PART 1

Economic Mobility of Rural Households
(c. 1860 - c. 1950)
CHAPTER 2

AGRARIAN CONDITIONS IN THE DISTRICT

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The main objectives of this chapter are to (1) provide an economic background to the district (2) analyse the agrarian conditions prevailing in the district prior to its formation in 1860/61 and (3) examine the economic mobility of rural households during the period 1860/61 to 1970/71. This chapter is presented in three sections dealing with each of these objectives.

2.1 ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE DISTRICT

The districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah and Bellary were ceded to the East India Company by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800. Though the rights of sovereignty over kurnool district were vested with the Company, the Muslim rule continued in the district till 1839. The district (hereafter Kurnool Proper) was small during the period 1800-59 and consisted of only four taluks namely Ramallakot, Nandyal, Nandikotkur and Sirvel. However, the Muslim rule ended in 1839 when the Nawab was dethroned for his rebellious conduct and for a brief period the district was administered by an agent to the Governor. The agency administration lasted till 1858/59, when the taluks of Cumbum, Markapur and Koilkunta from the Cuddapah district and that of Pattikonda from Bellary district were added to Kurnool Proper and the whole formed under a Collectorate. The district remained intact till 1953, save for some minor changes.
The district has abundant black regar soil, more than 85 per cent of which is found in taluks of Kurnool, Nandyal, Sirvel, Nandikotkur and Koilkuntla. Infertile red soils are obtained in Markapur, Cumbum, Dhone and Pattikonda taluks (GOM, 1913; 212).

The sowing of crops was generally done during the months of June to October. The crops of jowar, korra, bajra, cotton and groundnut, which accounted for more than four-fifths of total cultivated area in the district, were sown during the months of June to October. Hence, the need for an equal distribution of precipitation was greater in these months than in the whole of an agricultural year.

The average rainfall required for a good harvest was, however, extremely low (around 21 inches), but it should be well spread out during the season. However, the rains during these months were short of the normal fall during 45 out of 80 years; the shortage was more than 20 per cent in 20 years during this period (Figure 2.1). The rainfall was particularly deficient in 1876, 1884, 1891, 1896 and 1899 and led to widespread famine conditions in the district. In the remaining years also, the rainfall was deficient in one taluk or other and resulted in withering of crops; large scale remissions; relinquishment of land and; relief works. On the whole, while the variation in the average rainfall was very high (standard deviation was 7.95) during the period 1870-1900, it was relatively low (standard deviation was 5.53) during the period 1900-1950. The average rainfall was generally high in Cumbum, Markapur, Nandyal, Nandikotkur, Sirvel
and Koilkuntla taluks, compared to rest of the district (GOM, 1924; 23). It was also uneven across the months in a year.

Figure 2.1: Shortage (%) of South-west Rainfall (1870-1950)

Artificial irrigation, which was mainly provided by tanks, was grossly inadequate and was confined to a few taluks which were also receiving good rainfall. The scanty and uncertain rainfall together with inadequate irrigation resulted in crop failures and famines in the years 1876-8, 1890-91, 1896-7 and 1900. To counter the menace of recurring famines, the colonial government constructed the Kurnool-Cuddapah canal in 1865 with an estimated ayacut of 1.47 lakh acres. This canal which passed through the taluks of higher rainfall, was a total disaster. Except in the famine years, when irrigated dry crops were raised, in normal years the irrigated area was too small and made a painfully slow
During the period from 1900/01 to 1944/5, tanks formed an important source of irrigation. The share of irrigated area to total sown area was small around 5 per cent (Appendix 2.1). Moreover, about 80 per cent of the irrigated area was confined to the taluks of Cumbum, Markapur, Nandikotkur, Nandyal and Sirvel. Further, irrigation was not secure as the main source of irrigation happened to be tanks which depended on the rainfall.

2.2. THE DISTRICT PRIOR TO 1859

Prior to the British rule, village lease system existed in this district, under which the whole village jointly paid the land revenue. The headmen, who were responsible for the collections, exercised authority in matters of distribution of land, fixing the land revenue (according to the means of the ryots) and thus in reality they became the renters (Chetty, 1886: 45). However, the manner of imposition and collection of the revenue was arbitrary and most iniquitous. The revenue history of the district was nothing but a series of acts of repression and violence on the part of the Nawab and passive resistance or flight on the part of the people.

In 1840, the village lease system was replaced by the Ryotwari Settlement (RS) under which cultivators paid land revenue directly to the government. The unexpected introduction of RS, the poverty of the people, the decline in prices together with a rupture of accustomed ties, resulted in heavy balances of revenue (often irrecoverable), large remissions and a progressive decline in the land revenue. In 1843, the District Commissioner wrote that "if bad farming, heavy balances year after year, land which
has no saleable value and a universal struggle to reduce the size of the farms, are proofs of the poverty or symptoms of over taxation, then assuredly Kurnool can produce abundance of them" (Chetty, 1886: 47). Moreover, the assessments were grossly unequal as they were fixed by village officials (such as Karnams and Reddys) and the apportionment was mostly unfair. The influential men in the villages favoured themselves and their friends, while placing a disproportionately large share of the revenue burden on the poor.

Realising these problems, the agency administration proposed a systematic survey and settlement and favourable land revenue rates for three years before the settlement was introduced. But, the Board of Revenue refused to carry out any revision of assessment pending the general survey which could begin only in the early 1860s.

The revenue history of the transferred taluks was similar to that of Bellary and Cuddapah districts. Soon after acquiring the districts, Thomas Munro, the then Governor of Madras Presidency, introduced the RS in them. Under the RS the government received land revenue in cash. Not being a pecuniary commutation for its share of the produce, the assessment varied according to each year's produce. Whereas the land revenue was very high, the people were quite poor. Consequently, agricultural development was hampered; particularly so in Bellary district, where "most of the farmers were, if not annual bankrupts, annual applicants for remission". Added to that, ryots were compelled to cultivate as much land as possible (Mukherjee, 1962: 181). Unable to relinquish
the lands, the farmers used to abandon the rich black soil fields and occupy inferior red soil fields. The RS was replaced by Triennial and Decennial lease settlements, under which the revenue burden was even heavier. A revised RS reduced assessment by 25 per cent on dry and wet lands and 33 per cent on garden lands in 1821. However, the high tax burden together with famines and depression in prices had further ruined these districts. The land revenue collections, which marginally increased in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, had remained virtually the same during the period 1820-60 in Pattikonda taluk (SRPT, 1871; 4240).

The revenue system also hampered the development of commodity market. Though the logic of RS was to encourage the cash crop cultivation, which had barely picked up. There was a marked extension of cultivation of indigo and sugarcane in the region during the period 1800-20. However, cotton did not show a corresponding increase due to the subsistence nature of the ryots, high cost of cultivation and heavy assessment. Nevertheless, cotton to some extent was cultivated because of the compulsions of land revenue payment in cash.

Despite agrarian expansion and growth of cash crop cultivation, land did not become saleable due to the high assessment. Munro felt (in 1807) that "even a remission of 50% would not immediately render the lands saleable. It would be hindered ... by three factors - want of the ryot's confidence at first in the permanence of the remission, the unwillingness of all other castes excepting the cultivating castes to buy land and the
general poverty of the ryots" (Mukherjee, 1962; 287). Land market could not have developed during the period 1807-50 due to the low prices of the agricultural commodities, availability of cultivable wastes and a slow population growth.

Under the RS, though peasant proprietorship involving direct relationship between cultivator and the government was sought to be legalised and institutionalised, in practice, it had neither prevented tenancy nor resulted in any redistribution of land (Mukherjee and Frykenberg, 1979; 238). The inequality of land ownership had further worsened by the extent and nature of inam lands, for ryotwari was not the only settlement. RS "was only half of the settlement with leaders and elite groups of the villages in South India. Implicit if not explicit in the contents of records is ... a lurking suspicion that Munro reached separate, quiet agreement with village leaders".

The inam tenures in Kurnool district were of exceedingly remote times. Many inams were illegal and they were now and then levied a nominal tax in the first half of nineteenth century (GOM, 1948; 193-202). Under the former governments, inams did not pose much problem as their cultivation was normally prohibited until government lands were fully cultivated. However, with the introduction of RS with its concomitant high land revenue, the inam lands became more attractive (Ibid; 183). Moreover, the village headmen used to enter the government lands as inams on their names with an intention of appropriating them later on (Ibid; 196). Such an extensive cultivation of inam lands worried the colonial officials, who favoured an imposition of a tax on inams. The
government, however, did not adopt any remedial measure as it felt that the high rent on government lands had compelled the ryots to occupy inams and lowering of assessment on the former would remedy the evil (Ibid; 183). And importantly, in the wake of rebellion by Poligar Narasimha Reddy in the Cuddapah district, the government did not want to take any drastic action.

The high magnitude of inam lands in the district became known only after the appointment of the Inam Commission in 1858. In the Kurnool district (hereafter Kurnool), there were 47837 land titles, comprising an area of 8,78,913 acres with an average hypothetical land revenue of Rs. 1.05 and the average quit-rent payable on them was only Rs. 0.43 (Ibid; 324). Roughly half of the total lands were given to individual families or their descendants for their socio-religious (and political) merit. These lands were the richest, most cultivable and best watered in the district. Since these lands were mostly owned by non-cultivating castes such as Brahmans, the incidence of tenancy was quite high and disputes between the tenants and the landlords not uncommon.

Thus, the policies of the colonial government relating to nature, method and burden of land revenue policies resulted in an oppressive land revenue system and a large extent of inam lands perpetuated the iniquitous land ownership. As noted earlier, the RS had legitimized the existing inequality and resulted in the emergence of village elite groups, who became much more powerful with the cultivation of partially or fully revenue free inam lands. These lands were controlled by the non-cultivating castes such as Brahmans and cultivating castes such as Reddys and Lingayats,
whereas the other middle and lower middle castes (especially Yadavas and Boyas) were either tenants on the inam lands or petty land holders. Besides, they had to hire themselves out in the labour market to eke out a subsistence. The untouchables (Malas and Madigas) were mainly agricultural labourers. Thus, when Kurnool was formed in 1859/60, people in general were poor, the revenue burden was quite high, cash crop cultivation inconsiderable, the land market only partially developed and the society extremely stratified.

2.3 ECONOMIC MOBILITY OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS (1860 - 1870)

The question of economic mobility of rural households during the period 1860-70 assumes importance in the context of rising prices in India during the Civil War in the U.S.A. The increase in prices was instrumental in bringing changes in commodity and land markets in the district. This section, by analysing the agrarian expansion, changes in commodity and land markets, attempts to capture the economic mobility of rural households in Kurnool during this period.

2.3.1 Agrarian Expansion

The cultivated area (excluding inams) had only marginally increased from 11.4 to 11.55 lakh acres during the period 1862/3 to 1870/71, while occupied area increased from 11.42 to 11.9 lakh acres during the same period (Table 2.1). This marginal agrarian expansion was partly due to the increase in prices. The prices generally remained at a high level during this period. Table 2.2, which compares the prices during the period 1862/3 to 1873/4 with the averages for the earlier period 1843/4 to 1861/2, shows that
the prices of food grains doubled (and even trebled) during the period 1863/4 to 1867/8. Though the prices started declining from 1868/9 onwards, they were still higher compared to the average for the period prior to the American Civil War. Such an increase not only facilitated the expansion of cultivated area but also reduced the burden of taxation. The revision of land revenue rates in 1860s also reduced the burden of taxation (Table 2.3) and facilitated the agrarian expansion.

Table 2.1: Government Cultivated & Occupied Area ('000 acres) in Kurnool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triennium ending with</th>
<th>Cultivated area</th>
<th>Occupied area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1864/5</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>1142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867/8</td>
<td>1134</td>
<td>1176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/71</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chetty (1886; 265).

Table 2.2: Prices (Rs per garce) of Food Grains in Kurnool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triennium ending with</th>
<th>Jowar price</th>
<th>Index base=119</th>
<th>Arika price</th>
<th>Index base=69</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avg. for 1843/4-61/2</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864/65</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>Period of famines and famines and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867/68</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/71</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873/74</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 1) Data for the period 1843/4-61/2 are obtained from SRKP (1863; Appendix p).
2) Data on prices from 1862/63 onwards are obtained from Chetty (1886; 267).

However, the tax burden was uneven across the taluks as well as over the years. So there were taluk-wise variations in the agricultural expansion. For instance, in Cumbum taluk, the revenue rates for dry lands ranged between a high of 9-8-3 (Rs-A-P) and a
low of 0-1-2. In the Markapur taluk, the range was from Rs. 3-11-0 to Rs. 0-1-2. In these taluks, assessment as a proportion in the total gross produce on ordinary lands was 19 per cent in 1862/3. However, with the decline in prices, it rose to 25 per cent in 1873/4 (Appendix 2.2). Besides, a large number of rates existed for both dry and wet lands; the land revenue rates were as many as 343 for dry lands and 216 for wet lands in Cumbum; the corresponding figures in Markapur were 114 and 80. The Collector felt that such a complex land revenue rates would throw "the people into the power of Curnums and inevitably thwart the uneducated and lower classes in their efforts to obtain suitable land". These two factors together resulted in large extent of cultivable wastes (as much as 80 per cent of total cultivated area excluding inam lands) in Markapur taluk. The farmers in some villages used to abandon the rich fields nearer the village and occupy inferior and far away fields. The Collector wrote that "the ryots hold lands of the adjoining village in preference to and not from want of lands in their own villages, and they ascribe it to excessive assessment of their own lands". Consequently, the average revenue on lands relinquished was high compared to the lands taken up (Table 2.3). In Markapur, the extent of cultivation of partially or fully revenue-free lands was almost equal to that of government lands and the Collector bemoaned that the ryots, instead of holding proprietary rights on government lands, prefer to be tenants-at-will on inam lands. An enhancement of land revenue rates in the 1960s and early-1970s resulted in relinquishment of land on a large scale in several taluks.
Table 2.3: Per Acre Assessment on Lands Relinquished and Lands Taken Up in Kurnool District (1861/2 to 1872/3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triennium</th>
<th>Per Acre Assessment on Lands Relinquished</th>
<th>Taken Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862-64</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-67</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868-70</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-73</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports on the Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Provinces under the Madras Presidency, for the relevant years.

2.3.2 The Commodity Market

As the time series data on cropping pattern are not available for this period, mainly qualitative evidence is used to discuss the changes in commodity market. Around 1860s, the food crops such as jowar, korra, arika and bajra were important. In Koilkuntla, jowar occupied 57 per cent of total area in the late 1860s. In the Pattikonda taluk, the proportion of area under food crops was 89 per cent in 1864/5, of which 71 per cent was under jowar. The cultivation of cotton and indigo in Kurnool Proper was not extensive in the early 1860s. In Pattikonda taluk the area under cotton was only 8.49 per cent in 1864/5, while in Koilkuntla it was as much as 19 per cent in the early sixties. Thus, except in Koilkuntla, the area under cash crops such as cotton and indigo formed only a small proportion of total area in early 1860s.

However, the cash crop area increased, with fluctuations, during this period (Table 2.4). These fluctuations were mainly due to rainfall and prices. The rising cotton prices during the American Civil War (as much as Rs. 400 per candy of cotton against an average price of Rs. 120 per candy) resulted in an increase in
area under this crop in the Triennium of 1863/4 to 1865/6 (SRKT, 1871; 7). In the next Triennium, the cotton area declined chiefly to fall in the prices. The increase in cotton acreage from 1.91 to 2.34 lakhs during the period 1870/71-1871/2 was mainly due to a steady rise in cotton prices from Rs. 68 to 114 per candy during the same period. Thus, the farmers in the district seemed to be responding to price changes.

Table 2.4: Areas ('000 acres) under Cotton and Indigo in Kurnool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triennium ending in</th>
<th>Cotton area</th>
<th>Indigo area</th>
<th>Cotton &amp; Indigo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865/66</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868/69</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871/72</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874/75</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chetty (1886; 265).

The cotton cultivation had benefited by transport development in some localities. In Pattikonda taluk, the roads were well developed and in an excellent condition. Koilkuntla also had "good lines of main road" (SRKT, 1871; 70). In Kurnool Proper, only Ramallakot and Nandyal taluks had roads "worth mentioning" (SRKP, 1863; para 17). In Cumbum and Markapur taluks, there were hardly any roads worth naming. Consequently, the collector wrote in 1865 that, "the ryots have not yet the command of the market and thus lose the full benefit of the present unprecedented rise in prices". Though K-C canal was designed for both navigation and irrigation, the canal alignments could not bear the pressure of navigation. However, the construction of railway line between Madras and Bombay in the early 1870s had significant impact on the commodity trade. Though this line did not pass through the district, it traversed very closely and thus, drew the surplus.
produce from the countryside and worked towards the expansion of the commodity trade.

The market towns were very few in number and the trade in these towns was insignificant. For the taluks of Ramallakot, Nandyal, Nandikotkur and Sirvel, the only market town was Kurnool, influencing the surrounding country but to a limited extent (SRKP, 1863; para 17). Though Pattikonda taluk did not have any marketing town, it benefited from towns in the neighbouring district such as Bellary, Adoni and Kurnool. The settlement officer heard from the ryots that "there is not only ready local sale for their grain in the more important villages of the taluk, but the merchants from Bellary, Adoni and Kurnool likewise come and carry off the surplus produce during the harvest time". The weekly markets were also held at pyapaly, Pattikonda, Maddikera and Devanakonda on a small scale (SRPT, 1871: 4191). Thus, the trading activity had begun to pick up.

2.3.3 Land Market

A high tax burden, an unfavourable weather, availability of large tracts of cultivable wastes coupled with inadequate irrigation facilities had depressed the land market in the district. In unirrigated, poor and neglected areas of Cumbum and Markapur, lands were barren and unable to produce two crops in succession. Hence, the revenue collections were made with much difficulty. Excepting irrigated and black cotton soils, lands were not at all saleable and were hardly a security for the land revenue. Consequently, the land transfers were very few and confined to irrigated and cotton growing regions. The total
transacted area was fluctuating and it formed only an insignificant proportion of the total occupied area (Table 2.5). Thus, the development of land market was not extensive and was confined to a few pockets.

Table 2.5: Percentage of Total Land Transferred in Kurnool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area (acres) transacted</th>
<th>Average assessment</th>
<th>% of land transacted to total Govt. occupied area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868/69</td>
<td>9383</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869/70</td>
<td>13460</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/71</td>
<td>20938</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871/72</td>
<td>22525</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Same as in Table 2.3.

Thus, the agrarian expansion was only marginal confined as it did, only to a few taluks. It was in these taluks, that the commodity trade had picked up and the cotton cultivation was on the rise. Despite the oppressive rates of land revenue and unfavourable weather, the farmers in these taluks could benefit from the rise in prices due to better transport and trading facilities. In the other taluks such as Markapur and Cumbum, the farmers did not benefit from the rising prices.

2.3.4 ECONOMIC MOBILITY (1860-75)

Now a question arises: who benefited from this marginal agrarian expansion? We should note that by mid-1850s the rural society was already stratified. A high land revenue on government lands compelled the small farmers to opt for the inam lands. As inam land owners, Brahmans and Reddys were in an advantageous position. Moreover, their accumulation of surplus from the revenue free inam lands was greater especially during the phase of rising...
prices in the early 1860s\textsuperscript{32}. In Kurnool, 25 per cent of the Brahmins derived their income from landed property. The Commissioner of 1872 Census remarked that:

"as a rule, Brahmin cultivators secured the best lands in the country. By the proceeds of land, tilled by serf labour, they have increased in substance and grown wealthy ... the Brahmins have gradually shifted their position from that of mere priests, purohits ... to the more substantial one of landed aristocracy"\textsuperscript{33}.

The condition of small farmers and tenants was not very encouraging. Despite rising cotton prices, the cultivation of cotton did not pick up mainly due to low incomes of small farmers and tenants. In 1863, their estimated monthly income was only Rs. 0.50. Hence, it was not surprising that "a new demand, like that which has arisen for cotton, should meet with but a feeble response" (SRKP, 1863; para 36). Thus, the price boom of 1860s seems to have by-passed the small peasantry.

Many farmers, with a high burden of taxation, unfavourable weather and inadequate irrigation facilities, found it difficult to pay the land revenue. Hence, the arrears for which coercive processes were issued and sales were resorted gradually increased (Table 2.6). The smaller amounts during the period 1859/60 to 1870/1 should not be taken as a criterion to judge the manner in which the collections were made. For, as a Tahsildar wrote in 1865, "the power of selling movable property for arrears of revenue now reserved to collectors, who generally do not delegate it to others, the Tahsildars feel unwilling to make frequent attachments in legal manner lest they be charged with inefficiency and it must be candidly admitted that what is legally authorised ... is done without a legal process or report by village Reddies encouraged by

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Taluk authorities\textsuperscript{34}. Despite this, the amount for which legal processes issued and amount of land sold increased in the early 1870s. The ryots, consequently, had to borrow from village sowcars for the payment of land revenue\textsuperscript{35}.

Table 2.6: Coercive Processes employed in the Collection of Land Revenue in Kurnool District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triennium ending with</th>
<th>Arrears for which coercive processes were issued (Rs)</th>
<th>Sale of arrears realised (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861/62</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864/65</td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867/68</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870/71</td>
<td>8155</td>
<td>3445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873/74</td>
<td>48354</td>
<td>6617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875/76*</td>
<td>104622</td>
<td>10275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two year average Source: Benson (1889; 20).

Note: These figures also include transactions on account of items other than land revenue. Such transactions, however, form a small fraction of the figures and the means do not exist to distinguish them separately.

A rapid increase in population (Appendix 2.3) and increase in family size would have induced the small farmers to bring those cultivable wastes under plough where assessments were tolerable. In fact, the labouring class was "struggling to rise to the position of landed proprietors" (SRKP, 1863; para 36). Since their monthly income was small, these small farmers resorted to supplementary means of subsistence viz., hiring out for agricultural work, stone quarrying, plying bullock carts and cotton spinning (SRKT, 1871; 7). The construction work on Kurnool - Cuddapah canal also enhanced the job opportunities. With the availability of cultivable wastes and employment opportunities, the small farmer was "endeavouring to better his condition" (SRKP, 1863; para 37). However, such an endeavour was, perhaps, affected
by a high tax burden. Nevertheless, we suggest that this group had experienced a mild upward mobility.

Thus, colonial government's policies of land revenue, which were arbitrary and exorbitant, left a deep impact on the society and economy and shaped the economic mobility. The nature and logic of RS was such that it created village elite groups, who became much more powerful with the control of revenue free and qualitatively superior inam lands. These groups could take advantage of the rising prices and experienced upward mobility. The complicated and exorbitant land revenue rates not only thwarted attempts of the poor in obtaining suitable land but also sapped their agrarian surplus. Although the availability of cultivable wastes and employment opportunities had a countervailing effect, polarization of peasantry seems to have been the predominant tendency. So when the Great Famine struck the district in 1876, certain sections of the peasantry were already vulnerable.
Notes and References

1. These districts were ceded for the perpetual maintenance of a body of troops known as Hyderabad subsidiary force and in payment for the troops furnished during the Mysore Wars (Maclean, 1877; 21).

2. In 1860/61, 99 villages were transferred to Nellore, while ten from Bellary and six from Cuddapah were added to the district. One village was retransferred to Bellary in 1874-75 and another was added to Sirvel taluk from Cuddapah in 1879-79.

3. In 1865/6, the deficiency of rain fall in the Pattikonda taluk caused the crops to wither. Due to deficient rain in Cumbum and Markapur taluks, the wet cultivation had suffered (Proceedings of Board of Revenue (hereafter PBR), June 11, 1867, p.3260). In Pattikonda, Koilkuntla, Cumbum and Markapur taluks, water shortage in the tanks reduced the irrigated area and rendered large scale remissions in 1867/68 (PBR, March 31, 1869, p.2067). Again in 1871/2, the rainfall in Pattikonda was deficient and led to relinquishments of over 5 per cent of the total holdings (PBR, Feb 24, 1873, p.838). The early rains in Koilkuntla in 1873/4 were so deficient that "the labouring classes were reduced to distress for want of employment and it was found necessary to carry out relief operations to enable them to tide over their difficulty" (PBR, April 1, 1875, p.2507).

4. Defects in the engineering design made the water availability uncertain. While a guaranteed rate of interest on the capital sunk made the company reckless in spending, a high water tax imposed on the cultivators (up to Rs. 12 per acre) filled the cup of woe to the potential irrigators. Consequently, by 1882, when the government was compelled to take over the enterprise, area irrigated under the Canal was hardly 18000 acres (PBR, No. 24, May 25, 1893). By the close of the nineteenth century, the irrigated area rose to a little over 48000 acres.

5. Statistical Appendix to the Kurnool District, Vol.II, for the years 1905, 1915 and 1928.

6. The Commissioner noted that no public accounts were kept except by the village officers, and the amount of remittances was carried straight into the Nawab's zenanah. The land revenue of a village was changed according to the caprice of Nawab. When his demands passed all bounds, the people would run away. Then the Nawab would lure them back, but at the harvesting time, he would unscrupulously seize the produce. He played a couple of such tricks in Nandyal where there was good tank irrigation, until the ryots fled leaving the cultivation to lower castes in the village. In another village, Nannur, he added Rs 5000 to the demand, because his horse of that value died in that village! The inhabitants fled and left the Nawab to continue the cultivation with his own servants and bullocks (Chetty, 1886; 45).
7. The collective payment of land revenue generally kept up the extent of cultivation. However, when this tie was broken, the richer ryots were not interested in assisting the poor and consequently, much land was relinquished and land revenue had steadily declined between 1839 and 1843 (Chetty, 1886; 46).

8. The total land revenue collections (including tax on inams) declined from Rs. 6.67 to Rs. 5.9 lakhs during the period 1839/40 to 1944/5 (SRKP, 1863; Appendix B).

9. The commissioner noted that "it is true that each field has a Tirwah tacked to it, but it is entirely nominal, for No.1 may be assessed at 1 rupee, and No.2 next to it, and of the same description, may be rated at 3 rupees an acre without any one being able to assign any other reason that it is so" (Chetty, 1886; 46).

10. The ascendancy of village officials and the subjection of the ryots from the long established customs was such "that nothing is easier than for the former to saddle any one with undue proportion of highly-assessed land, reserving the most lightly rated or the lands nearest the village for themselves and those whom they may wish to favour" (Chetty, 1886; 46-7).

11. The Ryotwari Settlement was first tried in Baramahal in the 1790s by captain Alexander Read.

12. The average annual collection of land revenue in Bellary and Cuddapah worked out to be Rs. 23.3 and 22 lakhs respectively during the period 1800-1807 (Mukherjee, 1962; 375).

13. Munro admitted that the country was poor and thinly populated, the few existing towns had little trade, large tracts of lands were lying waste and the poor were not attached to any village and wandered in search of better tenure. "The ryots were generally so poor that it was always doubtful whether next year they would be in the rank of cultivators or become labourers. Few of them were so rich as not to be liable to be forced by one or two bad seasons to throw up a considerable part of their farms. Many of the middling class of ryots often failed from the most trifling accidents. The loss of bullock or of a member of the family who worked in the fields frequently disabled them from paying their usual revenue the ensuing year. The poorer ryots who paid about one-fifth of the whole land revenue seldom paid the full assessment of the lands which they occupied" (emphasis added) (Mukherjee, 1962; 25-26). Because poverty was so widespread and the society stratified, Munro, in a letter to a friend, regretted that for the sake of assisting the public want of money, he had to press the ryots more than he ought to have done. Cited in Mukherjee (1962; 24).
14. Since land revenue was collected in accordance with each year's produce, the cultivators were reluctant to undertake any developmental activities in the land, as increase in production would only mean more payment of land revenue to the government. Munro attributed the unsatisfactory agricultural production in the region to the poverty of the people; but "to the ryot poverty and high assessment were much the same thing. The one was the cause of the other. Poverty prevented the ryot from making the land productive and high assessment deprived him of the fruits of his labour" (Mukherjee, 1962; 259).

15. In Bellary district, while 63278 acres of black soil assessed at c.pagodas 57245 had been abandoned, double that quantity or 134080 acres of mixed land assessed at only c.pagodas 2489 had been newly occupied (Mukherjee, 1962; 269-270).

16. The total land revenue collected under RS was Rs. 23 lakhs, while under these settlements it was more than Rs. 25 lakhs in Bellary district. Similarly, in Cuddapah district the total collection under these settlements was Rs. 25 lakhs, while under RS it was only Rs. 22 lakhs (Mukherjee, 1962; 375).

17. There were scarcities in 1802-1804, 1805-07, 1824 and famines in the years 1833 and 1854.

18. There was a widespread depression in the prices during the period 1826-1852, barring the famine period of 1832-34 (Gribble, 1875; 315-16). Such a depression in prices for a quarter century should have accentuated the problems of the farmers and must have forced them to alienate most of their produce to meet land revenue, thus leading to little surplus for re-investment and agrarian expansion.

19. "The ryots could not afford to grow cotton without first raising food grains for themselves and hay for their cattle. After having attended to the latter cultivation, they are hardly left with means enough to cultivate any thing else, with the result that not one-fifth of the land fit for cotton cultivation in 1807 produced that crop" (Mukherjee, 1962; 266).

20. The cultivation of cotton was not only expensive but also required great labour and attention. A kind of grass (nutt) used to grow in black soil fields which had to be eradicated at a high cost every 12 or 20 or at least every 30 years. Since the crop entirely depended on monsoons, the cultivation was extremely precarious (Raju, 1941; 90-91).
21. The cultivable wastes were believed to be a great source for cotton cultivation. Munro felt that if there was a reduction of 25 per cent in the existing assessment, cotton cultivation would extend to million and quarter acres in the course of 10 to 15 years (Mukherjee, 1962; 266). The fact that black soil fields, where cotton could be grown, were abandoned itself was enough testament that cotton cultivation was not favoured due to high assessment.

22. A phenomenon which puzzled the colonial officials was why cotton was cultivated in spite of high costs associated with it. The farmers of Coimbatore replied that "if they cultivated nothing but grain, they would have nothing to wherewith to pay government rent". A Superintendent of government experimental farms to whom this statement was made believed that there was a good deal of truth in it (Raju, 1941; 91).

23. R.E. Frykenberg dealt with an interesting question why, in spite of the enormous loss involved in inam holdings, the colonial government never looked into the question of inams till 1858 and why it compromised with inam holders. One possible answer to this could be a combination of local evasion (by village leaders) with local ignorance (by European Officers). Rejecting such an answer, Frykenberg developed a hypothesis that colonial government in an attempt to consolidate their power, had secretly come to an agreement with village leaders. Under this silent agreement, the village leaders accepted the supremacy of the Company and in return, they were allowed to cultivate the rent-free lands. This agreement was favourable to all the parties involved because all of them wanted "peace (to be) established where it had not been known in living memory" (Frykenberg, 1984; 47-48).

24. With a reduction of 10 to 75 per cent in the assessment in 196 villages in Kurnool Proper, the cultivated area expanded. Consequent upon the revision of land revenue rates in Pattikonda, "the cultivation has increased yearly in almost mathematical regularity; through every vicissitude of season, amounting from 186000 to 247000 acres or about 25 per cent in the six years (1858/9 to 1863/4) with an almost corresponding increase of revenue. In the other taluks (excepting Cumbum and Markapur) there has also been an increase of cultivation and revenue" Letter from the Collector of Kurnool to the Board, PBR, April 28, 1865, p.2225.

25. This paragraph heavily draws from the letter from the Collector of Kurnool to the Board, PBR, April 28, 1865, pp. 2225-2231.

26. In 1863, an increase (of 10 to 100 per cent) of assessment in 174 villages in Kurnool Proper resulted in relinquishment of land especially in Nandikotkur (Chetty, 1886; 51). In Pattikonda, encouraged by expansion of cultivated area till late 1860s, the colonial government enhanced the land revenue. The settlement officer himself admitted that "the sudden addition of Rupees 27773 or 14 per cent to the demand of a talook like Pattikonda, devoid
of wealth and irrigation, is doubtless a serious enhancement" (SRPT, 1871; 4210). Not heeding to the apprehensions of the settlement officer, the government introduced the new rates in the taluk in 1872/3 and "a large extent of land (Acres 28923) was relinquished in consequence of the high rates of assessment imposed by the Settlement Department" (Settlement Report of Kurnool, PBR, April 1, 1875, p.2509). Similarly, the ryots in Koilkuntla relinquished 1669 acres owing chiefly to the heavy assessment in the Settlement (Settlement Report of Kurnool, PBR, May 24, 1876, p.4613).

27. This evidence is mainly drawn from the Settlement Reports of various taluks in the district. See SRKP (1863; para. 40): SRKT (1871; 7-8): SRPT (1871, 4231).


29. This increase occurred chiefly in Koilkuntla taluk (SRKT, 1871; 3264).

30. The northern portion was traversed by the Trunk road between Kurnool and Bellary, while the southern portion possessed two highways, one from Gooty to Kurnool passing through Pyapaly, and other from Gooty to Adoni passing through Pattikonda (SRPT, 1871; 4191, 4227 and 4232).

31. Letter from the Collector to the Board, op.cit., p. 2228.

32. "During the American war ... the cotton producers had prosperous time of it. Land owners ... invested their unusual profits in land" (SRKT, 1871; 7).


34. Letter from the Collector of Kurnool to the Board, PBR, April 28, 1865, p.2231.

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