I was drawn to this subject while doing some work in connection with writing something about the Mutiny in Hyderabad. It was noticed that the so-called revolt in Surapur in 1858 was claimed as part of the freedom struggle both in Andhra and Karnataka. Particularly the editors of *History of Freedom Movement in Karnataka* claimed to have based their account on original records available in the National Archives of India and had reproduced many documents in extenso. A detailed examination of these documents convinced me of the necessity of rewriting the whole account given therein. This also led me to three published books on Surapur: the autobiography of Capt. Meadows Taylor who was stationed at Surapur for many years; a small booklet by Nawab Framurs Jung Bahadur, first taluqdar of Raichur district; and some letters of Taylor to his cousin Henry Reeve. The first is as fascinatingly readable as historical romances on Indian subjects for which Taylor is celebrated in English literature. The second one is partly an abridged edition of Taylor's work but also gives a brief account of the early history of Surapur based on a Kannada chronicle on palm leaf leaves. The last one and the best of all disappoints by abruptly coming to an end. Luckily for the researcher plenty of original documentary material on the subject is available at the National Archives, a veritable treasure-house for modern Indian history. Ready availability of this material, and the many-sided, versatile personality of Capt. Meadows Taylor who belongs to the best line of British district administrators in India sustained my interest in the work. An additional factor that strengthened it was the oblivion into which the
principality of Surapur has fallen. Petty states smaller in size and resources happen to be better known, while Surapur is, even to-day, a "forgotten empire". A Kannada research work on it by Shri Kapattral Krishnarao, octogenarian, revered historian of Karnataka, remains unpublished, and Surapur history continues to be a largely virgin, unexplored area of study. It contains many peculiar features, the most important among them being its foundation by the Bedars, a caste held low in the Hindu hierarchical system of society.

In a popular novel entitled "The Prince", well-known novelist Manohar Malgaonkar, who is also a historian of sorts, has accidentally chosen the term Bedar to describe his fictitious principality, though in reality it has nothing to do with either Surapur or any other Bedar Raj. Though 18th century Surapur is as fascinating as its subsequent history, I had perforce to restrict my study to British relations with it in view of the available material. I am aware that a study mainly based on English records ignoring materials in vernacular languages tends to be lopsided and also creates gaps when relevant materials are not forthcoming. But it is risky to employ historical imagination in filling such gaps in a factual narrative and I have not made such an attempt. I have only endeavoured to bring to light facts lying hidden in voluminous manuscript records and set them in an orderly fashion, incidentally providing correctives to the few published accounts. In the process I had to ignore some interesting information on Surapur society available in the records as it did not have direct or indirect bearing on British relations with the principality. I have used the term
'principality' as an equivalent of "samstan" in vernacular though it may not be the most apt translation. A glossary has been provided at the end for Indian terms. I have not converted the Fasli era used in the documents into Gregorian calendar. The Christian era is obtained by adding 590 years to the relevant Fasli year. But the two calendars do not coincide exactly and accounts etc. given in the Fasli calendar will not reflect the position with the same accuracy in Christian calendar, and therefore I have not made that attempt. I have modernised the spellings of Indian place and personal names wherever possible. Surapur has been always spelt as Shorapore in English records and even in the Gulbarga District Gazetteer published as late as 1966. I have used the nearest vernacular spelling especially to avoid its being mistaken for Sholapur, a confusion perpetuated either through oversight or ignorance, in many published and unpublished works which happen to refer to the principality.

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