Chapter V

AGRARIAN RELATIONS : LANDLORD AND PEASANT

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Chapter V

AGRARIAN RELATIONS: LANDLORD AND PEASANT

Introduction

We have seen in the preceding chapters that it was not possible to discuss the structure and dynamics of production, without taking into account the social relations in which it was embedded. We have also suggested that the social context of production was fraught with contradiction. There was constant struggle between the zamindar and the peasant for control of all the major elements of production, be it the forest, the arable or the water sources. This process shaped in an important way the variation in the dynamic of production. Take the example of the arable. Although the whole region was equally subjected to the Malthusian pressure, the response of the arable to it varied both in time and space. Thus it was found that in part of the region the arable had stagnated in most of the 19th century even with the mounting pressure of population. These areas underwent fairly rapid expansion after the introduction of legislative and executive measures like the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act and the Survey and Settlement operations. It was suggested, then, that the stagnation of arable in these regions was mainly due to institutional reasons viz the structure of property relations, the dominance of landlordism and consequent insecurity of tenancies.

In this chapter our aim is to study an important aspect of the social structure, namely the relationship between the landlords and peasants. Till the beginning of this century it was this relationship which dominated the agrarian society of the
region. The landlords by virtue of their ownership of land extracted surplus from a vast majority of the population - the cultivators - in the form of rent (cash, kind and labour mixed in various proportion). But the property relation which was the source of power and surplus for the landlords was not an absolute given. Constantly subject to pressure and counter-pressure from the contending social classes, this structure of relation varied over time and space. It was also crucially shaped by the colonial state. The intervention of colonial state in favour of one class or the other decisively tilted the balance of force between the classes. These direct or indirect interventions apart, colonial policy in general and its agrarian policy in particular often provided the arena as well as the rules according to which the struggle between classes took place. Thus the importance of 'law' and the legal structure in determining the contours of the relations between social classes.

Yet we confront the question: why was the balance of force differently structured in different areas of the same region even when they were subject to broadly similar colonial policy, law and administration? This question cannot be answered if the specifics of the regional context of social relations are dissolved into the monolith of the colonial structure.

In this chapter we first explore the spatial variations in social structure of the region at the beginning of this century, using 'rent' as the index of power exercised by landlords over peasants. We also carry out a preliminary analysis of the factors that determine the level and rate of surplus. In the next section we delineate the forms of property relations and customary rights inherent in various types of village systems.
Part I: Regional Variations of Rent Rate

1.1: Mapping Rent as Share of Gross Value

A crucial measure of the power the landlord has over the peasants, is the amount of surplus which is extracted by the former from the latter. In the agrarian economy of the region, one of the major forms of surplus extraction was the amount of rent paid by the cultivators.

In Chotanagpur, till the Survey and Settlement operations the rent paid by the tenants was usually in a combination of forms i.e. cash, kind and labour. The cash component of the rent was the predominant form, added to which were a variety of cess in kind called rakumat. In addition, in many areas tenants were supposed to give a limited quantity of labour for the cultivation of landlord's personal land, thatching or building his house and carrying his luggage on his travels. The labour dues were called beth begari. The proportion in which these three forms were combined varied from place to place. There were tenancies in which only labour dues were taken and others in which only cash rent was taken. While cash and kind rent, were usually assessed on the Don and Tanr land on the size of cultivation, beth begari was usually assessed per household, without reference to the size of cultivation.

During the Survey and Settlement operation the kind and labour component of the rental was commuted into cash, at the prevailing rate of wage and price of products. But the gross rental thus ascertained during the settlement operations did not represent in all cases the amount actually paid by the cultivators during or before the survey. Under the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, (Section 26), the rents which were enhanced after 1901 without
due process through the revenue courts, were declared illegal and only the rents that were paid before 1901 were recorded. Secondly, if the rental was found to be either too high or decidedly not 'fair and equitable, there was provision for settling the rents by a 'fair rent settlement'. In case of Palamau, the rental which were attested during the settlement were often found to be too high (see the discussion later) and thus in most of the district compulsory fair rent settlement was initiated, which considerably reduced the rent payable by the cultivators compared to what they were paying before the settlement operation. Similarly in some cases, as in parts of Ranchi district where the rate of rent was too low, the rental was increased on application of landlords by certain fixed per cent. With these caveats, the gross rental of each district during Survey and Settlement operations thus gives us an index of the surplus that was extracted by landlords in various forms of rent.

In Table 5.1 we have the gross rental of each district of Chotanagpur, as ascertained during the Survey and Settlement operation held in the first two decades of the present century. The settlement officers also frequently, estimated the share of rent in the total value of the agricultural produce in the rent paying lands. Undoubtedly, the proportion thus assigned was not always accurate since the valuation was done mainly by converting the total produce in terms of a fixed ratio of yield of paddy in each class of land (i.e. both Don and Tanr ) and then multiplying it by the price of paddy. The ratios of the yield were often not based on accurate or extensive crop cutting estimates. Nevertheless, the proportion of the rental to the gross value of the produce, thus estimated, will give us a fair idea of the
spatial variation of the amount of rent within the division.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year of survey</th>
<th>Gross rental(^{(1)}) ((\text{cash + produce}))</th>
<th>Gross value of tenants produce (\text{Rs.})</th>
<th>Share of rental to the gross value (in per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RANCHI</td>
<td>1902-10</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>14,993</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAZARIBAGH</td>
<td>1908-15</td>
<td>1337</td>
<td>10,739</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALAMAU</td>
<td>1913-20</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>4,841</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANBHUM(^{e})</td>
<td>1918-25</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>22,763</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGHBHUM</td>
<td>1900-03</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) FORAHAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) DHALBHUH</td>
<td>1906-11</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>3,604</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) KOLHAN(^{e})</td>
<td>1913-18</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>7,233</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from respective SRs of the districts.

Note: (1) Produce rent has been converted into cash on the assumption that it was always half the total produce. (adh halai).

(2) The proportion of various kinds of land under tenancy is assumed to be the same as the total district proportion.

From the table it can be discerned that the rental of 3 districts viz. Ranchi, Singhbhum and Manbhum was roughly around 5 to 6 per cent of the value of gross produce of the land cultivated by the tenants of various categories. On the other hand, the rental of Palamau and Hazaribagh is distinctly higher, with the Palamau raiyat paying about 20 per cent of his produce as rent and in Hazaribagh the figure being nearly 12.5 per cent. The distinctly higher rental of Hazaribagh and Palamau bears comparison not with other districts of Chotanaapur but with the
neighbouring districts of Bihar. Under what conditions did the landlords of Palamau and Hazaribagh manage to extract such a high proportion of the tenant's produce as rent?

Another crucial variable in the relation between landlords and tenants was the land held directly by the landlords, variously known as manjhihaas, bakast, abad, zirat or khas. These categories of land were either cultivated by servants and forced labour (begari) extracted from the peasants, or let out on very high produce rent. Very often it was the best rice land of the village which was held as bakast by the landlord, (see Table5.2)

Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year of Survey</th>
<th>% of Bakast Don to Total Don</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>1902-10</td>
<td>14.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>1908-15</td>
<td>15.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>1913-20</td>
<td>30.06 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manbhum¹</td>
<td>1918-25</td>
<td>14.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhbhum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Porahat</td>
<td>1900-03</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Dhalbhum</td>
<td>1906-11</td>
<td>6.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Kolhan</td>
<td>1913-18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from the 'Goshwara' of respective SRs

Note: (1) Figures for Manbhum also include that of Barabhum and Patkum estates which were surveyed in 1907-12.

(2) Figures for Porahat represent the ratio of total bakast land to total cultivated area.

1. In the Southern portion of Shahbad and Gaya district adjoining Chotanagpur it was estimated that the share of rent to value of tenants produce was about 12.5 per cent, in the last decades of the 19th century. See 'Rate Report of Palamau Government Estate' in 'Palamau Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi)
From the table it is evident that the landlords and tenure holders of Palamau held a disproportionately high amount of Don land as bakast. At the opposite end was Singhbhum district where there was no bakast land in Kolhan Government Estate and very little land held as khas in the other two estates of the districts. In Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Manbhum the proportion of landlord's bakast Don land was very nearly the same, at around 15 per cent of the total Don land. Though the configuration here is not so clear cut as in the case of gross rental, it is evident that in Palamau at least, the high rates were to some extent associated with a high proportion of bakast land.

1.2 Determination of Rate of Rent

As a working hypothesis, we can begin by assuming a relationship between rent and bakast. If the landlord holds a large proportion of land as his personal cultivation, it definitely reduces the amount of land for the tenants. This would mean that competition among the tenants would drive rents high. If rent is determined by the degree of competition amongst the tenants, then the pressure of population per unit of land would be the determining variable for the rate of rent. Thus on the assumption of competitive rent, we should expect that the rate of rent would be simultaneously determined by both the proportion of land held bakast as well as by the pressure of population.

In order to test the above hypothesis, we have the data of rent rate, population pressure and proportion of bakast land for 70 revenue thanas of 4 districts of Hazaribagh, Palamau, and Manbhum. The situation in Singhbhum being characterised by low
rent and low bakast, we have for the time being left it out of our experimental design\(^2\).

The dependent variable we have chosen is the rate of rent. The rate of rent is the rent payable per acre of Don land in possession of three categories of cultivators viz the kayemi or settled raiyats, dakhlikar or occupancy raiyats, and gair dakhlikar or non-occupancy raiyats. The total rent payable by all three classes of tenants has been divided by the total amount of Don land in their possession to get the figure for rate of rent. The rate of rent per acre of Don land has been chosen as the index because, the universal practice of rent assignment in Chotanagpur was on the basis of Don land while with each unit of Don land a complementary portion of village Tanr land was usually assigned free of rent. Thus usually the total village Don land was divided into certain fixed shares. With each share of the Don land a certain portion of the village Tanr land was thrown in. This type of rental assignment was known as chattisa in Ranchi, jibandari in Hazaribagh, rekhs in Manbhum and pattidari or kunwadari in Palamau\(^3\).

The calculation of rent rate per acre of rice land, thus makes it possible for us to compare the rent rates across territorial units, which may possess varying amount of Tanr land of different classes. A second problem arises from the fact that

\(^2\) There is another difficulty in using the data of Singhbhum district. In Singhbhum, the data on rent rates is available only at the level of estates. But the data of population is available between these two units, which makes comparison with other districts difficult.

\(^3\) The Hazaribagh settlement officer was of the opinion that the incidence of rent per acre of rice land was comparable because the "Tanr lands are generally complementary to the rice land". Hazaribagh SR, p. 68.
Survey and Settlement operations were carried out at different time periods in different districts. Thus for the sake of comparison, the rent rates of each district have also been deflated by the average price of rice, current during the period of settlement, excluding the famines years of 1907 and 1918. This represents the real rent per acre in terms of maunds of rice. The two independent variables chosen are:

1. the proportion of bakast Don to total Don - (BAKD)
2. the population per acre of Don land - (POPD)

In the Appendix Table I, we have the figures for both the nominal rent per acre of Don land (REND) and the real rent in terms of numbers of maunds of rice per acre (RENDR), as well as two independent variables for the 70 thanas. The population figures have been taken for the mid point years of each Survey period by interpolating the Census figures. Here, we consider only the results of the analysis.

**Correlation Matrix for 70 Thanas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REND</th>
<th>RENDR</th>
<th>POPD</th>
<th>BAKD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REND</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RENDR</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPD</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAKD</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REND - Nominal rent/acre of Don land
RENDR - Real rent/acre of Don land
POPD - Population/acre of Don land
BAKD - Bakast Don/Total Don land
1.3 Results of Correlation / Regression Analysis

Some interesting results of correlation between the variables can be seen from the above correlation matrix. Thus for all the thanas of 4 districts, 70 in number, we find that there is a significant positive correlation between either of our dependent variables i.e. rent rate both nominal and real, (REND and RENDR) and population pressure (POPD) and proportion of bakast Don land to total Don land. A minor point is that the proportion of the bakast land to the total Don land (BAKD) and population pressure (POPD) is also positively correlated, though the level of correlation is much lower than that between either of them and the rent rates.

If we take the real rent rate (RENDR) as dependent variable and regress it on the independent variable we get the following equation:

\[ Y = -0.638^* + 0.0419 X_1 + 0.0360 X_2 \]

\[ (5.835) (7.104) (7.60) \]

\[ R^2 = 0.735 \]

F statistic = 96.51

* Significant at 1% level.
Figures in brackets are 't' statistic of the coefficients

Real rent/acre of Don = RENDR = Y
Proportion of Bakast Don BAKD = X_1
Population per acre of Don land POPD = X_2

The two independent variables explain 73.5 per cent of the variation in the rent rate (real). So there is a very strong relationship between our independent variables and rent rate. In general then higher proportion of landlord's bakast land and higher population density are associated with high rent rates throughout the division.
But this is not all. If we notice the residuals, we can see an interesting pattern. The residuals being deviations of actual thana figure from the estimated value, we find that there is a preponderence of negative residuals, in the thanas of Ranchi and Manbhum districts. That is, the actual value of the rent rate is considerably lower than that of the estimated values. Does this mean, that our original hypotheses may not be valid for all the geographical regions? To test this we divide the data into two groups. In the first we have 27 thanas of Hazaribagh and Palamau and in the second group 43 thanas of Ranchi and Manbhum. Then we run the regression for both these groups separately. The results of the separate regressions are given below. For Palamau and Hazaribagh, the regressive equation is:

\[
Y = -0.5367^* + 0.05 X_1 + 0.242 X_2
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{\( (3.066) \)} & \text{\( (6.17) \)} & \text{\( (3.7) \)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
R^2 = 0.85 \quad F \text{ statistic } = 74.60
\]

* Significant at 1 % level.
Figures in the bracket represent the \(t\) statistic of the coefficient.

It is thus seen that around 85 per cent of the variation in the rate of rent in the two districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau is explained by the two independent variables. This is significantly higher than the figure for all the thanas. Thus the relation between population pressure and proportion of bakast land on the one hand and the rate of rent on the other, is much stronger in the two districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau than for all the 4 districts taken together.

Now let us see how far does our hypothesis hold good for the rest of the division. The regression equation for Manbhum and Ranchi is as follows.
\[ Y = 0.466 - 0.006 X_1^{**} + 0.029 X_2^{**} \]
\[
(5.123) (1.36) (1.28)
\]
\[ R^2 = 0.101 \]
\[ F \text{ statistic} = 2.26 \]

* Significant at 1% level.

** Not significant.

Figures in the bracket represent 't' statistic of coefficient.

It is clear that a very weak relationship exists between the rate of rent and population pressure and proportion of bakast Don, with only about 10 per cent of the variation in the rate of rent being explained by the two independent variables and neither of the regression coefficients being significant.

We then have a situation where in part of the region, Hazaribag and Palamau, the rate of rent is strongly determined by both population pressure and the proportion of landlord's bakast Don land, while in rest of the region, the same two variables seem to have very weak relationship with the rate of rent. It may be pointed out here that this broad geographical pattern coincides to a great extent with the regional configuration of the expansion of arable sketched out in the last chapter. That is, the districts where we had reasons to believe that the expansion of arable had not taken place in the 19th century, are precisely the areas where the rate of rent is strongly determined by the proportion of landlord's bakast land and population pressure. Conversely in the areas where we had evidence of rapid arable expansion in the late 19th century, the rate of rent seems weakly determined by the above variables. Given this coincidence, we have no hesitation in putting the whole of Singhbhum district, which underwent rapid expansion of
arable in the 19th century, with Ranchi and Manbhum i.e. in the region where the rate of rent was weakly determined by the two independent variables.

1.4 Context (I) and Context (II)

Our preliminary enquiry into the class relations of the region, taking "rent" as the key to the class structure has opened up a series of new problems. First of all we have to explain, (a) under what conditions of property relations could a high rental be extracted in some regions and not in the others. (b) what were the differences in class structure under which the same variables viz. the proportion of bakast land and population pressure, have such different relation with the rate of rent? The geographical pattern sketched out is a broad one; the district boundaries were not the actual lines which separated the two regions. Distinction across the borders of the district were not as clear cut.

We shall refer to the regions thus delineated as Context (I) and Context (II). In Context (I), we have the districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau and in Context (II) the districts of Manbhum, Singhbhum and Ranchi. We shall now address ourselves to the differences that characterized these two Contexts, at the beginning of this century (i.e. before the Survey and Settlement operation). First about the character of rent in these two Contexts. It is evident from the regression equation, that the rent rate in Context (I) is more in the nature of 'competitive rent' and in consonance with our hypothesis. Here rent rates tended to increase with the higher proportion of landlord's bakast land which meant that there was more competition for the tenant's land. Conversely the rent rates were lower where
the population pressure on Don land as well as the proportion of landlord's bakast Don was lower. In this context the operation of the variables of landlord's bakast and population pressure had full play and their role was mainly to determine respectively the supply and demand for land. Two conditions, apriori, are necessary for the operation of these two forces of supply and demand (in the form of landlord's bakast and population pressure). First, the total supply of land should be more or less fixed, since only then can landlord's bakast become an important determinant of supply of land. Secondly, and more pertinently, the power of the landlord to enhance the rate of rent unchecked by peasant resistance, customary regulations or the tenancy legislations etc., must be considered as near complete. That is the landlord must be able to eject recalcitrant tenants at will in order for the full play of the forces of supply and demand to take effect. These, we have already noted, are, apriori and logical preconditions. How far did these two conditions accord with facts will be discussed later. Part of the precondition seems to have been fulfilled as we notice that the general character of arable expansion in the region was either too slow or nearly stagnant in the late 19th century. So, rents in Context (I), was essentially "competitive" by the turn of the century. In Context (II) the character of rent was different. The role of both bakast land and population pressure was also entirely different from that of Context (I). Landlord's bakast did not affect the supply of land nor did population pressure lead to increased demand. Part of the reason was of course the continuous expansion of the arable which characterized
the region in the late 19th century. But it seems probable that the landlord's ability to enhance rent at will was more restricted in this region.

As a result, the rent rates retained to a great extent their 'customary' nature in this Context (II). This of course is only a tentative formulation which must be verified by detailed investigation later on. Again, apriori reasoning would lead one to expect that the tendency for the rent rate in Context (II) to be lower than in Context (I), may be due to the existence of a large proportion of privileged or fixed rent tenancies which made it largely a customary rate of rent, rather than a competitive one. Theoretically, the emergence of a fully competitive rent can only be possible with the monopoly of land with the landlords, and with the removal of all barriers to the free play of supply and demand. At the other extreme, we may have landlords' rights over land being checked by numerous customary regulations, which would mean that the landlord in effect has less than full monopoly rights over land.

Thus far we have progressed without much reference to the question of ownership and rights but the key to the transition from customary to competitive rent, conditional to full proprietary rights has to be sought in the historical transformation of the community and customary rights over land into private monopoly rights. This transformation is necessarily coincidental with that of the 'village community'. It is to the study of the types and forms of village community that we devote the next section.

4. See Chapter III Supra for evidence of expansion in Manbhum, Ranchi and Singhbhum in the late 19th century.
Part II: Typology of Villages

"To comprehend rights and customs in Chotanagpur... the most important requisite is to discard completely all ideas of land tenure acquired in other parts of Bengal... the unit of Chotanagpur being frequently not an individual tenant, but a community and the landlord being not owner of the soil, but merely receiver of a charge called "rent" and having no direct relation with the cultivators".

Thus wrote T.S. Mcpherson at the beginning of his exhaustive investigation into land tenures and customary rights in Porahat estate in 1905. He was only voicing the opinion of a considerable section of the officialdom at the turn of the century, which held that beneath the legally recognised proprietory rights of zamindars and tenure holders there existed in many areas in Chotanagpur, a much older customary proprietory right of the village community.

The difference between the legal property rights and the customary property is best seen in the contrast between the two polar types of villages found in Chotanagpur. At one end is the pure landlord's village with unfettered rights of the landlord, to settle the tenants and over jungles and wastelands, to enhance rent and to collect beth begari for cultivation of his personal land (bakast). At the other end was the khutkatti villages found amongst the Mundas in the south and south west portion of the Ranchi district. Here the proprietorship of the village land devolved jointly on all the patrilineal descendents of the founders of the village, who had exclusive rights over the village land, jungles and wastes, and paid only a nominal "tribute" to the superior overlords, and gave no beth begari or

other abwabs (cesses). At the beginning of the Survey and Settlement operation only about 156 pure khutkatti villages were found in existence in Ranchi district.

Between these polar types of villages, there were a variety of intermediate types, where joint co-parcenary property had been extinguished, and only semblances of it persisted. The descendants of original reclaimers and even ordinary cultivators continued to enjoy residual customary rights.

2.1 Khutkatti to Landlordism

The agrarian scenario at the end of the 19th century was thus marked by varying kinds of village systems. In Ranchi district alone, S.C. Roy noted successive forms of decayed village organisations originating from full khutkatti villages down to pure zamindari villages.

"In no other country can we study with greater profit the gradual evolution of the idea of collective property into that of individual ownership".

The level of decay of the village community can be studied through the persistence of collective property and customary rights on the one hand and by the degree of intrusion of landlordism on the other. In this way we can delineate the forms of village systems which seem formally or logically related to each other. However these logically successive forms do not necessarily represent the actual historical evolution, though both Lister and Hoffman as well as R.D. Haldar, who wrote the first coherent account of the village systems in Chotanagpur regarded the logical succession of forms of villages, a proof of the actual historical evolution.

whole of Chotanagpur was covered by simple village communities which resembled the contemporary khutkatti villages. "Since there were no landlords there could not have been any rent". The first step in the dissolution of full community property was the election of a chief to whom the village communes agree to pay a nominal tribute. From then on there was a gradual growth of the 'feudal' property through the delegation of villages to various relatives and military retainers of the king. Concurrently, the demands on the tribals made by these intermediaries tended to increase. The "nominal tribute" became regularised into a 'rent'. Not content with this the various stratas of the intermediaries claimed as khas certain lands in each village for which they demanded forced labour (beth begari) from the villagers. The final step was when the landlords and intermediaries, thus created from above and imposed on the village community, succeeded in destroying all semblances of community rights and privileged status of descendents of original founders of the villages. They appropriated all rights of the community over the wasteland and jungles, and the right to settle outside tenants, who now paid contractual rent directly to them.

This in brief, was the "received theory" of historical evolution of landlord property from collective and community based property in the villages. This was the view of Dalton, A.B.Power, R.D.Haldar and a score of other British


8. 'Report of Mr. Webster on tenures of Chotanagpur' cited in SAB Vol XVI, p. 385.
administrators from the middle of 19th century onwards. Its fullest expression is found in the accounts given by Father Hoffman, E. Lister, F.A. Slacke and S.C. Roy in the beginning of the 20th century. In the absence of written documents, this explanation was more often than not speculative in nature and suspiciously close to the prevailing anthropological view of Sir Henry Maine which regarded the evolution of primitive society based on custom into civilized society based on contract in a similar manner. Haldar even ascribes the emergence of the king to an idea resembling "Rousseau's idea of social contract" by which the village community elected a chief and agreed voluntarily to submit to him.

Whatever may be the historical validity of such a construction of sequence it was nevertheless based on the contemporary observation of villages which showed various survivals of community property and secondly on the local tradition of Mundas and Oraons and other tribes. However we do not intend here to enter into a debate on largely speculative theories of the origin or the decay of village systems in Chotanagpur. Our aim is to study the various types of villages that existed at the beginning of our period.

9. Haldar, op. cit. Attempts at dating the actual landmarks in the above account, usually come to a nought due to lack of precise historical references. The mythical accounts of genealogy of kings and ruling chiefs were of no help in such matters. Haldar and following him Hoffman and S.C. Roy were wont to describe this gradual decay from the pristine antiquity in terms of an ethnic struggle between the "invading Aryans" and the "non-Aryan Commune" of the tribes. The historical reference to such an invasion is again limited to the 'jagirs' and grants 'aانांस', the oldest of which Haldar found, in Ranchi district was dated 1676 AD. In case of Palamau the oldest jagirs dated from 1600 AD. From these meagre evidence, the 'settlement of Hindus' has been dated by Haldar to about 1300-1400 AD.
2.2 Khutkatti and Munda Country

We have already alluded to the 156 intact mundari khutkatti villages found in existence in south and south western Ranchi. All the villages were jointly owned by a group of mundari khutkattidars, who claimed descent from a original group of pioneer reclaimers, in the male line. Cultivated lands were held in separate enjoyment. The joint owners or the khutkattidars were all members of the same clan or killi of the Mundas. Lister wrote "An exception has not yet been found, and the union of men of different killis in establishing a new village is entirely alien to Munda ideas". According to a custom of the Mundas, there is prohibition of permanent burial of a man in any village other than in which his family was the khutkatti owners. In fact, the horizontal gravestones (sasan diri) of their ancestors were considered by the Mundas as the surest proofs of ownership in the village khutkatti land. There were of course other members of the village community who were not khutkattidars. The cultivating tenants were called parjas, who jointly paid a rent to the khutkattidars. The khutkattidars in turn paid only a fixed sum called chanda to the overlords. Apart from this nominal tribute which was found in 1902-10 survey to be on an average only Rs. 5 per village, the overlord had no rights in any part of the village. The internal management of the villages, settling of parjas, rights over trees and waste land were left completely in the hands of the khutkattidars.

10. E. Lister, 'Note on constitution of khutkatti and other villages in south Tamar and Khunti' Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 74.
In their secular affairs the khutkattidars were represented by the munda; in the ritual affairs it was the pahan who headed them. The munda was usually drawn from the family of original reclaimers which was the leading colonist and the pahan was usually a member of the family of the pahan khut of the original village from which the founders of the village had emigrated. The offices were held in hereditary possession; but there was no special land or remuneration attached to either of the offices. Hoffman mentions that the intact khutkatti village was usually divided into two groups munda khut and the pahan khut, representing the lineage groups of the munda and pahan. But this practice was not universal, because in 1875, Webster the erstwhile manager of the Chotanagpur wards estate wrote that the khutkatti villages were usually divided into several khuts or lineages each of which claimed descent from one member of the original party of colonists. Similarly Sugiyama Koichi found in 1961, that in village Hunt, which was an intact khutkatti village, the khutkattidars were divided into several khuts each of which traced its descent from one member of the original party of colonists. The lineage group was an important unit for the purpose of inheritance. According to Munda custom only descent in the male line is eligible for inheritance of the land. If a khutkattidar died without any male offspring, the land went to the nearest affinal kin of the lineage group. If the lineage group itself was extinguished, then the land passed on to the village munda, who as the temporal head of the village and the clan (killi) managed the land or settled it with another member of the clan. Under no circumstance the land of the khutkattidars was to pass out of the clan. The common factor binding the members of
The *khutkatti* group was the land cleared by the ancestors which they shared; the land could not be sold, mortgaged in perpetuity or leased to a non-clan member and worse still to a non-Mundari.

Thus (though there was individual possession and enjoyment of land, it was not a case of individual property i.e. the owner/possessor was in no sense in any relation of freedom vis-a-vis the land. He was a owner of land only as a member of the lineage group (*khut*). If he was excommunicated from the village or from the tribe, he could not dispose of the land as he pleased. The second important characteristic of the village was the non-enhancebility of the quit rent. Webster wrote in 1875, that the old *khutkatti* villages were specially privileged with this right, while the new village set up in the beginning of 19th century did not possess any such right. But in 1902-10 survey Lister found that in these villages the rents were practically not altered.

Most of the *khutkatti* villages in the eastern Khunti and Tamar Subdivision were grouped into 12 or so villages each in a *patti* the head of which was the *manki*. The *manki* was usually the *munda* of his own village. It was found that part of the quit rent from the villages went to the *manki*, while the rest of it went to the overlord. In a simpler arrangement at times some of the villages of the *patti* paid their quit rent to the *manki* alone. These villages were called *chaputa* villages. The rest of the villages of the *patti* paid their quit rent exclusively to the overlord and were called *thakur* villages.

11. SAB Vol XVI, p. 392.

We had mentioned earlier, the practice by which no non-khutkattidars of the village had the right to be buried in the village graveyard. But if the immigrant Mundas happen to have paid a salami to the khutkattidars or as in some cases to the munda or village head and had bought the land on which they have settled, they had the right to make their own graveyard and be buried in them unlike other parjas who invariably were buried in the graveyard of their original villages. These virtually independent hamlets in which the immigrant mundas settled after having bought the land from the khutkattidars, were called shikmitalas. The quitrent for this hamlet was paid to the khutkattidars of the mother village. In every other respect these hamlets were similar to the khutkatti villages13.

(The khutkatti villages were regarded as the original form of village community which once existed throughout Chotanagpur. The existence of such villages even in the borders of Palamau district was attested to by the presence of the horizontal grave stone of mundaris. From the strict adherence of the mundari burial custom it is readily inferred that the Mundari village systems prevailed once upon a time in the northern frontiers of Palamau14. It is thus presumed that the Mundas were driven out from these areas either by successive invasions of other tribes like Cheros and Oraons or by other communities from the plains of Bihar.

The khutkatti village system thus remained in intact form only in the remotest jungles in Southern Ranchi. Part of the reason for their long survival in this corner of Ranchi

13. ibid p. 82.
district, was the active intervention by colonial state in favour of these tenures in the so called manki patti region after the Kol insurrection of 1832, when the mankis and mundas of the eastern Khunti and Tamar Parganas were granted permanent non-enhancible, patitas, by Captain T. Wilkinson. However often these tenures were given to the manki or the munda as his individual property. It was the Manki or the munda who was presumed to be the actual owner of the village: we find no mention of "joint proprietorship" of all khutkattidars in any of the reports prior to the Survey and Settlement operations of 1902-10. Unfortunately no account of the extent of spread of khutkatti villages is to be found in these earlier reports. But it was reported that between 1888 and 1895 during the peak of sardari larai, a number of such intact khutkatti villages had been broken down mainly through the orders of the courts. This was because a large number of khutkatti villages had withheld paying of the nominal rent to various overlords. These overlords, successfully sued in the court against the munda headman and obtained decree against them. The court at Ranchi, presuming the munda to be a tenure holder rather than a coparcenry proprietor, put the villages up for sale and gave possession to the buyers. The buyers then sued each individual khutkattidars for arrears of rent and the court presuming them to be mere raiyats of the dispossessed munda ordered enhancement of rent, thereby destroying the khutkatti character of these villages.

15. R.D. Haldar though referring to the original commune system being khutkatti never once mentions the "joint proprietorship" as a feature of these tenures. Similarly Webster also makes no mention of proprietorship status of the khutkattidars, referring to them only as privileged raiyats.

khutkatti systems was confined only to the Mundas or only to be found in Ranchi district. Almost all the tribes, viz Oraons, Bhumijs, Hos, Kharias and Santhals, and even Kurmis and Goalas, and Bhuinyas had similar reclaiming systems. Nor were khutkatti villages confined to Ranchi district alone. Similar systems were to be found in Singhbhum district, in Manbhum and also in parts of Hazaribagh district.

2.3: Khutkatti in Porahat

In the Porahat estate bordering Ranchi district, were to be found a number of villages in the Kolhan Pirs, founded and inhabited by Munda tribesmen, which were very much similar to the khutkatti villages of Ranchi district. The most important feature of these khutkatti villages of Porahat types were, as in the case of Ranchi khutkatti villages the co-ownership of the village lands (both cultivated and the jungle) by a group of Munda villagers who were the direct descendents in the male line of the pioneer settlers of the village. Here also, like in Ranchi the proof of ownership of village land lay in the sasan diri or the grave stone in the common burial ground of the village under which an ancestor of the claimant had been buried. Amongst other signs of co-ownership was the fact that in many of these villages the jungle i.e. the uncultivated portion of the village land was found to have been divided amongst the 'brotherhood' (bhaiyyad)\(^\text{17}\). A second feature indicating the joint ownership of village land was the unquestioned right of each member of the brotherhood to extend

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\(^{17}\) Porahat SR (i), p. 164. Mcpherson gives an unusual example of a khutkatti village whose members for some reason elected a non-Mundari Rautia as a headman. They agreed to divide the village jungle in three parts and gave one part to the headman reserving the rest with themselves. ibid p. 158.
cultivation without permission. In their origin also Mundari villages of Porahat were similar to the Ranchi type except that in a few cases more than one killi of Mundas had often jointly founded the village.

Some important differences between Porahat and Ranchi came about due to the intervention of colonial state. First of these was that in Porahat khutkatti villages the rents paid to the superior landlord (in this case the chief of Porahat) by the khutkattidars were not fixed but were enhancible according to the size of cultivation in the village. Secondly, unlike in Ranchi where the 'tribute' (chanda) was fixed for the whole village brotherhood, the khutkattidars in Porahat were, individually assessed according to the size of the cultivated portion of their holdings. Thirdly, in Porahat, the parjas or non-khutkatti members of the village did not pay the rent to the corporate village group but were assessed as the khutkattidars at the same rate, for their cultivated land. The only mark of inferiority the parjas had vis-a-vis the khutkattidars was that they could extend cultivation only with the permission of the bhaiyyads.

These features of Porahat villages, had come about not through an internal evolution but through an act of intervention by the colonial state. It was shown by Mcpherson that

18. ibid p. 164. This right to extend cultivation at will was curtailed only where the jungle was made into reserved forest in 1887. It created a lot of resentment amongst the khutkattidars of affected villages and Mcpherson ascribes the rise of Sardarism and Birsaism mainly to the interference with khutkatti rides over jungle. See ibid pp. 160, 101 fn and 164.

19. ibid, p. 155. This contrasts sharply with the practice in Ranchi where no such exception were ever found.

20. For differences between Porahat and Ranchi khutkatti, ibid, p. 163.
till 1839, the chief of Porahat received only an irregular tribute in kind from the mundas and mankis of Mundari and Ho villages. So the question of enhancement of this tribute did not arise till then. In 1839, Porahat estate came under the Court Wards management. The Government fresh from its victory after the Kol insurrection decided to put the assessment of tribute on a sound basis. Thus in Porahat, like in the neighbouring Kolhan estate, it introduced the plough tax. Instead of a fixed assessment for the whole village, each individual cultivator was supposed to pay according to the size of their holding (the 'plough' was here a measure of area) through their respective headman mundas and mankis. The 'plough' being a notional unit of area, no actual measurement was ever done of the size of the holding. In 1858, the estate of Porahat was escheated to the Government after the mutiny. In 1880, by a further innovation, assessment by 'plough' was abandoned and regular measurement of the Don land of the villages was done and each cultivator (khutkattidar and parja alike) paid rent according to the area of Don land held by them. A further innovation was the introduction of the remuneration of 25 per cent of total village rental for the munda and mankis, in analogy with the practice of Kolhan Government estate and other parts of Porahat where non-tribal villages predominated. Thus in Porahat the original fixed tribute became an enhancible rent. 

These differences in evolution notwithstanding, the actual interference of the Government in the internal affairs of the village was limited only to the measurement of Don land in

21. For the above account of the origin of difference in development between Ranchi and Porahat, see ibid, p. 163.
1880. As Mcpherson shows, the new method of assessment of old tribute was to the mind of the tribal an act of state and only on that account acquiesced in...22. Mcpherson also thought that the Government action was plainly due to a misconception that the real ownership of the soil rested with the chief of Porahat to whose interest the Government had succeeded. But this Government action had in no case been able to destroy the corporate character of these village communities. The khutkattidars in all cases exercised complete control in the election of mundas and over wasteland and jungle23. In fact, even when the Government had in 1880, explicitly given the right in Porahat to the mundas and mankis to collect and keep the assessment of new cultivation after 1880 (like in Kolhan), so strong was the corporate character of the villages that not even a single case was found in which the mundas had actually assessed the new cultivation24. It was for these reasons that Mcpherson forcefully pleaded for the recognition of the intact khutkatti character of the Porahat villages, claiming that it was the corporate ownership of the villages rather than the criterion of fixity of rental which decides the character of intact khutkatti villages25.

But since the 'Ranchi' model was decided upon by the Government to be the model of 'intact' khutkatti villages and incorporated in the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1900, in Porahat khutkatti villages, unlike in Ranchi, the jungles and wasteland

22. ibid
23. ibid, p. 164.
24. ibid
25. ibid, p. 162 also p. 164 fn.
came to be recorded in the name of the landlord (the chief of Porahat, whose heir had been restored to his estate in 1896) in the 1928 Revisional Survey, with the proviso that mundari khutkattidars had the right to extend cultivation without seeking permission. But this act of Government had two important consequences. First, on extending cultivation in the wasteland the mundari khutkattidars now had to pay at the full rate of rent. Secondly, the effective ownership of jungle was now transferred to the landlord.

It is a moot point whether the Porahat khutkatti villages or its Ranchi analogue was closer to the original system. Mcpherson, was of the opinion that if one discounted the innovations introduced by the Government, the Porahat system was perhaps closer to the hypothetical original system. In support of this one should mention the fact that in Porahat, khutkatti villages were established in recognisable clan territories, while in Ranchi khutkatti area, no such clan territory existed.

26. This decision was taken after a joint meeting between T.S. Mcpherson, John Hubback and James Sifton all three officers who had experienced of settlement in Chotanagpur. This decision was taken after it had been initially decided to record the wastelands under the name of Mundari khutkattidars. Porahat Revisional SR, p. 19. Apart from the regions of statutory nature it seems the Government had decided after the first round of settlement that granting of rights in jungles to raiyats had been a mistake and was consequently no longer interested in giving the khutkattidars of Porahat the exclusive right on jungles as in Ranchi district.

27. As it happened, very soon after the Revisional Survey and Settlement the Porahat Estate again past to the hands of the Government after the death of the erstwhile ruler of Porahat. Thus effectively the Government became the owner of all village forests of Porahat.

28. ibid, p. 163.

29. ibid, p. 150. in Ranchi bhuinhari area the pattis were orginally clan territory. It seems that the khutkatti area was settled later in Ranchi than the bhuinhari areas.
It perhaps indicated that Ranchi villages were established at a later date and sporadically. In Porahat, villages seem to have been founded by natural extension from the one central clan lineage. Secondly, many of the khutkatti villages in Ranchi district, were established after a formal permission from the superior landlord. While in Porahat no such permission was sought. This indicates ‘perhaps’ that the origin of Porahat villages predated the state formation and emergence of a chief.

One of the significant features of Porahat khutkatti villages was the remuneration of the mundas and mankis from part of the total village rent. This system of remuneration was introduced by the British Government, in accordance with the practice in the villages of sadant pirs of Porahat, where the pradhnai system prevailed. The village headman, here, till 1839, used to be remunerated for collecting rent for the landlord by a grant of rent free land (maniya or man) which was changed into a cash remuneration by the British. It must be evident that the co-parcenary or joint-ownership of the village land that we encountered in case of the mundari khutkatti villages is not present here. Secondly, in the sadant pirs, the villages were not organised into groups or pirs whose heads were mankis. Here the relation between the overlord (Porahat chief) and the village...


31. The sadant pirs, derive their name from sadan or non-tribal which distinguished them from kolhan or tribal pirs. This area of Porahat was in the plains of Chakradharpur below the ghats that led up to the Ranchi plateau. The villages here were held by Bhunyas who were the traditional militia of Porahat chiefdom. The system of villages here was different from those of kolahan pirs which were mainly Mundari khutkatti villages. For discription of sadant pir system of villages, see Porahat SR passim.

32. ibid
headman (pradhan) was direct. However the presence of the landlord also was not strong enough to do away with the representative of the village community. We shall examine the features of this system in the next section.

2.4 Pradhani System

(The pradhani system of villages were found in existence in the majority of villages of Porahat, Dhalbhum, and Manbhum. In its origin the pradhani system was quite similar to the mandali system found in adjoining Midnapur district of Bengal. The Rent Commission described the mandali system in the following words;

"The zamindar granted a tract of wasteland to a substantial ryot, termed an abadkar, who undertook to bring it under cultivation, paying the zamindar a stipulated lumpsum as rent. This abadkar, partly by the labour of his own family and dependents and partly by inducing other raiyats to settle under him gradually reclaimed the greater part of the grant and established a village on it, to which he usually gave his name, and, as the head of the settlement, he was called mandal or headman. The zamindars and mandals from time to time readjusted the terms of their bargain, but the zamindars never interfered between the mandal and his under tenants... The Government in settlement proceeding deducted 15 per cent from the gross jama in their favour: and after some demur, they accepted this as a sufficient recognition of their status".33 Mandali tenures were customarily transferable in Midnapur. The Porahat headman's tenure was not transferable but his status was in every way similar. Another similar lease to be found in Jungal Mahals (which included parts of Manbhum) of Bengal was the jungle bari taluk, "granted for the clearance of the jungle at first rent free, and after a certain time subject to a

specific rent on so much of land as is brought into cultivation, the rent being adjusted according to pargana rent". Thus Porahat and Dhalbhum pradhani tenures were similar to both these tenures found in south west Bengal. Till 1860, large tracts in Porahat were being granted rent free for clearance of jungle and after some time a lumprental was assessed on the land. In all the Ho and Santhal villages these type of tenures were named khutkatti.

The non-transferability of these tenures arose partly from lack of competition in the early period but largely because headmanship was not coterminus with individual ownership. Wherever pradhani system existed it was found that: "In the vast majority of cases, the whole village community of a leader and his family and associates in the acquisition, were joint owner of the jungle land thus acquired". The villagers had equal rights in the cultivated waste and the jungle land and an equal voice in the administration of the village. The headman's tenure thus represented an undivided share of the whole village and its transfer did not imply the transfer of the village. In his relation with the cultivators the headman's function was to act as a buffer between them and the overlord, to levy rents but without profits, and in consultation with the villagers to distribute the wasteland and the jungle; settle vacant land, decide about the admission of outsiders, and generally to dispose of all matters affecting the village community. Khutkatti pradhans were holders of heritable tenures, the headmanship always passing to the eldest son of the family, in his absence or in

34. ibid p. 126.
35. ibid p. 127.
exceptional circumstances to a near relation, but never to an outsider. The remuneration of headman of Porahat in cash was modelled on the Midnapur precedence, during the 1840-1846 period. But as Mcpherson wrote the "headman's right in sadant Porahat was somewhat more extensive than the mandal's and the tenure there, specially in Kolhan Porahat is much more distinctly that of the community than in Midnapore"³⁶.

As is evident the pradhani system was only slightly removed from that of the khutkatti. There were no parjas as separate from the corporate group since once admitted to cultivation all raiyats had equal rights on settlement of wasteland and vacant plots. The landlord could not throw out the pradhan on expiry of his term nor could he usually appoint a headman above the village community who was not a member of the original family of redaimers. But obviously the landlord tried to usurp the function of pradhan in his bid to raise the rate of rent. This usually took the form either of letting out the village to a professional thikadar or a resumption of the village as khas. Yet, as can be seen from the table below, the pradhans in most villages were from the khutkatti family.

Table 5.3
Pradhani System in Porahat 1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of villages</th>
<th>Pradhani villages with</th>
<th>No. of Tribal Pradhans</th>
<th>No. of Non-Tribal Pradhans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pradhani Khas</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Tribal Pradhans</td>
<td>M.C.-tribal Pradhans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>507</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix V, Porahat 56 (1).

³⁶ ibid p. 127 fn.
While the tribal pradhans were overwhelmingly from khutkatti families, nearly half the non-tribal pradhans were not. They were either professional thikadars or were pradhans who had settled villages for the Government after they were deserted by the khutkatti Bhuiya pradhans (naiks and paiks of the Porahat chief). Nevertheless, the dominance of pradhan system is evident in Porahat Estate at the turn of the century.

In Dhalbhum, of the total 1686 villages, 965 villages were held under pradhans. The pradhans were of 3 types. The first being the khutkatti pradhans with permanent heritable rights in the village. Their remuneration was 20 per cent of the total rental of the village. The second type was the non-khutkatti pradhans with heritable and permanent rights. These pradhans were in every respect similar to the 1st type, except that the villages held by them were either resettled after the extinction of the original line of reclaimers. Finally there were a third class of tenures held by persons who were thikadars or jiradars who have taken farm of the villages for limited periods..."34.

Table 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANTHAL</th>
<th>BURJUJ</th>
<th>MUNDA</th>
<th>KURMI</th>
<th>BAGAL</th>
<th>SGODHP</th>
<th>MAL</th>
<th>BAJIYA</th>
<th>SUNRI</th>
<th>TELI</th>
<th>OTHERS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Khutkatti Pradhans</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Non Khutkatti Pradhans with heritable rights</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Non Khutkatti Pradhans without heritable rights</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table (5.4), the tribal pradhans though reduced to a minority still held a considerable number of villages. (448 out of 986 villages). Secondly, most of the khutkatti pradhanship and the non-khutkatti pradhanship with heritable rights were held by tribal pradhans. The non-tribal, outsider was thus most prominently found in the 'non-khutkatti-non heritable' or 'temporary' pradhanship.

The chief function of the pradhan was to settle of wasteland with tenants. The pradhan, had the right to settle new rents on such reclaimed land after a period of 5 years and could enjoy the rent of the new holding till the next settlement. The rent settled with the pradhan by the landlord could not be enhanced between the settlements.

One crucial difference between the pradhani system in Porahat estate with its predominantly tribal population, and that of Dhalbhum with its relatively mixed population, lay in the fact that pradhani system in Dhalbhum had tended to envolve into a 'tenure' above the corporate village group. The tendency for the pradhans of Dhalbhum to detach themselves from the corporate group was noticeable in the composition of temporary pradhans. Thus though salami was expressly prohibited in new settlement in pradhani villages of Dhalbhum, it was found in 1934 that the pradhans had exacted Rs. 80,000/- for settling 1400 acres of land 38.

Compared to this in Porahat in 1928 the cases where the pradhan took salami were few, and limited to villages where the headman was not of the family of the village founders29. Secondly, in Dhalbhum, the tendency of the landlord to breakdown

the pradhani system was far more advanced than in Porahat, as is evident from the comparison of the two tables (Table 5.3 and Table 5.4). In a sense this was the tendency throughout the region where pradhani system was the predominant form of village tenure. This tendency is best seen in pradhani villages of Hazaribagh district. In Hazaribagh district, pradhani system of villages were to be found in the Southern and Eastern portion of the district, specially in the Giridih Subdivision. Most of these villages were Santhal settlements which had been reclaimed from jungle. Sifton found the headman system in the district to be essentially similar to Dhalbhum pradhani villages, though "it has never been as firmly established in Hazaribagh as in Dhalbhum".

In the Santhal villages where the headman existed, the rental was periodically adjusted according to the expansion of cultivation. The headman received no special land for his office, but was usually paid a small commission on the rental collection. The rights of resident raiyats and the pradhan were similar to those in Dhalbhum pradhani villages. Apart from villages of Santhals, pradhani village of a different kind were to be found amongst other castes. In these villages, partition of headman's rights amongst his descendents often led to a system known as 'joint thikadari'. In the northern thana of Chorparan,

40. In Hazaribagh of the 7007 villages only 412 were held on pradhani system, of which 306 villages were in Giridih Subdivision. Hazaribagh SR, p. 85.

41. Memo of J.D. Sifton to Commissioner of Chotanagpur, at 6-2-1911, Ranchi, in 'Hazaribagh Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's record room, Ranchi)

42. ibid

43. 'Report of the Survey and Settlement Operation in Chotanagpur for the year ending 30th September 1911-12.' in 'Hazaribagh Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi).
a curious development of the above form was to be found in which the village wastelands were held in common by a group of '16 anna raiyats'. Sifton thought these 16 anna raiyats were none else than descendents of a reclaiming headman. They had subsequently agreed to share the headmanship and later became simple raiyats except that their rights over wastelands were still held in common so that the raiyats who made fields in the waste land paid the rent not to the landlord but to the '16 anna raiyat'44. But apart from these survivals, in isolated tracks in most of the villages, no trace of headmanship could be found, and professional thikadar had everywhere supplanted these older institution. There were to be found in Giridih thana, certain villages which were held on doami thika (permanent lease) which were but disguised pradhani tenures. One of the chief charachteristic of such villages,was that thika doami was impartible and non-transferable. It is important to note that all these forms of pradhani or doami thika tenures were to be found in tracts which were relatively underdevloped.

"The purpose of the tenancy is mainly developing an underdevloped country, and the idea of ejecting the thikadars (doami thikadar), at will would indeed be inconsistent with and defeat the very object of lease... Time and tradition, custom and conduct; the very origin and object of tenancy have thus impressed upon them an indelible stamp of permanence45.

But once the villages had out grown their underdevloped character, it was the usual practice to resume such tenures on the ground that they

44. Ibid

45. 'Report of N.L. Bose on Doami thika' in Hazaribagh SR p. 75.
were mere temporary rent farming leases resumable on expiry. In such cases the village headman is immediately supplanted by a real thikadar or temporary farmer of rent. The case of Santhali villages, of Palganj estate in South East Hazaribagh was a classic illustration of such practice. Till 1873, 70 Santhali villages of the estate were by all accounts paying a low rent under their village headmen. Due to increased demands by the landlord for increased rental and labor services and abwabs there was considerable agitation among the Santhals. Through Government intervention, a compromise was reached by which the landlord agreed to forgo his demands and fix the rental for a period of 10 years on condition that the Santhals would get their village land measured and pay a rent prevailing in the neighbouring Dhanwar estate, which happened to be a purely zamindari area. The Santhal representative seems to have agreed on this. But once the land was measured and the new rent rates applied, the existing rental was found to be greatly enhanced. When Santhals refused to pay such a high rental, the headmen were sued for arrears of rent, and professional thikdars were introduced one by one. Thus by 1908, out of these 70 villages only in 15 villages were manjhi headmen to be found. The other villages were given on thika to rent farmers who immediately set about increasing the rate of rent and ejecting Santhal raiyats. As share cropper, the Santhals were made to do beth begar and pay abwabs.

46. The account of Santhal villages in Palganj has been taken from Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers, pp. 52-66. See also the dispute regarding payment of forest cess (bankar) by the Santhals in ibid pp. 67-73.

47. ibid p. 60.
When the Santhals continued to protest, the officials emphasised the logic of absolute property:

"The zamindar settled the Santhals on his property by allowing them many privileges and it is true the villages sprung up by the hard labour of these Santhal settlers, but that does not entitle them to claim any vested right in the property... The proprietary right in the property being vested in the zamindar he is free to let it out on lease to any person he liked." 8

Sifton had found that in consequence of the imposition of alien thikadars in place of the customary headman 'Santhals have deserted their ancestral village in a body in resentment of this injustice" 9.

The practice in Hazaribagh, as we noted earlier was for the landlords to designate the village headman pradhan, manjhi and mahto as thikadar, or a mere farmer of rents 30. This etymological confusion in a sense pointed to the thin line that divided a village headman, representative of the corporate village group, from a professional thikadar who was only an agent of the landlord.

48. ibid p. 59.

49. Memo of J.D. Sifton to Commissioner of Chotanagpur at 6-2-11, Ranchi, regarding the 'village headman of Hazaribagh' in 'Hazaribagh Settlement Papers', (Commissioner's Record Room Ranchi).

50. Hazaribagh SR pp. 72-77. For an example of such deliberate confusion see the case of village Badagunda where the Santhal headman was regarded as a thikadar by the landlord in the 'Extract from Settlement Officer's Inspection note dated 14th January 1912'. Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers pp. 79-80. It is thus possible that what we notice here is an older process, continuing from about the beginning of the 19th century at least, when Santhals enmasse emigrated to Damin-i-Koh and beyond. The cause was the same i.e. the introduction of thikadars who violating the customary rights of the tribe, had increased the rent and imposed other demands.
In many cases however the opposite also held true. In regions where the pradhani system was dominant, it was often found that a professional thikadar holding a temporary lease of the village was called a manjhi, mahto or pradhan. Thus Hunter wrote that in Manbhum it was by no means uncommon to find the non-resident rent farmer of the village even if he be a Brahmin, being given the appellation of manjhi which is the term for headman amongst the Santhals.\(^1\)

We have seen how the headman of the village from being a representative of the corporate village group consisting of the original clearers of the land, became an agent of the landlord receiving a certain proportion of village rental as commission. The notion of property inherent in the office of the headman was different from that underlying joint ownership. With the emergence of the pradhani as a 'tenure', the power of the landlord also increased from being a mere receiver of rent to one who through the appointment of headman manages to breakdown the original nature of the village tenure.

2.5 Ghatwali

I now discuss a peculiar form of tenure, known as ghatwali found extensively in Barabhum, Manbhum, Dhalbhum and Hazaribagh. In Dhalbhum, and Manbazar thana of Manbhum and Barabhum, the ghatwals were generally of the Bhumij tribe. In Hazaribagh, the ghatwals were drawn from the Bhuinya tribe.

The ghatwals seem to have been originally the guardian of passes (ghate) and it was their duty to protect the passes and generally police the region under them. It was due to

\(^{51}\) SAB Vol XVII, pp. 305/306.
these duties attached to their tenures that there was a general misconception that these tenures were service tenures resumable by the zamindar or the Government. Extensive investigation into the origin and nature of these tenures established clearly, that the ghatwali system was in nature similar to the khutkatti tenures of Ranchi district. It was only a developed form of reclamatory system common to all tribal land organisations.

The ghatwale in Barabhum and Dhalbhum were of 3 grades. The highest grade was called taraf sirdar, the next grade was that of the sadiyal in Barabhum and naik in Dhalbhum. The lowest grade at the level of the village was ghatwal. Like in the khutkatti system, the village corporate group consisted of the descendents of the original reclaimers of the jungle who were called paiks in Dhalbhum or tabedars in Barabhum. They paid a quitrent (panchak) to the naik or sadiyal who in turn paid a fixed sum to the taraf sirdars. The sirdars, similarly paid a quit rent to the overlord (the chief of Dhalbhum or of Barabhum). The rent of the parjas or raiyats who did not belong to the family of original descendents was, like in khutkatti system, originally paid to the corporate group of tabedars or paiks as the case may be. During the course of the 19th century due to extensive reclamation, the rental incomes of the ghatwali villages became lucrative enough for the zamindars. Thus began a prolonged struggle between the ghatwale and the zamindars for rent of the newly reclaimed lands. In general the tendency of the landlords was to regard the ghatwali as mere service tenures, to limit the extent of these tenures, and increase the rent on ghatwali land.

52. For the controversy regarding ghatwali tenures, see Dhalbhum SR, pp 28-40. See also Manbhum SR, especially Chapter X and Barabhum SR, pp. 18-20. The following account is largely taken from the above sources.
In Barabhum, the arbitrary doubling of the quit rent paid by *ghatwals* and imposition of a house tax led to the Bhumij rebellion in 1833. The dispute between the *zamindars* and the *ghatwals* came to a head in 1883, when under the aegis of the Government a compromise was struck between the *zamindars* and *ghatwals*, by which the latter were forced to give up claims to newly reclaimed land within their tenures, keeping only 6 annas in a rupee as commission. The *ghatwali* tenures were then demarcated, in Barabhum and Dhalbhum, on the presumption that each grade of *ghatwal* held only a service tenure. The rest of village land was liable to pay enhanced rental. These lands often belonged to the descendents and relatives of the *paiks* and *ghatwals*. Hierarchy of rights was more developed within the *ghatwali* system than in the *khutkatti* system.

The *ghatwali* system developed into a "tenurial holding" where the *taraf sirdars*, *sadials* and *ghatwals* had become virtual owners of their respective estates. It was to them that the rent of the *prajas* was paid, and unlike in *khutkatti* system it was not shared by the *tabedars* or the corporate village group. But *tabedars* only paid a fixed sum which was a quit rent. In Hazaribagh, the Bhuinya *ghatwals* had become practically the owner of their respective *gadie* by 1830's as is evident from the Government effort to make these tenures non-liable for sale in common with other proprietorial holdings of Chotanagpur. The *taraf sirdars* of Barabhum were similarly protected from sale of

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54. See Hazaribagh SR, p. 33 regarding the Government policy towards Khuruckdeah *ghatwals*. 
their tenures for debt by the Encumbered Estates Act of 1876. But there was no doubt a strong customary character that inhered in the individual property which evolved. Sifton wrote about the Barabhum ghatwals "The Taraf Sirdar had as little right to negotiate the condition of ghatwals as the zamindar" and "The Taraf Sirdars... had no more right according to the tribal custom of land tenures to exact additional rent from khutkattidars than the zamindar had to extract rent from the taraf sirdars".

2.6 Bhuinhari Villages

In the bhuinhari villages we have another variant of the village system which was deeply moulded by the superimposed landlordism. The bhuinhari land system was peculiar to Ranchi district, and was found in existence in 2482 villages of the district. In essence it represented a tripartite division of the village land into bhuinhari, rajhas and manjhihas. Bhuinhari was that portion of the village land which was cleared from the jungle by the original founders of the village, and was held by their descendents in the male line. They often paid no rent, or paid a fixed nominal rent or/and labour services of varying amount. Rajhas was that portion of the village land which paid "rent" to the landlord. Manjhihas, was the portion of village land held directly by the landlord for his personal cultivation.

Certain other cognate tenures, connected with the worship of village deities, called pahanai, dalikatari, bhutkheta also belonged to the bhuinhari stock. There was usually no rent

55. The Taraf Sirdari of Dhadka and Satrakhani was under the management of the Government during 1883 ghatwali compromise see Barabhum SR pp. 24/25.

paid for these special tenures. Another special tenure called bethkheta was often found allied to the manjhihas land. The holders of this land paid no rent but performed labor services on the manjhihas fields. In 1869, after a prolonged period of agitation by the bhuinhars, a special legislation was enacted (Chotanagpur Tenures Act 1869) in 1869 and the bhuinhari and allied tenures as well as the manjhihas and bethkheta tenures were surveyed, demarcated and recorded in a special bhuinhari register. Many areas of Ranchi district where either such tenures did not exist or were not known by the name of bhuinhari were not included in this survey conducted by a Special Commissioner. Thus the whole of the Panch Pargana portion of the district in the south and east and the Barwe pargana in the west and Biru pargana in the south west were not included in the bhuinhari Survey. The survey was completed in 1880 and covered 2482 villages in all.

The bhuinhari land tenure was reportedly a survival of the ancient khutkatti system 57. However it is not known when exactly was the khutkatti changed into bhuinhari. That this happened much before the British occupation of Chotanagpur is undoubted. Webster mentions a rent roll of circa 1720 AD which showed that there was already a division of the village land into bhuinhari and rajhas 58. Some idea of the process could be had from the creation of rajhas lands in some villages of Tamar thana, as late as the last decades of the 19th century. In these villages, which were khutkatti villages, the landlords had

57. This was the opinion of both E.T.Dalton and R.D.Haldar the Special Commissioner of Bhuinhari Survey and Father Hoffman. See Haldar opcit, also EM p. 512.

58. SAB Vol XVI, p.385.
succeeded in rupturing the link between the khutkattidars and the prajas, turning the land of the latter into rajhas, paying rent directly to the landlord.

There was a concerted campaign on the part of the landlords to designate bhuinhari as only a form of 'privileged' or service tenancy held under the express condition of providing services to the landlord. Thus the Maharaja of Chotanagpur in 1859 in a petition to the Government, alleged that the bhuinhari lands were those that were granted by sanads of the Maharaja and his predecessors "to some Cole families on condition of the payment of a very small sum as rent, but upon the condition of supplying forced labour in cases of exigency". This view of the landlords accorded well with their claims to absolute proprietary rights over the villages. But as Haldar pointed out, and both Lister and Slacke confirmed later, this theory was patently manufactured to fit the existing facts rather than being an explanation of the origin and evolution of the bhuinhari system. Haldar clearly mentioned that rights of bhuinhari like khutkatti were not obtained from any sovereign power. This was by far the earliest acknowledgement of the fact that 'absolute proprietary rights'


60. Petition of Maharaja Jaganath Pratap Shaideo, dt. 22nd March 1859, GOB, Judl. (Judl.), 259, May 1859. R.D. Haldar also mentions that the zamindars were wont to treat bhuinhari land as korkar land which by custom every raiyat whether bhuinhari or not was allowed to hold with privileged rent (half the village rate) when Don land was made by converting wastelands or uplands. Haldar opcit.

61. Haldar, opcit, and Lister and Slacke. 'Report on Grievances of Mundaris in other than intact khutkatti villages' Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers.

62. Haldar opcit,
did not exclusively vest on the zamindar or his assignees.

In the bhuihari villages, the bhuihars are usually divided into two lineage groups or khuts, that of the munda and pahan. In many of these villages a third lineage group called the mahto khut was to be found. The office of mahto found in bhuihari villages is mentioned in the earliest report on the bhuihari system written by Dr. Davidson, the principal assistant to the Governor General in 1839. This new addition to the usual munda and pahan found in the intact khutkatti villages was, according to Lister, a creation of the landlord. In the 1839 report, the mahto is described as the 'most important person in the village', one who assigns land to raiyats and gives the gotee (or a lump of clay) as a sign of acceptance of tenancy. He also collects rent from the raiyats for the owner, settles disputes about rent and "in short is the person on whom the settlement of all the pecuniary affairs of the village depends". He received a piece (one pawa or 2 to 4 acres) of Don land as his jagir, or sometimes 1 to 1½ pice per raiyat as his remuneration. His office, was specifically mentioned to be non-hereditary and he was appointed at will by the landlord. But the mahto was always selected from the stock of bhuihars or more specifically from the mahto khut.

The office of the mahto introduced by the landlord thus was a cross between the traditional munda and the thikadar. He was, like the munda, drawn from the stock of original clearers of land but, unlike him, did not hold the office hereditarily. The


64. Cited in Deprees' Report Para 38.
creation of mahto in face of the traditional institution of munda, was explained in the following words by Lister, "The landlord... whilst not strong enough to displace the bhuinhars from the control of the village, was shrewd enough to break up their solidarity. In the face of the pahan and munda, the mahto in order to maintain his position, must have been inevitably obliged to rely on the support of the landlord, and to that extent to administer affairs more or less in accordance with the wishes of the landlord". By the end of the 19th century, however, the office of mahto had been rendered superfluous, the landlord himself or his agent settling the rent and the vacant land. Amongst other features of bhuinhari villages, that distinguished it from the intact khutkatti villages, was the institution of separate manjhihas land, meant for the personal cultivation of the landlord. The word manjhihas undoubtedly is a corrupted form of manjhi angs (share of the manjhi). It is unclear how the word came into being. One explanation for it is that in its origin it was the land set apart as the remuneration for the lessee of the Maharaja which was later imported into even the villages which the Maharaja held directly.

The etymological distinction between rajhas and manjhihas suggests that it was the land set apart for the manjhi or the headman of the village. In the mundari khutkatti villages, no special privilege was attached to the office of headman, the


66. S.C. Roy held that the word manjhihas may have originated from the Sarawak (Jain) caste middle men who held lease of the Maharaja's villages. Sarawaks were known as manjhi in Ranchi district. See Roy (1970), p. 359 fn.
It seems probable that the word and the institution itself were imported from areas where the institution of the headmanship had evolved. Subsequently of course, the manjhihas land came to be found even in villages where there were no lessees of the zamindar. Thus in the north eastern part of Ranchi district, the manjhihas land was generally a small area (about 5 acres) held by the manager or agent of the landlord in the village. But in Southern Ranchi, the manjhihas land were much larger in extent and were held directly by the local jagirdars or sub-proproritors and other grantees.

In the manjhihas land, occupation could not give the cultivator any right of occupancy. Thus all cultivators holding these lands were mere tenants at will subject to heavy produce rent known as saika. But with the availability of forced labor, very often the land was cultivated either by the landlord or his agent.

2.7 Lineage of Bhuinhari

There are certain features of bhuinhari which provide similarity with the intact khutkatti villages. One of the most important one was the existence of the descendents of the original clearers of the land. Like in the khutkatti areas, these

67. Dr. Davidson reported that in the general bhuihari villages the munda possessed only his bhuihari land common with other raiyats. While Haldar found that in villages where the landlord had succeeded in subjugating the village completely, the office of the munda had became a service tenure and a piece of land called mundai like mahtoi land was attached to it. Haldar opcit.

68. Haldar, opcit.

69. Resolution of the Government of Bengal to the Final report of operations under the Chotanagpur tenures Act II (B.C) of 1869, Para 9, Enclosure no. 13 to Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 52.
bhuihari villages were organised into groups of villages or parhas. The parhas organisation, unlike the manki patti was not just a union of villages; it was primarily a social unit. Amongst the characteristic feature of the parha was that the whole of it comprising 8 to 12 villages consisted of bhuihars of the same killi (sept or clan). This feature is notably absent in khutkatti area of manki patti; where the villages were founded by different killis. It appears more probable that the parha organisation of the villages represented the classic form of tribal settlement i.e. these were recognisable clan territories consisting of various villages, offshoots of a parent village in which the headquarters of the killi was located. But unlike in the manki patti area, the bhuihari parha performed no economic function. The head of the parha known as parha raja was merely a titular and ritual head of the clan whose function was to convene the clan panchayat, to resolve issues regarding violation of taboos and other social infringements.

Another important similarity with the custom of intact khutkatti villages was the practice of burial of the bhuihars in their own villages. This practice was common to both Oraon and Munda bhuihari villages. From this practice followed the custom of retention of the land of an absent bhuihar with other members of the khut or the village headman.

70. Such lineage territory is to be found in the Bhumij settlements of Manbhum and Barabhum as also amongst Porahat Mundas.
72. Haldar, opcit.
73. ibid
However this practice had been usurped by the landlord to a great extent. In many villages, landlords took over the land abandoned by the bhunihar, or the land of the khut which had become extinct. Davidson reported that, in 1839, it had become the usual practice for the landlord to take up such abandoned holdings into the manjhihas, although an important custom that still remained was of granting the land to the bhunihar when he or his heir returned\textsuperscript{74}. But by 1871, when the bhunhari survey had commenced Haldar noticed "the usual practice of resuming of bhunihar's land when he leaves a village, with the usual theory of giving him back the same on his return, and is consequently considered exceptionable by the zamindar"\textsuperscript{75}. The denial of legislative sanction to this ancient custom of retention of bhunhari land within the khut or the village was given as one of the major causes of dissatisfaction amongst the bhunhars\textsuperscript{76}. An allied custom found in some bhunhari villages, in which the bhunhari land was held jointly in a khut, restricted the individual right of transfer of bhunhars unless all the members of the khut chose jointly to do so\textsuperscript{77}. The tendency of the landlord to appropriate the individual bhunihar's land in his absence was found to be restricted where the bhunhari system and the bhunhars mustered strong. But in a majority of the villages, by

\textsuperscript{74} Depree's Report para 36.

\textsuperscript{75} Cited in Bengal Government Resolution of 1880 on the final report of the operations under the Chotanagpur Tenures Act II (B.c) of 1869, para 16 also para 8. pp. 51. 58. 59 Enclosure no. 13 of Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers.

\textsuperscript{76} ibid para 25. See also the opinion of A.B.Power, Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi, in letter no 298-R, dt. 18th June 1880, to commissioner of Chotanagpur, para 6 Enclosure no. 12 of Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, pp. 31, 32.

\textsuperscript{77} Haldar, opcit.
1880, it had become the usual practice for the landlord to appropriate the vacant land into *rajhas* or *manjhihas* and disallow the individual transfer to other *bhuinhars* or even outright sale and mortagage.78

In comparison to *khutkatti* or *pradhani* villages, we see a more significant intrusion of the landlord into the internal affairs of *bhuinhari* villages by 1880. Firstly, by the creation of *rajhas* land, the landlord had appropriated the right to settle rents of a large portion of the village land. Secondly, by the creation of *manjhihas* land, the landlord also removed a significant portion of the village land from the ambit of customary privilege of occupancy of the resident villagers (whether *bhuinhars* or *raiyats*). Thirdly, there also seems to have been a reduction in the customary rights exercised over jungles and waste land.79 Again, in comparison to *khutkatti* and *pradhani* villages, the *zamindars* were much strengthened here, especially with the outright dismissal of *bhuinhars'* claim to jungles and hills (as being 'monstrous') during the *bhuinhari* survey.80

However inspite of legal guarantees, it is doubtful whether landlords could assert absolutely in *bhuinhari*

78. ibid
79. While the rights of reclamation without permission seem to have been held by both *bhuinhars* or other *raiyats* in many *bhuinhari* villages throughout the late (19th, but after the *bhuinhari* survey the area of *bhuinhari* land being fixed, all new reclamation by, *bhuinhars* were now considered *rajhas* and became ordinary *rayati* land.
80. Haldar after the first year of survey wrote "claims have been made by *bhuinhars* for exclusive rights to hills and jungles. Such claims have appeared to me to be simply monstrous. The proprietor of the village alone can have rights in hills and jungles. But on the other hand I have to give it out that the *bhuinhars* cannot be denied the prescriptive right of using timber and fuel obtained from jungles in their villages for domestic purposes". *Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers*, p. 56.
villages. The strong persistence of the community property rights in the bhunihari villages is testified to by the continuous agitation throughout the late 19th century. Since we shall deal with the struggle between bhunihars and zamindars in next chapter we shall only deal with one point here, that of the persistence of a strong customary perception regarding the extent of bhunihari land. In 1860s, when the conflict over bhunihari land was most acute, Dalton noted that the bhunihars led by Christians were claiming half the lands in every village as their own. In 1867 winter, Oliphant the Deputy Commissioner sent to enquire into the disputes between the landlord and the bhunihars in village Talguri reported that the bhunihars refused any compromise excepting half the land in each village as bhunihari. Dalton mentions that the bhunihars claimed to have got from one Calcutta lawyer G.M.Tagore a decree granting them 'fee simple of half the country'. During the course of the bhunihari survey R.D. Haldar was frequently confronted with the assertion from bhunihars that half the village land was bhunihari.

"The proportion can only be raguely described in relative terms as large or small: in Nagpur phraseology it is always called 'half' whether more or less than a moiety, 'half'".

The origin of this customary perception lay apparently in the tribal tradition which claimed that the village community had, at some point of time in the past, voluntarily

82. ibid
83. Cited in Government Resolution on the Final completion report of operations under Chotanagpur Tenures Act 1880 Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers.
84. Haldar, opcit
given up half the land in the village for the maintenance of the Maharaja reserving the other half with itself. This tradition also found support from the popular saying adha kam adha dam i.e. half the land is held by bhuihars, free of rent on rendering services (kam) and the other half is held by the king where payment of cash rent is the practice. Whatever may be the origin of such a conception it nevertheless pointed to a customary conception of equal division of the village land into rent paying and rent free property. The former, the realm of the king and the latter, the realm of the bhuihars.

But in fact this customary conception did not accord well with reality. As Haldar found there were villages where bhuihari land greatly exceeded this proportion. Thus in village Baragaon the total cultivated area was 1420 acres and the bhuihari area was 1056 acres (74.4 per cent) In Lalgunj, the total cultivated area was 858 acres while bhuihari area was 660 acres (76.9 per cent). In Nagri the former area amounted to 1320 acres and the latter to 990 acres (75 per cent) S.C. Roy mentions that in many villages in Paragana Siri, and in some other villages namely Posea and Burju near Khunti, not a single acre of manjhihas or rajhas was recorded by the Bhuihari Commission, most of the land being held as bhuihari. In contrast to these villages with more than 3/4th land held as bhuihari there were villages where only a miniscule holding of a few bigha alone was held as pahnai land.

85. ibid

86. ibid

Thus Haldar wrote, "It may be broadaly stated that the proportion of bhuihari to rajhas varies from even less than the hundredth part of the cultivated land to more than three fourths". In the oldest reference hitherto found of bhuihari village, in a 1720 A.D. rent roll, Webster had found the proportion of bhuihari to rajhas as being 1:5.

The great variation in the proportion of bhuihari land to the total cultivated area was no doubt dependent on the ability of the bhuihars to resist encroachments of landlords. And no doubt it was in regions where they mustered strong, or in other words where clan settlements were marked by numerical superiority and genealogical depth, that the resistance to encroachment of landlords also was the strongest.

Similarly, a degree of variation could also be seen in the amount of services and rent that the bhuihars paid. Usually these lands were held rent free with labour services attached to it. The usual labour service was of 14/15 days. But in many villages specially in north eastern part of the district, the labour services were found to have been commuted into a rent, long before the bhuihari survey. But there were many villages where a rent was added on to the usual labour services. The amount

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88. Haldar, opcit
89. SAB, Vol XVI, p. 385.
90. Haldar, opcit
91. Haldar found the usual labour services consisted of 3 days ploughing, 3 days digging, 3 days sowing or planting, 3 days cutting rice, 1 day threshing, 1 day storing, in all 15 days, added to it was the practice of carrying the landlord's burden on his journeys and supplying a timber pole and 100 bundles of grass for thatching Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 58.
92. Haldar, opcit
of labour service and rent demand thus varied from village to village. For example in village Gutuhatu there was no manjihia

land, but there was a rent of Rs. 9/- for 25 acres of bhunihari

Don land and 57 acres of bhunihari Tanr land. In nearby village

Hutup, where there was manjihia of 27 acres, the rent paid on 35

acres of bhunihari Don and 18 acres of bhunihari Tanr amounted to Rs. 22/- and a labour service of 22 days was demanded of the

bhunihars. Such instances of variations in the rate of rent and

the amount of labour service were primarily due to the variation

in the relative strength of bhunihars in resisting the demands of

the landlord.

One curious fact about the labour service was that, even though under the Chotanagpur Tenures Act of 1869, there was provision for commutation of labour service to money rent, not many applications for commutation were received by the Bhunihari Commission. The number of applications for commutation amounted to 1167 compared to some 13,763 claims for bhunihari and manjihia

land. This was indeed surprising considering the fact that there was such a massive agitation against beth begari preceding the

bhunihari survey. This apparent paradox can not be fully explained by the official view that the bhunihars preferred labour services to money rent or that the complaint against beth-begari

system were exagerated. It can only be explained if the struggle

93. See bhunihari register of Sonepur Pargana Vol II, village number 116 and 126. (Ranchi District Records room).

94. Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, pp. 64-65.


96. For the opinion that the complaints against beth begari were exagerated, See Government Resolutions on the Final Completion report on the Bhunihari Survey, 1880 Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers p. 72.
of the bhuihars against the landlords is taken into account. As we shall see later, during the bhuihari survey itself, the bhuihars led by native Christians were already moving beyond the economic demands to an alternative conception of political power which challenged the very basis of beth-begari i.e. the system of landlord property itself. It was thus natural that they refused to bargain for lesser or greater number of days of beth or their commuted value, since landlord property or his power itself was considered illegitimate. This no doubt was the reason, why many Bhuihars specially the Christians had stopped giving begari altogether97. It would have been absurd to legitimise the landlord property and beth begari by pressing for commutation.

The bhuihari Survey, did not at all lead to any decline in the agrarian strife in the district; it in fact led to increased efforts on the part of zamindars and bhuihars to raise the level of demand on both sides. But that is another story to which we shall return a little later.

2.8 Broken Khutkatti Villages

We have already mentioned the fact that the, bhuihari survey excluded a large area of the district of Ranchi from its purview. In the Tamar and Khunti thana it was found that in 459 villages, the khutkatti system had broken down. In most of these villages, the munda had become a tenure holder of sorts i.e. he had acquired the sole right to receive the rent from the parjas; in some cases he had also enhanced the quit rent payable by the khutkattidars and in some others he had acquired the proprietary rights over jungle and waste lands by suppressing the

97. See ibid for the refusal of christians to render begari.
In all these villages, the munda had evolved into a landlord having usurped the rights of the khutkattidars by stages. In most of these villages, khutkattidars had become like bhuihnars i.e. they were only holders of 'privileged' tenancies. Though they were not required to give any labour services.

In a second group of such villages, specially in villages which paid rent to it directly (Chaputa villages), the manki had acquired defacto proprietorship and had sometimes even imposed a munda of his own choice on the village even though he did not belong to the village killi. The transition of the munda and manki to the position of a petty landlord had thus become a pronounced feature in the villages. In some of these villages the munda or the manki had acquired the land of other raiyats for his personal cultivation, just as the landlord of bhuihnari villages held manjhihas land.

Khutkatti villages broke down due to other reasons: the action of Civil courts in the last decades of the 19th century; and the displacement of the munda or manki by landlord appointed rent farmers.

2.9 Pure Zamindari Villages

In contrast to all these above forms of villages where there were survivals of community rights of various degrees,

98. EM, pp. 2399-2401.
99. ibid
100. ibid, and also E.Lister and F.Slacke "A note on Grievances of mundas in villages, other than intact khutkatti villages" Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers p. 99.
101. ibid
we have the pure zamindari villages. These villages consisted mostly of the ordinary rent paying land and the land for landlord's personal cultivation. Such villages were founded either by the landlord or a grantee himself and in areas where old communal forms of village organisation never existed. Or else, these villages were those resettled by the landlord or a grantee on the extinction or abandonment of earlier settlers. The rights of the landlord over cultivated and uncultivated waste and jungles were absolute, subject only to 'such rights in others and liabilities on his own part as have been created by contract, custom or law' 102. Most of these villages were to be found in Ranchi district, in thana of Bano and Kolebira.

"Usually the illakadar, who holds the pargana directly or indirectly under the Maharaja of Chotanagpur, makes a grant of piece of jungle to capitalist or relative Teli, Sunri or Rautia for a lumpsum and reserves a modest annual rent. The landlord may or may not himself make a start in reducing the land to cultivation; but his chief object is to attract raiyat from elsewhere to clear the lands. Sometimes these raiyats may belong almost entirely to a single caste, but often they are a medley of races—Kharias, Gonds, Mundas, Oraons and Birjhisas" 103.

Even in these villages the tenants were not deprived of all customary privileges. In fact it was the existence of such privileges, which attracted settlers from the central plateau of Ranchi to the western paraganas. Foremost among these privileges was the right to make don land by levelling the bed of streams or from the Tanr land and wasteland adjoining it and hold such land free of rent for a stipulated period, usually from


103. Selection from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 87.
3 to 5 years, and then holding such land at half the usual village rate. These lands were known as korkar\(^4\). Secondly there were the usual common rights over forest. But once the population grew, such rights were threatened. In villages which were founded by landlords, the privileges of raiyats in cultivated land and uncultivated wastelands were being reduced by the end of the 19th century, process which was part of a more general trend\(^5\).

We shall end this section with an example of the second type of landlord's village which was resettled or made khas after the original founders of the village were driven out by the landlord. The example is from Palamau district during the 1913-20 settlement.

"Village Anwar belonging to the Ranka estate contains 32 acres of rice land of which 28 acres were held by landlords. It was found that this land had been reclaimed by raiyats 22 years ago, on an understanding that they would pay only half rates for it. At first they were allowed to hold it at 12 annas a bigha. This was soon raised to Rs. 5/- and subsequently to Rs. 9/- per bigha or Rs. 12/- per acre. Being unable to pay this rate they surrendered the land"\(^4\).

No doubt in such villages the power of the landlord to raise rents was absolute, and the tenants had no

\(^4\) Korkar, is derived from the saying Korkar hum banaye hain i.e. "the land has been dug up by me using a kudali". In Mundari it is said Korkar bai kaede which has the same meaning.

\(^5\) Letter of Dr. A.Nottrott to the Settlement Officer of Ranchi dated 13th February 1905, 'Appendix to 'Report on Grievances of Mundaris in other than khukkatti villages in Ranchi district' Ranchi Settlement Papers, (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi). We should mention here another common feature of these villages in western and south western Ranchi, the landlord's bakast was usually 'a very high proportion of the village lands, part of the reason being that the landlords belonged to cultivating castes and had often cleared the land himself or with the help of the servants.

semblance of customary privileges. In such villages, the proportion of landlord's *bakast* land was always very high in fact it was as we shall see later a necessary result of the high rate of rent. It can also be easily seen that the high proportion of *bakast* land was, conversely, a necessary precondition for high rate of rent.

2.10 Geographical Pattern

In the discussion so far, I have tried to delineate the types of villages and the property relations within them at the beginning of our period. The criterion of my classification has been:

a) The degree of power the landlords have over the village, i.e. their ability to exercise absolute proprietary right.

b) The degree of survival of older forms of customary rights and privileges. In the course of our discussion on the typology of villages we have often referred to the geographical spread of the types. It might have become apparent that the villages which displayed various degrees of survival of communal property or customary relations were concentrated in the districts of Ranchi, Manbhum, Singhbhum and the south eastern part of the Hazaribagh district; while in Palamau and most of the Hazaribagh district, the existence of such village system had long been destroyed by the beginning of our period.

I shall now attempt a brief survey of the spread of customary village tenures in Chhotanagpur. In Ranchi district, of the 7000 villages or so, if we take into account the 2482 villages which were surveyed under bhuinhari survey, 449 broken *khutkatti* villages and 156 villages which were intact *khutkatti* then roughly 40 per cent of the villages had remnants of village
systems still prevalent. In Singhbhum the percentage would be much higher than in Porahat and Dhalbhum estates, where around 60 per cent villages were under pradhani system. In Manbhum, around 1918, around 1200 out of the 3985 villages were held by pradhans, ghatwals and maljagirdars, and other such versions of headmanship, or developed headmanships. But in Hazaribagh only 412 out of 7000 villages, i.e. less than 5 per cent, were held under headmanship; and in Palamau district out of 3599 villages only 55 villages were held under pradhani. No doubt this is a crude index of the degree of sway of landlordism but it confirms to an extent the regional variation that we proposed at the beginning of our section. And to that extent, it has given us a clue to the problem of class structure of the region i.e. the emergence of landlordism and the various forms that it took was determined by the degree of dissolution of the village community and the customary relations. This also determined to a great extent the amount of surplus that was extracted by the non-producing classes. We have seen that the village communities were repositories of various customary rights which posed a formidable barrier to the exercise of absolute proprietary rights of the landlords. First, there were collective rights over wasteland and jungles and rights to reclaim jungle without the permission of the landlord. Secondly, the right to settle new tenants was often with these village communities or its representative headman. Thirdly, there were various types of privileged holdings, rentals of which

107. See the Section on pradhani system in Supra.
108. Calculated from list of tenures gives in Manbhum SR p. 50.
could not be enhanced or as in case of many pradhani villages, could be enhanced only if there were new reclamations. Finally, and more importantly, there was no direct relation between the landlord and the individual tenants; the rent receiver had to deal with the village as a whole or its representative. All these definitely posed a barrier to the exercise of landlord's proprietary right; restricting competition amongst tenants, checking optimal enhancement of rent, constraining the full extension of propietory right over vacant plots, abandoned holdings, wastelands and jungles etc.

In other words the social limit of surplus extraction was often extended by the existence of village community in its various forms. Thus it is not difficult to imagine that there was necessary antagonism between the institution of landlordism and that of the village community. This antagonism was the basis for the repeated attempts to breakdown the village community.

But why was there such a regional difference in the incidence of village communities? Why was Palamau and most of Hazaribagh conspicuous by the minimal presence of any form of village community at the beginning of our period?

110. The concept of social limit of surplus, has been expounded by U. Kula in his theorisation of the feudal economic system. Kula distinguished the social limit of surplus from technological limit of surplus, the latter being the maximum possible surplus that could be extracted within the given technological constraint of the economic system without endangering its reproduction. The social limit is the actual level of surplus extraction governed by custom. Kula (1962).

111. It must have become apparent by now that the term 'village community' is being used here as a short hand for a variety of customary rights which the cultivators exercised whose locus was the village. It does not in any sense refer to some 'ahistorical original form of village community'. Thus the term 'village community' here includes a heterogenous mixture of forms.
I would suggest that the main reason for the weak presence of village communities in the northern portion of the division (Palamau and Hazaribagh) lay in the ethnic composition of the population in these two districts. We have seen earlier that there was a close relation between the tribal social organisation and the land systems based on village community. The link was best exemplified in case of the Munda land system of khutkatti whose close connection with their clan system (killi), burial practices and ancestor worship we have noted earlier. Bhumijs, Hos, Oraons, Santhals and Kharias all had similar village system or variants of it, the most popular being the village headmanship types we have discussed earlier. Common to most tribal tenures was a belief in common origin of the village through reclamation of jungle by pioneer ancestors. Individuals within the community were bound to each other as co-sharers of the reclaimed land, and as member of common clan. So, institutions governing land and community organisations based on clan, reinforced each other 112.)

It is reasonable to suppose that the village organisations which were repositories of customary and communal rights would tend to be stronger in areas where the tribes predominate and obversely they would be weaker in areas where they are in a minority. The ethnic composition of the population then

112. In the tribal dominated areas in the southern district of Ranchi, Singhbhum and Manbhum, many non-tribal communities e.g. Goalas, Kurmis and Rautias etc too shared features of khutkatti land system. It may be argued that these communities were in terms of religious belief, ritual practices and clan organisations not far removed from the neighbouring tribes. Thus in the Porahat estate in the Kolhan pire, there were many villages which were settled by Rautias, Bhuinyas etc. which had similar village organisation as the Munda khutkatti areas. In Porahat Mcpherson even found a case where Munda and Rautia jointly founded a village. Porahat SR (1) pp. 154-158.
would provide us an index of the strength of village organisations. I do not propose here to venture into the historical origins of patterns of ethnic occupancy in the region but the earliest Census (1872) clearly showed that the Northern districts had much less concentration of tribal population compared to the southern districts. We have also evidence of massive migration of Santhals from the beginning of the 19th century, both southwards (to Manbhum and Singhbhum) and northwards to Santhal pargana. Thus between 1830 and 1855 about 1500 villages of Santhals were established in Damin-i-Koh region of Santhal pargana mainly by migration of Santhals from the northern borders of Hazaribagh district.

In many cases the displacement of Santhal headmen by the immigrant thikadars was the cause of wholesale desertion of villages by Santhals. "A Santhal village is a compact body, the members of which will stand by each other, and will even desert their cultivation if the thika or farming lease is given to anyone but a Santhal".

113. In the 1872 Census the proportion of tribals (recorded as aboriginals) to the total population of the district was as follows.

Hazaribagh = 57120/770,456
Manbhum = 238,872/971,000
Lohardagga* (including Palamau) = 518,645/1237,123
Singhbhum = 256065/415,023

The census of 1901 showed the following proportion of tribals in the various districts.

Ranchi 59.4
Hazaribagh 23.3
Palamau 28.0
Manbhum 45.6
Singhbum 64.4

114. This movement of Santhals has been amply testified to in their folklores which record their migration from their original home in Chai and Champa pargana (Chhatra) of Hazaribagh. See W.M.Culshaw (1944).

115. SAB Vol XV, p. 73.
If the desertion of Santhal villages enmasse from about the beginning of the 19th century often appeared 'voluntary', in case of bhunharsi villages of northern Hazaribagh, force and deceit seem to have been more apparent. Thus in numerous villages of Hunterganj and Partabpur thana of north west Hazaribagh it was found that immigrant landlords had completely ousted the old settlements of Bhuinyas and many of the Bhuinyas had been subjugated into debt peonage (Kamias) 116. In these instances we have the forcible destruction of the village community by the landlords. It might not be out of place to recollect here that in Hazaribagh district, the only semblance of village community in the shape of headmanship was to be found only in the areas where Santhals and other tribes predominated i.e. in south and south eastern portions of the districts.

We must conclude then that the structure of property relations heavily favoured the landlords due to the absence of village communities; mainly due to the continuous emigration of tribes from the northern borders. Their place was taken by the immigration of peasant castes from the Bihar plains 117.

116. Concrete instances of displacement of Bhuinyas and Bhogtas from many villages of Partabpur thana were cited by P.N. Kapoor, Asst : settlement officer, Hazaribagh during 1908-15 settlement. "I feel convinced however that not only that a considerable proportion of agricultural population has been driven away from Partabpur but that some Bhuinya agricultural population has been driven away or reduced to kamiauti." A note on the kamiauti system in thana Partabpur', Enclosure no 13, Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers, p. 26.

117. Hunter had noticed the process of immigration in Hazaribagh. 'A continuous stream of Hindustani settlers from Bihar has for many years been passing into the district, through the passes in the hills that define the frontier to the north. Most of them are probably of low caste...' SAB Vol XVI, P 59.

L.R. Forbes commented on the massive immigration of settlers into Palamau after 1830's. See Palamau Govt. Estate SR (1864) para 47.
Having been under the sway of landlordism for a much longer period, the Bihari immigrants were probably less wont to challenge the claims of absolute proprietorship of the landlords. [118] However, it was primarily the immigration of landlords, specially the petty tenure holders from Bihar which contributed to the demise of village communities in these areas. Thus by 1875, it was found that in Hazaribagh 'bulk of the thikadars and small farmers all over the district are natives of Bihar, and it is through their influence that the present system of rack renting has been introduced'. We have alluded earlier to the Santhal emigration being caused by imposition of alien thikadars on their villages. [119]

The process then in Palamau and Hazaribagh was as follows. In the first place, there was imposition of a system of landlordism from above, whose main function was to breakdown the tribal village organisation. Secondly, there was a retreat of the tribal communities from the northern borders, followed by resettlement of the villages by immigrant peasants of Bihar plains. This partly explains the weak presence of village communities in the northern districts and the sway of absolute proprietary rights of landlords, by the beginning of our period in Hazaribagh and Palmau.

118. SAB Vol XVI, p. 75.

119. The retreat of the Santhals and other tribals could also be due to the conflict between two different systems of cultivation. Santhals, were till a much later time shifting cultivators, and their retreat was linked also with disappearance of jungles as much to their refusal to change their mode of cultivation which would have made possible a larger surplus. See SAB Vol XVI, p. 65.
### APPENDIX

**Table 1**

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Source: Various district SRs

Note: Bakd = bakaest Don / Total Don
Popd = Population/Don Rend = Rent in Rs./raiyati Don
Rendr = Rent in md.s of rice /raiyati Don.