did not have the interest or the confidence to produce because there was no certainty as to who would reap the benefits of cultivation. The revenue collectors of the Maharajas created an atmosphere of fear and suspense which acted as obstacle to any economic growth of the State. In addition, State officers who were entrusted for collecting land revenue (known as *ijaradars*) became corrupt and started gobbling up the part of taxes collected for the state. Maharajas' indifferences towards governance had aggravated the corrupt practices further.

Crimes were also on the rise. All these factors worked as deterrent towards the material prosperity of the people of the state.<sup>3</sup>

But after the British intervention in the policy-making body of the Cooch Behar State, a change was seen among the landed classes and the agricultural community in Cooch Behar. As we all know, the British being the trading community were always interested in expanding their commercial interests. It was obvious that their commercial interests were directly linked with their agricultural and land revenue policies, and they had realized the fact that unless the good agricultural policy was made, the commercial interests were going to be hampered. The British wanted to make the land as a medium of winning the loyalty and support of the people and with this intention the land revenue policy of Cooch Behar State was conceived.

It was found from the different Settlement Reports that during a time period of 55 years from 1872-1927 the revenue of the State increased by 394%. The revenue incomes also register an increase from Rs.3, 64,140 in 1872 to Rs.17, 98,984 in 1927.<sup>4</sup> But the total land under cultivation and consequently having been settled with the *Jotedar* does not of course show a corresponding quantum change. From a total area of 21, 65,620 bighas in 1872 the area increased in 1927 to 22, 04,102 bighas<sup>5</sup> i.e. an enhancement of 2.83% only. Moreover the enhanced area under the First Settlement are partly explained by *Patit Charcha Settlement* and partly by resumption of land from the termination of the old service tenures and reclamation of unauthorised holdings under the tenants. The rise in land revenue therefore was caused by revision of revenue rates and the rental share of the tenants and under-tenants. By allowing 35% profit to the *Jotedar*, 25% profit to the *Chukanidars*, 15% profit to the *Dar-Chukanidars*, 10% to the *Dar-a-dar Chukanidars*, 5% to the *Tashya-Chukanidars*, 5% to the *Tali-chukanidar* of the rental income the burden of rent borne by the cultivating rayat had gone up by 95% and in some cases even to 150%. So the burden of rent appears to have been raised to 194% at the grass-root level of the *Krisiprajas* in successive settlements.

Under the circumstances it is likely that at every stage of revised settlement a part of the total *Jotes* had been surrendered by the erstwhile *Jotedar* on account of inability to pay enhanced revenue. The *Jotes* thus obtained had been settled with new *Jotedar*, many of them were immigrants from other districts. Originally the *Jotedar* were the cultivators of the soil and the residents of this state. Gradually there was an

influx of the foreigners from adjacent districts of Bengal or other provinces of colonial India. They were more intelligent than the Cooch Beharis and they began to grab all real power in the State.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the Final Settlement more than half of the temporarily assessed area in the Cooch Behar State was owned by immigrant *Jotedar*. Even during the *Rakamcharcha* and *Patit Charcha* settlements, it was found that larger quantity of land in the State was in possession of foreigners than that of held by the natives. The necessity of introducing effective rental law to prevent ousting of cultivating tenants by speculators was foreseen even during the First Settlement. Taking advantage of the backwardness of the local cultivators or poor *ryots*, the immigrant *Jotedar* began to exploit them.

Thus through the process of immigration the entire demographic composition of the State underwent a rapid change. As a result, the land control structure of the State was also changed. This included the racial character of the *Jotedar*, the money-lenders and the agricultural labourers. The large numbers of shops of the Cooch Behar town came under the possession of Marawari and Bengali merchants.<sup>7</sup> The immigrants from Dacca were only temporary residents of the State and were generally the traders and shop-keepers who had their homes in the mother district.<sup>8</sup> The emigrants from the district of Bihar were the day-labourers who seasonally migrated in large numbers during winter in search for employment. Many of these men gradually settled down permanently in the country, mostly in the town of Cooch Behar.<sup>9</sup> This argument can be substantiated by the Census Reports from 1872-1931. No attempt of enumeration of the inhabitants of Cooch Behar was made before the Census of 1872. The Census of the State was initiated by the British Settlement Officers. It was completed in February, 1872. The result showed a total population of 532,565 persons, living in 1119 villages and townships. The area of the State was 1307 square miles, showing an average density of population 407 persons per square mile.<sup>10</sup>

This was not merely the fact that only immigration had taken place in the State but also emigration had taken place. This view was also substantiated in the Census reports. The next Census was undertaken in 1881, when the total population was increased to 602624. The third Census was carried on in 1891, and the population stood at 578,868, which showed a decrease of 3.9 per cent in comparison to Census of

1881.<sup>11</sup> The decrease of population since 1881 was, as would be noticed hereafter, due chiefly to two epidemics of Cholera and migration into the Duars of Jalpaiguri.

These emigrants generally hailed from the landless class and were heavily pressed debtors, who left the country in the hope of bettering their condition in a new land. Under an old decision of the Calcutta High Court, since overruled, the decrees for debts passed by the Civil Courts of the State could not be executed in British territory. The debtors found in this fact a strong incentive to migrate.<sup>12</sup> From the Saunder's Report of Jalpaiguri it was known that the number of the emigrants from the Cooch Behar State to Jalpaiguri district was very large and basically they belonged to *Chukanidar* or *Adhiar* class. They were compelled to leave the State because of the high rate of land tax, oppression on the part of the *Jotedar* meted out to other and sometimes for the infertility of the soil.<sup>13</sup>

Immigration was almost the same during the two decades between the years 1881 and 1891. The immigrants mostly came from the neighbouring districts of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Assam. In this connection Mr O'Donnell remarks, "Cooch Behar itself, however, seems to have a considerable attraction for outsiders, particularly for the people of Rangpur. Bihar contributes 6,494 men and 529 women, the great mass of the former being temporary residents who come for work only in cold weather. Assam sends forth 2,544 men and 1,573 women, many of whom are permanent settlers"<sup>14</sup>

Obviously, the British sponsored land management system in Cooch Behar affected the rural society of the Cooch Behar State. Though it is difficult to ascertain that how much the British policies were responsible for the creation of the landless agrarian class, however, due to the enhanced tax payment and the price hike of almost all the commodities<sup>15</sup> most of the small peasants were compelled to sell their lands and became landless labourers. The rapid growth of the population also accelerated the process (Appendix-3). This reduced the per-capita availability of land. Consequently, a certain number of cultivators were inevitably slipped into landlessness though their numbers were not adequately reflected in these Census Reports. But in the Census of 1951 we saw a growth of a small class of landless agricultural labour.<sup>16</sup>

Cooch Behar, the Princely State, dominated by the British administration had practised the legacy of the imperial prototype of administration. To bring about the fruits of development, the imperialist power had an active hand to draw maximum resources of the State and in order to fulfil their mission, the imperialist power required to introduce certain steps for development. At the outset, it was to be kept into the consideration that the British Government had their own political and administrative outline of development while administering the entire India as well as the Princely State. In their effort to make their objectives successful, the British Government with the help of the royal kings of the princely State, wanted to change the old social, political and economic institution by bringing about change in all the spheres of life such as economic, socio-cultural and political life. In fact the British Paramount power always tried to uphold the cause of the royal families and maintained regular connection with the princely states under their domination. But the common people, for whom the all kind of developments was supposed to be designed, were always neglected. There was no sign of popular participation, no development from below and no changes for the lower strata of the society in most of the princely states of British India. The centralized administrative system like British type was followed by the princely states of India. The case of the Princely State of Cooch Behar was no exception.

Under the impact of European enlightenment in the then Calcutta, the rulers of Cooch Behar since the days of Narendra Narayan set out to establish English medium schools in Cooch Behar.<sup>17</sup> They were found to have lost interests in establishing the vernacular schools. Though the new educational policy had promoted the cause of modern education but its benefit did not appear to have filtered down through the upper caste bureaucratic society and the non-Rajbansi immigrants to the level of the Rajbansis in general. A frequency distribution study of the Rajbansi students along with the non-Rajbansis from the data obtained from two schools namely 1) Sunity Academy and 2) Maharaja Nripendra Narayan High School indicates some significant trends.<sup>18</sup>

**Table- 20: Percentage of Rajbansi Student's Population to Non-Rajbansis in Sunity Academy and Nripendra Narayan High School (Candidates Appearing in Matriculation Examination)**

Names of schools	Years	No. of Non Rajbansi students	No. of Rajbansi students	% of Rajbansi students
1.Sunity Academy	1929-1939	38	3	7.1
	1940-1950	157	15	9.55
	1951-1961	208	15	7.2
	1962-1963	76	9	5
2.Swedish Mission Institution (Maharaja Nripendra Narayan High School)	1933-1934	8	Nil	Nil
	1944-1945	986	168	17

5% ± calibration to neutralise errors.

Source: i) Sunity Academy Centenary Volume, ii) Platinum Jubilee Commemoration volume (1924-1999) Maharaja Nripendra Narayan High School.

The English educated non-Rajbanshis swamped the administration of Cooch Behar State. Though no complete list of all the officials during the reign of different kings of the dynasty can be found, a tentative idea can be drawn from the list of important officials during the time of King Nripendra Narayan (Table 21).<sup>19</sup>

After the coronation of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan in 1883, a tendency to avoid the Rajbansi mass in the personal ceremonies of the Royal Family had started. By this avoidance they seemed to have moved away from their antecedents.<sup>20</sup> Maharaja Nripendra Narayan's marriage with Sunity Devi, the daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen was not liked by the common people as well as the palace ladies.<sup>21</sup> Local people perceived this marriage as denouncement of Rajbanshi ritual and culture by the Cooch Behar Royal family. The marriage of Nripendra Narayan's daughter had to be performed at Woodlands in Calcutta instead of at Cooch Behar to the great disappointment of the local people.<sup>22</sup> So from the very beginning a sense of cultural gap between the Royal family and the mass was observed.

Another dichotomy arose between them through religion. After the marriage of Nripendra Narayan with Sunity Devi, the religion of the Royal family had completely changed.<sup>23</sup> The Maharaja embraced Brahmoism as his personal religion and all the festivals of Royal family were done according to Brahmo rites.<sup>24</sup>

**Table- 21: List of Non-Rajbansi Officials Found in Administration (1882-1898)**

<b>Dewan</b>	<b>Secretary to the State Council</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Babu Kalikadas Dutta</li> <li>2. Mr Narendra Nath Sen</li> </ol> <p><b>Members of the Council</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kalika Dutta</li> <li>2. Bulloram Mullick (judicial member)</li> <li>3. Babu Jadav Chandra Chakraborty (Judicial Member)</li> </ol> <p><b>Deputy Commissioners</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capt A. Evans Gordon B.S C</li> <li>2. G.T.B.T Dalton C.S(1883)</li> <li>3. W. O. A. Beckett. Asstt. Commissioner Cooch Behar Division.</li> <li>4. FR. Cockerell, Commissioner Cooch Behar Division</li> </ol> <p><b>President in Council</b> King</p> <p><b>Vice- President in Council</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A. Evans Gordon (1885)</li> <li>2. E.E.Lewis(1892)</li> <li>3. D. R. Dyall.</li> </ol> <p><b>Head clerk to the State Council</b> Rajani Kanta Roy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Babu Karuna Nidhan Palit(1884)</li> <li>2. Babu Priyanath Ghosh (acting 1885)</li> <li>3. Babu Narendra Nath Sen B.L (acting Secretary, 1888.</li> <li>4. Thankur Jago Mohan Sinha (1888)</li> <li>5. Babu Ashutosh Ghosh (acting) (1893,1894)</li> <li>6. Babu Gopal Chandra Chatterjee</li> <li>7. Harinath Basu (1895)</li> </ol> <p><b>Settlement Naib Ahilkar</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Babu Rajkrishna Das (1894)</li> <li>2. Babu Govinda Charan Dutta</li> <li>3. Hemchandra Bhattacharya</li> <li>4. Rameswar Pramanik</li> <li>5. Harendra Narayan Chaudhury</li> <li>6. Sashi Bhusan Roy (canoongoe)</li> </ol> <p><b>Personal Assistant to His Highness</b> Babu Priyanath Ghosh M.A. (1885)</p>

*Source: Collected from different Settlement Reports and correspondence during the period of British intervention in the administration of princely state of Cooch Behar*

But most of the local people of Cooch Behar believed in Hinduism. So the religion of the Rajbansi royalty and local people had started diverging from each other. This resulted in two parallel cultural streams for the Royal family and the masses respectively. *Vaishnavism*, as one of the principal props of native cultural framework had also suffered a setback. It seemed to have survived as a counter thesis to the new religious doctrine of the Royalty.<sup>25</sup>

Anglicized members of the royal family hardly spoke in the local dialect or it might be that they could not speak the local language. It was presumable that this led to a serious communication gap between the Rajbansi Royalty and Rajbansi<sup>26</sup> subjects. Thus the cultural and psychological gap between the Rajbansi subjects and

the Rajbansi Royalty had gradually widened. It was presumable that a social tension of sorts had originated in the Cooch Behar State among the subjects for pronounced cultural dichotomy.

Not only culturally but also economically the Rajbansi people were disempowered on account of the phenomenal growth of the non-Rajbansi *Jotedar*, agricultural labour in the agricultural sector of the Cooch Behar State. There was an intrusion of rural society in Cooch Behar by educated Bengalis from British Bengal employed in the service of the native State, who, in the absence of *zamindari* or *taluqi* rights, began to get hold of the *Jotes*, turning them from land-holding titles to revenue-collecting rights.<sup>27</sup> Originally the *Jotedar* were all residents of the State and personally participated in agricultural operations. But with the influx of the outsiders to the State, usually educated Bengalis from the British territory, many of the *Jotes* were acquired by the non-cultivating classes in 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> In many cases, resident *Jotedar*, in order to escape the oppression of the ladies of the palace and the officers of the State, who took most of the revenue farms, gave up their *Jotes* to influential foreigners and became their under-tenants (*Chukanidars*).<sup>29</sup> In other ways influential foreigners who happened to be farmers of the state revenue utilized this position to acquire *Jotes* by unfair means. In this way 54 percent of the registered titles to revenue-paying lands in Cooch Behar had by 1872 passed to foreigners. Of the remaining 46 percent, less than a third was held by cultivating *Jotedar* and rest by the non-cultivating *Jotedar* who collected rent from *Chukanidars*.<sup>30</sup>

But these statistical data did not permit us to argue that the old resident *Jotedar* class of the State was destroyed in the process. They continued, as land holders below the new *Jotedar*, to employ the large body of peasants called *adhiars* (share-croppers), who cultivated for them for a half share of the crop.<sup>31</sup> Thus the old resident *Jotedar* continued in effective possession as *Chukanidars* and their *Chukanidars* became *dar-Chukanidars*. The *Chukanidars* and *Dar-Chukanidars* were residents of the State and tenures were transferable and heritable, though subject to the consent of the *Jotedar*.<sup>32</sup> The State itself stepped into protect the position of the old resident *Jotedar* and an order of the State in 1853 prohibited deeds called *istafas* and *ikrars* by which *Jotedar* used to give up their *Jotes* to influential persons.<sup>33</sup> By degrees a tribute-collecting superstructure was imposed over the village land-holding

class in Cooch Behar, but in British territory, they continued in effective possession of land and in actual control of landless labour.

As the Rajbansi mass was economically, culturally and educationally backward, the Maharajas of Cooch Behar always appointed the non-Rajbansi people in the high offices of administration. During the reign of Nripendra Narayan most of the administrative posts were captured by the Bengali intellegentia from British Bengal and during the time of the regencyship of Indira Devi the people who assisted her in the administration of the State, all came from other parts of India. Nawab Khusru Jang, noble of Hyderabad state, came to look after Cooch Behar's financial affairs.<sup>34</sup> Her private secretary, several senior members of the household attendants all came from outside Cooch Behar. Thus the whole life of the palace lost its Cooch Behari character. Even in spite of being capable of participating in administration of the State, Panchanan Burma, and the Rajbansi lawyer was not appointed as Governmental high officials by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar.<sup>35</sup>

Thus in every sphere of life the Cooch Behar Royalty outdistanced themselves from the Rajbansi mass consciously or unconsciously. Now the question that might have arisen as a natural reaction among them was "Who were they"? Why were they deprived? The Census Report of 1891 played the role of match stick in the heap of disappointment of the Rajbansi mass. In this report it was shown that the people of Cooch Behar State are generally composed of two elements-Hindus and Muslims. The Rajbansis though grouped under Hindus, were given the status as Hinduised and clean subject tribe. So this report greatly disappointed them and compelled them to start movement to get the recognition as Varna Hindu as their caste identity was in question at that time.

From the substantial amount of historical literature on the various aspects of caste system in Bengal it can be concluded that within the broad *varna* framework, the caste hierarchy could be further classified into six categories on the basis of the prevalent notions of ritual purity, i.e. a) The Brahmins, b) the *Baidyas* and the *Kayasthas*, c) the *Nabasakh* castes, d) the *Ajalchal* castes, e) the castes between the *Nabasakh* and the *Ajalchal* groups, f) the *Antyaja* caste.<sup>36</sup> The Rajbansis were placed at the bottom of the structure, along with the *Namasudras* in the social hierarchy of Bengal. With the gradual settlement of upper caste Hindu gentry in the native State of Cooch Behar, the existing balance in local power structure had changed. In the

course of time these immigrant upper caste gentry became the most dominant group in the local society, economy and politics. They obtained all the important administrative posts and by virtue of their intimacy to the administration they emerged as the dominant landholding class.<sup>37</sup> Culturally the Rajbansis were overpowered by these upper caste gentry as they were guided by the traditional *Brahmanical* cultural values. There were no similarities between the cultural practices of these two groups and the upper caste gentry treated the Rajbansis as “backward, uncultured”<sup>38</sup> Thus the attitude of cultural superiority of the upper caste gentry alienated the Rajbansis and indirectly helped them to develop a spirit of community solidarity among them. Their search for *Kshatriya* identity was only a symbolic cultural expression of this emergent collective self-consciousness.<sup>39</sup>

The claim of the Rajbansis to be enumerated as a *Kshatriya* but not a tribe (Koch) began to take the shape of a movement at the time of the Census of 1891 when the Census authority gave instruction to the effect that the “Rajbansi is the same as Koch.” The Rajbansis presumed if they could succeed in getting themselves recorded as *Kshatriyas* in the Census, an official document of the Government, no one would indeed be able to dispute their rank in the caste hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> Further, to confirm their *Kshatriya* identity, there were serious efforts on the part of the Rajbansi leaders to secure the opinion of the Brahman pundits of Nabadwip and Benaras and other *shastric* sanctions from them to validate that claim. They also wanted to get it legitimized by the priests and genealogists.<sup>41</sup>

The social mobility movement of the Rajbansis is a recorded fact of history. From 1872, the Rajbansis of Bengal and parts of Assam were trying to disassociate themselves from the tribal Koches. They were frantically demanding for their independent entry in the Census as a distinct caste i.e. Rajbansi. As a step towards Hinduization, they also declared themselves as *Bratya Kshatriya* (fallen *Kshatriya*); while from 1911 they began to boast of a pure *Kshatriya* origin. Interestingly enough, they constantly changed their identity and for that matter asked for different names in different Censuses: from Koch to Rajbansi (1872), Rajbansi to *Bratya* (fallen) *Kshatriya* (1891), *Bratya Kshatriya* to *Kshatriya* Rajbansi (1911, 1921) and *Kshatriya* Rajbansi to only *Kshatriya*. (1931).

The most interesting point is that the Rajbansi mass never got the psychological and financial support from the Rajbansi Royalty in the State of Cooch Behar. The Royalty kept itself completely separated from the wave of the movement of *Kshatriyanization*. Moreover, the Cooch Behar State Notification in 1896 that henceforth Koch Bihar State would be known as Cooch Behar State instead of nij Behar or in any other designation was interesting. It is stated by Hunter that the Cooch Behar Raja repudiated the theory of a Koch descent.<sup>42</sup> As the administration was under the control of the upper caste Hindu gentry, the Rajbansis faced strong opposition from the State administration. These officials were reluctant to accept the *Kshatriya* status of the Rajbansis.<sup>43</sup>

The *Kshatriyanization* movement aimed primarily to achieve *Kshatriya* status and earn some specific concessions for the educated members, failed to be very appealing to the poor Rajbansis. The Rajbansi literature itself shows the frustration of the Rajbansi leadership to mobilize the masses on caste issue. This movement failed to improve the deplorable economic condition of the poor.<sup>44</sup> The motive behind the reforms introduced by British administrators in the revenue system was not only to guarantee and increase the land revenue collection but also they desired to form a rich "middle class." Houghton's intention can be substantiated from the reports in which he refers: "here there are none of that middle class who should form the bone and sinews of the country. It appears to me that every effort should be made to improve this state of things, and to produce a class having an interest the country."<sup>45</sup>

As a part of satisfying their imperialist venture the British administrators fulfilled all the official posts in administration, judiciary, law courts, and schools by the immigrant Hindu upper caste people who had the training of formal education. These English educated upper caste people were called '*Babus*' or '*Bhadralok*' who were averse to physical labour and kept themselves separate and distinct from the mass people. They were mainly 'white collar' employees and elites of the society. The '*Babus*' of Cooch Behar had hardly the skill, intelligence or mentality to become the entrepreneur. But they were the emerging middle class with so called modern outlook. These '*Babus*' were hardly suitable to take risks in business; they preferred secured jobs in the government offices rather than risk taking ventures of industrial activities. Another middle class of Cooch Behar namely *Jotedar*, (local and immigrant) small peasants or new elites of the rural areas were more interested to

invest their capital in land rather than in the business. They were rooted to the soil, conservative to the outlook, tradition bound and not urban in outlook or spirit. The commercial class mainly composed of Marwari *banias* who came from far away place and became virtual shopkeepers of the area. They were not local, spoke a different language, had different customs and remained perpetually outsiders to the system of Cooch Behar State.

Thus the people of the Princely State of Cooch Behar were sharply divided on two broad categories- Cooch Beharies and non-Cooch Beharies. Cooch Beharies meant the local Rajbansi Hindus, the local Rajbansi Muslims, the Kamrupia Brahmins who had settled in Cooch Behar since the time of the Hinduisation and some other non-caste Hindus such as the Saha's, Jogi's and some tribals.<sup>46</sup> Obviously the terminology of Non-Rajbansi denotes the meaning of the term-not the people of Cooch Behar They were called by the local people outsiders or the *Bhatias*. The *Bhatia* people came from the East, South and West Bengal. But most interestingly the Marwaries and the other non-Bengali people were not called *Bhatias*.<sup>47</sup> Though initially there was unity among the Cooch Beharies and the non-Cooch Beharies but gradually the ground was prepared for confrontation among them on economic and cultural disparities. It appears from the Administrative Reports of the State that the lion's portion of the opportunity of higher education was availed by the *Bhatias*. Not only that the all higher posts of all the educational institutions were occupied by the non- Cooch Beharies. This disparity had created a feeling of discontent among the rising Rajbansi middle class. The all important administrative posts were also captured by the Non-Rajbansis.

The situation took a new turn in the question of land. There was a massive change in the ownership of the land. As mentioned earlier the State Government adopted various measures to develop the agriculture and to increase the land revenue. So the fallow lands and the jungle lands were distributed to the cultivators of the outside Cooch Behar. In order to attract the cultivators of the outside the Government had announced various measures. This resulted in a radical change in the land-man ratio as well as ownership of the land of the Cooch Behar State. Further urgency to introduce commercial crops to boost revenue income necessitated new class of revenue farmers. The Muslim population, who had mostly immigrated from Mymensingh and Rangpur were excellent cultivators and did much to improve

cultivation in the State.<sup>48</sup> In order to enhance the land revenue of the State, Calica Das Dutta; the Dewan of the State encouraged the peasants of British Bengal to settle in the State. Thus most of the lands were captured by the Non-Rajbansi people. This process of change in ownership of land is continuing even today. This became matter of social conflict between the Cooch Beharis and the non-Cooch Beharis. The emergence of the *Hitasadhani Sabha* in the late 40's was the direct outcome of these conflicts.<sup>49</sup> The members of this *Sabha* had launched a crusade against the immigrant Bengali caste Hindus or the *Bhatias* and raised the slogan of "*Bhatia Hatao*".<sup>50</sup>

The change in land-control structure in the rural society seriously affected the land-man relationship in the rural Cooch Behar. The relation between the *Bhatia Jotedar* and the Rajbansi *adhiar* had undergone a plausible change. The Rajbansi *adhiar* never felt the kinship relation, the racial affinity with the Non- Rajbansi landlords. On the other hand the level of exploitation increased by the Non –Rajbansi Landlords as they had a feeling that they were the outsiders. Racial and cultural differences between Rajbansi *Adhiars* and Non–Rajbansi *Adhiars* had also contributed in aggravating the social tension. The attitude of the *Jotedar* from local ethnic groups also changed substantially as they came in contact with the upper caste gentry. The prevailing practice of the *Jotedar* themselves cultivating their lands was now increasingly discontinued and a class of non –cultivating *Jotedar* emerged. As a result subsequent changes in the patter of land–control had taken place. The non-Rajbansi landlords gradually pushed out the Rajbansis from their position of eminence.

At the initial stage of the settlement when there was abundant land in the Cooch Behar State, the early settlers invited their own kinsmen to settle in their lands and the work was shared among them. There was a personal relationship between the landlords and the cultivators.<sup>51</sup> But with the passage of time this was replaced by a mechanical contractual relationship and different intermediaries came into existence between the two.<sup>52</sup> Those among the Rajbansis who were *Jotedars* or rich farmers came under the cultural influence of the upper caste land lords or other *Jotedars* of the area as they were closer to this group in terms of secular status.

Now onwards the cultivators did not have the kinsman relationship with the respective migrated *Jotedars*, *Chukanidars*. They felt the absence of heartily relation with the new landed gentry because of their different racial identity. There was also a

tendency among the Rajbansi *adhiars* to work under the *Jotedars* of their own community, although the latter were no less demanding than other *Jotedars*.<sup>53</sup> As there was no racial similarity between the immigrant *Jotedars* (Bengalee and Marwaris) and Rajbansi under-tenants or *adhiars* the volume of exploitation has extended. As the most of the *Jotedars* became the non-cultivating *Jotedars*, naturally the sense of belongingness towards the *Jotes* was absent among these *Jotedars* which also affected the *Jotedar-adhiar* relationship. It was seen that the Rajbansis who once dominated the local society and economy of the State were gradually subordinated by the newly settled dominant upper caste gentry. On the other hand, the prevalence of different kinds of land grants and hierarchic structure of landlords added a new element of complexity in the rural society of Cooch Behar. The *krishiprajas/adhiars* under the *Jotedars* and *Krishiprajas/adhiars* under the different grades of *Chukanidar* created problems in the rural society of Cooch Behar.

The other complexity that developed was the dichotomy between the locals and the immigrants on ethnic and cultural ground. The attitude of the *Jotedars* belonging to the local ethnic groups also changed substantially as they came in contact with the Hindu upper caste gentry. The gradual settlement of the Caste Hindus in the Cooch Behar State had shaken the cultural autonomy of the Rajbansi people of this region bringing them to the closer to the Orthodox Hindu culture.<sup>54</sup> There was one section of the Rajbansis who felt the urge to change their existing cultural practices and lifestyle and also the religious practices. But this section of the people was economically more affluent rather than the others. They suddenly started to worship the god and goddesses of the upper caste Hindus instead of local deities.<sup>55</sup> Now the concept of the sub-castes developed among this community. Discarding their traditional clothes, both men and women started to dress themselves in the fashions of the upper castes in society.<sup>56</sup> Now they started to disallow the widow remarriage. They had also started to follow idolatry and the Brahmin priests were invited to preside their ceremonies. They formed a distinct group within the Rajbansi community. Educationally they were advanced than the common peasant folk. This makes one point clear that there was a vertical division within the community. Initially the economic differentiation did not lead the cultural differences within the community. But the penetration of the market forces, administrative and political changes brought significant change in the local society. As they came in contact with

these new forces of change, a sense of exclusivism gradually developed among the Rajbansi elite which affected the intra-community relationship among the Rajbansis. This intra-community relationship also affected the land–man relationship of the rural Cooch Behar.<sup>57</sup>

This affluent Rajbansis started to migrate to towns, send their children for higher education and take up other subsidiary occupation besides their family occupation i.e. cultivation. All these tendencies of the Rajbansi elites disassociated themselves from the more backward sections of the community and as a result the concept of social equality was replaced by a system of status differentiation. This differentiation in terms of social and cultural practices and economic profile within the Rajbansi community is very important as it sowed the seeds of dynamics of their caste movement.<sup>58</sup>

The above mentioned argument that the most of the cultivable lands were in the hands of the Non-Cooch Beharies can be substantiated by the proofs of *Dalil* and *Khatiyan* of different sub-divisions and of different point of time (Appendix-4).

The lists of the names of the faulty *Jotedar* in the Cooch Behar Gazatte, 1897,<sup>59</sup> also corroborate the fact that the most of the *Jotes* were under the Non-Cooch Behari *Jotedar*. Many *Jotedar* could not pay all the arrears on due dates and time and became defaulter. It was, therefore, become necessary from the part of Government to initiate various procedures to realize those unpaid arrears. As a result, the lands of those defaulters were put on for auction (Appendix-5). If the defaulters were able to make part payment of their dues they were given some time to enjoy the ownership or the auctions of those lands were put to on hold. In extreme cases only sales were held.

The Rajbansi *Jotedar* were also sometimes became the Defaulters. Not being able to meet up the excess demand of land revenue they were compelled to sale their *Jotes*. From the status of the *Jotedar* they were decreased to the status of the *Chukanidars*. But the excessive demand of land revenue was not always the cause of selling the land. Sometimes the big *Jotes* were divided among the successors of the *Jotedar*. Sometimes the lands were sold to mitigate the expenditure of the marriages of their daughters. Sometimes, to meet up medical expenses they used to sell their *Jotes*. Sometimes the *Jotedar* willingly sold their lands because they wanted to settle in town for the education of their children. Another important reason of the sale of the

*Jotes* was that the Rajbansi *Jotedars* were reluctant to cultivate their land. They did not prefer to toil on the land. They preferred to live a luxurious life by selling vast amount of lands to the non-Rajbansi people. Because that time the Rajbansi people were not in a position to buy the lands on satisfactory price. Naturally the lands were bought mostly by the *Bhatia* people who wanted to settle in Cooch Behar State that time.

Not only the *Bhatia* people but also the Marwaris bought large number of *Jotes* from the Rajbansi people.<sup>60</sup> The wave of the Great World wide Depression in 1929-30 and the following crisis in rural credit also affected the rural people of the Cooch Behar State like other districts of North Bengal. To meet up the increased revenue demand along with Rajbanshi *Jotedars*, the *Chukanidars* were also compelled to sell their lands to outsiders.<sup>61</sup> Naturally the condition of the under-tenants can easily be assumed. Though from the Annual Administrative Reports of the State of different years it appears that the concession in land revenue was made by the administration and the concession were extended to all classes of under tenants but these were not sufficient to reduce the hardships of the peasants.

Another important effect of the British land policy was the creation of a new structured rural society mainly based on the emergence of a new landlord community. The Colonial Government's aim to bring all the waste land under rent and to extract maximum possible revenue through *Jotedari* settlement could only be materialised with a corollary creation of a land market. Particularly in the princely State of Cooch Behar this wish was fulfilled. Various factors such as commercialization of agriculture, land speculation, periodic enhancement of revenue through successive settlement operations and immigration into the State from British Bengal prompted the rapid sale of *Jotes* to the outsiders who had no previous connection with the land. The new settlers brought with them a caste-based hierarchical social structure that was not exact to the local society as the Rajbansi society was basically egalitarian in their code of social conduct.

The sufferings of the Rajbanshi peasants reached to such an extent that sometimes they revolted against both the Rajbansi and the Non-Rajbansi *Jotedar*. The disappointment on the part of the peasants against the administration was first observed among the peasants of the subdivision of Mathabanga region under the leadership of Panchanan Burma who tried to wave the burden of the loans of the

peasants of that region.<sup>62</sup> But this disappointment could not take a shape of organised revolt.

The Cooch Behar peasants were largely influenced by the Tebhaga revolt of the adjoining part of the country. The Communist Party organised the peasants of the Tufangunj sub-division against the extra charges (*tola gandi*) on sale of the animals. The younger leader of the Communist Party, Jiban De told the peasants not to pay the extra charges taken by the *izaradars* over the royal charges on sale of the veterans.<sup>63</sup> But when one of the agents of the Administration declared Jiban De as terrorist, the peasants badly revolted against the royal administration. They demanded that the *Nirikh Nama* (royal order) signed by the Raja should be displayed in different market places. At last the *Ahilkar* Sri Hemanta kumar Burma was compelled to display the *Nirikh Nama* in different places.<sup>64</sup> Thus the peasants won their battle against the royal power.

The big dissatisfaction of the peasants was manifested in the various places of Mekhligung subdivision. The rebellion was led by the peasant leader Dineswar Singh. He started the revolt against the excessive exploitation of the *Jotedar*.<sup>65</sup> He was renamed by the peasants as "Raja". He carried an autonomous administration for three months. But at last he had to surrender to the power of the *Jotedar*.

But this type of show of anger and disappointment of the peasants of the Cooch Behar State can not be compared with the revolt of the peasants of the other parts of India. These revolts were not organised revolts at all. Therefore they never revolted against the Raja. Their loyalty to the Raja was almost unquestionable. They did even think to revolt against Raja. The peasants always felt the 'ethnic identity' with the Rajas and the royal family. On the other hand, generally from our experience of Indian history, the peasant revolts of the other parts of Indian region were led by the educated middle class, but the educated middle class people of the Cooch Behar State were outsiders and they were too loyal to the Rajas to revolt against. Therefore, the political system, the rules and regulation of the Cooch Behar State were not congenial for revoltees to revolt against the State. The famous 'Deportation law' was prevalent in the Cooch Behar State like the other Princely States.<sup>66</sup> According to this law anybody could be declared irrelevant for the State and could be ousted from the State within 24-hour notice. As a result no one can dare to express their resentment against Royalty.

So from the above discussion it appears that in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century some socio-economic changes had taken place in the State of Cooch Behar. These changes were basically due to the implementation of the British land policies. It was seen that the Rajbansis who once dominated the local society and economy were gradually subordinated by the newly settled dominant upper caste gentry. On the other hand, the prevalence of different kinds of land grants and hierarchic structure of landholders added a new element of complexity in the rural society of Cooch Behar.

Indeed, not only in Cooch Behar State but also in other parts of whole North Bengal Region the phenomenal growth of transfer of land from the hands of the local people to outsiders became a pattern and in course of time it generated a sense of grievances among the dispossessed Rajbansi gentry. Later on this gained an ethnic dimension as the Rajbansi elites tried to raise caste sentiments among the members of their community.

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- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.p. 230
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<sup>32</sup> W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Kuch Behar*, vol.x, Calcutta, 1878, rpt, Delhi, 1974 ,p.388.

<sup>33</sup> Rajat and Ratna Ray, opcit. p. 231

<sup>34</sup> Gayetri Devi and Santha Rama Rao, *A Princess Remembers*, New Delhi, 1976 (8<sup>th</sup> edition)p.55,

<sup>35</sup> U. N. Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barmar Jiban Charit*( Bengali), Jalpaiguri, 1387 BS, P.1-9.

<sup>36</sup> Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Politics and the Raj, Bengal 1872-1937*,Calcutta, 1990. pp.3-7

<sup>37</sup> Swaraj Basu, *Dynamics of a Caste Movement, The Rajbansis of North Bengal, 1910-1947*. Manohar publication, New Delhi, 2003. p. 62.

<sup>38</sup> A.K. Roy, *Some Notes on The Kshatriya Movement in Northern Bengal*, in Journal of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, vol xx, no.1, p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> Swaraj Basu, opcit, p.64.

<sup>40</sup> U. N. Barman, opcit .p. 3

<sup>41</sup> Deb Singha Barman,*Jagat Mohan,Kshatriya Rajbansi Kula Kaumudi*, Rangpur,1317B.S pp.52-63

<sup>42</sup> W.W.Hunter, opcit, p.332. It may be held in the light of our research that Hunter's observation is not corroboratable. Had it been so then the notification of the Cooch Behar State in 1896 declaring the State as Cooch Behar State would not have featured. But this incident is significant in a different sens. Being issued at a time when the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement took off the ground in the context of 1891 census classification of the Rajbansis as Koch suggests that the royal family might have preffered the Koch identity to the identity perception of their Rajbansi subjects.

<sup>43</sup> Swaraj Basu, opcit.p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> R. Mukhopadhyay, *Uttar Khand Movement:A Sociological Analysis* ,occasional Paper. Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, April 1987, p.15.

<sup>45</sup> Proceedings of the Government, April, 1872, No-12,p.13

<sup>46</sup> Ananda Gopal Ghosh, "*The Hitasadhani Sabha-Power Struggle by the Cooch Beharies*" in Sukha Bilas Burma's ed. Volume " Socio-political Movements in North Bengal" Global vision publishing House , New Delhi, 2007 .p.85.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid p.88

<sup>48</sup> A. Mitra, "*Census 1951, West Bengal, District Handbooks, Cooch Behar*" Calcutta, 1953. p.xiii

<sup>49</sup> Ananda Gopal Ghosh ,opcit.p.93

<sup>50</sup> Ibid p.98

<sup>51</sup> Swaraj Basu, opcit.p.46.

<sup>52</sup> S. Mukhopadhyay, "*Jalpaiguri Jelar Samajik Kathamo*", Madhuparni (Bengali), Jalpaiguri special number, 1987, p.152.

<sup>53</sup> J.Roy, "*Economic and Social Customs of the Rajbansis*" Modern Review, August, 1954. p.129.

<sup>54</sup> Swaraj Basu, opcit.p. 46.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.p.47.

<sup>56</sup> C.C.Sanyal, *Rajbansis of North Bengal*, Calcuta 1965. pp. 27-32

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<sup>57</sup> T.K.Roy Choudhury, “*Land Control: Class structure and class relations in Western Duars 1871-1905*”, U.G.C Seminar Paper, North Bengal University, 1987. S. Mukhopadhyay, opcit, p.110

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<sup>59</sup> The Cooch Behar Gazette for the year 1897, published by Cooch Behar State Press.1897.

<sup>60</sup> N.C. Saha, *The Marwari Community in North Bengal: a Historical Analysis of the Selected Districts* unpublished Phd. Dissertation North Bengal University. pp 272-273

<sup>61</sup> Swaraj. Basu, opcit, p. 51

<sup>62</sup> Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Shekhar Sircar, “*Cooch Behar Rajya Rajnaitik Andolaner Ruprekha*” Madhuparni(Bengali), Cooch Behar special number,B.S 1396,p.406

<sup>63</sup> Jiban De, “*Cooch Behar Rajya Rajnaitik Andolaner Ruprekha*” Madhuparni(Bengali), Cooch Behar special number,B.S 1396,p.422

<sup>64</sup> Ibid p. 423

<sup>65</sup> Ibid p. 423

<sup>66</sup> Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Shekhar Sircar, “*Cooch Behar Rajya Rajnaitik Andolaner Ruprekha*” Madhuparni(Bengali), Cooch Behar special number,B.S 1396,p.395

## Conclusion

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The interrelated and interwoven preceding chapters attempted to establish the resulting implications of land-man relationship in pre-colonial and colonial Cooch Behar from the perspective of political economy approach. The chapters in ascending orders have provided the socio-economic and the political profile of Cooch Behar under pre-colonial and colonial formation. The Chapters are adequately dealt with the nature of land-man relationship vis-à-vis the right of the proprietary holdings, the indigenous land administration system, land revenue land settlement with their micro historical details have been spelt out different chapters of this study. It has been established adequately that the indigenous system of land propriety admixed with Mughal land revenue administration have provided Cooch Behar a distinctive place to be studied as a regional variant to understand the National discourse of the subject. It has been further established that the unique indigenous character of land man relationship in pre colonial and colonial Cooch Behar can well be placed under "National History Localised" frame. The entire study reveals the fact that Cooch Behar during pre-colonial and colonial formation and the land man relationship thereon had experienced a unique kind of aborted feudalism causing thereby the resultant abortions in its pre-capitalist formation.

Conclusively, the role of agrarian structure in economic development is one of the most important problems for social science research in underdeveloped countries. It is important to note that the study of the relationship of agrarian structure and economic development has been attempted in many cases without either clarifying the concepts or following a genuinely scientific methodology. For studying the agrarian structure in India the terms 'feudal,' 'semi feudal' and 'capitalist' had been indiscriminately used without always distinguishing between the Western and the Indian variants of feudalism. Charles Bettelheim<sup>1</sup> has defended the use of the term semi-feudal for the Indian agrarian structure on the ground that some of the typical elements of feudalism are present in the Indian situation. These elements have been identified as: i) absence of labour market in a large part of the rural sector, ii) the personal subservience of the immediate producer to the land owner, iii) the excessive importance of land rent, iv) the underdeveloped marketing system resulting in little

social division of labour, a low rate of accumulation and the use of produce mainly to satisfy immediate needs.

It is important to note that even when an attempt is made to identify the regional variations of agrarian system it is usually done through the use of such terms as *Jaigirdari*, *Zamindari* and *Raiyatwari* systems which have mainly legal and juridical rather than socio-economic significance. As Thorner<sup>2</sup> pointed out long back this habit of characterizing land systems as *Zamindari* or *Raiyatwari* results from equating revenue systems with the actual agrarian structure (i. e. Mutual relations of landlords, tenants and labourers). In terms of the forms of control of land and broadly, the resulting socio-economic relations among the rural classes many districts of Madras and of Bombay are poles apart even though in terms of land revenue payment they are both *Raiyatwari*. For the examination of regional variations therefore a set of terms and concepts is required which is very different from those imported of native categories which are now in vogue among analysts of agrarian structure in India or in other underdeveloped countries.

The fact of the matter is that neither Liberal Economics nor Marxian offer readymade tools for the analysis of the peasant economy. That the capitalist development of the economy on modern lines necessarily requires the destruction of a peasant economy is an assumption which is implicit in both liberal economics and Marxism and which needs a thorough re-appraisal<sup>3</sup> in the context of understanding any regional variant of such economy—may be pre-colonial and colonial Cooch Behar a reference point.

At the methodological level, for instance, Myrdal in his *Economic theory and Underdeveloped Regions* and in his *Asian Drama*, formulated an institutional approach and applied it to the Indian situation which may be of great significance. Myrdal's model<sup>4</sup> of analysis of economic stagnation in terms of structural factors was relevant at best only to the *ex-Zamindari* and *ex-Jaigirdari* regions of the country and not to the *ex-Raiyatwari* regions. Even in relation to the *ex-Zamindari* and *ex-Jaigirdari* regions, the model suffered from serious gaps especially as it did not explore the role of credit structure, the land lord-dominated power balance and the technological backwardness in perpetuating the retrogressive agrarian structure. These deficiencies of Myrdal's analysis were due to two reasons. In the first place in the absence of economic historical studies of the evolution of the Indian agrarian

structure in different period of Indian history, he does not take into account some of the peculiarities of the Indian Agrarian structure. These peculiarities were not present in Western feudalism but were very marked in the implanted feudalism of countries like India.<sup>5</sup>

In the recent period new contributions have been made to the study of agrarian structure and economic development. In the first place mere 'Theorising from above' has been replaced by a blending of abstract reasoning and model building with observation from below. Secondly, in earlier phase many research workers began with agrarian structure. That is why the preference for grand concepts like feudalism and capitalism or grand frame works like transition from feudalism to capitalism. Today it is being recognised that enormous ground work has to be done before the construction of a grand view may become possible. Thus formulation of smaller problems e.g. the changing forms and magnitude of tenancy, and middle range theorisation is now in vogue. Thirdly, in place of studies trying to generalise for the whole country, we have now more regional studies which try to evolve generalisations for specific regions on the basis of data pertaining to that particular region. (P, C, Joshi) As a point of reference the present study revealed the intensity of Colonial penetration in the economy of the Princely State of Cooch Behar and its effects on the political economy, society and the land-man relationship of the State. A number of significant socio-economic changes had originated from those economic measures for which the introduction of new land policy of revenue farming is held to be responsible.

Over a span of 400 years or so the political identity or the status of the Princely State kept on changing. From a small Koch Kingdom to Princely State, from a Princely State to a feudatory state and from a feudatory state to a small district town under West Bengal after the merger of the State to the Indian Union in 1950. Though the political status of the State changed so many times, its economy remained same-the agrarian economy as the agriculture was the primary sector of the economy in the State. Naturally the one and only source of revenue was the land revenue.

It has further been disclosed that the indigenous land revenue system of the Koch kingdom before the coming of the Mughals and after that it appears that the Koch revenue system was an admixture of both Ahom and Mughal land revenue system. Like the Ahoms they were habituated with shifting cultivation, *paik* system, and cultivating *ahu* rice and later followed like the Ahoms the wet rice (*Sali*)

cultivation. On the other hand when they were influenced by the Mughals, they started to collect the land revenue in cash instead of kind. It is presumable that under the Todormal's land revenue system the cultivable land of the State would had been surveyed. The Koch Rajas started using the designations of most of the officers like *Dewan, Ujir, Nazir, Sikdar, Piyada* and others under the influence of the Mughals in their administrative set up. The pre-colonial Cooch Behar had adopted the features of revenue administration of Bengal *Subha* under Murshid Kuli Khan to make its own structure. The feudal structure of revenue collection through the *Izaradars* seems to have been a direct adaptation of the *malzamini* system of Murshid Quli Khan. So the small principality of Cooch Behar in its pre-colonial formation had an indigenous system of land administration along with the Mughal land revenue administration resulting thereby an indigenous political economy distinctively different from the other princely State of pre-colonial India.

Before the arrival of the Colonial administrators in the Cooch Behar State, the indigenous revenue administration of the State was not systematised and well maintained. It is obvious that the amount of the collected revenue was not satisfactory. But the British entrance in this region by virtue of the Anglo- Cooch Behar Treaty in the year 1773 had radically altered the economic profile of this State. A great transition took place in the economy through the introduction of a quasi-feudalistic order and capitalist exploitations of waste land through commercialization of crops. To maximise the land revenue of the Cooch Behar State the British administrators implemented four successive land-settlements escalating the rent up to 134% over a period of 55 years. *Jotedari- Adhiari* System was the dominant proprietary relationship in the State. Although at the outset the British Government showed ambivalence in determining the classificatory attributes of *Chukanidar, Dar-chukanidar, Dar-dar-Chukanidar, Tasya-Chukanidar* as tenants and their tenurial rights, gradually it became clearer that the *Jotedars* were the supreme agent of the Colonial administration in realising the revenue. Most interesting part of this discussion is that unlike the British Bengal, the different intermediaries had the occupancy right in the State of Cooch Behar. Even the *adhiars* who formed the large number of cultivators got the favour of the State authority. The colonial administrators did not try to replace the inbuilt *Jotedari-adhiari* system of the Cooch Behar State by any of their new land settlement systems (Permanent, *Rayatwari* or

*Mahalwari*) like other parts of India though the State came under their direct administrative purview from 1789. Local conditions were the main factors behind the choice of proprietary body under the British land policy. The British administrators did never make any abrupt changes in the land administration of the Princely State.

But this was only one side of the coin. Obviously, the British sponsored land management system in Cooch Behar affected the rural society of the Cooch Behar State. It is though difficult to say that how much the British policies were responsible for the creation of the landless people. Due to the enhancement of tax payment most of the small peasants were compelled to sale their lands and became the landless labourers. The rapid growth of the population also accelerated the process. There was not enough land to accommodate the excess population. A certain number of cultivators were inevitably slipped into landlessness- though their numbers may not have been adequately reflected in the contemporary Census Reports.

Rent can increase either because of fall in land-man ratio (that occurs when population increases because of natural population growth and immigration) or increase in the rate of rent both in percentage as well as absolute terms. With the rise in population if new land is brought into cultivation then land -man ratio may remain unaffected. In case of Cooch Behar State population was increased both because of population growth as well as immigration. Therefore it is the fact that the land-man ratio had fallen and that resulted in increase in land rent. However, it was also observed that in pursuit to increase their mercantile capital raised the land taxes. It added penury to the peasantry. As a matter of fact during the period from 1872 to 1927 the percentage increase in revenue was 394% while the percentage increase in land in use for cultivation was 2.83%. No major technological changes took place in agriculture. Therefore the rise in agricultural productivity was a distant reality. Therefore two outcomes were obvious. One, the increase in mercantile capital for the British and the other is sub-infeudation and marginalization of peasantry.

As a part and parcel of the British land policy, the self-sustained village economy of the Cooch Behar State started replacing itself by a transitional economy from the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The break-down of the barter system and commercialization of agriculture, the spread of English education in the urban Cooch Behar created new opportunities, new tertiary job avenues for outsiders to migrate to the State. The urban population in Cooch Behar composed of English educated

people or “*Babu*” or “*Bhadralok*” or gentlemen class who were averse to physical labour and kept themselves separate and distinct from the mass people as part of the prevailing “*Babu*” culture in India at that time which was a product of British rule in India. The growth of urban society in Cooch Behar is very much related to the growth of urban centres to meet up the need of the British and the Cooch Behar Raj for administrative purposes. Keeping these administrative needs at centre, all kinds of commercial activities grew up. Trade, commerce, administrative ramifications including establishments of law courts, judiciary, schools, college etc led together an expanded employment base offering job opportunities to people. As a result being attracted by the new openings, occupational groups entered into urban Cooch Behar from different parts of Bengal. Therefore, the new opportunities in employment and commercial activities were restricted to only those who had the qualifications and means. Mostly such opportunities were enjoyed by educated enlightened Rajbansis (absentee landlords) and immigrant gentries. This was the reason why the great majority of Bengali upper caste Hindus was found in every nook and corner of the urban settlements of Cooch Behar State. Besides, a land market had gradually emerged due to the newly formed policy. The entry of the caste Hindu professionals and the Marwari business community in the area from the neighbouring districts triggered the land price movement as they invested their capital in land. The price movement had induced some of the land-holders to sell their estates to the affluent migrants.

One of the major effects of the change was that the indigenous people who once dominated the Cooch Behar Society were gradually subordinated by the newly settled dominated upper caste gentry. Since the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century a substantial amount of Rajbansi land had been transferred to the non-Rajbansi immigrant gentry and many of the earlier Rajbansi *Jotedars* had turned into *Chukanidars* and *Dar-chukanidars* and the small peasants or *adhiars* turned into landless labourers. Sharecropping which was the general feature of agriculture in Cooch Behar State increased since the 1920's, because of the depression and other economic causes. As a result of this the number of the *adhiars* increased and became more dependent on the whims of *Jotedars*.

The domination of an essentially immigrant gentry as well as the cultural differences between them and the Rajbansis created a sense of community solidarity

among the latter. The Rajbansi society was basically egalitarian in their code of social conduct. Even though they are a significant component of Bengali Hindu society but the traditional Hindu cultural norms failed to make an impact on them. At this stage of egalitarian social order the transfer of *Jotes* in the hands of the non-Rajbansi people as expected disturbed specially the traditional fabric of the society. Stratification of the society both in terms of caste hierarchies and class differences gradually assumed a discernible shape by partial rejection of the erstwhile kinship dominated society.

The influence of the immigrant landed gentry on the Rajbansi society was not at all negligible. It was the English education and the process of urbanization that influenced the old society and they served to displace the traditional rural elite which were the strongholds of the Rajbansis. Both due to the Government and private initiatives schools were set up even in the rural sectors. The Rajbansi student population too had increased over the years. The new elitist outlook gradually spread among the Rajbansi *Jotedars* who encouraged their children to get the fruit of modern education. The process of absentee landlordism developed among the Rajbansi *Jotedars*. One tangible result of this alienation was the derogation of physical labour or professions like farming which would involve physical labour by the new class of *Jotedars*. The formation of this "*bhadralok*" mentality among the Rajbansi, a section of *Jotedar* community created a social strata which was clearly distinguished from the parental background. It affected the intra-structural relationship within the Rajbansi society itself.

The social dynamics thus released gave rise to a complex crisis of identity in the Rajbansi society itself. The occupational reasons forced the service class to leave the village and thus it produced among them a sense of alienation from the villages and village communities. They adopted the new urban mode of living which accentuated the differences between them as problematic in the rural urban dichotomy. The professional changes in fact developed a sense of loss of identity both for those who adopted the new professions and those who choose to live within the fold of traditional economy. The most articulate section among the Rajbansis, the elites, played an important role to whip up this community solidarity and consciousness in order to mobilize the members of their caste for collective mobility.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the caste mobility movement or *Kshatriyaization* movement, the Rajbansis aspired to raise the social status by claiming *Kshatriya* status and wanted a promotion from a lower to a higher birth in the regional caste hierarchy thereby gaining greater prestige and respectability in terms of the conditions of caste system prevalent at that time. This has been a peculiar social mobility movement asking for a better placement at the hierarchically arranged Hindu caste structure, while on the other, the caste movements of that contemporary period had been to defy Hindu *Brahmanical* caste structure. Thus the Rajbansi caste movement was a mismatch in comparison to other caste movements in India.

Along with *Sanskritization* another important goal of this caste movement was to secure for themselves an access to political power which had so far remained the monopoly of the upper caste elites. The demand for reservation in education, employment and representative bodies was primarily aimed at ensuring a place for the Rajbansi elites. The facilities that were provided in the name of reservation mainly helped the advanced section within the community. Most unfortunately the majority of the poor Rajbansi remained same as they were. This movement failed to touch the heart of the backward section among the Rajbansis. Thus the nature of the socio-economic relationship between the Rajbansis and the non-Rajbansis of the State remained unaltered.

Though these developments brought several changes in the rural society of Cooch Behar, simultaneously the British developed a feudal path of development. A feudal economy as was prevalent in the other Princely States of India exercised the fullest control over the factors of production which in other way should have helped the growth of capitalist economy in the State. In the State of Cooch Behar the feudal economy was prevalent as the Maharajas of this State through ages had controlled the land management system and the administration. Obviously the feudal economy has got its in-built weakness which may be verified through the “spontaneous forces” of the economy upon which the power holders do not have control and command. This force of the feudal path of development endangers the weak rulers. It invites resentments and decreased the volume of popular allegiance to the king. But the rulers of the Cooch Behar State did not face such type of resentment from below

except few popular sentiments sometimes cropped up here and there to obtain the social rights of the local people.

Actually, class contradictions and social polarization may lead to the upheaval. But the question is that was there any class contradiction in the Cooch Behar State? Was social polarization a fact of Cooch Behar? Most probably the answer is no. The social polarization of the scale sufficient to create antagonism was never present in Cooch Behar State. This was because the land was mostly held by a particular “ethnic group” –namely the Rajbansis or the Koch. The Rajbansis or Koch had their distinct Mongoloid features as opposed to hierarchical structure were related with each other by blood and ethnic relationship. For example it was the practice of the Rajbansi landlords to employ able-bodied young men for cultivation of land and enter into marriage relationship with their daughters. The landless young agricultural labourers were always treated as part of their extended family. The concept of “We” and “they” had not developed in this type of economy. Social polarization could have occurred if the kitchen is different or labourer is hired. This type of relationship was nearly absent in the Cooch Behar State. The *Jotedars*, *Adhiars* and the landless peasants were very often related by family and blood relationship. Naturally except a few sporadic cases no violent struggle were found anywhere in Cooch Behar.

But it was further argued that the economic and the institutional changes probably created the favourable conditions for the emergence of the other dominant group in the agrarian society of Cooch Behar. But it is difficult to suggest that this dominant group was at all revolutionary. This was so because that those dominant group was totally patronised by the Royal family. This so called intelligent middle class people had the unquestionable loyalty for the Royal family and they never play the role of the peasant leader against the system. Secondly, in Cooch Behar many of the money-lenders were outsiders and small in numbers. This smallness of numbers put them at a disadvantage, particularly when they had to deal with village community as a whole. So naturally there was no class contradiction or struggle among the landlords and peasants because there are innumerable layers of middle and very small ownerships. The economic organization of a village in Cooch Behar, characterised by a combination of a self-sufficient peasant economy and rural industry did not ensure economic progress and growth in the Marxist sense of the term. The village community were gainfully employed and were not usually

compelled to seek employment elsewhere, except during period of severe natural calamities or famines.

The Koch kings belonged to a very low caste of Hindu society. The Koch Kings distributed their lands among the relatives and the people of their own race and made them settle in agriculture. As a result the settlers were mostly non-Brahmins by and large. The Brahmins were insignificant proportion in the rural areas because they were hardly land-owners. They mainly entered into the service sectors. So the vast rural sector in Cooch Behar was not that much caste-based. Further, landless labourers were virtually non-existent in the Census before 1951. The phenomenon of landless labourer is the recent origin in Cooch Behar and the caste system as hierarchy has nothing to do in this regard. The group of small peasants were not really "have-nots" in the orthodox sense of the term. The small peasants in Cooch Behar were not alienated from the land. The nature of land relation, as pointed out, was hardly caste based serfdom. The so called attached workers in Cooch Behar could breakaway from the master's domination and could themselves become small farmers. It is in this context, so called alienation never really existed in the State of Cooch Behar-at least for a very long period.

Most interestingly the overall process suggests two dichotomous areas: i) owners of land became physically alienated and proved to be extractors of surplus of land such as *Jotedars*, absentee *Jotedars*, different intermediaries and ultimately the Kings of Cooch Behar, ii) the native peasantry being physically present as tillers of the land virtually alienated from such extractions.

The fact remains that in Cooch Behar State feudalism as introduced by the British did not give rise to industrialization or capitalism. The feudalism in the Cooch Behar State remained static with a few ornamental changes in the successive periods. There were no major industries and so there was no steady movement for change. Both the internal and external factors were not sufficient enough to bring any type of change in the Royal Cooch Behar. Because of the slow growth of urbanization and the absence of any proper entrepreneur class who could bring capitalism the society of Cooch Behar remained stagnant.

The shift to a market-based economy required a revolutionary and violent class struggle through which the capitalist bourgeoisie could capture state power and

create conditions conducive to the capitalist mode of production. This happened in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century civil war between the forces aligned with the bourgeoisie and the feudal forces. This type of violent class struggle had never taken place except some small abortive movements in the State of Cooch Behar and naturally the favourable conditions for the rise of capitalism was always absent in the State.

The basic factor that worked as pivot for the pre-colonial and the colonial rule was land. It was on land that government was solely dependent for its revenue. Majority of people earned their living from land as agriculturist and semi-agriculturists (rural artisans and professionals). Therefore, to have a perceptible change in the society a change must begin from the village. The subject of change must be the village institutions and the village infrastructure. Majority of the people were tied to agriculture because the productivity of agricultural labour was very low. Therefore, agrarian community continued to tie up with land to earn their subsistence and thus freeing labour from agriculture to non- agricultural pursuits was mere impossibility. Low productivity was thus one of the key factors for the static mode of production and relations of productions in case of Cooch Behar State.

Such a feudatory nature of economy gradually through phases witnessed an abortive kind of capitalist process certainly not leading to the capitalist formation of the society as per the deterministic discourse that feudalism would ultimately lead to the process of capitalism. The pre-colonial and the colonial Cooch Behar continued with agriculture as the principal primary sector of economy. The colonial Cooch Behar witnessed aberrations of different nature in its own economic process defined in terms of the relationship between the proprietary land and the tillers of land—the peasantry. However, beneficiaries of such economy varied from time to time due to the changes in the over all land revenue system witnessed by the Princely Cooch Behar. At no point of time the reforms in land system did bring peasantry as beneficiaries.

The marginalizing process of the peasantry had been a continuous process resulting out of the changes in the political, administrative, social and cultural intricacies that took place over the last few 100 years. This abortive capitalism as experienced by Colonial Cooch Behar may be reference point to understand the macro-dynamics of Indian agricultural history, society and political economy at large.

which may create a new academic space for the verification of the grand narratives of the nature of national economy based on agriculture.

While dealing with the experiences of agricultural history of Cooch Behar State both during pre-colonial and colonial formation, it has been revealed that a unique kind of feudalism prevailed in Cooch Behar till the de-colonization had taken place. Thus the mega-narratives on the societal development do not match with the experiences of Cooch Behar both under pre-colonial and colonial period. One needs a separate tool to conceptualize the intricacies at the local regional scale as little narratives. Evidently, this research venture specifies the micro details of the Cooch Behar, a marginally situated region neighbouring the North Eastern part of India, reaffirms the academic compulsion to understand the national history taking into cognizance its regional variants in a 'National History Localised' framework. Indeed the search on the issue whether Grand National history is the aggregation of the regional/local narratives or the regional/local histories are the by product of Grand National narratives-this is the question /query which has puzzled me throughout the years of my attempt to understand history which I live in. Nevertheless, the pre-colonial and colonial Cooch Behar finds a place in the mosaic of Indian social history.

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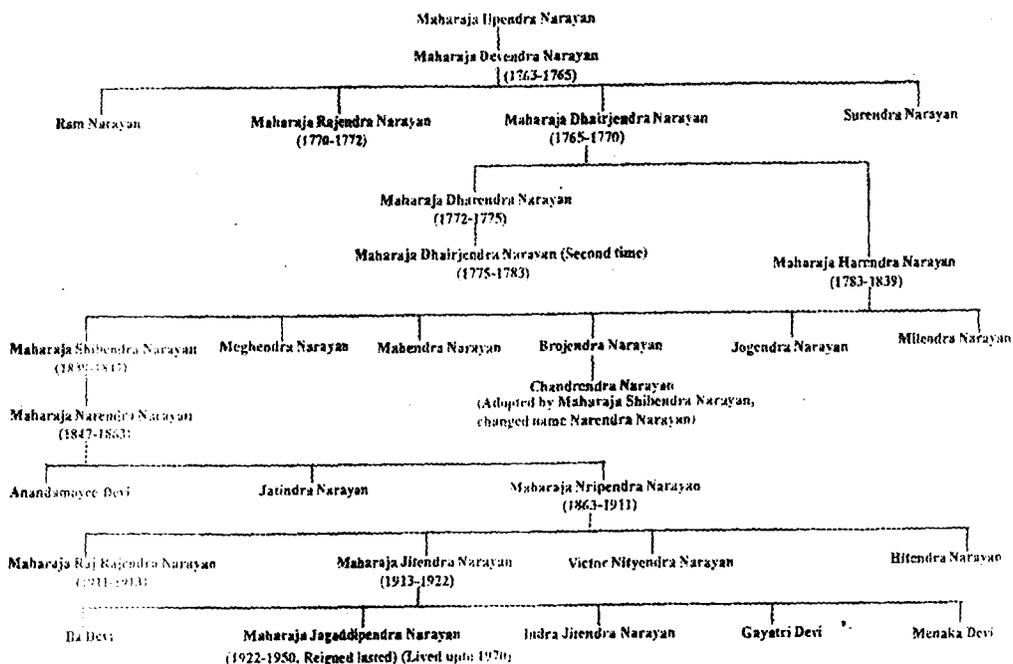
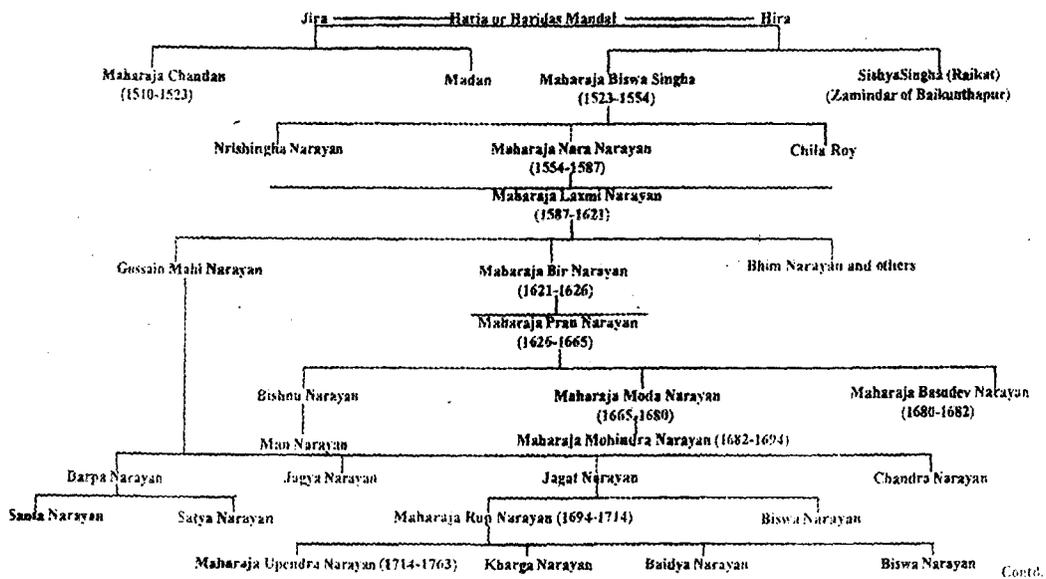
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Appendix – 1

GENAEOLOGICAL TABLE OF COCH BEHAR ROYAL FAMILY



## Appendix - 2

### Lands Granted as *Debutter* and Money allocated for the maintenance of Deities

No. 8.

Statement showing lands granted as *Debutter* to private individuals for maintenance of *Thakurs* and *Thakurani's*.

69

Ten Crore Rupee Fund.

Soyamant

No.	Date	Name of Donor	Name of original grantee	Name of present holder	Date of original grant	Name of Thakur or Thakurani for whom maintenance of the grant was made	Plot No. and name of Thakur whose land is situated	Quantity of land contained in Debutter	
1	22nd 1867	Maharaja Shivendra Narayan Bahadur.	Bala Desai...	Rari Prasad, Gurt Prasad & Dandara Desai	12th B.S. ...	Deities of Bhandarwan Thakurani.	78 Nij Tamal Makhilgunj.	64 15 5	
2	2 of 1868	Unknown ...	Unknown ...	Mahendra Narayan Chakravarty.	Unknown ...	Deities of Nara Birgha Thakur.	64 Shabaganja Rohingunja.	80 7 9	
3	276	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bahadur.	Chura Karji	Shri Prasad Karji, Kishori, Gonkashore Bhole Nath, Monohar, Durga Prasad.	27th Magh 268 Shaka	Deities of Kasa Lal Thakur.	211 Gopalpore, Mathabhang.	123 12 0	
4	121	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bahadur.	Ram Deb Modi	Jago Bandha Modi ...	Original grant and last renewed granted by Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan on the 27th Magh, 1861 B.S.	Deities of Chotabhai Thakur.	261 Bhartal Danga Mathabanga.	1,114 15 0	
5	741	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bahadur.	Madhusudan Karji.	Taktiram Karji ...	7th Asvin 203 Shaka.	Deities of Syam Hari Birgha Thakur.	326 Nalagibari, Mathabanga.	40 15 2	
6	224	Unknown ...	Unknown ...	Ram Nath Bairagi ...	Unknown ...	Deities of Mahaprabha Thakur	269 Akra Bah Khorkibari.	21 5 0	
7	234	Unknown ...	Megaji Bairagi.	Banai Das Bairagi ...	Unknown ...	Deities of Gopi Nath Birgha Thakur.	221 Jatia Gara Lal Batar.	29 18 2	
8	1502	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bahadur.	Radha Ram Govwami.	Lalit Mohan and Hari Mohan Govwami.	5th Magh 271 Shaka.	Deities of Syam Bander Thakur.	274 Chokusaal, Dinahata.	97 15 0	
	1503	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bahadur.	Radha Ram Govwami.	Lalit Mohan and Hari Mohan Govwami.	5th Magh 271 Shaka.	.....	284 Borobhita, Dinahata.	64 15 0	
10	1048	.....	Kidoy Ram Das.	Bir Nath Barakati ...	15th Bhadre 270 Shaka.	.....	289 Brahmanir Choki, Dinahata.	49 10 16	
11	1677	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bahadur.	Govindaprasad Baiswaha and Atinchun Das Bairagi	Suk Deb Das Bairagi.	9th Magh 205 Shaka.	.....	270 Tharakhaha, Dinahata.	21 12 0	
12	1808 1161	.....	Balak Das Shebaiti.	Raghunir Bairagi Shebaiti.	Unknown ...	.....	710 Baladanga, Dinahata.	2 9 10	
13	1788	Unknown ...	Madhuram Hishabai.	Shubannanda, Shibananda and Hemannanda Hishabai.	Unknown ...	Deities of Radha Nath Birgha and other Thakur.	714 Dinahata ...	25 2 0	

Contd...

No. of Settlement Case in which the grant was issued.	Name of grantor.	Name of original grantee.	Name of present holder.	Date of original grant.	Name of Thakur and Thakuradas for whose maintenance the grant was made.	Thak. No. and name of Taluk where land is situated.	Quantity of land contained in Dehata.	
		Unknown.	Saidya Nath Das ...	Not known.	.....	728 Koaldaha, Dinahata.	140 15 6	
15	1678	Som Baharaja ...	Dukhiram Adhikari.	Dollram Adhikari ...	2th Kartic 256 Shaka.	724 Kharkharis, Dinahata.	14 5 6	
16	2041	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Raghu Narayan Kumar.	Dhullab Narayan Kumar.	Unknown...	Braja Mohan Bigraba Thakur.	740 Haribhanga Khattimari, Dinahata.	127 19 12
17	1834	Kharendra Narayan Nasir Deo.	Rati Hishabta.	Rash Behari Budra ...	12th Agrhasya 1175 B. S.	Lakshmi Narayan Gopal Bigraba, Radhika Thakurani.	758 Lotafala Chhat, Dinahata.	78 0 0
18	1863	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Kanta Narayan Kumar.	Dhairya Narayan Kumar and Anandmoni Jhoreni widow of Mahesh Narayan Kumar.	Not known.	.....	759 Moria Bud, Dinahata.	140 10 18
19	2000	Ditto	Hari Deb Sharma.	Dharma Narayan Sharma.	12th Kartic 1175 B. S.	.....	777 Gopalganj, Dinahata.	54 0 0
20	2007	Unknown	Unknown	Rash Behari Budra	Unknown	.....	780 Kalganai bud, Dinahata.	37 0 4

The Cooh Bahar Grant.

21	602	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Shante Deb Kumar.	Lakshmi and Jhoreni and Srimati Jhoreni widow of Shantur Deb Kumar.	12th Falgun 235 Shaka.	Debottar of Madan Mohan Thakur.	598 Falakwari Charja Cooh Behar.	128 6 8
22	621	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Janak Ram Bhattacharj	Dhansu Ram Bhattacharj and Upendra Ram Bhattacharj and Nitya mot Debta.	11th Magh 318 Shaka.	.....	640 Haldimohan, Cooh Behar.	12 12 8
23	64	Kharendra Narayan Nasir Deo.	Ram Deb Sharma Med.	Jaga Bandhu Med.	7th Chaitra 303 Shaka.	Debottar of Chaturbhaj Thakur.	655 Patpara, Cooh Behar.	46 16 16
24	798	Unknown.	Unknown.	Jibes and Ram Mohan Adhikari.	Unknown.	Debottar of Gopal Bigraba Thakur.	Do.	47 10 10
25	840	Kharendra Narayan Nasir Deo.	Ram Deb Med.	Jaga Bandhu Med.	7th Chaitra 303 Shaka.	Debottar of Chaturbhaj Thakur.	659 Nalinghari Haru, Cooh Behar.	98 12 12
26	409	Unknown.	Unknown.	Guru Prasad Med.	13th Pous.	Debottar of Juganath Thakur.	683 Athakota Baro, Cooh Behar.	85 2 12
27	385	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Radha Ramon Goswami.	Lalit Mohan Goswami.	6th Magh 271 Shaka.	Debottar of Nym Sundar Thakur.	604 Mowamari, Cooh Behar.	64 2 2
28	1422	Rani Shatyabhama	Rani Deb Med.	Jaga Bandhu Med.	Original Sanad lost. Sanad given by Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, 24th Agrhasya 1182 B. S.	Debottar of Chaturbhaj Thakur.	610 Gungumari Cooh Behar.	26 12 0

Dehata.

Contd...

No. of Grants	Name of grantee.	Name of original grantee.	Name of present holder.	Date of original grant.	Name of Thakur and Thakurani for whose maintenance the grant was made.	Thak No. and name of Thak where land is situated.	Quantity of land contained in Debottor.	
29	346	Khangendra Narayan Nasir Duo.	Randab Modi	Jagabandhu Modi	7th Chaitra 203 Shaka.	Debottor of Chaturbhuj Thakur.	917 Bhaladanga, Cooch Behar.	256 13 7
30	653	Maharaja Upendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur	Unknown.	Ramya Deb and Chandra Deb Guwam.	18th Asvin 211 Shaka.	Debottor of Madan Gopal Thakur.	918 Damodarapur, Cooch Behar.	247 2 2
31	1078	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Mahendra Narayan Kumar.	Bhubanendra Narayan Kumar.	Unknown.	Debottor of Krishna Balaram Thakur.	922 Natkerpar, Cooch Behar.	24 0 12
32	2086	Do.	Opbra Karji.	Nila Sanbar.	Ditto.	Debottor of Balaram Thakur.	925 Gosingunj, Cooch Behar.	3 4 15
33	1090	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Kholaram Jamdaria.	Krishna Chandra Jamdaria.	4th Asvin 250 Shaka.	Ditto.	932 Jhansidanga, Cooch Behar.	21 13 0
34	1101	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Wister of Asharu Das.	Shidhya Nath Jhantacharya.	18th Pous 325 Shaka.	Debottor of Braj Kishore Bigraha.	933 Dawguri, Cooch Behar.	44 5 12
35	1099	Unknown.	Unknown.	Mahendra Sing Kumar, Padya Sing Kumar.	Unknown.	Debottor of Kanai Thakur.	935 Kusidanga, Cooch Behar.	5 2 3
36	1 37	Maharaja Upendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Kanta Narayan Kumar.	Shambhu Narayan Kumar and Narayan Kumar.	11th Chaitra 228 Shaka.	Debottor of Mohan Thakur.	Ditto.	78 12 6

THE COOCH BEHAR STATE

37	1098	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Asharu Das.	Shidhya Nath Jhantacharya.	14th Falgun 313 Shaka.	Debottor of Braj Kishore Bigraha Thakur.	936 Choryga, Cooch Behar.	40 14 14
38	1098	Do.	Padya Dandria.	Kail Prasad Das.	10th Falgun 324 Shaka.	Debottor of Madan Mohan Thakur.	Ditto.	86 8 0
39	1412	Do.	Rasik Sing Kumar.	Kabir Sing and Sherup Sing Kumar.	5th Sraban 379 Shaka.	Debottor of Balgram Thakur.	944 Dodaerpar, Cooch Behar.	55 0 0
40	1093	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Govinda Ram Jamdaria.	Krishna Chandra Jamdaria.	23rd Kartik 293 Shaka.	Debottor of Balaram Thakur.	947 Chokhoka, Cooch Behar.	16 6 11
41	1094	Maharaja Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Gopal Adhikari.	Bholka Adhikari.	Unknown.	Debottor of Ranai Madan Thakur.	Ditto.	4 10 18
42	1100	Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Govinda Deb Modhi.	Ramya Deb and Chandra Deb Modhi.	12th Asar 285 Shaka.	Debottor of Balakrishna Nath Thakur.	1008 Baikuntapur, Cooch Behar.	173 16 0
43	187	Marich Mati Aye ...	Gayan Das Adhikari.	Bhuban Mohan Buri.	17th Sraban 1193 B. S.	.....	1023 Amburi, Cooch Behar.	25 0 0
44	1094	Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Rajghunath Das.	Kail Deb Buzi	23rd Asvin 361 Shaka.	Debottor of Madan Mohan Thakur.	1078 Putimari Buzi beel, Cooch Behar.	518 0 0
45	235	Maharaja Bup Narayan and Harendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur.	Paras Ram Modhi and Hariprasad Modhi.	Gunga Prasad, Gura Prasad and Gobinda Prasad Modhi	10th Asar 185 Shaka. 8th Poush 294 Shaka.	Debottor of Gopi Nath Thakur.	914 town of Cooch Behar.	16 4 9

BOSTON

Contd...

No. of grant.	Name of grantor.	Name of agent.	Name of present holder.	Date of original grant.	Name of holder whose distribution the grant was made.	Place of issue.	Quantity of land contained in the grant.
66	Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Bhop Sahas det.	Prithvi Narayan Bhop Sahas det.	Krishna Sambhara	22nd March 1810	Director of Public Revenue, Travancore.	914 Pura of Cochin.	7 12 10
67	Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Bhop Sahas det.	Raghunath Das det.	Rati Das Das det.	22nd Aug. 1811	Director of Public Revenue, Travancore.	DMCO	100 12 18
68	Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Bhop Sahas det.	Arjun Das det.	YD Mool Naraya det.	20th March 1812	Director of Public Revenue, Travancore.	1000 Nakkattigoch, Puzhappuzha, Travancore.	83 8 6

COCHIN BEERAS : CHANDRA KAMAL LALITH,  
 The 29th March 1900. Dwar MullMeer.

A  
 Statement showing the details of Debut-  
 ter grants, prepared by Mr. Beveridge,  
 Deputy Commissioner, in 1865.

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মৌসুমী ধরনের বরাদ্দ স্থাপিত যেবালর সবুহ সরকার কোচবিহার এলাকে আকিল কমিশনারী সন ১৮৩৫  
 ইংরেজী তারিখ ২৪এ নবেম্বর মোতাবেক ১২৭২ সন বাঙ্গালী তারিখ ১০ই অগ্রহায়ণ।

সেবার নাম।	বিত্তা পূজা।	পূর্ব পূজা।	বারে তিথি বাঙ্গা পূজা।	সেবারি ধরট।	বারে ধরট।	একুন।	বারে বকে খরের পরিমাণ হইয়াছে।	বাড়ি মোট।
✓ কলসোহন ঠাহুর ...	১০২৬	.....	১০৪	১০৬	.....	১০০০	২০০	১০০০০
✓ কালোলা ঠাহুর ...	৪৭০/০	.....	৭৯	১২০	.....	৪০২/০	৭	৪৭০/০
✓ কালোলা ঠাহুর ...	১৩৭৭/০	.....	৪২৬/০	৪০	.....	৩০০/০	১২	৩০০/০
✓ কলসোহন ঠাহুর ...	১৩২৬/০	.....	৪৫৭/০	১০২	.....	৪০০	৪৭	৪০০
✓ কালোলা ঠাহুর ...	৪১০	.....	৪০০	৪০	.....	২২১৬/০	৪	২১০০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর। মীরাপুর টাকাদার...	৪০	.....	.....	.....	.....	৪০	৪০	৪০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর মাকদারীর পূর্ব ...	১০১	.....	.....	.....	.....	১০৪	.....	১০৪
কাল মোকদারীর ঠাহুর মোকদা ...	৪০	.....	.....	.....	.....	৪০	.....	৪০

THE COCHIN STATES

কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	১০৬	.....	.....	.....	.....	১০৬	.....	১০৬
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	১১০১/০	৪০/০	১১০৬/০	১০	৪০০	১০০১/০	৪০	১১০৬/০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	.....	.....	.....	.....	১০৬	১০৬	.....	১০৬
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	৪০	.....	.....	.....	.....	৪০	৪০	৪০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	৪০	.....	.....	.....	.....	৪০	পূজা বাব মো	.....
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	১০৬	৪০	৪৬	১০৬	৪০	৪০	৪০	৪০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	৪১০	১০৬	১০	৪০	৪০	৪০	৪০	৪০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	.....	৪০	.....	.....	.....	৪০	৪০	৪০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	১০৬	.....	১০৬/০	১০	৪০/০	১০৬/০	৪০/০	১০৬/০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	৭০	.....	১০৬/০	.....	.....	৭০	পূজা বাব মো	.....
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	৭০	৭	৭১/০	.....	.....	৭০/০	.....	৭০/০
কাল কুলে ঠাহুর ...	১০০১/০	১০০১/০	১০০১/০	১০	৪০	১০০১/০	.....	১০০১/০
(মোট).....	৪০৬	১১০৬/০	১১০৬/০	১০৬	৪০০/০	১১০৬/০	৪০৬/০	১১০৬/০

CORRECTION

Contd...









## Appendix - 3

### Growth of Population in Cooch Behar District 1901-1971

GROWTH OF POPULATION IN KOCH BIHAR DISTRICT : 1901-71

District/Subdivision/ Police Station	Population 1971	Variation 1901-71	Population 1901	Variation 1951-61	Population 1951	Variation 1941-51	Population 1941	Variation 1931-41
<b>Koch Bihar District</b>	<b>14,14,183</b>	<b>3,94,377</b>	<b>1,019,806</b>	<b>+3,50,857</b>	<b>6,68,949</b>	<b>+30,206</b>	<b>6,38,743</b>	<b>+49,650</b>
Sadar Subdivision	3,72,487	1,00,003	2,72,484	+1,00,610	1,71,865	+21,891	1,49,974	+17,352
<b>Koch Bihar</b>	<b>3,72,487</b>	<b>1,00,003</b>	<b>2,72,484</b>	<b>+1,00,610</b>	<b>1,71,865</b>	<b>+21,891</b>	<b>1,49,974</b>	<b>+17,352</b>
Tufanganj Subdivision	2,41,633	67,986	1,73,637	+75,924	97,713	+3,011	94,702	+0,355
Tufanganj	2,41,633	67,986	1,73,637	+75,924	97,713	+3,011	94,702	+0,355
Dinbata Subdivision	3,40,556	92,697	2,47,859	+86,905	1,61,054	+1,020	1,60,034	+11,201
Dinbata	2,88,501	77,606	2,11,295	+74,295	1,37,000	+5,126	1,31,874	+0,904
Silai	51,535	15,091	36,664	+12,610	24,054	-4,100	28,160	+1,799
Matabhanga Subdivision	2,21,923	1,00,700	2,18,165	+89,474	1,28,691	+1,698	1,26,993	+7,398
Matabhanga	2,21,923	70,382	1,60,443	+47,509	1,02,936	+2,780	1,00,156	+4,627
Sitalkuchi	95,128	35,071	67,520	+21,065	46,455	-268	45,529	+4,796
Mekhliganj Subdivision	1,37,582	30,921	1,07,501	+17,035	89,626	+2,620	87,000	+4,146
Mekhliganj	81,007	21,010	60,037	+14,802	45,235	-268	45,523	-1,881
Haldibari	56,515	0,011	47,504	+8,133	44,371	+2,894	41,477	+6,020

GROWTH OF POPULATION IN KOCH BIHAR DISTRICT : 1901-71—contd.

District/Subdivision/ Police Station	Population 1931	Variation 1921-31	Population 1921	Variation 1911-21	Population 1911	Variation 1901-11	Population 1901
<b>Koch Bihar District</b>	<b>5,89,053</b>	<b>-1,548</b>	<b>5,90,599</b>	<b>-413</b>	<b>5,91,012</b>	<b>+25,898</b>	<b>5,65,116</b>
Sadar Subdivision	1,32,623	+288	1,32,334	+1,732	1,30,602	+8,993	1,21,609
<b>Koch Bihar</b>	<b>1,32,623</b>	<b>+288</b>	<b>1,32,334</b>	<b>+1,732</b>	<b>1,30,602</b>	<b>+8,993</b>	<b>1,21,609</b>
Tufanganj Subdivision	85,147	+2,184	82,063	+2,810	80,147	+6,709	73,438
Tufanganj	85,147	+2,184	82,063	+2,810	80,147	+6,709	73,438
Dinbata Subdivision	1,48,800	+647	1,48,183	-346	1,48,520	+1,620	1,43,000
Dinbata	1,21,370	+632	1,21,838	-285	1,22,123	+1,300	1,18,517
Silai	26,400	+116	26,345	-61	26,400	+828	25,581
Matabhanga Subdivision	1,09,500	-1,767	1,11,367	-1,237	1,12,604	+2,421	1,10,183
Matabhanga	96,920	-515	96,344	-1,791	97,535	+1,591	96,171
Sitalkuchi	44,051	-1,282	45,323	-251	44,709	+760	44,001
Mekhliganj Subdivision	82,564	-2,808	80,752	-3,478	80,120	+3,144	76,906
Mekhliganj	47,400	-1,570	48,976	-2,569	51,545	+1,142	50,293
Haldibari	35,148	-1,328	36,776	-809	37,583	+1,802	36,781

Appendix - 4

The Documents related to Landed Property e.g. Mutation, Deed and other Records presented herein are in Bengali language which happened to be the official state language of Cooch Behar under Pre-colonial and Colonial dispensation

জিলা		মৌজা নাম চুচুয়াবন্দর		জেঃ এলাঃ নং		খতিয়ান নং	
খানা চুচুয়াবন্দর		পত্র নং ১২৩		রেজিষ্ট্র নং		জোড়ি নং	
উপস্থিত বছের			অত্র বছের মেয়			যদিহা যতে ও কোন তারিখ হইতে	
খতিয়ান নং (মায় বাটা)	বিবরণ ও মখলদার (সংক্রান্ত)	স্বত্বদার নাম	খাজানা	সেল	মতব	খাজানা	সেল
৩০৩	চুচুয়া দা. মুসলিমী-খানা	২	১২৩	পথ ও পুর্	১২৩	পথ ও পুর্	১২৩
SEAL		ATTESTED DL 25/3/57 REVENUE OFFICER					
অত্র বছের বিবরণ ও মখলদার		অংশ	অত্র বছের বিবরণ ও মখলদার		অংশ	অত্র বছের ক্রৌী এবং বিশেষ বিবরণ অনুসর	
মুসলিমী চুচুয়াবন্দর মি. মুসলিমী মি. মুসলিমী মি. মুসলিমী মি. মুসলিমী মি. মুসলিমী মি. মুসলিমী		১০ ১১ ১২	মুসলিমী মুসলিমী মুসলিমী			U/R 31A মুসলিমী মুসলিমী মুসলিমী	
১০৫ ধারা যতে নোট বা পরিবর্তন (মায় মোকদ্দমা নং এবং সন)							

Contd...

অত্র বছরের নিজ: দখলীয়া জমি								
খতিয়ান নং	২৫ম দাম নং	জমির রকম	মত্ববা	আরুপার মোট পরিমাণ		দানের মধ্যে আরু বছরের অংশ	দানের মধ্যে অত্র বছরের অংশের জমির পরিমাণ	
				এঃ	শঃ		এঃ	শঃ
২২৬	২০১৪	<del>১১৬৫৫</del> ১১৬৫৫	<del>১</del> ১	৪	২		<del>২৪</del> ২৪০	
নিজ: দখলীয়া জমির মোট পরিমাণ								
অধীনস্থ বছরের খাজানা প্রাপকের খতিয়ান নম্বর (সার খাটা)		অধীনস্থ বছরের বিভিন্ন খতিয়ানের বর্ধ						
		২৪০						
অধীনস্থ বছরের মোট পরিমাণ								
সর্ব মোট								২৪০

Contd...



খতিয়ান নং _____ অত্র বছরের নিজ দখলীয় জমি								
ক্রমিক নং	খতিয়ান নং	জমির রকম	মতবা	আয়গার মোট পরিমাণ		মাগের মধ্যে অত্র বছরের অংশ	মাগের মধ্যে অত্র বছরের অংশের জমির পরিমাণ	
				এঃ	শঃ		এঃ	শঃ
৩২	১২৩৪	১০০০	১১০ হুটেজ মাগারত		২৬০	২		১৬
৩৩	১২৩৫	১০০০	১১০ হুটেজ মাগারত		২১০	২		১৪
৩৩৬	১২৩৬	১০০০	১১০ হুটেজ মাগারত			২		২১
(Tug Plots only)				১১০				
				১১০				
নিজ দখলীয় জমির মোট পরিমাণ								
অধীনস্থ বছরের খাজানা প্রাপকের খতিয়ান নম্বর (মাস বাট)		অধীনস্থ বছরের বিক্রির খতিয়ানের তফ						
				অধীনস্থ বছরের মোট পরিমাণ				
				সর্ব মোট				৬৪০

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খতিয়ান নং		অত্র বকেব নিম্ন দখলীয় জমি							
স্মারক নং	খতিয়ান নং	জমির রকম	মতব্বা	দায়গীর মোট পরিমাণ		দায়গীর মধ্যে বকেব অংশ		বকেব অংশে বাকী	
				এঃ	শঃ	এঃ	শঃ	এঃ	শঃ
৪৬ ৪৬২	৩২৪	জমিদার বাড়ী জমি	মহা জমি					০৪	
								২০০	
				মিল্ল দখলীয় জমি মোট পরিমাণ					
অধীনস্থ বকেব খতিয়ান নং				অধীনস্থ বকেব বিভিন্ন খতিয়ানের দর্দ					
				অধীনস্থ বকেব মোট পরিমাণ					
				সর্বমোট				৪২০	

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খতিয়ান নং		অব. বছর নিজ দখলীর জমি						
ক্রমিক নং ১৮	২১তম দাগ নং	জমির রকম	মতবাবা	জায়গার মোট পরিমাণ		দাগের মধ্যে অব. বছর জমির পরিমাণ	দাগের মধ্যে অব. বছর জমির পরিমাণ	
				এঃ	শঃ		এঃ	শঃ
৩২২	৪০২৩	চন্দ্রাবা	চাঁদ		০		০	০
৩২৩	৪০২২	চন্দ্রাবা	চাঁদ		০		০	০
৩২৪		চন্দ্রাবা	চাঁদ		০		০	০
		২/ Two plots only sd.				০৩০		
				নিজ দখলীর জমির মোট পরিমাণ ...				
অব. বছর খাজনা প্রাপকের খতিয়ান নম্বর (মাস বাটী)		অব. বছর বিভিন্ন খতিয়ানের ফর্দ						
				অব. বছর মোট পরিমাণ ...				
				সর্বমোট ...				০৩০

Contd...



খতিয়ান নং		অধীনস্থ বছরের নিজ দখলীর জমি		জমিদার মোট পরিমাণ		দালের মধ্যে অধীনস্থ বছরের অংশের জমির পরিমাণ	
খতিয়ান নং	খতিয়ান	জমির রকম	মন্তব্য	এ:	শ:	এ:	শ:
				৩১৮	৩২৬	৩৩৭	১
৩১৮	৩২৬	৩৩৭	১	১	১	১	
৩১৮	৩২৬	৩৩৭	১	১	১	১	
Two plots only se				৩৭০			
অধীনস্থ বছরের খাজনা প্রাপকের খতিয়ান নম্বর (মাস বাটা)				অধীনস্থ বছরের বিভিন্ন খতিয়ানের কর্দ			
				৩৭০			
অধীনস্থ বছরের মোট পরিমাণ ...				৩৭০			
সর্বমোট ...				৩৭০			

## Appendix – 5

### List of Jotedars who became Defaulter

#### রাজ্য কোচবিহার মহকুমা সদর

ইং ১৮৯৭ সনের ১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারী মোতাবেক ১৩০৩ সনের ১৪ই ফাল্গুন বুধবার, কোচবিহার রাজ্যের মহকুমা সদরের মাল কাছ রীতে প্রকাশ্য বিক্রয় হইবে ইতি।

ডৌজির নং	মহালের প্রকার	পরগণার নাম	ভাণ্ডারের নাম	জোতদারের নাম	সদর জমা	বাকী	মন্তব্য
৩৫২	মাল	বেহার	পাটছড়া	ফুলেশ্বর দাস	১০২।।১	২৫।।১৬	
৬১১	মাল	বেহার	ছেট নলসীবাড়ী	কেন্দারমোহন রায়	৫০।।৫	১২।।১৮	
৪৭২	মাল	বেহার	ছেট আঠারকোটা	জনকীনাথ মজুমদার	১৩৮।।২	৩৪।।১০	
৪৮৯	মাল	বেহার	একমুখা	তারানাথ মজুমদার	১৩৮।।২	৩৪।।১০	
৪০৪	মাল	বেহার	খররা তিবাড়ী	অনন্দাশ্রম মজুমদার	১৪০।৫	৩৪।।০	
৫৩৩	মাল	বেহার	বড় আঠারকোটা	ইন্দ্রনাথ গোট	৬৪।।৩	১৮৮।।৪	

Gopal Chandra Chatterjee, Naib Ahilka, pp.100,102,1001.

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রাজ্য কোচবিহার মহকুমা দীনহাটা

এতদ্বারা জনান বাইতেছে যে, ১৮৫৯ সালের ১১ আইনের ও অত্র রাজ্যের প্রচলিত বিধানানুসারে, রাজ্য কোচবিহারের অধীন মহকুমা দীনহাটা কালেক্টরির ভৌগোলিক নিয়ন্ত্রিত মহাল সমস্ত ১৩০৩ সনের পৌষ তালকের খাকী রাজস্ব আদায় জন্য আশা মী ইং ১৮৯৭ সনের ২২এ কেরকারী, মোতাবেক ১৩০৩ সনের ১২ই ফাল্গুন সোমবার রাজ্য কোচবিহারের মহকুমা দীনহাটার মাল কাছারী প্রকাশ্য নিলামে বিক্রয় হইবে ইতি।

ক্রমিক নং	মহালের প্রকার	পরামর্শের নাম	আলফোর্ডের নাম	ক্রোড়মানের নাম	সদর জমা	খাকী	মন্তব্য
৬৭৬	মাল	দীনহাটা	দশরান শেরমাথুকা	ইয়ার মাদুদ সিংহ...	৬৫/৪	১৬১০	
৬৯২	মাল	দীনহাটা	কল্লর জলধুরহাটি	শিবেরদেওয়ান বহোরগাশায়	৩১১১৮৭	১৫১৯	
৭০৪	মাল	দীনহাটা	খাঃ আদৌরাবদী	মদাকান্ত মজুমদার	৩২১৮৭	২৪১৭	
৭৪৯	মাল	দীনহাটা	করলা	শশীকান্ত ঘোষ	১০৭১৬০	৩৪১১০	
৭০৫	মাল	দীনহাটা	কেন্দ্রস্থল হরিনান	মদাকান্ত মজুমদার	৮০১১১	৪০১৩	
৮৪৩	মাল	দীনহাটা	চানের কুঠী	মহেশচন্দ্র বিশ্বাস	১১১১৮১০	২৭১৬০	
১০৬৫	মাল	দীনহাটা	দুর্গানগর	বিবেক্রামচরণ কোচ র সাহেব	৩২৬/৫	৮১১৪	

Source: The Cooch Behar Gazette, 1897, N.B.S.L., Huri Nath Bose, offg. Naib Ahikar, p.66,67,68.



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রাজ্য কোচবিহার মহকুমা তুফানগঞ্জ

রাজ্য কোচবিহারের আন্তর্গত মহকুমা নিম্নলিখিত মহাল সমস্ত বর্তমান বর্ষের কিন্তু তুফানগঞ্জের কালেক্টরীর জেজিভুক্ত পৌষ জলাবের বাকী রাজস্ব আদায় জন্য ইং ১৮৯৭ সনের ২০এ ফেব্রুয়ারী, মোতাবেক ১৯০৩ সনের ১০ই ফাল্গুন, শনিবার, কোচবিহার রাজ্যের মহকুমা তুফানগঞ্জের মালকাছারীতে প্রকাশ্য নিলামে বিক্রয় হইবে।

জেজির নং	মহালের প্রকার	পরগণার নাম	ভালুকের নাম	জেজিটারের নাম	সদর জমা	বাকী	মন্তব্য
৫১৩	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	বিধুজি চিকলীওড়ী	শিবপ্রসাদ মাজা	১৪৮।। ৬	৩৮ ০	
৬৫৪	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	অশ্বরাম ফুলবাড়ী	রতনবর দাস	৩৯।। ১	১।। ১০	
৯৭৭	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	মাটাবাড়ী	কোনরাম দাস গঃ	২৭।। ৭	১৩।। ১	
১০০৭	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	চাড়ালাজানী	প্যারীমোহন বোম্বাল	২১।। ৫	১০	
১১১০	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	শ্রী শঙ্ক বাসরাজ	সঞ্জীকান্ত চক্রবর্তী গ	১১ ২	৫।। ১০	
১১২০	মাল	তুফানগঞ্জ	শ্রী শঙ্ক বাসরাজ	দুলাল নগা	১৫।। ৭	৭।। ২০	

Eharendra Nath Chowdhuri, Naib Ahikar, pp. 108, 109, 110.

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রাজ্য কোচবিহার মহকুমা মাথাভাঙ্গা

১৩০৩...১৮৯৭ সনের ৮ই মার্চ মোতাবেক ১৩০৩ সনের ২৬এ ফাল্গুন, বুধবার মহকুমা মাথাভাঙ্গার মাল কাছারীতে প্রকাশ্য ি  
নলামে বিক্রয় হইবে ইতি।

ক্রমিক নং	মহালের প্রকার	পরগণার নাম	ভালুকের নাম	জোতদারের নাম	সদর জমা	বাকী	মন্তব্য
২২৫	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	বড়খতিসামারী	বিদ্যাসিনী দাস্যা	৭৭৩/২	১৯২/১ ১৩	
৩৬১	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	শীকারপুর	সর্বানন্দ প্রমাদিক গঃ	৯২/১০	২৩/১	
৫১৩	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	পচাগড়	তাকিনীচরণ চক্রবর্তী	৫০/১২	১২/১ ২৬	
৭৭৫	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	পানীগাম	কেশবচন্দ্র চক্রবর্তী	১০২/৬	২৫/১৫	
৭৮৩	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	পানীগাম	শক্তিচন্দ্র লাহিড়ী গঃ	৬২৬/৫	১৬৫/৪	
১১৫৮	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	ছেড়ামারী	স্বরকালোধ চৌধুরী	৭৭/৩	১২/১৩	
১১৫৮	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	গুতারশাড়	নবকান্ত মজুমদার	১৭৫/১৭	খাস জোত	
১১৯২	মাল	মাথাভাঙ্গা	শালনারা ২য় খণ্ড	ধর্মেশ্বরী দেব্য	৯৮৫/১১	২৯৯/৮	

Ashutosh Gosh, Naib Ahlikar, p.177,178.

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রাজ্য কোচবিহার মহকুমা মেখলীগঞ্জ

সবই এক... ১৩০৩ সনের কিছু পৌষ তলরের বাকী মোতাবেক ১৩০৩ সনের ১৪ই ফাল্গুন রাজস্ব আশয়ের জন্য আগামী ইং ১৮৯৭ সনের ২৪এ ফেব্রুয়ারী, বুধবার রাজ্য কোচবিহারের মহকুমা মেখলীগঞ্জের মাল কাছারীতে প্রকাশ্য নিলামে বিক্রয় হইবে ইতি

তৌজির নং	মহালের ধকার	পরগণার নাম	জালুকের নাম	ক্রোড়সাতের নাম	সদর জমা	বাকী	মন্তব্য
৫	দেবত্র	মেখলীগঞ্জ	অম্বরান দেবত্র	কাশীনাথ দাস গঞ...	১৩৫।১৮	৫৬	
৪২	মাল	তেলধর	কেউলাতাকঃ	রামমোহন বস্তুী...	৬৭৮।১১	১৩৯।। ১০	
৭৫	মাল	তেলধর	সিসিমারী	বিক্রমনাথ দাস গঞ..	৩৫।।১৪	৮।।১২	
১	মাল	বহিমগঞ্জ	বড় হলনিবাড়ী	তাসমতুল্য প্রধান	১৩৯।।১৪	৩৫	
৮১	মাল	বহিমগঞ্জ	বস্তুীগঞ্জ	শ্যামাধরাম রায় গঞ	৯২।।১০	২৩৮।৬	

Padma Nath Dass, Naib Ahikkar, p. 84, 85, 87.

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