CHAPTER VI

CLASS STRUGGLE AND RENT

Introduction

Part I : Agrarian Relations in Palamau, Hazaribagh : Context (I)
  1.1 : Subinfeudation
  1.2 : Thikadari
  1.3 : Bakast and Begari
  1.4 : Logic of Determination of Rent
  1.5 : Kamia System
  1.6 : Class Struggle and Context (I)

Part II : Agrarian Relations in Manbhum, Ranchi : Context (II)
  2.1 : Manbhum : peasant resistance to landlords
  2.2 : Level of Rent
  2.3 : Tenant - Landlord Conflict in Manbhum
  2.4 : Tenant - Landlord Conflict in Ranchi
  2.5 : Class Struggle and Rent

Part III : State Intervention And The Rent Question
  3.1 : The Tenancy Act
  3.2 : Decline of Rent in post-Tenancy Act Period
  3.3 : Rise of Salami

Conclusions
CHAPTER VI

CLASS STRUGGLE AND RENT

Introduction

Our enquiry in the previous chapter was confined to the status and incidence of types of village communities. It was found that village communities were subject to constant assault by the landlord class primarily because they posed a barrier to the development of monopoly rights over land. By the beginning of our period village communities were in various stages of decay, with the landlords having succeeded in destroying by degrees features of community rights. I had then proposed an inverse relation between the degree of landlord power and the strength of the village community. In the Southern districts, a greater incidence of village community implied a lesser degree of landlord's control over villages and obversely in the Northern districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau, a higher degree of landlord's power was implied in the relative absence of village communities. In this chapter, I investigate the results of the regional differences in the degree of power of landlords, specially in so far as it affected the level and character of surplus appropriation. I shall first take up the districts of Hazaribagh and Palamau, which constituted what I have termed as the Context(I) in the previous chapter.

Part I : Agrarian Relations in Palamau, Hazaribagh : Context (I)

1.1 : Subinfeudation

The distinctive feature of the landlord based property in the Northern districts was the heavy subinfeudation of property on the one hand and the wide prevalence of the system of
rent farming (thikadari) on the other~

Table 6.1

Degree of Subinfeudation in Hazaribagh and Palamau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total no. of villages</th>
<th>Total no. of tenures</th>
<th>No. of 1st degree tenures</th>
<th>No. of 2nd degree tenures</th>
<th>No. of 3rd degree tenures</th>
<th>No. of 4th degree tenures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>7007</td>
<td>11,733</td>
<td>9169</td>
<td>2071</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>3599</td>
<td>14,893</td>
<td>8263</td>
<td>4708</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hazaribagh SR p. 85
Palamau SR p. 109

The degree of subinfeudation was evidently more rampant in Palamau than in Hazaribagh. The origins of this process of subinfeudation can briefly be mentioned here. It is certain that in the precolonial period, Hazaribagh and Palamau were ruled by chieftains who were invariably linked to some tribe or the other. Palamau was ruled by Chero chieftains and Ramgarh in Hazaribagh was under Kharwar chief. Granting of feudal tenures to military retainers and dependents had given rise to the first set of subinfeudation well before the colonial era. These tenures were mainly of two kinds, jagirs and khorpsh, the former were grants to retainers and the latter to the younger branches of ruling families (since primogeniture was the rule in these areas). Another kind of land grants called kush brit tenures were given to Brahmins. It must be mentioned here that the oldest reference to landgrants by the ruling chieftains dates no further back than 1600 AD. Apart from the fiefs granted to retainers and dependents there were of course independent chieftains who owed nominal suzerainty to the territorial chief e.g. the Bhuinya.

1. Hazaribagh SR p. 21
ghatwals of Khuruckdeah. At the beginning of the colonial era, it was found that most of the jagirdars etc. were virtually independent of the territorial chiefs.

Drastic changes came about with the imposition of the colonial rule. For the first time the fiefs and grants were treated as private property and assessed to revenue. The revenue assessments were not heavy in themselves, but they had the effect of transforming the tribute paying structures into rental property. Authority no longer came from grants by the territorial chiefs but from possession of property. This led to the creation of saleable intermediate property in the older grants which the jagirdars set about to sell as permanent leases (mokararis), either to the mahajans or other middle men. This became the basis for the inception of a second set of subinfeudation. In the process, large areas under the suzerainty of smaller, independent chieftains (Chero and Kharwar khorposhders) passed on to the hands of the new set of intermediate tenure holders. In Palamau, the attempts at resumption of jagirs by the ruling chieftains mostly affected the Chero and Bhogta jagirs. Thus it was noted that "Palamau’s history of tenures was one of the secular decline of old clan chiefs of Cheros and Kharwars who were now gradually replaced by acts of resumption and mokarari leases by outside Babhans and Chattris as Jagirdars and tenure holders". 

Thus, two processes went on simultaneously, on the one hand creation of a large number of intermediate tenures

2. The resumption of older jagirs granted to clansmen of the Chero chieftain gave rise to the rebellion of Cheros and Bhogtas in 1800, 1817, 1832 and during the mutiny in 1857. For discontent among clan chiefs due to their dispossession see Jha (1964), pp. 12-20.
3. Palamau SR, p. 23
through *mokarari* leases and secondly the gradual displacement of older chieftains who were linked by ties of kinship to the village communities. This new set of landholders was mostly imported from the plains of Bihar and set about to ruthlessly raise the level of rent and allied services from the cultivating classes.

1.2 Thikadari

Where landlords could not themselves carry out the task of rental collection or did not think it worth while to employ an elaborate establishment for such purpose, villages were sublet in temporary rent farming leases known as *thikas*. The thikadar thus emerged in the 19th century as the most visible and immediate symbol of the worst form of landlordism. The incidence of *thikadari* in the two districts were as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total number of villages (excluding Khas villages)</th>
<th>Number of Thikadari villages</th>
<th>% of Thikadari villages to total No. of villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>1125</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>5407</td>
<td>2367</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8266</td>
<td>2492</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Palamau SR P 109, Hazaribagh SR P 85

Roughly 30 per cent of the villages had *thikadari* settlements. It must be remembered, though, that these *thika* settlements only refer to 1st degree tenures, that is in these

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4. The Raja of Ramgarh alone created a host of *mokrari* leases between 1864–1878 in 634 villages. In these 634 villages, rentals were doubled and one year’s rental was taken as *salam*. *SAB* Vol. XVI, p. 123 and *Hazaribagh SR* p. 28
villages thikadars worked under only one superior landlord. But the true extent of thikadari can be gauged from the subinfeudation of II, III and IV degree tenures in the district. Most of the tenures of lower degree were usually given out in thika settlements of temporary nature.

(Thikadari tenures were the surest and the least expensive method for raising the rental income of the landlord. It was the usual practice for thikadars to pay a year's rental as salami and 5 years rental in advance). Since the landlord's rental demand increased at the expiry of each lease, the thikadars had very little margin if they collected only the legal rental. So "the thikadars reimburse themselves by enhancing rents all around". Their aim was to recover his rental as quickly and as much as possible.

The effect of the thikadari on the gross rental of a village can be surmised from the following example of village Matnag in the Palamau district.

The successive increase of the thika rental with each settlement can be easily seen. The village happened to be a Khutkatti village in the southern part of Palamau and thus it might have been lightly rented in the beginning but then with the first thika settlement in 1878 onwards, we can see the

5. Even in villages held khas by landlords of large properties the tendency was to let them out on thika. Thus it goes without doubt that thika system was far more widespread than is shown in the figure in Table 6.1. See Palamau SR, p. 110.

6. Hazaribagh SR, p. 78

The system of thikadari had a devastating impact on the village rental, which had risen about 5 times in a period of 30 years or so. That this gross enhancement of rental was not at all due to any extension of cultivation was well established by the settlement officer in his detailed examination of the village. It was often found that the thikadars had sublet the village or portions of a village to another middleman (katkenadar). This happened specially if the ex-thikadars had managed to get a footing in the village as raiyats. In fact a favourite method adopted by various intermediaries, including

8. See Note by T.W. Bridge, Enclosure no 51 A and 51 B, Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers, pp. 151,161. According to Bridge's calculation the thika rental represented 30 per cent of value of the gross produce of tenants' holding. He later reduced the rent to Rs. 307.00.

9. See the case of Iltaphat Hussain, who held the village of Nawatang for many years as thikadar, katkenadar and raiyat. Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers, p.85. In Palamau the practice of subletting by thikadars was noticed by S.R. Hignell. "The fortunate raiyat had thus to provide for the Nawab's estate, the farmer, and the subfarmer with their profits before he could make a pice for himself." 'Memorandum on the Necessity or Otherwise of Extending Settlement operations to the District of Palamau', 21th August 1909, by S.R. Hignell D.C. of Palamau in land Revenue VI-file no. 18 of 1909-10 (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi).
thikadars who held resumable lease, was to acquire land in the villages by ousting older raiyats and taking raiyati settlement at favourable terms from the superior landlord.

Thus Subans Rai, a powerful bhumihar landlord held village Durganji as thikadar under the Dhanwar estate of Hazaribagh. After his thika of the village ceased he got a raiyati settlement in the village, and 2/3rd of the village rice land was recorded as his holding.

1.3 Bakast and Begari

A far more insidious system in the form of bakast cultivation came into being with thikadari. The origin of bakast cultivation lay in the theory of manjhihas. We are familiar with this term in the discussion on bhuinhari, where we had seen that the etymological roots of the term were in manjhi or 'headman'. Since the thikadar was theoretically the successor of the manjhi or headman in the village, it was assumed that the share of village land which went with the office of the manjhi should pass on to the thikadar. But interestingly, in Hazaribagh unlike in parts of Manbhum and Dhalbhum there was never any share of village land attached to the office of the manjhi or headman. So Sifton found the theory of origin of manjhihas as propounded by landlords and thikadars 'entirely fictitious'. Nevertheless this fictitious theory indicates that the origin of bakast cultivation lay in the displacement of the headman system or in other words of the village community. Thus in Hazaribagh the bakast land

10. Memo no. 1833 of J.D.Sifton dt. 10-11-1911, Ranchi in 'Hazaribagh Settlement Papers', (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi) Instances of such practices amongst the mokarirdars of Ramgarh in Hazaribagh were also common. In Government estate of Giridih the Bhumihar Babhan thikadars had successfully ousted older raiyats en masse. Hazaribagh SR, pp. 91,106,107.
11. Hazaribagh SR, p. 79
invariably came into being with the entry of the thikadar into the village after displacing the headman. The usual practice was for the thikadar to take up the best rice land of the village as the bakast land. In some of the estates of Hazaribagh, by a curious formula, das ban mein ek ban (1/10th of the village land) was made bakast. But this was only a theoretical limit. In villages where the sway of landlords was absolute the only limit to the amount of bakast was the need of the landlord or the thikadar. The bakast land became thikadar's remuneration, taken by forcible dispossession of tenants from the best land of the village.

Though in its origin associated with the rise of the professional rent farmer, bakast cultivation was not confined to only the thikadari villages, but was a feature of almost all types of tenurial villages as well as of the khas villages. In Palamau district, bakast cultivation had taken a form which did away altogether with the fictitious theory of headman's share. Numerous instances of direct dispossession of raiyates from the holdings they had cleared was cited by the settlement officer. "In Ursugi, Babu Kalicharan Singh Khopposhdar under the Untari estate claimed as zirat all the rice lands of one tola. It was found that this land had been reclaimed by Oraons who had only recently been dispossessed and given

12. ibid.
13. ibid. Also see Inspection note of J. Reid dt. 19th January 1913 in 'Hazaribagh Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's Record Room Ranchi)
14. "An enquiry into the history of manjihias land in nearly every village afforded good grounds for holding that they were raiyati land in origin". ibid. In Palamau, similarly in most villages bakast land was originally taken over from the raiyati stock Palamau SR, p. 101.
wasteland to reclaim in another tola.\textsuperscript{15}.

The mode of cultivation of the \textit{bakast} was broadly of two types. It was let out to tenants at a heavy produce rent (generally about 50 per cent of gross produce or often a fixed quantity of produce which was very much higher than the above share). But more often \textit{bakast} land was cultivated by \textit{begari}, or forced labour extracted from the tenants. The worst incidence of \textit{begari} were to be found in the Northern districts, in regions where the area of \textit{bakast} cultivation was a high proportion of the cultivated area. In Hunterganj and Partabpur thana of Chhatra where the amount of \textit{bakast} land held by landlords amounted to roughly 45 per cent of the total cultivated area, "the raiyats had to render almost unlimited \textit{begari}, which is executed at critical moments in the season's agriculture.\textsuperscript{16}"

In village Masnodi, the Bhumihar landlord had made 200 acres of rice land as \textit{bakast}, and cultivated it by demanding \textit{begari} not only from the village but also from raiyats of the surrounding villages.\textsuperscript{17} In Palamau, in Untari estate, often double \textit{begari} was demanded in villages which were under the thikadars. Thikadars as well as the superior landlord took \textit{begari} for cultivation of their own \textit{bakast}.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{itemize}
\item 15. \textit{Palamau} SR, p. 101. It so happened that this particular landlord also took land improvement loan and claimed credit for clearing the jungle. See \textit{Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers}, p. 113.
\item 17. Hazaribagh SR, p. 72.
\item 18. \textit{Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers}, p. 112. "The system presses most hardly on those raiyats who live in villages near the landlord's private land; and those who suffer most are naturally the poorest raiyats who are least able to resist excessive demand". \textit{Palamau} SR, p. 92.
\end{itemize}
Begari, was, thus associated with high degree of bakast cultivation, conversely where the bakast land was let out on produce rent, begari did not serve any particular economic function, and remained only as a symbol of the domination of the landlord.

1.4 Logic of Determination of Rent in Context (I)

Thus, in Palamau and Hazaribagh, the institutions of thikadari, bakast and begari, along with the weak presence of village communities contributed to weaken the position of the cultivator. The most immediate impact of all these institutions was felt on the level of surplus extracted from the raiyat's holding, and thus primarily on the level of rent given out by the tenant. Rent enhancements, made illegal by the tenancy law after 1901, were widespread all over Hazaribagh and Palamau. In Hazaribagh, in 212 out of 254 villages, enhancement of rent had been done after 1901. In the whole district probably less than 25 per cent of villages were paying only their legal rent.

Landlords could raise rents possible only due to their ability to eject raiyats and resume khas possession of their holdings or resettling them with other tenants who pay up all arrears as condition of settlement.

Despite regional variation within Context (I), in general power of the landlord to evict tenants, enhance rent and make bakast land out of tenant's holdings, was exercised quite frequently. The immediate impact of this was felt first of all in the sphere of surplus extraction. It is evident that, in the

19. Hazaribagh SR, p. 64
20. Ibid.
scenario sketched above, the rent rate would be determined to a large extent by the supply and demand for land. If the supply of land is fixed, either because the limits of arable frontier were reached or if the arable was stagnating for artificial reasons, the rent rate on the existing land would tend to go up. There will not only be competition for vacant plots but the rent rates on the existing tenancies would also be correspondingly increased since eviction and subsequent enhancements at the going rate of rent were quite possible. Thus population pressure as an index of demand for land would be an adequate determinant of the rate of rent.

However we should note that the population pressure would tend to be high in regions where arable had stagnated and would be generally lower where there has been considerable arable expansion. Now from the supply side, it is evident that the competition for land would be more if some of the land let out to tenants is withdrawn into bakast cultivation. But this is only possible if the arable was stagnating or if the rate of expansion of the arable was slower than the rate at which land is made into bakast. Higher rent rate should be associated with higher proportion of bakast land only if the arable expansion had stagnated absolutely or relative to the expansion of bakast land. As we had argued earlier, an index of the absolute stagnation of the arable would be high population pressure. Thus generally one should expect high rate of rent to be associated with high bakast and high population pressure. A strong intercorrelation between all the three indices would, conversely, indicate the tendency for arable stagnation. Moreover we would in that case be certain that arable stagnation was not due to the exhaustion of arable
frontier but rather due to the working of the institutional variables of rent rate and bakast cultivation. That is, the higher the rate of rent and the proportion of bakast cultivation, the weaker would be the tendency for arable expansion.

Another point needs to be made here about the significance of bakast land. Its role did not simply lie in determining the supply of land. It also was, as we have seen earlier, an index of power of the landlord class. Thus a higher proportion of bakast land also meant a greater degree of exercise of that power, i.e. it also meant a greater ability to determine the rate of rent, by raising it above the level of what the competition of ryots alone would bring about. Thus in Context(1), bakast cultivation would be a stronger variable than the population pressure, in determining the rate of rent.

**Correlation Matrix - Hazaribagh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Rate of rent</th>
<th>(2) Population pressure</th>
<th>(3) Proportion of Bakast land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of rent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population pressure</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Bakast land</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can now verify the above propositions in the light of the data of 27 thanas of these two districts, from the settlement period. First of all we notice a strong interconnection between the rate of rent, population pressure and proportion of bakast land, which points to the vicious circle of arable stagnation induced by bakast cultivation leading to high population pressure on the existing arable. The net result is a
high rate of rent. The partial correlation show that if the population pressure was the same in all the thanas, bakast cultivation alone would explain roughly 50 per cent of variation in the rate of rent. But if the proportion of bakast cultivation was the same in all the thanas, population pressure would provide only 36 per cent of the explanation of variation in the rate of rent. Thus the proportion of bakast cultivation would seem to be a stronger explanatory variable in determining the rate of rent than population pressure.

The point becomes clearer when we study the correlation matrix in Hazaribagh and Palamau districts separately. In Hazaribagh the inter-correlation between the rate of rent, population pressure and bakast cultivation is very high. At first sight the correlation coefficient between population pressure (0.87) and the rate of rent and bakast land and rate of rent (0.95) does not seem very much different. But on studying the partial correlations it becomes evident that the association of bakast cultivation with the rate of rent is much stronger (r13.2 = 0.78) than that of population pressure with the rate of rent (r12.3 = 0.49). The scenario in Hazaribagh thus shows more clearly the interrelation of factors which gave rise to the high rate of rent. The high rent areas invariably had high population pressure as well as a higher proportion of bakast land. Conversely the low rent areas were also areas of low population pressure as well as lower proportion of bakast land. That is, in Hazaribagh one can notice that there were two groups of thanas, (a) in one group comprising of 9 thanas in the south east, the rate of rent was lower than average; the population pressure on the arable was
also lower, and the population of landlord's bakast land was similarly lower. This was the developing area of Hazaribagh, which was largely populated by tribals, in many of their villages the headman system prevailed, landlord's acquisition of bakast land being low had not been able to prevent the arable expansion here.

(b) The second group of thanas consist of the rest of the district to the north west. Here the proportion of landlord's bakast was higher than the average district figures, the rate of rent was also higher and the population pressure had increased, due to a stagnating arable. This was the real landlord country of Hazaribagh, where the tendency for bakast to increase faster than the arable had given rise to high rate of rent and arable stagnation. But this division into two groups is not to be taken as a strict geographical division; what it shows is that there were two tendencies working in the district one expansionary and the other regressive. The expansionary tendency was associated with lower degree of landlord's control over the tenants while the regressive tendency was allied with high degree of landlord's power as evidenced by larger share of bakast cultivation. However without more details at the thana level we shall not be able to pinpoint the exact geographical spread of these two conflicting tendencies.

21. J.D.Sifton, the settlement officer, clearly favouring a geographical division had observed the difference of development between the South Eastern thanas and the North Western thanas of Hazaribagh. The former was more progressive in terms of arable expansion than the latter. He also showed that the former thanas also experienced greater population growth, had greater per capita landholding (both in terms of Don land and Tanr land), and lesser proportion of bakast land and lower rate of rent. See Hazaribagh SR, pp. 16,17.
Another point about the regressive tendency has to be identified. In our analysis, so far the role of bakast cultivation in determining the rate of rent has been emphasized. But after a certain threshold is reached, the rate of rent assumes an autonomous role, and becomes the primary determinant of the institutional structures. This extreme form is characterized first and foremost by almost complete decimation of all customary rights and privileges of the tenant population, and conversion of a large portion of them into virtual serf status. This extreme form was to be seen in the northwestern corner of Hazaribagh and in Palamau.

The settlement officer of Hunterganj in Hazaribagh found that roughly 30 per cent of tenancies were only homestead or service tenancies (gcharbari or nokrana) holders of which were practically serfs of their masters. The villages here were held largely by a host of petty tenure holders like mokrardars and thikadars. Here the rates of rent were very much higher than the average rent of the district. Half produce rent which in other parts of Chotanagpur is the rate of rent payable for landlord's privileged land, in most villages here is the normal rent for all rice lands held by raiyats. Eviction and seizure of cattle on failure to render begari were extremely common. In Partabpur thana alone, it was estimated that raiyats of 3000 acres (roughly 30 per cent of the total thana land) were ousted by the landlords.

Consequently bakast lands were a very high proportion of the total cultivated area. This high proportion of the bakast land was

22. J.D. Sifton, 'Note on Agrarian Condition in the North West of Hazaribagh district' Enclosure no. 17, Selections from Hazaribagh Settlement Papers, p. 30.
23. P.N. Kapoor 'A Note on the Kamiauti system of thana Partabpur', Enclosure no 13, ibid, p. 27.
cultivated mainly by a serf population, which was bound to the landlord by debt peonage. The whole bhuinya population, of this corner of the district had become kamias. Rackrenting, insecurity of tenures and lawless exactions of landlords, were cited as cause of the absolute degradation of the cultivating population.

At the moment we do not propose to go into the details of the kamiauti system. It is only to be noted here that the vicious spiral of arable stagnation (high rent-high bakast) had reached its zenith in this system.

Similarly in Palamau, Jhon Reid clearly set out the leading role played by high rate of rent in determining almost all features of the institutional structures; and he specified the threshold of rental rate above which such features became prominent.

"We cannot entirely reconstruct the rural annals of Palamau; but it is now well known that the imposition of very high rents exceeding one fifth of the value of produce has been the signal throughout the district for relinquishment of their holdings by the raiyats, and their degradation, in large number, to the status of bondsmen or slaves... The chief characteristic of agrarian conditions in Palamau, so far as I have been able to ascertain them are... arbitrary and huge enhancements of rents payable... The results of these enhancement are wholesale dispossession of tenants without reference to courts, failure to give rent receipts with its corollary, the complete dependence of the cultivating population, resumption of the lands of the tenants by the landlord, and the

24. ibid.
25. J.D. Sifton 'Note on Agrarian condition of North Western thanas of Hazaribagh' ibid. p. 30.
degradation of the tenantry in a large number to a state of serfdom. 26.

Rent rates higher than 20 per cent, sometime as high as 60 per cent of gross produce were quite commonly found in Palamau. 27. Was the rent rate in Palamau subject to the same economics of supply and demand that was characteristic of the situation in Context (1) as a whole?

In the 9 thanas, the inter-correlation matrix of the 3 variable of rent rate, proportion of bakast and population

26. Letter from John Reid, Director Land Records and Surveys to Secy: Board of Revenue, Bihar and Orissa, dt Ranchi 13th April, 1916. 'Survey and Settlement of Palamau district' (Commissioner's Record Room Ranchi). See also J.Reid 'Inspection Note on Palmau Settlement' dt. March 16th 1916, for numerous examples of the above features in the same file.

27. Palamau SR, p. 86. See also letter from T.W.Bridge to Director Land Records, Daltonganj, dt. 6th April 1916, in 'Palamau Settlement Papers', (Commissioner's Record Room, Ranchi). For 69 villages in thana Kenr and Latehar, where attested rentals were estimated above 20 per cent of gross produce. The break up of rental assessments of these 69 villages as proportion of gross value of produce was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rent as proportion of value of Gross Produce (in %)</th>
<th>Number of villages</th>
<th>Per cent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 and above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation Matrix: Palamau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rate of rent</th>
<th>Population pressure</th>
<th>Proportion of Bakast land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of rent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population pressure</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Bakast land</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pressure show a much weaker intercorrelation than in the case of Hazaribagh. Though bakast land and rent rate have fairly high correlation \((r = 0.79)\) it is less than that observed in the case of Hazaribagh. The relation between population pressure and rent rate is also much weaker \((r = 0.44)\). Interestingly there is also a very weak correlation \((r=0.29)\) between population pressure and proportion of bakast land. The weak relationship here does not mean that the characteristics of Context (I) are absent here. On the contrary it points to the overwhelming determination of these characteristics by the level of 'rent'.

Thus the weak association between population pressure and rent rate only indicates the relative autonomous determination of rent rate. Similarly in case of bakast land also we posit that it was not the high level of bakast which lead to high rate of rent, but the reverse i.e. the excessive rental burden led to abandonment of holdings and resumption into bakast. Here the index of landlord's power was in his ability to levy a higher than normal (normal for the existing supply and demand for land) rate of rent, rather than in the amount of bakast land he held. So even in thanas where the population pressure was low the rate of rent was high. As to the cause of such high rates of rent, T.U. Bridge, wrote:
I have examined many villages in order to ascertain, if possible the cause for such exceptional rents, and I have been unable to find any other explanation than that given by Mr. Hignell in his Memorandum on the necessity for settlement in Palamau, namely that the relative position of tenant and landlord is similar to that of the Toad and the Harrow... the incidence of rent has been controlled purely and simply by contract.

Such high rates of rent deterred enlargement of tenant's holdings and thus there was the curious situation of a large amount of cultivable land and sparse population density alongside high rates of rent on the existing holding. In fact till the inception of Survey and Settlement it was commonly supposed that in Palamau, given the sparse of population, there must have been competition for raiyats which must necessarily have kept the rate of rent low. The Survey and Settlement proceedings effectively demolished the so called 'competition theory' by showing that instead of rents being low they were the highest in whole of Bihar and Orissa, and instead of large holdings for the raiyats 'one out of every 3 agriculturist has been unable to get any land at all and the rest in vast majority of cases have less...

28. Letter from T.U.Bridge to Director of Land Records and Surveys Bihar and Orissa, dt. 6th April 1916 in ibid. Bridge further showed that the usual form of rent settlement was by paria system which was originally a form of system of sharing the village land, which had broken down to only a sum of money and the parties decide between them how much area it shall contain without any limit or restriction other than the paying capacity of the raiyat'. ibid.

29. This was the view of L.R.Forbes who wrote the first account of agrarian situation of Palamau district. It tended to be repeated by almost all subsequent reports. See Palamau Government Estate SR, para 47. Also Palamau DG, (1907), pp. 130-135. Interestingly most of the competition theorists also had observed, simultaneously lack of occupancy rights and the relative insecurity of tenancies, but they never seem to have seen the glaring contradiction between the two views, preferring instead to reconcile them 'by ascribing the lack of occupancy rights to the nomadic habit of the tenants, then subsistance holding'.
1.5 Kamia System in Palamau

The fault of the 'competition theorists' lay in altogether dismissing the possibility of bakast cultivation by the kamiauti system. The logic of kamiauti system was thus clearly related not only to the high rates of rent but also to the comparatively low level of population density in the district. Apriori it appears logical to argue that given an initially low population density, rent rates would never be high. Even with full monopoly rights of landlords over all the wastelands and jungles, competition amongst landlords would drive wages near to the marginal productivity of labour. The marginal productivity of labour being very nearly equal to the average productivity of labour, there would never be any adequate surplus in the form of rent (difference between average productivity of labour and marginal productivity of labour) accruing to a non-producing class. This was what the 'competition theorists' also argued in the case of Palamau. But the next logical step for landlords, as Domar has shown, was to restrict the movement of the peasant population through the debt bondage (as in case of Palamau and Hazaribagh). This enables the landowning class to extract a level of surplus which would otherwise be impossible if only normal economic forces are allowed to operate.

30. Palamau SR, pp. 118-119
31. The connection between sparsity of population and the kamiauti system was noticed by Hunter, "... the immigrant Hindu speculators from Bihar succeed like Eupatrids of early Athenian history and the Patricians of early Roman history, in making bonded slaves of lower classes by sheer power of money. This is an obvious means of securing cheap labour in a thinly populated country and it can be hardly doubted that the system was introduced by the moneyed Hindu settlers" SAB, Vol. XVI p. 112
32. This simple but elegant explanation for the origin of slavery and serfdom has been given by E.B. Domar. See Domar (1970).
We cannot here verify the above thesis with regard to the origin of the kamiauti system in Palamau or Hazaribagh except perhaps mentioning that the population density at the beginning of the 19th century must have been quite low, and the land to man ratio exceedingly favourable.

But what we can verify is the structural interlinkage between high rate of rent and the bakast cultivation through kamiauti as it existed at the turn of the century in Palamau. It is clear that the exceedingly high rate of rent (above 20 per cent of the value of gross produce) would lead to periodical abandonment of cultivation in large numbers. This would of necessity tend to increase in the proportion of bakast cultivation. But if the bakast cultivation was to be carried out only by free wage labour, the profits would never be as much as its rental value, so it would be more rational to let out the bakast, which would lower the rate of rent. Thus here we see the rationale of tying down labour to sweated wages on the one hand and simultaneously keeping the rent rate high on the tenant's land. The possibility of bakast cultivation with sweated labour thus counteracts the possibility of rate of rent falling below a certain limit because of abandonment of holdings by tenants. The high rate of rent, on the tenants' holding on the other hand makes it a potential source of bakast land as well as a reservoir from which kamia labour can be recruited. The intermeshing of two structures i.e. of high rent and high bakast is thus made possible by the existence of a pool of kamias. The kamia population in

33. In marginal calculation, it would mean that the landlord tends to equalize the returns from the marginal unit of bakast land cultivated with kamia labour with the going rate of rent.
Palamau during our period numbered 60,000 or so, or about 12 per cent of the total agricultural population and 35 per cent of agricultural labour and their families.

T.U. Bridge's exhaustive account of kamiauti system, done after surveying 10,000 kamias, provides a fascinating source material for a history of the degrading system. For the moment, it would suffice to mention that kamias invariably enter into bondage ostensibly for contracting loans for their marriage expenses which on the average amounted to Rs. 17 per head of kamia. In return the kamia pledges his labour exclusively to the master, to work at a dole (bani) which amounted only to 2 to 3 kutcha seers of paddy (or about 1 standard seer of rice in the maximum) or other unhusked grains or 2 to 2½ kutcha seers of husked grains like makai. He was not paid even this meagre dole on days on which he was not employed. Bridge observed that the kamia and his dependents together found work for only 365 dole days, i.e. a family of five members managed only 365 seers of grain in a year. Their total family earnings from all sources were less than half the prescribed minimum of famine code. No wonder then that the kamia could not ordinarily pay back his loan. And their bondage became hereditary.

Two features need be mentioned about the kamiauti system. First, that most of the kamia owners were petty tenure

35. Ibid, p. 103. Bridge also found that usually the kamias had to undergo prolonged starvation and lived for long stretches on one meal a day. Bridge vehemently denying that the 'dole' the kamia gets could be a 'wage' wrote 'can there be any doubt that the grain dole is not a wage but a minimum "feed" such as even a cow or tattu must get" ibid. p. 105.
holders, thikadars and big raiyats. The big landlords seldom operated their bakast with the kamias. For this they usually depended on the extensive begari given by the raiyats. Secondly, due to prolonged persistence of the kamiauti system of labour, the wages of nominally free labour in Palamau were not very much different from the kamia dole.  

The root cause of the kamiauti system was essentially the severe agricultural involution which beset the district. High rates of rent and the excessive insecurity of tenancy prevented arable expansion. Thus on a stagnating arable, population pressure produced pulverized small parcels of tenant holdings, allied with extremely skewed distribution. A fact to be noted here is that in general, the average size of holdings per tenancy was inversely correlated with the extent of bakast land. In other words, the higher the proportion of landlord's land, the smaller the amount of land held by each raiyat, and concomitantly the higher the rate of rent. This feature is not unexpected, given the arable stagnation which characterized most  

36. ibid.  
37. In one estimate of distribution of landholding of 7514 tenancies, the following distribution according to value of gross produce was reported: 370 holdings were valued above Rs. 150 and more of which 217 were valued at above Rs. 200 and 53 above Rs. 400 compared to that there were 2095 holdings which contained only 1 acre of inferior land. Palamau SR, p. 154.  
38. The correlation between the proportion of Don land held per khatian of raiyati tenancy showed a high negative correlation of \((r = -0.942)\) for Palamau. For Hazaribagh a similar exercise showed a slightly lower correlation coefficient of \(r = -0.861\). This implied clearly that enlargement of holdings was inversely related to the proportion of bakast land, which as we have repeatedly stressed was directly caused by arable stagnation that characterized Context (I).
of the district.

1.6 Class Struggle in Context (1)

In the course of our discussion, we have several times referred to the factor of power. The basic problem lay in identifying a proper index for this crucial variable. For instance, we have found that in Hazaribagh the proper index of this power was the quantity of bakast land held by the landlord. The more the bakast land the landlord held less was the power of the tenants to resist the demands for surplus. In the case of Palamau on the other hand we have hypothesized that it was the landlord's power, which determined the rate of rent the tenants paid, as also the sweated wage the labourers were forced to work under. In both cases, power is shown as an asymmetrical relation between the two classes i.e. landlords and tenants. The problem is to explain this asymmetry. If we take the level of surplus extraction as a measure of asymmetry of power, we cannot then use this same measure to explain the level of surplus extraction. The problem of 'identification' is quite visible here. The tautological nature of this formulation will be as follows: the landlords extract more surplus because they exercise more power and they are powerful because they extract more surplus. It is possible to get out of this tautological framework if we look at power as not just a predetermined structure but an asymmetrical relationship subject to the process of class struggle. The relative strength or weaknesses of the class forces are reflected in the amount of surplus they extract or surrender; but is not determined by it alone. That is, there are factors other than the purely 'economic' which mould the balance of class forces. One such factor is the
property structure within which the process of surplus extraction takes place. However I have suggested in the preceding discussion that the structure of property relations was itself in a process of evolution. It did not emerge full blown from the beginning, but came into being by incorporating and destroying older preceding forms. Thus in case of Context (1) we have suggested that the degree of surplus extraction was determined to a great extent by the survival of forms of village communities. Similarly the ethnic composition of the landlord class and the tenant population also had an effect on the level of rent. In Palama, where landlordism was far more rampant, it was often found that 'wherever cultivating pradhans existed the rate of rent was never more than 7 to 10 per cent of the total produce' or that 'in many of the jungly villages which are still in the hands of aboriginal pradhans the rents are comparatively low being roughly 5 to 10 per cent of the total produce'.

(We might here recall certain features that characterized the prevailing property relations in the region. First, we have suggested that most of the landlord class had no historical or kinship ties with the local population i.e. they were mostly outsiders from the plains of Bihar. They were thus less subject to customary checks and social pressure of ties of kinship with the tenant class. To that extent they were more prone to transgress the social limits of exploitation and destroy the customary barriers to surplus extraction posed by village communities.)

39. Palama, SR, pp. 85, 86
A second feature which characterized agrarian relations in the region was the muted level of resistance offered to the demands of landlords. During the settlement, officers were often surprised by the extent to which the tenants acted against their own interest. Thus in pargana Japla in Palamau, where produce rent prevailed, the tenants as a body deposed before the settlement officer that adh batai or half share rent was the practice in the paragana from generations. While it was found on closer enquiry that produce rent had been imposed on the tenants only during the recent years. In many villages in North Western thanas of Hazaribagh it was found:

The subjection of the tenants is so complete that during the present settlement they have in very many villages refused to claim their own raiyati land and have declared at the dictation of the landlords that their lands are in the landlord's direct cultivation, that they themselves have no connection with the agriculture of the village, and that their cattle are not plough cattle but are kept for draught purpose only. Similarly when rents have been illegally enhanced within the last few years, the whole body of tenants in village have deposed falsely that rents paid by them now have been paid for generation past, and in cases where landlords neglected during the cadastral survey operation last year to suppress the raiyati possession of land in the villages, the raiyats so recorded have come forward by hundreds to declare that after khanapuri last year, they voluntarily relinquished their lands and hold them no longer.

Evidence of such kind could be multiplied but it can only prove what is known already, that the tenant resistance to landlord was not usual in the two districts. In this region,

40. Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers, p. 31.
41. Hazaribagh SR, p. 58.
enhancements of rent, eviction of recalcitrant tenants from their holdings, and resumption into khas of tenant land, were often done without reference to the court, while in other districts, civil courts were forged as an instrument of oppression, in Palamau, it was precisely the lack of litigation and rent suits in courts which indicated the absolute power of landlords and the lack of resistance of tenants against them.  

But there were regions within the districts where successful resistance by the tenantry had collectively restricted the amount of surplus extraction to a minimum. Thus in Mohuadanr thana of Palamau, the raiyats mostly Oraon Christians had absolutely refused to render begari to the landlords; there were frequent clashes between the landlord and the tenants for rent rakumat, jungle tax etc. The raiyats had also successfully asserted their rights to make korkar against landlord opposition. The result of this successful resistance was that rents were the lowest in the district as also, the proportion of landlord's bakast land and, there were no kamiauti at all to be found here. The frequent disputes in Mohuadanr were in sharp contrast to the acquiescence of raiyats to landlord's demands in rest of the district. These pockets of resistance in South Eastern

42. In fact the relative absence of disputes in courts was often mistaken as sign of well being of tenants under the 'paternal rule of landlords and was used as an argument against any active interference by colonial state in the agrarian relations. Selections from Palamau Settlement Papers, p. 88. For Hazaribagh see Hazaribagh SR p. 64.
43. 'Korkar and tangikar or Jungle cess in Tapa Chechari' Enclosure no. 5, Selection from Palamau Settlements Papers, p. 8.
44. Letter from T.W.Bridge to Director Land Records and Surveys, Bihar and Orissa, dt. 5th September 1918. ibid. p. 181.
45. Letter of P.W.Murphy to Secretary Board of Revenue dt. 9th Nov.1918, ibid, p. 88.
Hazaribagh and Mahuadanr in Palamau, were mostly populated by tribals, and they had also retained feature of the tribal village organisation. It is possible that the ethnic homogeneity and the common village organisation here facilitated common resistance to the landlords. It has been asserted that the main reason for the lack of agrarian resistance amongst non-tribal peasants of the region was because "they consist of heterogeneous elements and are not capable of combination". Added to the ethnic and caste heterogeneity, it must be mentioned, was the fact of sharp differentiation amongst peasants. The burden of landlord’s demand for *begari* or rent, fell heavily on lower caste and small peasants. "It is noticeable that the superior Hindu raiyats, such as Brahmins, Babhans and Kayasthas in very few cases ever render any praedial services or give any equivalent for them to the landlord. Thus the people most likely to give lead to resistance have always been excused". However, it is not possible to explore here any further the reasons for comparative weakness of class struggle in the region. But there is no doubt that it resulted in greater power with the landlord class with all the attendant effects on the level of surplus extraction.

Let me now summarise the findings regarding the agrarian relations of Context (I). First, we have relatively weak village community organisations here, consequently absolute proprietary rights of landlord’s was more in evidence. Secondly, the rates of rents were largely competitive and contractual, being subject to pressures of supply of land (which was determined by the proportion of landlord’s *bakast*) and demand for land.

47. ibid. p. 71.
(determined by the pressure of population). Thirdly, the high rent and high bakast areas of the region were necessarily characterized by arable stagnation. Finally, the landlord's practice of raising rents, often above a threshold limit of 20 percent of value of the produce of the holdings, resulted in the highly regressive structure where the mutual effects of high rent and high bakast land were reinforced. A crucial link between these two structures was the system of debt-slavery or kamiauti.

Part II: Agrarian Relations in Manbhum and Ranchi, Context (II)

2.1 Manbhum - Peasant Resistance to Landlords

The situation in Manbhum presented a striking contrast to that of Palamau and Hazaribagh. Here there was no comparable invasion of landlords from the plains. Most of the landlords and tenure holders had emerged from the internal dissolution of village society. This had an effect on the level of surplus extraction. In the pre-colonial period, most of Manbhum was divided up into kingdoms and chieftainships (very much like in Hazaribagh or Palamau as we have noted earlier, and also like Ranchi as we shall see later). In origin most of these chieftains had emerged from the prolonged process of state-formation that had taken place prior to the colonial era amongst various tribes of the region. Though most of the chiefs claimed to be Rajput, Dalton had no doubt that they were very much marked by their tribal origin. Thus the chiefs of Barabhum and Manbazar were linked to the Bhumij tribes, the chief of Panchete with the Kurmis and the numerous chiefs north of Damodar in Dhanbad sub-division shared their origin with the
Bhuiyana *ghatwals* of Hazaribagh*. The link of these territorial chiefs with sovereign power was tenuous and irregular. British attempts at collection of regular revenue initially failed *. The main reason being that the chiefs often could not collect the demands from numerous subordinate chiefs and village headmen. This indicated considerable independence of the grade chiefs down to the village level. Thus for instance in Panchete Estate in 1771, of the 1280 villages then under the control of the *zamindar*, only 453 villages paid rent to the *zamindar*, the rest of the villages paid only a nominal quit rent *. In Barabhum, of the 218 villages about 64 villages were under mahal *bumijani*, held by Bhumij *sardar ghatwals* at a quit rent *. Attempts at strict and rigid enforcement of revenue had led to a series of rebellions *. It should not be presumed however that independence at lower levels meant that village community existed in some pristine form. Participation in the process of state formation had led to development of hierarchical rights within and

48. *SAB* Vol. XVII pp. 262, 321. Dalton had noted a curious similarity in the stories of the origin of most of the chiefs. An outsider, either a Brahmin or Rajput, on pilgrimage to Puri with his wife leaves a child in the jungles and there the child is nurtured by wild animals (in case of Barabhum a boar, in Panchete a cow), 'this miraculously nurtured foundling is then adopted by the tribes (Bhumij, Kurmis, Bhuiyas as the case may be) and by his innate power becomes the chief'. It may be mentioned here that not only in their stories of origin but also in certain court rituals there is a prominent role assigned to the tribes.  
49. Against Reza Khan's demand of Rs. 30,000 only about Rs. 5,600 could be collected in 1766. A military expedition in 1771, collected Rs. 19,44,954 by 'zortaieb', but even after that there was considerable problem of getting regular revenue till the Permanent Settlement. See *Manbhum SR*, p. 20.  
50. *ibid.*  
52. A permanent military retinue was stationed in Barabhum in 1773 to quell these rebellions which had affected large parts of Barabhum, Manbazar, and Jhalda. *Manbhum SR*, p. 21.
above villages. Much of this process has been described in our
discussion on headmanship and *ghatwali* and need not be repeated
here. The internal dissolution of village community must have
accelerated with the transformation of chiefs into proprietors of
estates. The basic change here was that while earlier the chiefs
exact ed tribute now as proprietors they became holders of rental
property. In the process many of the lower level chieftains and
village headmen acquired proprietary status. To cite an example
in Baghmundi in Western Manbhum bordering Ranchi, the *manki*
of Torang paid revenue directly to the Government and was considered
a proprietor in his own right. Similar examples of many such
territorial or clan chiefs of tribes having become proprietors
could be seen in the Manbhum district, in the course of the 19th
century.\(^3\)

This process was aided by two important
developments that took place from the early 19th century onwards.
First was the active reclamation of jungles and expansion of
arable that took place in the 19th century.\(^4\) In the first half of
the century the new reclamations were done by pioneers from
crowded villages under the *jungle-bari* leases granted by the
various *zamindars*. These *jungle-bari* lease holders were allowed
to reclaim jungles and pay only a quit rent to the superior
landlord. They in turn could collect rent from the settlers. By
1875 Hunter noted that these lease holders were 'virtual
proprietors of the villages they held.'\(^5\) As the reclamation of

\(^3\) *SAB* Vol. XVIII, p. 328.
\(^4\) In Panchete between 1771 and 1867, 3000 new villages or
hamlets were found to have sprung up. In Barabhum between 1770 and
1906, 478 new villages were added to the original 218. See *Manbhum
SE*, pp. 21, 22 and *Barabhum SR*, pp. 55, 56.
\(^5\) There were various types of reclamatory leases known by
different names, 'Mundi ijara', 'maurusi', 'mankiari', 'mukarrari'
etc. See *SAB* Vol. XVII, p. 330.
jungles tapered off by the 2nd half of the 19th century, a new form of reclaiming leases called nayabadi came into being. Unlike junglebari leases, the nayabadi leases were usually held on rent with remission of 3/8th of the village rate or as in Baghmundi the leaseholder was allowed a rent free 'man' land instead. Other forms of clearing leases called jalasan, ariat held under similar terms were also prevalent. But the commonest village tenures found in 1875 were held by reclaiming headmen on enhancible tenures, i.e. they held the villages for terms of years after which the rental of the village was increased in proportion to the extension of cultivation.

During the course of the 19th century another process, of subinfeudation of rent collecting rights took place on a large scale. This process, created a multitude of rights above the village. But unlike in Hazaribagh and Palamau, where such rights were quickly grabbed by thikadars from Bihar, in Manbhum it was from the ranks of the cultivating headmen and other big peasants that the bulk of the village level tenure holders arose. The proprietary rights over villages at fixed rent and heavy salami, sold by zamindars piece by piece were taken by this already substantial class of peasants. Thus in contrast to Hazaribagh and Palamau where the buyers of intermediate tenures were usually landlords (as in Hazaribagh), in Manbhum peasants formed the majority amongst various group of buyers.

56. ibid. p. 329.
57. Commonly called ijaras, the headman held the village and cultivated his holdings free of rent. Many of these ijaras were held by a member of the family of original clearers. They were then virtually hereditary tenures ibid. p. 328.
58. Between 1880 and 1912, the peasant buyers constituted the single most important group of buyers of intermediate tenures of all kinds that is roughly 42 per cent of the total buyers. This
An evidence of the large scale penetration of peasants and headmen into the tenurial structure is provided by the list of tenure holders of the Matha estate in south east Manbhum. In this estate, consisting of 19 villages, we find a large variety of intermediate tenures. What is interesting is that most of the tenure holders belong to the cultivating tribes of Bhumij and Kurmis. In comparison the presence of outsiders, Bengalis and moneylenders or merchants was inconspicuous.

Two other features that are evident from the list of tenure holders of Matha estate are (a) the large number of brahmottar tenures each of which consisted of a very small area, (b) the peasant tenure holders were found holding all types of intermediate tenures, ranging from jungle bari, madhya satwa to mokarari and even khorposh tenures which are actually given out as maintenance grants by ruling chieftains to the junior members of their family.

The evidence so far points not only to the weakness of the system of landlordism but also to a great degree of peasant penetration into the structure of tenurial property. It also indicated that the line of demarcation between rent-collecting 'proprietorship' and cultivating tenancies was blurred to a great extent in Manbhum than elsewhere in Chotanagpur. In Hazaribagh and Palamau we had seen that this line of demarcation ran through the whole agrarian society separating

58. (cont.)
inspite of the severe famines and bad harvest in the period 1895 to 1908, during which understandably peasant buyers were in a minority and moneylenders were more in prominence. See Section on Land market in Chapter VII.
59. 'Statement showing the Total Assets of the Estate of Matha village by village and their Government Shares' in Selection from Manbhum Settlement Papers, pp. 100-102.
not just two classes, but also two cultures, or as the colonial administrators were fond of saying 'two races'. In Manbhum, wrote Hunter "It is impossible, to draw any line between cultivating tenures and cultivating raiyats, as the holders of many of these tenures were themselves cultivators". It is obvious that the same degree of cultural and ethnic difference between the landlords and tenants was not to be found in Manbhum as compared to Hazaribagh and Palamau.

2.2 Level of Rent

What determined the rate of rent, in the above scenario? As in the case of Hazaribagh and Palamau, we examine first the correlation matrix of rent rate, proportion of bakast land and the population pressure.

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<th>Rate of rent</th>
<th>Proportion of Bakast</th>
<th>Population Pressure</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of rent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Bakast</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population pressure</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>-0.318</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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We notice here a low negative correlation between the rate of rent and the proportion of bakast land. This implies that in Manbhum the role of bakast either in the supply of land or in augmenting the power of the landlord was not the same as in Hazaribagh and Palamau. The reason for this is not surprising.

60. *SAB* Vol. XVII, p. 332. The settlement officer wrote 'In the case of cultivating tenancies, it was often very difficult to decide whether they should be recovered as tenures or as raiyati tenancies' *Manbhum SR*, p. 56.
given the discussion earlier. Most of the bakast land was the personal cultivation of the peasant tenure holders or of the miniscule plots of brahmottardars. In Manbhum the total number of tenures were 37,473 of which the brahmottar and debottar tenures numbered around 18,648. The settlement officer had noted that the area recorded under brahmottar tenures is in several cases less than the area recorded in an ordinary raiyati khatian. Similarly many of the tenure holders being cultivators themselves, the area of their holdings was not often very high. There are many mokarari tenures covering not more than a few acres. On calculating the average amount of land recorded in each khatian of bakast tenancy we find that it is roughly the same as the amount of land recorded per khatian of settled raiyat tenancy. The former figure is 2.01 acres of Don land and 1.3 acres of Tanr land, and the latter figure being 1.95 acres of Don land and 1.38 acres of Tanr land.

Thus, though the proportion of bakast land to the total Don land in Manbhum is in fact the same as that of Hazaribagh, in its origin as well as in the composition of its occupants it differed completely from the above district. In fact, while in the former the proportion of the bakast land was an index of the power of the system of landlordism, in Manbhum it was rather a sign of its dilution and weakness. It might be mentioned here that unlike the Northern districts, bakast cultivation was not associated at all with the system of begari or kamiauti.

61. Manbhum SR, p. 56.
62. Ibid.
63. In Manbhum 'however it is very common for raiyats to have several khatians either exclusively in their name or jointly with co-sharers'. Manbhum SR, p. 69. In this case the true average of land per holding of settled raiyats would be more than the average given in the text.
Begari was almost non-existent and kamiauti system was not to be found anywhere in the district. The explanations for the lack of relation between bakast cultivation and rate of rent, could be found in the interpenetration of the tenurial and tenancy structures. Many of the tenures being raiyati holdings which were held at low rates of rent. Secondly, it is evident that the institution of bakast could not affect the rate of rent precisely because it did not impede the expansion of arable. As we have seen, many of the tenurial leases and holdings were specifically linked to the ongoing process of arable expansion; in fact the tenurial leases to peasants were devices that aided the expansion of the arable.

But in many areas the limits of arable expansion had been reached specially in the more open parts of Southern and Eastern Manbhum and in other parts in Jharia coalfields. The opening of coalmines often put an abrupt end to the arable expansion; many potentially cultivable land being taken up by the mines. In such conditions, the demand for land as expressed by the population pressure tended to rise. This was most clearly reflected in the increasing restrictions being placed on the customary concessions given for reclamation. The first signs of it, as we have mentioned earlier, were to be found in the replacement of the jungle bari leases by nayabadi leases for reclamation. In the beginning, the nayabadi leases were held by the tenants on a small quit rent for a period of 5 or 7 years after which they were assessed at the ordinary village rates (with 6 annas remission in a rupee given as mehnatana). "With the

64. Manbhum SR, p. 67.
gradual diminution of suitable land for reclamation and the growth of population, the allowance for mehnatana or expenses of reclusions has gradually decreased in some areas. We can thus, infer that once the limits of arable were reached, along side the rising demand for land, the value of the marginal unit of land also increases. This fact no doubt affects also the average rate of rent. As we can see from the correlation matrix, the rate of rent is very strongly correlated with population pressure, \( r = 0.8 \).

It might appear that in Manbhum economic forces of supply and demand had caused the rate of rent to find its true level of equilibrium. In contrast in Hazaribagh and Palamau the extra economic factor of landlord's power had distorted the rental market by creating artificial scarcity of land (both by constraining arable expansion and by possessing a large proportion of village land as bakast). But this view is only partially correct in so far as it assumes that market forces operate in conditions of absolute equality of participants. Secondly, it makes 'power' appear as an 'extra-economic' feature which distorts the ideal market situation. In reality, it is difficult to separate the operation of market forces from the power wielded by the participants. In Hazaribagh and Palamau, in fact, it was the absolute domination of landlords which made possible the operation of a market for land. In Manbhum, the operation of market forces was embedded in a context of grim struggle between landlords and tenants. The difference with Hazaribagh and Palamau was only in the outcome of the struggle.

65. Manbhum SR, p. 57.
2.3 Tenant - Landlord Conflict in Manbhum

In the 1870's, in the aftermath of the famine of 1866, we have the first signs of the tremendous struggle between landlords and tenants over the question of rent. In a conjuncture of rising prices of food grains after 1866, landlords faced with the very real prospect of falling real income from rent attempted to increase the rates of rent. The Deputy Commissioner of Manbhum noted the raging conflict between the two classes:

"The contention now going on is simply a question of rents; for whilst the landlords on the one hand are endeavouring to raise the rents all around, this is strongly resisted by raiyats, who, although in general they pay very low rates of rent, refuse to have them adjusted, though there can be no doubt but that they have benifited largely by the rise that has taken place of late years in the value of produce, in which the landlords consider they have a right to participate,"

The conflict reached an acute stage leading to the murder of a zamindar, in 1872, and serious attacks on other zamindars. It might be recalled that it was precisely during this time that the confrontation between the zamindar of Tundi and the Santhal raiyats over the question of enhancement of their customary rent, and transgression of jungle rights occurred. At one point, the zamindar had to flee and take shelter in the neighbouring Jharia estate. The Government had to intervene and arrange a compromise between the two parties guaranteeing the customary rates and the jungle rights of the Santhal raiyats.

67. See the following files for an account of the dispute between the landlord and the Santhal raiyats of Tundi. 'Disputes between Zamindar of Tundi and his Ryots' GOB, Rev. (LR). 50-54, December 1871. Also 'Zamindar opression in Tundi Estate', GOB, Rev. (LR), 1-7, Jan 1881.
The conflict between landlords and tenants took a serious turn in Barabhum estate, during the same period. Here the landlord being frustrated in his attempts at getting the rent from the newly reclaimed lands in the ghatwali villages had leased most of the estate in patni taluks to a powerful European Zamindari Company (Watson and Company), with the express purpose of resuming these excess ghatwali land by conducting the necessary litigation in the courts. We have already referred to the compromise struck by the Government between ghatwals and the Company. But inspite of spending nearly Rs. 20,000 per year on litigation for 30 years, the Company failed to enforce the terms of compromise which raised the rate of rent of the excess ghatwal land. The Bhumij ghatwals and other raiyats successfully resisted enhancement of rent and dispossession from land. Many of the original ghatwali tenures were bought up by the Company, but the ghatwals could not be easily ousted.

It was precisely because of their ability to resist the pressure of rental enhancement that the class of substantial peasants and headmen, could accumulate and invest in the land market. Between 1882 and 1913, in the market for both tenurial rights and raiyati rights the peasants were the predominant social group.

68. 'J.D.Sifton 'Note on need for settlement in Barabhum' in 'Ranchi Survey and Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's record room, Ranchi). Several complaints were lodged by the Company asking for Government help in recovering arrears of dues from the recusant ghatwals. There was the case of ghatwal, Rup Singh who successfully defied the attempts of the Company to dislodge him from the village even though his tenures had been bought up by the Company. Barabhum SR, p. 26.
Table 6.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of market</th>
<th>Total No. of transactions</th>
<th>Total value of transactions (in '000 Rs.)</th>
<th>Total No. of buyers</th>
<th>Total No. of peasant buyers</th>
<th>% of Peasant buyers to total number of buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenurial rights(a)</td>
<td>10,472</td>
<td>3539</td>
<td>13,229</td>
<td>5250</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raiyati rights(b)</td>
<td>38,740</td>
<td>3974</td>
<td>43,707</td>
<td>34,081</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (1) ARMD 1882-1911
(2) ARSH 1912-1913

Notes: (a) The figures for only 19 years i.e. 1884-88, 1890-91, 1893-95, 1897, 1903, 1905-06, 1909-13
(b) The figures are for 23 years 1882-88, 1890-91, 1893-95, 1896-97, 1903, 1905-1906, 1909-1913

The overall result of the class struggle during the period 1870-1920 was summed up by the settlement officer as follows:

"Apparently the landlords were worsted in the fight and except in a few villages, the rents remained unaltered... The customary rights of raiyats over trees and jungles and new reclamations are well defined and universally recognised...The landlords are in fact more or less helpless and have not got the power to be jabardast even if they like to be so. The attitude of tenants towards them is that of tolerance almost verging on indifference. The large number of...Bhumij and other refractory tenants who know how to combine amongst themselves and who make no bones about murder and manslaughter, have succeeded in establishing an ascendancy over landlords as far as it is possible for any body of tenants to do so"**.

This power of the peasantry was survival of various forms of village community and ethnic homogeniety as much

69. Manbhum SR, p. 90.
as by the fact of continuing expansion of arable that tended to weaken the power of the landlords and strengthen the hands of the class of reclaiming headman and substantial peasants. The blurring of the edges of class distinction between landlords and tenants on the one hand and the lack of sharp ethnic and cultural differences between them on the other, also tended to weaken the degree of exploitation (by raising the social limits) to a greater extent than in Hazaribagh and Palamau. Thus, the process of class formation and class struggle in Manbhum was an important variable in determining the level and rate of rent.

2.4 Tenant - Landlord Conflict in Ranchi

In Ranchi, the persistant struggle of the tribal peasantry against landlordism, limited surplus extraction by the landlords to a low level (1/8th of the gross produce). And here, the rate of rent was least affected either by the population pressure or by the proportion of landlord's bakast. This is evident from the correlation matrix given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rate of rent</th>
<th>Proportion of Bakast</th>
<th>Population pressure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of rent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Bakast</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population pressure</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Infact here we find that the rate of rent is negatively correlated with both population pressure and the proportion of landlord's bakast. This is completely contrary to what we have seen in all other districts of the Division. What was
the cause of such wide discrepancy between the hypothetical determination of rent rate and the existing rent rate? The settlement officer had found that in Ranchi nothing like an accepted standard or pargana rate of rent existed. He wrote:

"...the rate of rent and rakumats varies enormously; its incidence depending on most part on the relative strength of the parties rather than on considerations of equity or value of tenancy." 70

So, the rate of rent was determined not so much by economic forces, but by the nature of class struggle.

The history of rent and praedial conditions, in the district is the history of all agrarian discontent", wrote J.Reid 71. The constant tussle between landlords and tenants over rents often centred around the unit of rental assessment. In Ranchi, as also in Manbhum, the rent was usually assessed on customary units of measurements variously known as anna, powa, khari, kunwa for lowlands and kat for uplands. The units of measurement varied so enormously between villages and also some time within the same village that the officials considered it to be a purely notional unit having no relation with actual measurement 72. The indeterminacy of these units frustrated any attempts to derive the so called 'pargana rates' of rent, since the rent rate was linked to these local units of measurement. Thus it was not uncommon to find that in one village the rate of rent was say Rs.5/- per powa while in the next village the rate of rent was Rs.3/- per powa. If the rates were the same it could be found

70. Ranchi SR, p. 78.
71. ibid.
72. ibid.
that the area under the powa paying the same rent were very
different.

But these variations in the unit of
measurement or rental assessment were not completely illogical.
The Settlement officer examining several such cases of variations
wrote:

"The great variations are not altogether due
to the originally indeterminate character of
the local units. A favourite method of
illegal enhancement of rent in the district
was to increase the nominal area of the
holding and sue for arrears of rent on it.
Where this has occurred, the tendency is for
the area of local unit to contract. On the
other hand where land fit for reclamation are
plentiful, the raiyats frequently add the
newly reclaimed area to their existing
tenancies and pay no additional rent for them.
In this case the tendency is for the size of
the local unit to expand"\textsuperscript{73}.

The above quotation furnishes an index of the
degree to which the struggle over rent had affected the agrarian
structure of the district. It also pointed to a basic factor that
weighed in favour of the tenants in their struggle with the
landlords.

The indeterminacy of the unit of land measurement
(which in practice also was the unit of rental assessment) meant
that in order to keep track of the extended area of tenant's
holdings the landlords had to maintain scrupulously regular
supervision of the village and maintain a detailed rent roll. This
task was often beyond the ken of smaller landlords. Even the
largest landlord of the district, the Maharaja of Chotanagpur
complained bitterly of the tendency of the tenants to enlarge
their holdings without his knowledge. In his petition to the Lt.

\textsuperscript{73} Ranchi SR, p. 94.
Governor of Bengal in 1892, he suggested that the local unit of 1 powa be decreed as equal to 1 acre as the standard unit of land measurement in the district\textsuperscript{74}.

These local level struggles, had been a constant feature of the Ranchi district from about the beginning of the colonial rule. In general, they stemmed from the attempts of the landlords to increase the rate of surplus extraction. The 'privileged' tenures, which constituted a barrier to the increase of rental, were the first object of landlord's attack.

The attempts of the landlord were generally to limit the area of such 'privileged' tenancies and tenure on the one hand and to increase the area directly under his control on the other. Here their virulent opposition to the bhuinhari tenures, noticed early in 1839 by Dr. Davidson\textsuperscript{75}.

The process of subinfeudation of proprietary rights to temporary rent farmers disrupted the basis of 'privileged' tenures. Cuthbert dated the intrusion of the new class of middlemen to the year 1822, the year of coronation of Maharaja Jaganath Shah Deo.

"...but a far worse class of men had obtained a footing in the country about the year 1822, when the late Maharaja, Jaganath Shah Deo,

\textsuperscript{74} Petition of Maharaja Pratap Udainath Shah Deo to the Lt. Governor of Bengal' dt. 6th November GOB. Rev (LR), 31, Nov. 1892, Maharaja’s contention that one acre area equalled one powa was strongly contested by Father F.Hahn, who wrote that such 'small powas were extremely rare' the usual powa varied from 2 acres to 8 acres in size. Letter of F.Hahn, GEL mission to the Lt. Governor of Bengal in ibid. See also the opinion of A.T.Feppe, manager Chotanagpur estate and R.L. Verma, manager Wards and Encumbered estate of Ranchi district regarding the utility of a Survey and Settlement operation in fixing the exact area of tenant's holding and preventing 'encroachments' by tenants in 'Necessity of Survey and Settlement in Chotanagpur' 'Ranchi Survey and Settlement Papers' (Commissioner's Record Room Ranchi).

\textsuperscript{75} Cited in Depree's report p.36.
obtained his ancestral gadi on the death of his father in July of that year. These men were Mussalmans, Sikhs and some other, who came to the country as horse dealers, and shawls and brocade merchants, fetched enormous offers for their goods from the Nagvansai chiefs and obtained farms of villages instead of cash, of which the latter chief were always in want... They proved their yoke to be galling indeed and made the very name thikadar in Chotanagpur infamous”.

The acts of thikadars in dispossessing the traditional village headman (mundas and mankis) in the manki patti areas of Southern Ranchi had led to the massive insurrection of Mundas and other tribes in 1832, known as the 'Kol insurrection'. The colonial state had to intervene and restore the traditional rights of mundas and mankis in the mankipatti area, the seat of the insurrection. But the process of dispossession of bhuinhari land in the more open areas of the district continued unabated.

By 1850's the thika system had been strengthened by the entry of mahajans, merchants and had become well established in the central plateau. As an example take the village Chuchgoora in Bero thana a jagirdari village, inhabited mainly by Oraons. The village was let out on thikas of 3 years from about 1850's. A series of thikadars held the village and in one particular stretch from 1861 to 1864, Toorea Oraon a bhuinhar of the mahto khut held the village on thika on agreeing to pay an annual rent of Rupees 318 and 200 kats of paddy. The agreement was signed on a stamped paper and duly registered in the court at Ranchi. But being unable to pay the stipulated sum, his bhuinhari

77. Information regarding this village, given here is taken from the Tanaza (disputes) and field records of Bhuinhari Survey, Basta No. 10 (District Record Room, Ranchi).
land was sold up for arrears of rent. In the meanwhile to keep up with the rental demand he had recourse to the professional thikadar's means. He dispossessed some of his bhunhari brethren when they were absent from the plot or usurped the plot of a particular bhunhari, who died without heir or took the plot of land of another bhunhari who died leaving only a minor as heir. These fields were then let out to raiyats from outside the village or even to moneylenders. When inspite of this he failed to meet the demand he sold up half his thika lease on katkena to a Rajput, who now proceeded to do what Toorea could not do, i.e. remove the pahnai, and bhutkheta lands from the bhunhari stock. When inspite of all this he could not meet the demand, Toorea after losing his bhunhari land deserted the village and died in another village, a broken man.

This example shows the extent to which the institution of thikadari had permeated the village system of the Ranchi district, as well as the failure of the new rent collecting hierarchy to coopt the stratum of bhunhars and traditional headman of the villages. The reason for this as is shown by Torrea Oraon's case, was that it was difficult for a bhunhari to carry out the functions of a thikadar. Bhunhar or a tribal thikadar thus emerged as a contradiction in terms.

At the same time the attack on bhunhari by the use of professional thikadars did not always mean success for the landlord. Collective resistance and even counter attacks on landlords were quite common particularly after the Mutiny of 1857. In 1859 the whole of Sonepur pargana was declared a disturbed area following cases of attempts by Christian bhunhars to regain the fields from which they were dispossessed
by the landlords. In these attempts it seems the bhuihars were largely successful. "These nominal Christians of Sonepur, Bassia, Belkadi and Doesa, finally repossessed the lands claimed as bhuihari, of which they had been deprived for periods ranging from 10 years to one or two generations".

In many of these places the bhuihars, specially the Christian bhuihars, had stopped giving begari or forced labour. It is around this time that the idea of 'half the land of every village' being bhuihari gained hold over the bhuihars. In 1867, the influence of this 'idée fixée' could be seen in the village Talguri, where the thikadar of the village, Munaram Tewaree, had been absolutely unable to collect any rent for some time past. He could not execute the rent decrees. The officer sent to investigate the case Mr. Oliphant, found that:

"Chumroo (the headman) was in possession of the village, while the zamindar was unable to go within its limits for fear of his life except under the protection of my camp. Chumroo declined to receive any compromise saying he and other bhuihars were entitled to half the land in the village and that they would have that quantity or none."


79. 'A large and influential body of Christians have combined not to obtain redress for individual grievances; they scout with contempt the idea of being activated by any such motives; they go in boldly to reestablish themselves and their pagan brothers in the position that tradition describes them as holding more than 70 generations ago. They claim as their own, half the land in every village'. Letter of E.T.Dalton to H.L.Harriason Secy Revenue Department, GOB, dt. 17th August 1868. GOB, Rev. (LR), 48, November 1868.

The agitation for bhuinhari land assumed a significant dimension partly due to its link with the German Lutheran Church and the missionaries. It was because of success of the Christian converts, in the law courts regarding bhuinhari land that the impression spread that to become a Christian was a surer way to fight the landlord. The movement for Christianity thus became intimately linked with the agitation on the land question. In the initial phase, it was of course linked to the success of the Christians in the court cases but with time conversion to Christianity signified defiance of the landlord's power. It is interesting to note that the ritual of conversion for the tribals often meant not baptism rites conducted by the missionary but consisted largely of a symbolic sharing of the top knot and eating with Christians.

The demands raised by Christians related not only to their fellow Christians; they represented tacitly if not overtly in the beginning, the demands of the whole tribe. In this connection, a significant step was taken under the leadership of Christian converts when a deputation of tribals went up to Calcutta to present a petition of 14,000 Christians to the Government, complaining against the landlords' oppression including exorbitant labour demands (beth begari) and encroachments on bhuinhari land. They also, for the first time

81. In 1855 Dalton mentions the widespread belief that "when the Kola go to the court as Christians, they are more uniformly successful than those who have not changed their religion" cited by De Sa (1975), p. 81
82. Dalton noted this significant transformation from successful defiance in the court to a general defiance of the landlord's power. "The next step was to profess Christianity and going up to Ranchi to the mission, they returned with their hair puritanically cropped and ready to assert their rights and defy their landlords". GOB, Judl. (Judl.), 77, April 1859.
asked to pay their rent directly to the Government. On enquiry, Dalton reported that although the leading role in the deputation was played by the Christian converts most of those who were connected with the petition movement were 'pagan coles' or non-Christian tribesmen. This was the beginning of a movement called the Sardari Larai, which we shall discuss shortly. It may be mentioned here that the missionaries were opposed to even the slightest political overtone given to the movement and had advised strongly against sending petition to the Government. But it was due to the continued agitation and constant complaints of aggression and counter-aggression that the Government decided to enact a special law and commence the demarcation of the bhuinhari and manjhihas land in 1869.

The operation took 11 years and covered 2482 villages of the district. In total 14,173 claims were instituted by both landlords and bhuinhars, of which 7363 claims were disputed or roughly 52 per cent of total claims were contested by either parties. The outcome of the Survey in most cases fell short of the expectation of bhuinhars, who had claimed all their holdings (including rajhas). In fact they sought to claim as bhuinhari even holdings of which they had been dispossessed for periods more than 70 years before. The landlords on the other

83. 'Correspondence regarding Petition of 14,000 Christians presented to GOB Rev.(LR), 51-57. Dalton also reported that the organisation of petitioning was done by 'a number of men, mostly converts were moving from village to village in a body and when brought to Court they explained their object to be to collect contributions to cover the expenses of their deputation to Calcutta; the ring leader in this movement was called to give security by the D.C...' in ibid.
84. De Sa (1975), p. 94.
85. Calculated from Table appended to the "Final completion report of operations under Chotanagpur Tenure's Act (1869)". Selections From Ranchi Settlements Papers, p. 41.
hand, either claimed the bhuihari to be rajhas or manjhias. It was found that in many cases where bhuihars were stronger they had forcibly possessed the land they claimed as bhuihari and had ceased paying rent for it altogether.

The land which were thus not decreed bhuihari but were held by bhuihars became a source of renewed conflict. The struggle between landlords and tenants now shifted to the rajhas land. And the question of rent and other services like beth, begari and rakumats became the focus of the struggle during the last two decades of the 19th century.

In the meanwhile the agitation for bhuihari had given way to a far more radical demand put forward repeatedly in the petitions of the sardars to the Government of Bengal, Government of India, as well as the British Parliament. They opposed the Permanent Settlement the proprietary rights of all the landlords including the Maharaja of Chotanagpur. Instead they demanded that the Mundas and Oraons be allowed to form village communities and pay revenue direct to the Government.

86. Letter of A.W.B.Power D.C, Lohardagga to Commissioner of Chotanagpur division dt. 18th June 1880, in Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 33
87. ibid. The bhuihars of Chuchgoora village had ceased payment of rent for all the lands claimed by them as bhuihari. See deposition of Ajit Rae in Review case no. 3 of 1873/74, Tanaza and field records of Chuchgoora village, Basta no 10, (Ranchi District Records Room)
88. The Sardars were a group of Munda and Oraon headmen of villages. In most cases they were Christians of the German Lutheran church. The movement called 'Sardari Larai' ostensibly consisted of raising voluntary subscriptions from the ordinary Mundas and Oraons in order to draft petitions to be sent to various authorities.
89. The first mass petition was sent in 1867, the next one of importance was sent in 1879 to the Commissioner of Chotanagpur, as well as the Lt. Governor of Bengal. This petition was summarily rejected in 1881. Regular petitions were sent again in 1884, 1885, 1886 and 1887. We have not been able to trace the contents of all the petitions.
important difference between the Sardari Larai and the earlier bhuihari agitations was the overtly political demand raised by the sardars. They claimed not half the land of each village as in the earlier agitation but the whole land of Chotanagpur estate as theirs, on the basis of being the original settlers of the land. In one of their petitions in 1887, they stated:

"Every nation has its own Government: only we Mundas and Oraons have not. As every child inherits his father's rights so we wish to have the rights of our forefathers".  

The idea of a 'raj' which would do away with the zamindars and thikadars and reestablish the glory of tribal power was the constant refrain of the petitions. The agitation was also known by the name of mulki larai which can be roughly translated as battle for homeland. In another memorial of 1884, the petitions claimed the ancient and not so ancient monuments of Chotanagpur as the 'ancient deeds of the Mundas', including the abandoned palace of 'Nawratan' in Doesa Perganah which was evidently a monument built by Nagvanshi rulers of Chotanagpur in the 17th century.  

By demanding direct payment of rent, the petitioning sardars were seeking recognition as peasant proprietors, which was of course repeatedly rejected by the Government. Inspite of this rejection, in many areas of the

91. In this context it is interesting to note that preparatory to the insurrection of 1899-1900, Birsa had visited the Nawratan palace and from there brought the 'hero-water' (bir-da) to sprinkle on his followers to make them invincible against English bullets. S.C.Roy (1970), p. 195
district (mostly in the South and South Western Ranchi, in thanas Torpa, Bassia, Khunti and Tamar) the sardari villages stopped paying rent to the zamindars. They firmly believed that their rightful claims were already recognised by 'higher authorities', amongst whom they also counted the Queen Empress Victoria.²

The sardars were by now only nominally connected with the German Lutheran Church, which had by the mid 1870's assiduously distanced itself from the demands of the sardars². The estrangement of sardars from the mission led them to accuse the missionaries of having secreted their 'decree' and one of the object of sardari agitation was to induce their brethren to abstain from attending the Church or allowing their children to go to the mission schools. The main emphasis at such meetings, held at various places of South and South Western Ranchi in 1887, was to 'dispute the authority and to throw discredit on the local officers' as well as to seize the manjhihas land of the landlords and thikadars². They also refused to pay the rent to zamindars, or perform labour services for them. It was reported that the sardars had sought permission from the Empress to fight the

93. The Annual report of the German mission for 1874, noted with displeasure the involvement of its flock and specially the 'elders' with the Sardari Larai which was taking shape then. "All our efforts to convince them of their folly and prove to them the impossibility of their demands being ever fulfilled, have only served to alienate us". cited in SAB Vol. XVI, p. 436.

The missionaries in any case viewed the political overtones of the agitation with great fear, branding it as "Socialist". See De Sa (1975), p. 99 (citing the author of a mission history of German Lutheran Church). The missionaries were of course deterred by the official displeasure and distrust which they received, in this case in the form of stringent strictures from Richard Temple the Lt. Governor of Bengal in 1876.
94. Letter of C.C. Stevens, GOB, Judl. (Judl.), 12-14, Jan 1888, Para. 23.
'Sahebs for one and half day', during which the tribes of the whole country 200 miles on each side shall take on the armed might of the British.*5. But before the agitation could reach its climax it was nipped at the bud by an alert administration which promptly arrested the persons who had seized the manjhihas land in the village of Tilmì.

Nevertheless, the agitation persisted well into the first decade of the 20th century. The colonial Government kept up its attempt to repress sardarism by isolating its leaders and proving that they had committed illegal acts of coercion and defrauded their followers in 1887 Stevens could not find a single Munda or Oraon who admitted that any coercion had been used by sardars the contributions were always voluntarily given. In 1893-94 the Government attempts succeeded when with the active help of some missionaries and a few witnesses they managed to prosecute the leaders of the movement*6. But sardarism continued till 1905 as is evidenced from the anxiety with which Government sought opinions from various quarters as to the cause of its persistence*7.

The major action taken by the sardars in the meanwhile was to refuse payments of rent to the landlords. In consequence, by time of the Survey and Settlement operation in 1902, many bhuinhari tenures and intact khutkatti villages had been made ordinary raiyati tenancies*8. The importance of Sardari

*5. ibid.
*6. See ARAC 1893-94, p. 64. Many of the sardars were sentenced to long imprisonment. In 1894-95 the sardari movement was still quite active. ARAC 1894-95 pp. 7, 65.
Larai movement lay primarily in the creation of a political tradition the basis of which was the demand for tribal-autonomy. In the process, it articulated the first serious challenge to the concept of landlord property that lay at the basis of the Permanent Settlement. It thus elevated the local level struggles which otherwise would have remained trapped within the framework of 'agrarian disputes', to the political level and transformed the conflict of the villages into a struggle for power between the classes. It is this political tradition which the Ulgulan of Birsa inherited and through it the autonomist Jharkhand movement of the 20th century.

The spirit of the Sardari Larai, no doubt affected the local village level conflicts over rent between landlords and tenants. We have seen that the refusal to pay rent was a major plank of Sardari Larai. In fact these local level conflicts were more widespread than the Sardari Larai which tended to be confined largely to Southern Ranchi. Information regarding these conflicts is not easy to get. The colonial Government took notice of these conflicts only if they threatened to disturb 'public peace'. It was mainly in the spate of litigations that came up in the 1880's following the enhancement of the Chotanagpur Landlord's and Tenant's Procedures Act of 1879, that we get a glimpse of the intensity of the conflict at the village level.

Two factors seem to have aggravated the conflicts in the period after 1880. First was the attempts by landlords to enhance the customary rates of rent. Second, the demand for beth begari which increased often beyond the customary level. It had been observed by A.W.B.Power in 1880 that "it often happens that there are two rates of rent in a village the old customary rent
rate paid by the native cultivators and the contract rate paid by
the new raiyats settled on vacated lands by the illaqadar. The
general tendency was for the landlords to try to enhance the
customary rate and bring it to the level of the contract rate.
This was not always successful.

Tenant resistance to landlord's demands for rent
is seen in the number of applications made for deposit of rents.
According to the provision of the Tenancy Act of 1879, the tenants
could deposit the rent in the treasury in favour of the landlord
i.e. if the landlord refused to take it or did not grant a receipt
for it. As can be seen from the Table (6.5), the number of such
applications kept increasing almost at the same rate as landlords
instituted suits for recovery of arrears. It was the usual

Table 6.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of suits filed for recovery of arrears of rent by Landlords</th>
<th>No. of applications for deposit of rent by Tenants</th>
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<td>1887</td>
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<td>2064</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>1937</td>
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9. Letter of A.W.B. Power to Commissioner Chotanagpur dt 18th
June 1880 in Selections from Ranchi Settlement Papers, p. 34.
Table 6.5

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>No. of applications for deposit of rent by Tenants</th>
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<td>3075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>3158</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report on Land Revenue Administration of Bengal for relevant years.

practice for raiyats to deposit amounts of rent much lower than what was really due. This of course failed against zamindars who kept proper accounts. But many small zamindars who were hard pressed for cash were, "frequently found to have withdrawn the deposits....Having accepted the rents at the lower rate these landlords found it impossible to obtain decree for higher rents"\(^\text{100}\).

From 1885 onwards, a new wave of proselytization swept Ranchi district. The earlier wave of proselytization had received a set back in the mid 1870's after the German Lutheran

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\(^\text{100. Ranchi SR, p. 101.}\)
mission as a matter of policy had disengaged itself from the landlord-tenant conflict. The new movement of proselytization was the work of a remarkable Jesuit missionary Father Constance Lievens. In a short spell of 5 years between 1885 and 1889 due to Lievens and his activist brand of proselytization, no fewer than 70,000 tribals, mainly Mundas and Oraons were converted into the Roman Catholic Church\(^{101}\). The origin of this mass conversion movement lay in Lievens's initiative in helping the Mundas and Oraons in their court cases. Lievens used a unique method for conversion. He agreed to help the people in court cases if the whole village came over to the Roman Catholic Church. A written agreement was often taken from the villagers that if any one of them changed their mind a fine would be taken from the whole village. In Lieven's own words his method of conversion was as follows.

"To convert the people I proceed as follows. I remain at Torpa in the midst of the Mundas, Christians as well as heathen. I know their sorrows and their wishes. I call the headmen of different villages asking them to come to me on a visit, and I tell them that I am here for their eternal happiness and also for their temporal welfare; that I am ready to assist them in their difficulties as much as the law allows, and that I know the law better than they do. I tell them 'Return to your villages and induce the people to become Christians all together and to request my help'. Then they come, conclude the agreement receive a first instruction, return home, continue to learn and send their children to the school. And if they get into trouble, they have recourse to me and follow my advice'\(^{102}\).

The success of Christians in the law courts had a great impact on the tribals, and made the proselytization

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101. In August 1885 the total number of Roman Catholic Christians was only 2092 and by 1891 there were 73,263 converts. De Sa (1975) p. 319.
movement one of the most successful one in the history of missions in India. Although Lievens scrupulously avoided any contact with the raj movement or Sardari Larai, describing it like his Lutheran colleagues as a 'Socialistic Agitation', we can see the idea of the raj often animating the actions of newly converted tribals. One of the major objects of these actions, was to refuse beth begari to the zamindars. Numerous complaints and counter complaints were filed with the Government during the period 1885-1890 regarding exorbitant demands of beth begari on Christians and the total refusal on their part to give any beth begari at all to the zamindars. Though Lievens, when accused by landlords and the Government of inciting the tribals against the zamindars, defended himself in an open letter written in 1890 by saying that he never advised his followers to refuse any thing other than illegal demands. But later, Hoffman confirmed that Lievens and his band of tribal catechists whom he sent to villages recommended amongst other things to refuse absolutely all beth begari or forced labour.

103. Many of these complaints are cited by W.Maude in the Appendix, Chotanagpur Agrarian Desputes Vol. II. But there is no doubt that the movement for refusal of 'beth begari' had assumed a far more general character during this period than even suggested by these examples. The landlords' complaint against missionaries was primarily related to the fact of 'Christians every where refusing to give 'beth begari''. See the service of Landlord's complaints cited by De Sa (1975), pp. 189-200.


105. The Memoir of Father Hoffman to Superior General of Jesuit Mission, Fascicule IV, 1919, cited by De Sa (1975), p. 165. Hoffman also observed that in several case where the landlord had got decrees in the court for exorbitant rates of rent Lievens 'openly told the people every where not to mind such decisions, and to give to the landlord only what Lievens thought was fair. In fact these rates of rent fixed by Lievens and paid into the treasury were often much lower than the customary rate of rent . Lited in ibid, pp. 165,166.
Whatever may have been the role of missionaries in the particular cases, it is certain that defiance to landlord's power had become general enough throughout Ranchi district. This general defiance is also evidenced by Lieven's efforts to dissociate himself from the activities of his followers and other non-christians.106

The movement towards Christianity had become a part of the larger class struggle that raged during the period. Such a movement could not but get out of control of the missionaries as in fact it happened in large parts of Western Ranchi during 1888-89. It was during this year that an alarm of rebellion and sedition was raised by the landlords and the Government felt compelled to act strongly. Though later it was found that the fear was exaggerated and partly engineered by landlords, the strong Government action put a stop to Jesuit involvement in the land question. Lievens, though vindicated by Lt. Governor's own investigations in 1890 and cleared of all charges of inciting riots and rebellions, was removed from the Directorship of mission activity in Ranchi district.107 The proselytization movement came to an abrupt halt. As the Jesuits scrupulously dissociated themselves from the 'land question' and ceased as a matter of policy to give help to the converts in court cases, there was mass desertion of Christians from the Roman

106. 'Open Letter of Lievens to Goethal, Archbishop of Calcutta' dt. 19th Feb 1890. 'That I do not hold myself responsible for (a) the wrong interpretation given to my words by ignorant people, who have either misunderstood my meaning or interpreted my words according to the ideas current among them all, whether christian or non christian... (b) for the teachings and actions of over zealous catechists... have in that acted against my direction than in conformity with it' cited in Clarysse (1984,) p. 348.

107. Lievens left India in 1892, disgraced and suffering from consumption. He died later in 1893 in Belgium.
Catholic Church.

Inspite of this there was no abatement in the tide of law suits in the period after 1890. The Deputy Commissioner described the situation in 1891-92 as one of 'armed peace'. In 1892-93, the reports speak of continued defiance of the Christians to beth-begari. "the conversion to Christianity seems to have brought about a complete change in the minds of these people, and they now speak for total emancipation from the beth begari system... As a result the authority of landlords is on wane'. The disputes between landlords and tenants continued throughout the year though there was no open manifestation of it as in 1889.

We have alluded earlier to the recrudescence of Sardari Larai in 1893-94, in the Munda areas of Bano, Khunti and Tamar, which ended with the prosecution and conviction of leading sardars. But even in 1894-95, the raj movement had not entirely died down, and there was in fact an increase in the number of applications to deposit rent in the treasury.

The conflict between landlords and tenants had not taken any violent turn but the failure of the Government to legislate as promised in 1890, and the recrudescence of Sardari Larai in 1894, pointed to a serious turn, which came about with

108. The decision to reverse the earlier policy of proselytization seems to have been finalized by August 1892. The policy of not getting involved in the court cases seems also to have been taken then. The statistics of total number of Roman Catholic converts shows a steady decline after 1891. In 1891 as we noted earlier the total number of baptised and instructed (catachumens) were 73,263. It dwindled to 46,133 in 1894 and 33,000 in 1895. De Sa (1975), p. 315.
109. ARAC, 1891-92, pp. 11, 27.
110. ARAC, 1892-93, p. 40.
111. ARAC, 1893-94, p. 60.
112. ARAC, 1894-95, p. 61.
the advent of 'Birsa movement' in 1895.

2.5 Class Struggle and Rent

We have shown that the period 1860-1900 in Ranchi was marked by continuous conflict between landlords and tenants. In our discussion we have referred to two levels at which the struggle took place. The local level of struggle was carried out in each village of the district between tenants often led by bhunhihars or Christian converts. These took the form of refusal to pay the high rates of rent and beth begari demanded by landlords. Where landlords were extremely powerful, they could extract the high rent and beth begari by force, or they resorted successfully to the law courts and got their demands executed. But in case of smaller landlords and thikadars these demands could be successfully checkmated by a combination of raiyats. In the absence of fixed rates of rent and the lack of document support, the existing rates of rent tended to be purely 'customary'. The curious thing about 'custom' was that it was amenable to force and counterforce. Where the landlords were powerful, the customary rent rates were changed to suit their needs. Conversely, raiyats could and did often successfully stick to the 'customary rates'. Here 'custom' itself became a weapon against landlords. The same process could be seen in case of beth begari also. In the early period of bhunhihari agitation, the alleged custom adha-kam adha-dam ('half beth begari and half cash rent') had become the source for a demand from the bhunhihars that half the land in each village was theirs and here the landlord could only take services from them. And the other half would be rent paying land. Later even this justification of beth-begari was entirely dropped, and the sardars demanded full ownership of all

113. It might be pointed out here that the most immediate result of the failed insurrection of Birsa, was the commencement of the Survey and Settlement operations in Ranchi district and the enactment of Chotanagpur tenancy Act of 1903 and amended later by the Tenancy Act of 1908. We shall not deal here with the details of the 'Birsa movement', which has already been the subject of a monograph by Dr. K.S.Singh

114. It had been noted in 1890 that 'In most villages they (ryots simply admit a rent of which they have acquired a knowledge
the village land and since they were the full owners they would not render any beth begari. Here the idea of 'collective property' was utilised to override the earlier custom of giving begari for the 'privileged' tenancies. The amount of days of beth begari was also often disputed. The landlords being powerful in some areas, actually demanded and got unlimited number of beth begari, in other places where Sardari agitation and Christianity had made deep inroads, it was often found that for periods of time the landlord could not extract 'beth begari' at all".

The second level where the struggle between landlords (and eventually the colonial state) and the tenants took place was at the political level. There, the struggle was not so much for individual grievances or individual acts of oppression as for restoration of collective community and abolition of the landlord property. This struggle was mainly carried out by the Sardari Larai and through it bequethed to the Brisaitc insurrection. This was clearly a struggle for an alternative ideology, and an alternative political concept that of the 'raj' of the Mundas and Oraons as against the 'raj' of landlords and the colonial officialdom. The fact that in the process of this struggle the Sardari Larai constantly evoked the sanctions of higher authorities (including that of Queen Victoria) as against

from mere tradition, as the rent previously paid by their forefathers'. Note of Raicharan Ghose, Deputy Collector. Papers on Chotanagpur Agrarian Disputes Vol. II, p. 45.

115. Ranchi SR, p. 89.
that of the local hakims and 'sahebs' indicated the fact that the
creation of alternative political conception though based on a
collective memory was not in itself enough. It constantly needed
the legitimisation of supra local authority; thus the belief in a
mysterious 'document of decree' which had been either secreted by
the intermediate officials or missionaries. The belief in a higher
authority favourably disposed towards them, deepened and widened
the spread of the concept of alternative power. Christianity
represented a crucial ingredient in the articulation of this
concept. It could be seen in the way the biblical myth of the
story of Abraham was appropriated by the sardars for their concept
of 'raj'\textsuperscript{116}. It could also be found in the mode of organisation
of the movement. Elders of the Lutheran mission and catechistics
and chaprasis of Roman Catholic Church often were the main
organisers of the sardari movement. But a more crucial role was
played by the Christian missionaries as intermediaries between the
tribals and the colonial Government. In the phase when an
alternative conception of political power was still in its
formative stage, the fact that missionaries who were Europeans and
seemed to be in friendly relation with the colonial Government
officials immensely accelerated the process of articulation of the
demand for the 'Raj'. In the proselytization movement itself there
seems to have been implicit a concept of the 'Raj'. To become a
Christian meant also to join the 'Raj' or 'Rai'\textsuperscript{117}. This vaguely

\textsuperscript{116} See the charter of demands presented by sardars in their
petition of 1887 cited by C. Stevens in 'Agitation amongst a
section of Christian Kols in Lohardagga district', GOB, Judl.
(Judl.) 1887.

\textsuperscript{117} The concept of 'Raj' meant different things at different
time. In its widest and most commonly used sense it was identified
with struggle of Sardari Larai. But in a narrower sense it also
meant a community or organisation pitted against the landlord. It
articulated aspiration at the local level acquired a concrete character at the political level.

The separation between the 'political' and the 'economic' levels that we have shown is largely an analytical scheme. It did not mean any strict separation. The political idea of 'Raj' grew out of opposition to landlord's demand for 'rent' and beth begari. Similarly by rendering the basis for exploitation of tenants illegitimate, the 'political' struggle immensely strengthened the struggle against rent and beth begari at the local level. Thus, in spite of the distinction made between the 'local', agrarian or 'economic' on the one hand and the 'political' level on the other it is apparent that the transition from one to the other was constantly occurring in Ranchi district. One can see this transition clearly in the successive waves of proselytization. The first wave of proselytization of the German Lutheran Church was related to the struggle for bhuihari land and it was seen how it inexorably led to the political movement of the sardars. This movement in turn coincided with the second wave of proselytization by Jesuits linked to the struggle against 'rent' and 'beth begari'. The struggle against 'rent' and beth begari went beyond the local level to a generalized defiance of the landlord authority in the year 1889-90, over most of Western Ranchi which for a while raised the spectre of a generalized

117. (cont.)
also meant, for Christian converts specially, an alternative social community which would protect them and in which social intercourse between the members could be a substitute for their earlier tribal organisation. It is in the latter two senses that Grosjean speaks of Raj. "The pagans are gradually influenced by their Catholic relation or clansfolk to join the rai as they call it, we might say the league. They receive protection from it in their otherwise hopeless abandonment; marriage and other social intercourse 'easier', cited by De Sa (1975), p. 135.
rebellion. Each time with the passing of the local level disputes into the political plane the proselytization drive came to a halt, as the Christian missionaries held back support to the movement. In this context it is interesting to note that the Lutheran missionaries who had the mortification of seeing their 'good christian folk' being taken over by Sardarism gave exactly seven years to the Jesuit success in proselytization to be similarly infected by the disease of the 'Raj movement'118. As it happened, the Jesuit conversion drive came to a grinding halt in 1892, exactly 7 years after Lievens started taking up the cause of the tribal converts in the law courts. There could be no better illustration of the constant transition from the 'economic' to the 'political' level, that characterized the class struggle in Ranchi district in the second half of the 19th century.

This division of 'economic conflict' and political agitation was stereotyped to a certain extent by the colonial administration and the missionaries. The colonial viewpoint considered the conflict over rent rates or beta begari as normal agrarian disputes between two opposing classes which could be reconciled by appropriate tenancy legislation. Their approach to the question of class struggle was thus legalistic and bureaucratic. But as to the Sardari Larai they had no hesitation in branding it as 'dangerously political'. In this characterization the Christian missionaries were in general agreement. It thus was not surprising that to curb this 'political agitation' the missionaries actively collaborated with the colonial Government, while in espousing the cause of the tribals in the judicial courts

they often came to bitterly oppose pro-landlord policy of the administration. In case of the Birsa movement, we find a curious reversal of sorts in their scheme of characterization. Both the colonial Government as well as the leading Christian missionary of the time Father Hoffman, were at pains to dispel the political and anti-imperialist content of the movement and emphasized its roots in the agrarian disputes of the preceding half century. It was left to the zamindars to point out that, the targets of Birsaite attacks were invariably the colonial officials, police and the missionaries and hardly were any of the zamindars attacked. This schizoid analysis failed to register the constant transition from the 'economic' to the 'political' that characterized the tribal movement.

Our discussion so far has been aimed at explaining two facts about the agrarian class relations in the district of Ranchi. First was the relatively low level of rental and secondly the lack of correspondence between the rate of rent and the economic determination of supply and demand. We have shown that the over all level of rental was low because of the fierce resistance put up by tribal peasantry against attempts to enhance...

119. On the missionary collaboration see the account of C.Stevens, Commissioner Chotanagpur "Agitation among Christian Kols of the Lohardagga District" opcit. specially Para 38 where he records the help rendered by the missionaries of all 3 missions of Chotanagpur namely the Lutheran the Anglican and the Roman Catholic, in suppressing the Sardari agitation of 1887. For the instance of collaboration in case of Birsa Munda's arrest See in 1895 see "Arrest of Birsa Munda" GOB, Judl. (Judl.), 38-46. Nov. 1895.

120. See Father Hoffman's account of the allegation of zamindars regarding the nature of Birsa movement and his rebuttals, "Letter of Father Hoffman to J.Reid, Settlement officer, Chotanagpur dated 28th May 1905. Appendix II " Report on Grievances of Mundaris other than intact khutkatti villages", opcit.
the customary rent rates. It is not being asserted here that there were no exceptions to this. Where landlord's were powerful they extracted a very high rental and unlimited begari, but the overall balance of forces was very evenly matched with tenants combining successfully against landlords. The variation in balance of class power thus explained the wide variation in rent rate.

Thus often the rent rates varied enormously between the villages of the same thana. We shall end this section with some illustrations of the determination of rate of rent by the village level struggle. In village Tikartoli in thana Bero, the tribal raiyats refused to pay a rate of rents higher than the customary rate. The landlord started a campaign in the law courts against the raiyats and succeeded in evicting all the recalcitrant tenants and replace with raiyats who were willing to pay higher rates. This was a case where the landlord evidently won and thus was able to raise the rate of rent. But in another village Turgura, in the same thana the landlord refused receipts for rent and sued the tribal raiyats who paid lower rates for their bhuihari holdings, for enhanced rates on the ground that the land held by them was beth kheta which was resumable at will. The tribals of the village had then proceeded to seize the manjhihs land of the landlord and disposessed him from it and stopped rendering services even for the beth kheta land. In village Sonra, a Bania took mokarari (permanent) leases from the original jagirdars of all the cultivated land of the village and proceeded to raise the rate of rent to a very high level and wanted to evict the tenants who refused to pay the high rates. For 10 years he fought his case in the court but as he would not accept the existing rates, the raiyats simply held on and deposited very
small amounts in the treasury. In these two villages the victory of the tenants ensured a very low rate of rent. These examples of the villages within the same thana showed clearly that the rate of rent in a situation of highly accentuated class conflict in Ranchi, was primarily determined by the outcome of that conflict.

Part III: State Intervention And The Rent Question

3.1: The Tenancy Act

The immediate upshot of the Birsa insurrection of 1899-1900 was the making of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act. The various phases through which the Act came to be shaped; the pressures and counter-pressures that went into its making merits a separate study. The main provisions related to: (a) protection of special tenures like mundari khutkatti and bhuihari by making their sale for any purpose other than arrears of rent illegal and their rents were fixed in perpetuity. Mundari khutkattidars were also granted proprietary rights over jungles and wasteland; (b) granting of occupancy rights according to the custom of the country to the tenants, thereby limiting the arbitrary exactions of landlords, fixing the rent settled during the survey and settlement for a minimum period of 15 years; (c) making raiyati rights inalienable under any circumstances excepting for arrears of rent; (d) finally, it gave considerable sanction to the existing custom regarding use of forest, occupancy rights, rights to settle land etc. The Act was designed to protect

121. The examples are given in Ranchi SR, pp. 101, 102.
122. See Rothermund etal (1978) pp. 69 - 85, for an analysis of tenancy legislation of Chotanagpur specially the influence of various agrarian and legislative traditions of colonial period on the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act.
the interest of the tenant in the land against the landlord as well as to prevent alienation of the rights secured by the survey and settlement (Section 46). By the custom saving clause of the Act, (Section 76) the customary rights were strengthened and given statutory recognition.

But it is not to be imagined that the Act was an unqualified success for the tenants. It did not touch on the most crucial aspect of the agrarian agitation in Ranchi district, namely the denial of proprietary rights of landlords. Instead it codified and limited those rights. In the process of making of the legislation, several concessions to landlords in tenants were granted. The most crucial being the bakast land. Unlike the Bhuinhari Act of 1869, which had given the power to the Special Commissioners to restore land to the dispossessed Bhuinhars, the Tenancy Act of 1908 in fact legalised illegal dispossession of tenants till the passing of the Act. Secondly, it firmly established landlords' proprietary rights in extensive areas of wasteland and forests (though limited by customary rights of tenants); these areas had been a source of conflict between landlords and tenants throughout the late 19th century. The imprecise nature of rights on wastelands and forests often had allowed considerable lee-way for tenants to extend cultivation without the knowledge of landlords. In many areas forest land in the village was jointly managed by the village community. Though

123. A major concession to the landlords was granted in 1907, by legalising the bakast land which were acquired by the landlords in the years preceding settled. According to the possession of the Draft bill, the landlords' share of land was to be limited only the manjhihas land recalled in 1809-1880. This clause was dropped in 1907. 'Note by Mr. J. Kerr, 4th June 1908, GOI, LD, 33-36 June 1908.
it gave usufructury rights to tenants on these forests, the proprietary rights were granted to landlord. Thus by codifying and legalising existing rights the Act in many cases failed to take into account the historical evolution of these rights in a process of continuous class conflict. Nevertheless, the making of the legislation was a recognition of the political importance the tenantry commanded in the colonial scheme of things even though their economic role had not yet been considered important enough. The pro-tenant tilt of the Tenancy Act had a great impact on the future course of evolution of the agrarian structure. It dealt a serious blow to the existing structure of landlordism, by striking at the major source of landlord power: their ability to exact and enhance rent in its various forms. It abolished beth begari. All other forms of kind rent were commuted and consolidated with the cash rent. The rent itself was fixed for a period of 15 years after which it could be enhanced only by reference to revenue court. The decline of rent as a major form of social surplus, had commenced much before the enactment of the Tenancy legislation, and this process had advanced to a greater or lesser degree in various areas of the region. The Tenancy legislation merely accelerated the process of decline.

3.2 Decline of Rent in The post-Tenancy Act Period

In the ‘rent offensive’ of the late 19th century, 124. In the chapter on forest we have cited the examples where the proprietary rights exercised by village community on the forests were negated by the Tenancy Act. The instance of mundari khutkattidars of Porahat who were denied rights over forests and wasteland because the ‘Ranchi’ model of intact khutkatt was applied on them is also a case in point. These instances point to the basic lacunae of the tenancy legislations; they were designed to reconcile historically antagonistic relations of various social classes often by not recognising the historicity of these antagonisms.
landlords had met with varying degrees of success. This had taken place in a context of rising prices, and the falling level of real value of rental income in the late 19th century. The real value of the rental income fixed by the settlement, fell further in the accelerated inflation from 1905 onwards. The failure to increase rent in face of the falling real value elicited a variety of responses on the part of the landlord.

But let us first chart out some instances of the history of rent. Ranchi district was resurveyed in 1927-35 period. The intervening 25 years had seen a considerable degree of expansion of the arable. By custom (also by the new law) much of this arable expansion had taken place through the system of korkar, and were assessed only at half the village rate. The expansion done by bhunhars and khutkattidars in the wasteland included in their tenancy could not be assessed to rent. The normal rent paid by mundari khutkattidars in the intact villages were similarly exempt from rental assessments. The settlement officer in 1927-35, found that the total rental paid by the tenants had increased but now absorbed about half as much as the proportion of the gross value of the produce of the land than in the 1902-10 period. The fair rent settled in 1927 - 35 survey had allowed a flat increase of 12¾ per cent on the existing rental as well as allowed enhancements upto 50 per cent of the existing rental on holdings which were found to be specially low rented (due to the extension of cultivation). But in spite of that, in the 1902-10 survey, the total rental absorbed only 5.5 per cent of the gross value of the produce of tenant's land, and in 1927-35 period, it was calculated at 3.3 per cent of the gross value of the produce. The increase in rental and rent rate during 1927-35
was done largely by the authority of the colonial Government. Only in a very few cases were rent rates found to have been negotiated by private contract. Thus the attested rental was very much less than the final rental after settlement. It thus appears that the landlords had not been able to raise rental either by assessing new lands bought under cultivation or by raising the rate of rent. Few applications for settlement of rent on newly reclaimed land were filed. Illegal enhancements or ejectments had also gone out of practice in Ranchi. The settlement officer thought this was 'less due to the provisions of Chotnagpur Tenancy Act than to the supine attitude of the landlords towards rent.'

There was no doubt then that the power of landlord class was on the decline. Wherever the rent resettlements were done rent as a proportion of the value of tenant's produce was on the wane. In Dhalbhum during 1906-11 settlement the rental consituted 5 per cent of the gross value of the tenant's produce, by 1934-38 inspite of the depression the total rental was only about 3.25 per cent of the gross value of tenant's produce. For other districts we do not have comparable figures since Revisional Surveys were not held there. But the trend, nevertheless was towards a stagnation of rental and the decline of rent as a proportion of gross value of produce. Some evidence of this trend can be had from comparison of the gross cash rental of the

125. It appears that the final rental settled was about 19 per cent more than the attested rental (i.e. the rental paid before the settlement) Thus the actual rent paid before the settlement must have been a much lower proportion of the gross produce than the settlement figures suggest. See Appendix. Ranchi Revisional SR.
126. ibid. p. 47.
127. ibid. p. 56.
128. Calculated from Goshwara of Dhalbhum SR and Dhalbhum Revisions SR.
district of Palamau during 1913-20 settlement and the bhujharat records of after the vesting of zamindari rights in 1955. Palamau in 1913 - 20, had the highest rental (as a proportion of value of gross produce) in Chotanagpur Division. The total cash rental then was Rs. 8,10,000. In 1955, the gross cash rental paid by the tenants recorded by bhujharat was Rs. 8,73,000. This meant a mere 8 per cent increase in rental in a period of 35 years. The enormous increase in prices between 1920 and 1959 suggests that the proportion of rental as a share of gross value of produce must have declined considerably from the high figure of 20 per cent recorded during 1913-20 settlement.

3.3 Rise of Salami

The recording of rents of tenants by the Survey and Settlement operation thus, considerably reduced the practice of arbitrary enhancement of rent by the landlords. It thus limited landlords nominal rental income which tended to stagnate while its real value sharply declined over the years.

In reaction to this palpable decline in the real value of rental income, landlords shifted to salami as a means of raising income. Salami was essentially a premium which the landlord took for settling the wastelands, or the land they held directly (bakasht) with a raiyat for rent. Salami was mainly charged on the newly reclaimed land where reclamation required

129. Field bhujharats were conducted to ascertain the rent paid by each tenant holding under the intermediaries (i.e. zamindars and tenureholders). The field bhujharat rents cold not be consulted by us. The figure for Palamau is taken from Palamau DG (1961), p. 356. In Ranchi, similarly the total cash rate in 1956-57 after the completion of bhujharat was reportedly Rs. 12,35,000 an increase of 8 per cent over the 1927-35 figures. But the figures of Ranchi include also the assessments done by the Government of all kabli lagan holdings through a supplementary bhujharat. Ranchi DG, (1970), p. 404.
landlord's permission, when the bakast land there was settled for rent, salami in fact represented the selling price of land. In essence the landlords instead of organising production directly chose to selling the assets they were granted during the settlement operations. The settlement officer in Ranchi in 1927-35 had found the supine attitude of landlords towards rent was largely due to the fact that they attach more importance to salami than to rent as a source of income.

Salami could provide an alternative source of income to landlords in a context of rising value of land and demand for land. But the shift to salami itself was a sign of the declining power of landlords. Its adoption in turn further eroded the power of landlords. In Manbhum in face of tenant resistance to the rent offensive, salami had become a regular practice much before the settlement operation. But in other districts, salami was distinctly a post settlement phenomena. It might be recalled that in the 19th century landlords usually took salami for settling tenures, as the rental value of tenures declined and the value of tenancy rights increased salami was mainly taken now for selling raiyati rights.

A major consequence of the shift from rent to salami was the absolute decline of the area of bakast land. In Ranchi between 1902-10 and 1927-35 settlement, Landlords had settled off 32,000 acres of their bakast land which represented about 12 per cent of the total bakast land they held during the

130. Thus in Ranchi during the Revisional Settlement, the settlement officer could hardly find any instance of landlords making korkar out of wasteland. They preferred to get salami by settling the wasteland with tenants than go in for reclamation themselves Ranchi Revisional SR, para 86.
131. ibid. p. 49.
1902-10 Survey and Settlement\textsuperscript{132}. In Dhanbad subdivision of Manbhum district the loss of \textit{bakas}: land between 1925 and 1955 (\textit{bhujharat}) was about 22 per cent of the total \textit{bakas}: held in 1925\textsuperscript{133}. The figures for loss of \textit{bakas}: land for other districts are not available, it is certain that the trend was ubiquitous all through the division.

Thus the stagnation in rent rate and the falling value of rent lead to the decline of the major source of income for the landlords, did not lead to a consolidation of direct cultivation by landlords with hired labour. On the other hand the major reaction was to gain short term pecuniary gain by selling off and settling the land held directly under them with tenants.

\textbf{Conclusions}

We began our investigation into the social structure of the region from the question of 'rent'. The quantum of 'rent' and its variation over space and time defined, as we have seen, contours of the two major social classes of the region the landlords and the peasants. In turn, the size of rent (and its rate) was primarily determined by the struggle between landlords and tenants. It is not that economic forces of supply and demand had no role at all in the determination of rent. But they came into play only within a context which was marked out by the struggle between landlords and tenants. The case of Hazaribagh and Manbhum showed two different contexts in which the supply and demand for land determined the rate of rent. In the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Calculated from \textit{Goshwara} of Ranchi \textit{SR} and Ranchi \textit{Revisional SR}.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Calculated from Table 5.5, D.C. Wadhwa, 'Zamindars and their Land' in Rothermund et al (1978), p. 112.
\end{itemize}
former district it was the landlords power which provided the context for determination of rate of rent by supply and demand for land. In the latter district it was the ascendancy of the peasants that shaped the context in which the forces of supply and demand came into play. A large part of our investigation had been directed towards analysis of these variations of the context in which rent was determined. In each of the districts we took up for detailed analysis, we emphasized the crucial importance of class struggle. The failure and success in this struggle had determined the relative weight of the two classes in the social structure. Some of the factors that shaped the class struggle were also analysed. Ethnic homogeneity, the persistence of village community and the character and historical process of evolution of the property relations were found to have played a significant role in determining the relative balance of forces between the two classes. The role of colonial state and its allied institutions, was often crucial to the success and failure of the social classes in their struggle over surplus.

Rent as the major form of social surplus was threatened not just by increasing peasant resistance. The rising price level was steadily eroding its real value from about the last quarter of the century. In fact the conflict over 'rent' was accentuated by the attempts of the landlords to enhance the rate of rent to keep pace with the rising price level. The stiff resistance of the peasantry specially in Manbhum and Ranchi coupled with the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act knocked the basis of landlords power at the beginning of this century. The subsequent history of rent was one of steady decline in its importance. The decline of rent also marked the coeval diminution of the social
weight of the landlord class. Simultaneously, it facilitated the rise of a small structure of peasantry into social prominence. As rent absorbed less and less portion of the gross value of produce, other forms of social surplus began to take its place. These forms were historically linked to the gradual penetration of market forces into the agrarian regime characterized by petty peasant production. It is to the charting of the course of these forces that we devote the following chapters.)