Chapter - VI
-----------

ALLURI SITARAMA RAJU AND THE
MANYAM REBELLION OF 1922-24.
Agency Tract
(1921)

Legend

- Rivers
- Hilly areas

Source: A statistical atlas of the Madras presidency, 1921.

Cartography by: Niladri Dash, csrd/sss, jnu.
The pattern of tribal protests against forest grievances in Madras Presidency during the 1920's consisted of two streams which had a common goal but had differences in political ideology and forms of struggle. During 1920-22, all forms of protest around forest grievances operated within the framework of Congress-led Non-cooperation. During 1922-24, the form of protest took the shape of a full scale war against colonial police and army. To understand the dynamics of revolt at the latter level, which is the theme of this chapter, we shall first go into the specific grievances of tribal communities in the colonial context in the Rampa region which conditioned the 1922-24 rebellion against British rule in the hills. In the first section of the chapter we will trace the historical roots of the different forest grievances under British rule with a special emphasis on the material factors which conditioned them and the consequent hostility of the (pressure from below) masses against the popularly perceived "jubberdust" 'white' rule in the hills. We have also tried to underline the nature of the perception of popular grievances, the type of initiative and the level of integration of tribal masses from below into the Manyam rebellion, so that the popular social base of the anti-British revolt at the grass root level can be highlighted. At the second level we restrict our enquiry to the study of the social character and

1. Throughout the text the word "Rampa" is being used whenever we are describing the geography, economy and other related aspects of the region; when describing the rebellion we use the local name "Manyam" and for its leader the popularly known name "Sitarama Raju" instead of "Rama Raju" given in the Government records. The word "rebellion" for "fituri" is preferred so that its character would be indicated without any ambiguity.
political ideology of the rebellion. At this stage an attempt would be made to demonstrate the level of integration of the masses into Alluri Sitarama Raju's anti-colonial rebellion. This would, hopefully, help us to bring out the unfolding initiatives by the tribal masses - this is what we call the movement from below - in the light of the structural realities which necessitated popular mass participation in the two years' guerrilla war.

Forest Grievances in the Region Under British Rule

Geographically the total forest area in Madras Presidency was 2 19,607 square miles by 1907. By 1922 the agency division in Andhra alone embraced a total area of 19,287 square miles comprising of what were formerly the tracts of Ganjam, 3 Vizagapatam and Godavari. This agency division represents most 4 of the hill tribal groups even though, some tribes were scattered into districts like Kurnool, Guntur, Chittoor and Nellore.


4. Tribes like Koyas and Konda Reddis were dominant groups in Godavari district. Bagatas, Ronda Doras or Konda Kapus, Gadabas, Khonds, Muka Doras, Parjas, Kotias, Dhulias, Ghasis, Dombus, Paidis, Valmikis, Kannaras, Kummaries, Ojas, Mulias, Oginas, Ronas, Jatapus, Savaras, Rudulus and Goudas were concentrated in Vizagapatam district. See, A. Aiyappan, Report on the Socio-economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras (Madras, 1948), p.6.

5. Dominant Tribes in Kurnool were Chenchus, in Guntur Chenchus and Yanadis, and in Chittoor and Nellore Yanadis and Irulas which were classified as criminal tribes. Ibid.
The hill regions of the Agency were generally divided into Rampa and Gudem areas or blocks, with 30 (around 700 sq. miles) and 10 (around 740 sq. miles) 'muttas' or estates in each block respectively. Gudem had 411 villages (in 1921) with a population of around 21,780, whereas Rampa had 230 villages with a population of around 28,050, even though area-wise there was not much of a difference. In other words, the density of population was far greater in Rampa than in Gudem, it being 40 per sq. mile in Rampa and 30 per sq.mile in Gudem. But geographically Gudem was less accessible than Rampa, with a robust chain of mountains and rough valleys which were inaccessible to outsiders due to poor communications. The striking difference between the two was the fewer number of 'muttadars' in Gudem as compared to Rampa. Traditionally it was the 'muttadari' system which provided a structural framework within which all the tribal communities were effectively united and ruled by feudal rajas or lords from the plains.

--- 'Mutadari' System ---

The 'muttadars' in the Rampa region were the actual rulers as direct agents to the feudal lords or rajas from the plains. The 'muttadars', however, had no property rights on land. A 'muttadar',


7. Report from Agent, Vizagapatam Agency (Govt. of Madras) Land Revenue and Settlement, G.O. No.2587 (Rev.), 11th Dec., 1929; Govt. of Madras, Rev. Dept., G.O. No.1371 (Rev.), 17th July 1930; Also see, Land Rev. and Sett., G.O. No.312 (Rev.), 16th Feb., 1923 (Govt.of Madras hereafter as G.O.M.)

generally speaking, was entitled to collect taxes or levy new ones. During the British rule their mediatory role remained the same but the unlimited powers they enjoyed so far were clipped off. Under British administration a 'muttadar' had only the right to collect a fixed revenue - as fixed from time to time by the Agent - and receive a remuneration for doing so either in cash or in the shape of grants of land and trees free of rent. However, these rights had no statutory basis and the 'muttadars' were permitted to enjoy them only as a matter of policy. All the rights could be taken away by the British Government should it become necessary to do so. In other words, they were effectively brought into the fold of colonial administration, which, in turn, regularised and controlled their rights (even the right of hereditary succession to 'Muttas').

9. Theoretically 'Muttadar' collected land revenue and paid a fixed 'Kattubadi' (revenue) to the raja in the plains. For his services he retained the land revenue collected in excess of the 'Kattubadi' amount. He also enjoyed free lands. A. Ayyappan, op.cit., pp.25-26; Also see Minute 24 August 1848, Board of Revenue Proceedings, 24 August 1848, (India Office Library, London), quoted in David Arnold, "Rebellious Hillmen: The Gudem - Rampa Raising 1839-1924", in Ranajit Guha (Ed.), Subaltern Studies I Writings on South Asian History and Society (Oxford, 1982), p.104.

10. For details see, COM., G.Os. No.87, Rev dt. 14th Jan., 1929; No.109, Judicial, 16th Jan., 1880; No.1666, Rev. 27th July 1929; No.2587, Rev. 11th Dec., 1929; No.2162, Rev. 27th Aug., 1938; No.1153, Rev. 11th June 1934.

11. F.R. Hemingway, Madras District Gazetteers: Godavari District (Madras, 1915), p.62; Also see David Arnold, op.cit., p.99. In 1916 there was an 'outbreak' in Gudem 'mutta' when one Virayya Dora was removed from his 'mutta'. During this rebellion the British rulers used the weapon of taking away the right to 'muttas' to break the 'muttadars' from the rebellion. The British meddling with the traditional right of succession to muttas was the main grievance of 'muttadars' which pushed them into the lap of Raju. See, Fortnightly Report, 1st Sept., 1922, No.7593-1, Public, p.43; Letter from R.A. Graham, I.C.S., Chief Sec. to Govt. to the Sec. Govt. of India, Hon. Dept. dt. P.S.G. 16 Sept., 1922,
This change not only altered the power structure in the tribal society, but also brought a kind of economic uncertainty into it. This altered power structure and capricious economic conditions antagonised the 'muttadars'.

To some extent, under the traditional structure the tribal masses were oppressed by the 'muttadars'. Under colonialism, the 'muttadars' themselves became losers, for some of their powers and privileges were taken away by the British. Colonialism, therefore, became the common foe which bound together the 'muttadars' and the masses. Thus emerged the dual role of the 'muttadars' vis-a-vis the Manyam rebellion.

The 'muttadars' patronised rebels by supplying them with daily provisions and non-cooperating with the British as long as Raju had an upper hand in the rebellion. They no longer connived against the British authority once it became apparent that the rebels were losing ground. We shall be bringing this dual role of the 'muttadars' much more sharply in later sections.

'Podu' Cultivation

'Podu' cultivation had been going on for ages in the Agency areas. A small tract of land on the slope of a hill was cleared at the end of the year. Then dried wood was burnt during March-April. The ashes


served as manure for the crops. The soil was not be touched with implements of any kind. With the first rains a variety of cholam known as 'Rhondajonna' maize, ragi and samai were generally sown. Occasionally, a small crop would be obtained from the same place during the second year, but very often the spot was deserted till the jungle grew high enough to tempt the 'Podu' cutter. More often a fresh spot of land on the hill slopes was selected for the next year's cultivation. Burning down a part of the forest and then hoeing and broadcasting the seeds in the soil fertilised by the ashes requires very little capital and fairly good crops were ensured, at least enough for sustenance.

The Koyas, the dominant tribal group in the Rampa region, as a rule, would not practise 'Podu' beyond the minimum required for their personal needs. Before the colonial government took over the management of the major as well as minor forests from private hands, the hill peasants enjoyed considerable freedom to practise Podu in any part of the jungle. This freedom, however, was effectively restricted once the hills were opened to Government exploitation.


15. A. Aiyappam, op. cit., p.15.

16. Ibid., p.16.

It was remarked by Madras Government that as a result of 'Podu' large parts of forests had been destroyed; many perennial springs which used to exist had disappeared, and the summer flow in the rivers which arose in Agency areas had been diminishing year by year and floods in the rainy weather had been aggravated. This adversely affected the colonial needs (like wood for railways). Consequently between 1880 and 1900 many forests were declared 'reserved' and 'Podu' cultivation was banned there.

On the other hand the imposition of restrictions on 'Podu' was over done by the forest officials. It was recorded in a Government memo No.161/0-3, dt. 23rd July, 1923 that "as regards 'Podu' it is noticed that Mr. Cotterell as Agency Commissioner in June, 1922 gave it as his opinion that the country had suffered from too severe restrictions on jungle clearance, that various restrictions had been overdone and much population and food grains lost for the sake of forests of doubtful value".

Thus this attack on the source of their subsistence economy threatened the very existence of the tribal society. The bulk of the tribals came face to face with the immediate prospect of starvation, since the area available under permanent wet


19. This was quoted in G.O.M., Pub. Dept., G.O.No. 108, Confid. dt. 2.2.1925, p.7. Even though there had been no new forest reservations since 1899, it was observed in 1924 by C.A. Henderson, Agent to Governor, that "the repression of 'Podu' has been going on pretty steadily since 1910 and there has been some discontent about it from time to time ...." R.Dis. Confid. 4/23, dt. Vizag, 11th April, 1924, from C.A. Henderson, l.C.S., Agent to the Governor, Visagapatam, to the Secretary to Govt. Rev. Dept., Madras, in Ibid., p.18. Extracts from Administrative Reports from 1909-10 to 1920-21 were given to show the severity of the Government restrictions on 'Podu' and the consequent discontent smouldering in the hills. See Ibid., pp.15-25.
cultivation as well as left unreserved for 'Podu' was very small. The Madras Government officials noted that the "paucity of lands in the Gudem taluk for agricultural operations" once 'podu' was banned, had become the "chief grievance of the people there". Hence the right to 'podu' in the forests had become a major demand of the hill peasants leading to some tribal outbursts in the first two decades of the 20th century. The need for 'podu' was such that in spite of "fines and punishments" it was reported that it was going on in the Agencies as late as 1930's and 1940's.

Collection of Minor Forest Produce

Another means of livelihood for tribesmen was the collection of minor forest produce. Before the intrusion of colonial authority, throughout the hill regions, the tribes enjoyed absolute freedom to carry on this specific economic activity. In a bid to integrate the hill economy into the framework of colonial economy (during late 19th century), the forest department completely usurped the right of collecting even minor forest produce. The grip of forest department was further tightened from the beginning of the 20th century, for the collection of minor forest produce was now done entirely either


by the forest department directly or by contractors under the 23
supervision of colonial authorities. In some places the forest 24
department retained the 'seigniorage system', which was in vogue. 25
But the rates were fixed by the forest department.

The government monopoly of the collection of minor forest produce 26
deprived many tribals of their means of living. No doubt there 27
still existed the lease, permit and contract system in private
hands, but the forest department by following the principle of

23. It was recorded by forest department as early as in 1904-05, 28
that "in Vizag no leases were given out and the control of 29
the sales (of minor forest produce) was kept entirely in the 30
hands of the department. The revenue collected Rs.23,345 31
was the largest in the history of the district due chiefly 32
to the brisk demand for gallnuts caused by failure of that 33
crop in the Bombay presidency. In Godavari, minor produce 34
was chiefly exported from the Agency tracts on payment of 35
the usual seigniorage fees. In Kistna babul gum was 36
collected departmentally and supplied to the Superintendent 37
of stationary.... In Guntur, gum, honey, and wax collected 38
departmentally". Administration Report Forest Department, 39
1904-05 (Madras, 1906), p.25; Also see Ibid., 1905-06 40
(Madras, 1907), pp.29-30; 1906-1907 (Madras, 1908), p.29.

24. Ibid., p.19; Also see Administration Report Forest 41
Department year 1902-03, pp.25-28; Year 1904-05 (Madras, 42
1906), pp.25-26; year 1905-06 (Madras, 1907), pp.28-29; year 43
1906-07 (Madras, 1908), pp.29-36; year 1912-13 (Madras, 44
1914), pp. 13-14; year 1919-20 (Madras, 1921), pp.28-30. 45
Under the "Seigniorage system", "permits for the collection 46
of specified produce and articles such as stone, chiselled 47
and unchiselled, gravel, squared timer, etc., at rates fixed 48
by the Forest department are granted to persons applying for 49
them. This system obtains in unreserved areas where the 50
right of collection of forest materials is not leased out to 51
contractors". A. Aiyappan, op.cit., p.19.

25. It was observed that "the sowcars and other plainsmen, who 52
(took) such permits through their old established connexions 53
with the hillmen.... cheat(ed) the illiterate hillmen by 54
using false measures and weights and by paying them for the 55
goods far below any reasonable rate". A. Aiyappan, op.cit., 56
p.19.

26. See, Edgar Thurston, Caste and Tribes of Southern India 57
C.H. Benson, op.cit., pp.5-7; Administration Report Forest 59
Department 1919-20 (Madras, 1921), p.29.
yearly renewals could effectively control these private agencies. But the department could not control the arbitrary fixing of low wages at piece-rates by these private agencies and thus check the extreme exploitation of tribals. As a result the hillmen who collected minor forest produce under the system of contract were, paid very low rates for the produce. These low rates were arbitrarily fixed by the private contractor who was often backed by the powerful government agent.

Even the trading communities in the hills were effected by the colonial rule and had to leave their profession. In all the hill regions the minor forest produce which was collected by the tribals was passed on to the plains through the traditional trading communities. For instance, 'Balijas' were described as the "Chief Telugu trading caste, scattered throughout all parts of the Presidency", carrying on the trade linking even the remote parts (hills) with main centres of trade. In fact, this became quite a problem at that time.

27. A. Aiyappan, op.cit., pp.18-19.

28. See, Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India (Madras, 1909), Vol.I, pp.134-35. 'Spari' was another caste, meaning a trader, whose members were traders and carriers between the hills and plains in the Vizagapatam Agency tracts. See, Ibid., p.211. 'Besthas' were another group who were traders and being most numerous above the ghat. See, Ibid., p.219. This traditional system of trading was however, replaced by the contract/lease/permit system, explicitly and legally controlled by the Colonial Government, depriving these groups of their livelihood. Consequently, many of these groups by the beginning of the 20th century shifted to agriculture and other forms of work like coalie labour.
System of 'Coolie' Labour

To earn a livelihood many of the hill tribes turned to 'coolie' labour. The forest department was the biggest employer of the hill tribal labour. The tribals were employed for various forest operations including road work. While it was said that they were paid at local rates for their labour, many complaints were made to the Aiyappan Committee, appointed by the Government of Madras in 1946 to enquire into the socio-economic conditions of the aboriginal Tribes of the province, that the hillmen were not paid at all for certain type of forest work. If at all they were paid, "the Government rates were often below the current market rates". It was remarked by F.W. Stewart, Agency Commissioner Vizagapatam, in September, 1922 that "the deputy Tahsildar (Bastian) has taken labour for road work (in Rompa) without paying for it. This may be true..." Interestingly, this became one of the major grievances which aroused the tribals against colonialism during 1922-24. This was corroborated by A.R.K. Knapp, Home Member in Madras Legislative Council, after his visit to Narsapatam on 22 November, 1922. To quote him: "Every one

29. A. Aiyappan, op.cit., p.20.

seems to be agreed that the impressment of labour for roadmaking, etc., has something to do with it, (Manyam rebellion of 1922-24) more particularly when joined with the general suggestions that the impressed labour was not paid for."

Forest contractors were also big employers of tribal labour and the officers of the Forest Department were expected to see that the tribesmen got fair wages. However, the links between the "notoriously corrupt" forest officials and the forest contractors, who monopolised private business in the hill tracts, effectively denied justice to the hill peasants.

There were other forms of oppressive labour which were vicious, harassing and unjust vestiges of hillmen's slavery. One was 'Vetti' labour - underpaid or free customary labour -, the other was 'gothi' labour - a form of debt bondage which often descended from father to son. 'Vetti' labour was especially employed by the


This type of forced labour by the forest officials and others matched by their cruelty explains in part the mass base of the Manyam rebellion. For instance, the Deputy Tahsildar of Gudem, Bastian, and his peon were reported to have applied Varra (Chilly powder) to labourers (on the wounds caused by beating) on the road to make them work harder. See Report from the Deputy Tahsildar, Malkanagiri, to the Agency Commissioner, dt. 13 June 1923, appendix to, a letter from J.R. Huggins, dt. 23 June 1923, (Weekly Report), Pub. Dept., (Strictly Confid), p.270; Also see, M. Venkatarangaiya, The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra) Vol.III (1929-31) (Hyderabad, 1965), pp.365-70.

32. See, Administration Report Forest Department, years 1902-1903 to 1924-1925. Each annual report has one chapter on the "conduct of establishment" which gives ample evidence of the "notoriously corrupt character" of forest officials, whose conduct was never recorded even as "satisfactory" on the whole.
Forest Department in the Rampa region once the hills were integrated into the colonial economy. Sometimes compulsory labour was extracted from the tribals in some portions of the Agency under Act 1 of 1858. This amounted in practice to forced labour with no wages or low wages.

However, from the later half of the 19th century, it was the Forest Department which emerged as the biggest employer of the hill labour for laying roads and other communication facilities mostly under systems like 'Votti'. This, in turn, strengthened the resentment among tribals against the alien colonial rule. This resentment consolidated their anti-colonial consciousness.

'Illegitimacy' of British Rule Enters Popular Perception

The peasants in Rampa have had a variety of experiences that have produced the awareness of their grievances and the 'illegitimacy' of the British authority which perpetuated those grievances. As we have seen earlier the annihilation of the hill peasants traditional subsistence economy podu cultivations, the usurpation of their customary rights on forest resources like collection of minor forest produce and the imposition of an increasingly burdensome systems of unpaid or underpaid services and forced

labour by the British Government were major factors which generated and ultimately strengthened the consciousness of the 'illegitimacy' of colonial rule in the hills. The most acutely frustrating factors in all these cases were that no alternatives to 'podu' cultivation were provided. Instead, the oppressive British forest policy and rigid law enforcing mechanisms were encountered by the tribals whenever they tried to go back to their old forms of living. This frustration, acted as a strong radicalizing stimulus for action from below against the perceived 'unjust' and 'illegitimate' British rule in the Rampa region. Once the 'illegitimacy' of British rule entered into popular perception the foundations were laid for a radical outburst from below against British rule in Rampa.

It does not mean that we are totally denying the existence of consciousness of grievances generated in course of the tribals' day-to-day interactions with natives from the plains. For instance, there did exist the 'sawars' (money-lenders') economic enslavement of the hill peasants, exploitation by private business groups and forest contractors, alienation of land to


35. For details see, Factual Memoranda of Pub. (Pol.) Dept. on excluded and partially excluded areas (Printed) G.O.M., 1946; Also Ibid.
bigger ryots from plains, and so on. What we are interested in is identifying the dominant stream within the overlapping consciousnesses. Especially, the problems associated with plains (native) people had not threatened the very existence of the hill peasants' subsistence economy. In the face of the British Government's monopolistic exploitative control of the hill resources which did so, the problems associated with plains (native) people became one way or other secondary. The internalisation of the devastating socio-economic experiences under British rule thus strengthened the basic strand of anti-colonial consciousness pushing the other forms of consciousness into the background at least for the period of colonial rule. It is therefore not at all surprising to note the conspicuous

Paradoxically, even the 'Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act of 1917' which aimed at curbing the nefarious transactions of plainsmen, who simply pocketed the properties of the hill peasants "for a song", by lending money at "extortionate rates of interest" and also in some cases appropriated the lands for failure to repay the loans, was a failure due to many loopholes in the Act. An amendment was no doubt, passed fixing the maximum rate of interest on the debts borrowed by hillmen as 6 1/2% instead of at 24%, but that was done only in 1940.

Regulation II of 1940 to Act I of 1917 was passed fixing the interest rates on debts of tribals. See, GOM., G.Os.No.84, Legal, dt. 27th May 1940; For details on loopholes in the Act of 1917, see, Board Proceedings No.605, dt. 27th Feb. 1929; GOM; GOM., G.Os. No.281 (Rev.) dt. 3rd Feb., 1920; No.2315 (Rev.) dt. 5th Feb., 1931; No.1265 (Rev.) dt. 26th June 1934; East Godavari Agents' Report in G.O. No.181, Pub.(Pol.) dt. 31st Jan., 1937; G.O. No.84, Legal, dt. 27th May 1940; G.O.No.1249, Pub. (Pol.) dt. 26th June 1940.

In spite of all these changes there was no provision in the Act to safeguard the alienation of produce by the tribals. Rather the Government has taken the side of the sowcars and allowed the so-called "smooth collection" of debts. See, GOM., G.Os. No.2627, Development, dt. 13th Nov., 1940; Board's Report in 268, Development, dt. 12th Feb., 1941.
absence of open hostility towards plains sevaram, bigger ryots, businessmen, etc., throughout the rebellion. The sole object of the Manyam rebellion was to remove the "unjust" and 'illegitimate' British rule in the Rampa region. Consequently only the "white" officers and soldiers and Government institutions like police stations and Tahsildars representing civil authority were attacked. This came to be recognised by the enquiry conducted in 1924 by T.G. Rutherford, Special Commissioner, Agency Operations, into the root causes for the utter contempt of colonial rule manifested during the rebellion.

According to the enquiry:

The root cause of the population of the tract (Rampa) being so ready to help the fituridars and suppress information as to their movements, especially in areas like Gabgren Madgol and Pada taluk generally where there had been no Bastian to magnify into a tyrant and no forest grievances to dilate on, is I must confess a puzzle to me... mainly it must I think be due to some highland spirit of 'cussedness' mixed with a sneaking feeling of administration for the adventures in their fight against the Sircar which it cannot be said had done anything to endear itself to them - the activities they see are mostly repressive or involve distasteful work as in the construction of roads or the objectionable practices of police and revenue subordinates.... Most of the rebels questioned by me could give no personal reason for hostility to Government (and they are not simply criminals)... (But) some of them had been fined what appear to be unnecessarily large sums for forest offences and resented not being able to go into the forest and cut what they wanted for their ordinary purposes or to graze even young

calves without fee: as Ruda Ramayya put it "we are fined Rs.15/- for cutting a stick and have to pay four annas for a calf so high to graze". Others who had no lands nor cattle said they had been able to eke out their living by podu before it was restricted.

The root causes for the rebellion had thus been identified in the enquiry as restrictions on 'podu' cultivation, banned access to forest resources, exploitation on road works, and tyranny of forest and revenue officials. This analysis was also borne out by those who spoke in the Madras Legislative Council during 1922 and 1925.

This grievance added with other grievances which we have described earlier acted as a "combustible material" for Raju's rebellion.

In other words, to quote Biswanath Das, a Member of the Madras Legislative Council that "these grievances were there from time to time; they were brought to the notice of the officials

38. "The Roya had lost his elementary rights. He could not fell one tree in the forest as before for cooking his food. His cow could not freely graze on the forest pasture as before. Thus the whole of the Agency was seeking with discontent". A report on Manyam rebellion was sent by M. Annapurniah, Editor of a Telugu Paper 'The Congress', to Mahatma Gandhi and the abridged version of which was published in, Young India, July 18, 1929, Vol.XI, No.29, p.235.


40. Ibid., 10th to 23rd Oct., 1924, Vol.XX, Nos.1-12, p.590.
(British) without any redress being given.... It is no wonder, therefore, that such manifestations (Manyam rebellion) occur in the usual course, I say usual course, because when a series of grievances remain unredressed it is very natural that it should manifest itself in some form or other". The popular perception of British rule as a "Jubbordusty" rule which never aimed at redressing their grievances "had been at the root of this rebellion".

Social Base of the Rebellion

Raju had the great ability to link up these popular grievances with his anti-colonial rebellion. He could not only grasp the primary contradiction, i.e., hill peoples' interests vs. colonial exploitative needs but was also able to locate the grievances of tribals within the framework of colonial rule. In other words, Raju succeeded in inculcating or internalising his basic anti-imperialist ideology in the minds of his followers as well as the tribal masses, thereby bringing the masses into the nationalist rebellion as a radical force. This he did in spite of hostile reaction from the Congress leaders in the plains and the fact that his rebellion lasted only for a brief period of two years.

42. Ibid., 10th to 23rd Oct., 1924, Vol.XX, Nos.1-12, p.593.
Raju's first band of followers were drawn from the Peddavalana, and Makaram'muttas' of the Gudem taluk. His trusted lieutenants throughout the rebellion were the brothers Gam Gantayya Dora and Gam Mallayya Dora, Aggirazu and Yendu Padal. Raju recruited many of his men "with the assistance of the Gam brothers' local knowledge". Many of the rebels who clustered around Raju were victims of colonial rule one way or the other. The articulating capacity of Raju was shown in the manner in which he gathered all those victims of colonial rule and gave a new interpretation to their grievances by locating them in the particular colonial social situation. It is striking to see the diversity of the personal experiences of the rebels and yet the uniform anti-colonial consciousness which those experiences generated.

Gam brothers belonged to Battapanakalu village of Makaram'mutta'. They were originally landholders, but Bastian, the Deputy Tahsildar of Gudem, had deprived them of their lands and denigrated them to "beggary". To quote Gantayya Dora;


47. Ibid.

Bastian behaved very cruelly and did so many wrongs to the people in this taluk that I do not find time to narrate them. Please hear my story. Bastian deprived me of my lands and gave them away to Sumarla Paddabbi. I begged him in so many ways not to ruin me. I sat at his feet on a particular day entreating him not to ruin me and he kicked me with his shoes thrice. I was not given the entire portion of the land ordered to be delivered to me. Then I became disgusted with my life and sent away my wife and children from my village. I afterwards clung to the feet of Raju Garu... and I am determined to see the end... my house also was burnt....

This "unjust treatment of the Gem brothers and Genthem Dhora going about in beggary" brought sympathy to them from the people of the Makaram 'mutta'. They were also quite influential in the 'mutta' and brought many followers and sympathisers to Raju.

Apart from Gem brothers, Aggirazu was another close associate of Raju, "who joined from the plains when the fituri was well started and for his own reasons". It was ascertained by Sweney that Aggirazu, whose real name was Vegerazu Narayana Raju, "was a Kshatriya by caste, age 25 years, 5 feet 5 inches in height and was native of Lingarazupuram in Vizagapatam district". Sweney further reported that some ten years ago Aggirazu settled at Kumadavilly village of Bhimavaram taluk, Kistna district. This


50. Report from Happeil, Officer Commanding, Agency Operations, Govt. of Madras, Pub. Dept., dt. 23rd July 1923, No.572 (Mis).

village he left around May, 1923, probably on the personal invitation of Raju and joined the rebels.

Yendu Padal alias Balla Padal, an ex-village munsif of Paddockalasa 'mutta' in Gudem taluk, was another important individual who joined Raju. He too was a victim of oppression by Bastian. His young son later said that his father was, "not being paid for road work and was being fined Rs.100/- as well". He also "complained of the demands of beat constables from Chintapalli and Rovumangali who met at Paddockalasa for milk and fouls". It was also alleged that Yendu Padal was promised the Paddockalasa 'mutta' by Bastian if the roads were built without payment; but Bastian ditched him once the work was finished. Padal joined Raju to give vent to his revenge and to end British rule in the hills which appeared unjust to him.

There were many more 'desperadoes' who swelled the rebel ranks due to their personal grievances against colonial officialdom. In particular, a recurring theme in many of the grievances was


56. Report from Hapall, Govt. of Kudra, Pub. Dept., dt. 23 July 1923, No.572 (Mis.).
the cruelty of Deputy Tehsildar Bastian. For instance, then Mr.
Scoot and Coward questioned the villagers of Nagandrapalem, they
said that G asu Genta yya had told them that "he and the people of
Makavaram 'mutta' only wanted to kill the Deputy Tehsildar and
would go home when this was accomplished". Bastian was hated
virtually by the whole 'mutta' and not surprisingly this 'mutta'
was a strong base and a recruiting ground for Roju throughout the
rebellion. It was further reported by J.R. Huggins, Agency
Commissioner, in 1922 that "some of the captured rebels have been
examined as to what grievances might have led to the rebellion.
They are practically unanimous in saying that the Deputy
Tehsildar Bastian and his Overseer had underpaid and maltreated
those working on the roads...". It was also suggested that
Bastian "has taken labour for roadworks without paying for it".
Worst of all Bastian and his group (overseer and peon, etc.) had
invented a novel method of torturing the labourers on roadworks.
After beating the labourers they "applied 'Varra' (chilly Powder)

Dept. (Confid), p.70.

58. Letter from K.Murthenna Pantulu, dt. 3rd June 1923, No.R.C.
534, op.cit., p.261; Letter from Stewart, dt. 11 Sept.,
1922, Pub. Dept., (Confid), p.4; Letter from Stewart, dt.
23rd Sept., 1922, Pub. Dept., (Confid), pp.9-11; Weekly
Report from Huggins dt. 23rd June 1923, Pub. Dept.,
(Confid), p.270.

59. Weekly Report from J.R. Huggins, Agency Commissioner, to the
Chief Secretary to Govt., dt. Waltair, 15th Dec., 1922, Pub.
Dept., (Confid), p.164.

60. Semi-official, Stewart, dt. 12th Sept., 1922, Pub. Dept.,
(Confid), p.35; Also see, Note by Mr. A.R.K. Knapp on his
visit of Naraspatam on 22nd Nov., 1922, Pub. Dept.,
(Confid), p.156.
on the wounds. Bastian was also notorious for extracting bribes and for depriving the peasants of their lands. Rutherford later wrote that some rebels from Malamakaram'mutta' were inclined to expiate on the iniquities of Bastian in not paying for road work properly, his raising their kist to put the proceeds into his own pocket... and it was also alleged he made the headman collect from them tamarind and horsegram on an unprecedented scale". Kankipati Kotannapadal, elder brother of Yendu Padal, told Rutherford that "Bastian took away his lands and gave it to others. He removed him from his headman's post as useless and his successor took not only the old service inam lands but also newly cleared land". Similarly, Rutherford wrote that Kuda Kamayya "had a land dispute; he paid Rs.300/- to Bastian for a decision in his favour but the suit was still undecided when he joined the rebels. He gave the names of witnesses to the transaction and the person he borrowed the money from". The basic theme of all these complaints was the exploitation and oppression by colonial officialdom; and to escape it they had joined Raju and his anti-colonial war.


On the road works Bastian not only insisted on "forced labour from Koyas" but also employed force. "He attached plough cattle of the tribals, stopped the inflow of foodstuffs from outside for the use of the people and took recourse to violent methods for achieving his objects (of completing the road works)". See, V.Raghavaiah, Tribal Revolts (Nellore, 1971), p.36.


63. Ibid., p.369.

64. Ibid.
In general, large number of tribals were victims of intense colonial exploitation. This transformed many of them into "fituriders and decoits", "murderers", "jailbirds", "robbers and bandits", and the "landless budnashes". They needed no persuasion to assume the role of rebels; but they wanted a leader to articulate their grievances and lead them to an open physical revolt. When this was provided by Sitarama Raju, they were ready to join the band of rebels.

Raju as 'Dsvudu' (God) - A Messiah from Above

The hill peasants' desire for a change in the existing situation did exist. Yet the peasants could not themselves visualize a programme of action to remove the "jubberdust" rule of the British. Commenting on peasant rebellion in Latin America, G. Huizer has pointed out: "It is at this crucial point that either peasants with urban experience... or urban leaders... become important. They can channel the vague awareness of a need for change into a more concrete awareness of ways and means to change


67. For some instances see, Ibid., pp.368-69.

68. Press Communiqué, dt. 16th June 1924, op.cit., p.338.


70. For instance, four rebels from Malamokaram, (Koyyur mutta) "all land-owning, who were mixed up in the murder of a forest guard, joined the Raju because they were desperate men...". Ibid., p.368.
through organised effort”. In the case of Kanyakumari rebellion, the
leadership was provided by a peasant from a plains village, who
had some knowledge of the nationalist politics sweeping the
plains.

Alluri Sitarama Raju, a native of Mogallu, in the West Godavari
district, was born in 1897 in a Keshtriya family and had his
schooling at his village. He studied up to the fifth form at
various places in Andhra, he was not known to be a bright student
at school. Subsequently, in Naranapur, where he studied, he was
reported to have “developed a love for astrology (Jyotisha
Sastram), palmistry and horse-riding”. He also took interest in
the “study of the properties of medical herbs. At the age of 18
he became a ‘sanyasi’ and wandered in the hill areas of the Agency.
His austerity and his knowledge of astrology and medicine and his
reputed ability to tame wild animals gained for him the respect
and admiration of the tribal people who credited him with magical
powers”.

71. Gerrit Huizer, Peasant Rebellion in Latin America. The
Origins, Forms of Expression, and Potential of Latin

72. Report by M. Annapurnia, “Congress” (Telugu) editor, sent
to Gandhi, op.cit., p.234; Report from Happell, Officer
Commanding, Agency Operations, COM., Pub. Dept., 23 July
1923, No.572 (Mis); Letter from R.A. Graham, Chief Sec. to
Govt., to the Sec. to Govt. of India, Home Dept., dt. 16th


74. Ibid.; Also see, Semi-official, Stewart, dt. 27 August 1922,
Pub., Dept., (Confid), p.21; M. Venkatarangaiya, op.cit.,
Vol.III, p.79.

75. M. Venkatarangaiya, op.cit., Vol.VIII, p.79.
He bathed and prayed daily. He wandered like a 'sanyasi' and wore a turban, a long shirt and knickers, all made of red-colour khaddar. He also had a flowing beard. Raju had not only "obtained some reputation for sanctity among the local hillmen", but also "was undoubtedly very revered or feared by the hill folk who fed him and his mother and brother". He was revered so much that wherever he was, the villagers well attended to his wants. Raju's reputation as a "holy man" was one powerful aspect of his charismatic personality, which helped him to influence the popular mind in the hills.

Raju's charismatic personality was an assimilation of so many myths that it fitted well with the traditional mind of hillmen. Many postures or characteristics of his personality which impressed the tribals were created by Raju himself. Many of the myths around the rebel leader were created by the masses themselves, and this was tolerated by Raju. By the end of 1922, Raju's "semi-divine position" in the eyes of the villagers had


79. It was observed by George that the "late Assistant Commissioner, Polavaram, got him to move near to Addatigala (Paidiputta) and the villagers I fancied there also attended to his needs". Ibid.

been transformed into that of a "devudu" (God) who had come to liberate them from the "Jubberdust" rule of the British. He entered into folk songs as a 'messiah' from above who had descended to lead them and remove their grievances.

Alluri Sri Ram Raju! Brother Alluri Sri Ram Raju! We depend upon you, brother, for the redemption of our slavery. They (British) were afraid to touch you. They would look at your person steadily. If one looks at your divine person, one would have divine knowledge.

You looked up all the tracts in those thick forests; and undertook to wage war.... You said that you would bury this Feranghi (foreign) rule. What a great man you must have been!

There were many other 'messianistic' elements of his personality which helped him to command the undaunted loyalty of his followers as well as tribal masses. He was believed to be "invulnerable". "He would make a 'rain of arrows' and attack the men in the trenches (posts)"; under his leadership "no bullet would ever injure a fituridar", and so on. As a folk song later commemorated:

It was said that the while men would bring a large force, waylay all the tracts and catch hold of you without pain. It was said that he


82. A folk song popular both in the Agency and plains was published in "The Congress" which is reproduced in M. Venkatatarangaiya, op.cit., Vol.III, Document No.137, pp.453-54.


84. Ibid.
would throw bombs upon persons, and would shoot them with bullets.

But would the bullets of these wily Dorais touch you!

(Emphasis added).

Interestingly Raju himself further strengthened these myths by mixing popular 'millenarian' vision with his anti-colonial war. To quote M. Annapurniah, who was once his school class-mate; "Shri Rama's temple was his abode. There he used to perform 'tapas'. Huge numbers flocked to have his 'darshan' every day. They used to listen to his utterances, which were, from all accounts, reported to be thrilling. He used to deliver spiritual messages, but in the milk of spirituality there was invariably the sugar of patriotism. People drank this milk with great fervour".

87
(Emphasis added).

Actual Course and Dynamics of the Rebellion

It appears as if the rebellion started suddenly with the looting of Chintapalli, Krishnadevipet and Rajavommangi police stations on 22, 23 and 24 August 1922, respectively, by a band of 500 tribals under the leadership of Sitarama Raju. They walked off


Here our concentration is not on the simple chronological narration of the war but on the analysis of the social base, and other dynamics for the rebellion. For a simple factual narration see, M. Venkataramagya, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.80-92; V. Raghavaiah, Tribal Revolts, pp.39-47; J. Mangamma, Alluri Sitarama Raju, (A.P. State Archives Monograph Series, Hyderabad, 1983); Dantuluri Venkata Rama Raju, Viplava Veerudu Alluri Sitarama Raju Charitra, (Bhimavaram, 1984, Telugu).
with 26 police carbines and 2,500 rounds of ammunition. But in
reality it had been brooding in the popular mind at least from
January 1922. This was a period of intensive no-tax campaigns in
the plains. It was in this period that the Gandhian promise of
"Swaraj" in one year had also caught the imagination of the
tribal masses in the hills. This period also witnessed peasant
radicalism in Pedamondipad (Guntur district) pressurising the
Congress leadership to go ahead with a no-rent campaign, militant
civil disobedience movements at Palnad, and mass exodus from
Chirala-Peralala against the imposition of a municipality which
enhanced the tax burden on peasants artisans and small business
90
groups. The news of these political movements against colonialism
reached the hill peasants through the Congress 'pracharaks' as
well as through Sitaram Raju. It was later reported by
officials that 'pracharaks' from the Congress had been engaged
to propagate the principles of non-cooperation in the Godavari
Agency and the Provincial Congress Committee had discussed the
possibilities of increased political activity there in January
91
1922. Even though neither the Provincial Congress Committee nor
the Godavari Agency Conference could extend the mass civil
disobedience movement into Rampa so that the tribals' grievances

89. Fornightly Report, dt. Ist Sept., 1922, No.7593-1, Public
(Strictly Confid), p.43. They have also released Virayya
Dora from Rajavommang police station who involved in 1915-
16 raising in Guden.

90. See Chapter IV above.

91. Report on the Agency Rebellion for 12th October 1922, from
A.J. Hapell, Officer Commanding, Agency Operations, Pub.
Dept., (Confid), p.63; Letter from T.G. Rutherford, I.C.S.,
Special Commissioner, Agency Operations, to the Chief Sec.
to Govt. Madras, dt. Waltair, 22 August 1924, in M.
would also be integrated into the plains' non-cooperation movement, Sitarama Raju was very much active during this period in propagating the "less objectionable items of the non-cooperation programme" among the hill peasants. It was observed by M. Annapurniah that:

In the whole programme of Gandhiji boycott of courts and liquor appealed to him. He started in the Agency tracts of Godavari and Visnagapatam Districts a campaign of prohibition. His piety and devotion attracted huge crowds around him. His word was law to the Agency folk. They were guileless and his eloquent appeals touched their hearts. 'Don't dance attendance at the courts and don't drink was his message to the villagers. His message spread like wildfire. Not one in the Agency but responded to his bugle call. A new consciousness dawned on the innocent folk. People gave up drink in large numbers. Courts were deserted. A number of "panchayat" courts sprang up in the villages and justice was administered locally. Raju is reported to have been a regular Khadi wearer. From the confessions in the "fituri" trials, it is clear that Raju supplied only Khadi uniforms.
to his troops. Sjt. Rallapalli Kesappa, a non-cooperator and Khadi producer of Tuni, was put on trial for having supplied khaki Khadi uniforms to Shri Rama Raju.

It seems that while propagating the Gandhian programme, Raju had been simultaneously working on the idea of raising a rebellion against British rule, for it was reported by a rebel who had been caught and examined on oath by Stewart the Agency Commissioner "that Raju had been endeavouring to raise the country six months age (January 1922), he had addressed a meeting of village headmen, demanded a poll-tax of four annas a head". He had created a scare at Krishnadavipet as early as February 1922 with his intensive propaganda among the hill folks, consequently, he had been put under constant police surveillance. Thus, it seems that Raju was using the non-cooperation and its massive programme of establishing panchayat courts, propagation of temperance and Khaddar as an effective instrument to channelise the vague awareness of a need for change among the hill peasants into a more concrete political consciousness liberating Rampa from British rule through organised effort. There is no evidence that he actually believed in Gandhian non-violence. Rather he used other aspects of Gandhian programme to integrate the hill


peasants into the broader stream of anti-colonial politics of that period. Annapurniah was to rightly remark that Raju "was not known to have any great sympathy with the non-cooperation programme. His subsequent confessions and conduct show violence. But he patiently waited and allowed non-cooperation to have its trial. In the whole programme of Gandhiji (only) boycott of courts and liquor appealed to him. Consequently, he caught both the Congress leadership and the British rulers by surprise in August 1922 when he openly looted the three police stations and declared a War of Liberation.

After looting the three police stations in August 1922, Raju went North-West to Gudem there he celebrated a festival. His main object appears to have been to obtain more recruits. This took him to North-East to Rilamkota and then to the east to GangarajuMadgole. First official engagement with him was affected on 3rd of September 1922 by Mr. Tremanheere, who was loading the newly dispatched Government police force on the Onjeri ghat. In this encounter the rebels obtained a decided victory, killing one constable. The police force tried to establish contact again but in vain, for "the location and following up of the gang present(ed) considerable difficulty owing to the nature of the country, which (was) all hills and

100. Ibid.
The real victory for Raju was the daring ambush of British officers at Damanapalli Ghat on 25th September 1922. The District Magistrate reported that "the party (police) were ambushed in a very bad place. Rocks were rolled on them from above and the head constable's wound clearly resulted from a shot fired from almost directly above him". The rebels first allowed the head of column to pass and then opened fire on the two British Officers (Scott Coward and L.N. Hayter) who were killed immediately. This "made it clear that their hostility (was) mainly directed against the Englishmen". Raju himself was said to have declared to a taluk constable, who was caught then spying on rebels, that "he was not making war against the police subordinates but against the dawas". This victory not only enhanced the prestige of the rebels but also made the intentions of Raju apparent; he intended liberate Rampa if need be with a prolonged, organised guerrilla war in the hills. The organisational skill of Raju had also become apparent, for by the end of September 1922 the rebels had encountered the police force


103. Fortnightly Report, 3rd October 1922, No.8818-1, Pub., p.45 (Confid).

at four places and defeated it. The Government was thus forced
to change their tactics. Special Malabar Police companies,
trained in jungle guerrilla warfare, were brought in equipped with
105 special mule transport and pack wireless sets. Thus started the
full-scale guerrilla war against British rule in the hills.

The rebellion continued for two years. The rebels had a very
strong social base in the hills. Even after their regular
strength was reduced to 80 or 100 by September 1922, whenever the
rebels went in the disturbed region their actual number used to
swell two to three fold mostly drawing the local tribal masses
into their fold. Officials reported that "the rebels appear to
have many local sympathisers who join forces with them on
important occasions and then disperse to their homes....."

(Confid); 17th Oct., 1922, No.9017-1, Pub. (Confid); Also
Pub. Dept., CD., December 21, 1922, No.1066 (Mis); October
3, 1922, No.798 (Mis); Dec. 13, 1922, No.1046 (Mis).

Raju was like a "fish in water enjoying widespread popular support", to quote Sumit Sarkar. In fact, to carry on guerrilla warfare from deep woods Raju needed two things: unflagging social support from the tribal masses, and a continuous supply of daily provisions. Throughout the period it was reported by the officials that the "location and following up" of the rebels presented considerable difficulty owing mostly to the "non-cooperation" of the tribes who were inclined to help the rebels rather than the police forces. This, in turn, helped the rebels to be highly "mobile and elusive". Apart from superior mobility, the rebels were blessed with an intelligence network which was very effective and accurate, especially as compared with that of the Government intelligence department and was mostly manned by the sympathizers in the villages. Unless they were in the deep forests in the hills, the rebels were sheltered mostly by the villagers, i.e. whenever they had to move down to the plains. The police pursued the rebels like 'bloodhounds' on many occasions but in vain, for they were often unable to obtain

107. Sumit Sarkar, 'Popular Movements & 'Middle Class' Leadership in late Colonial India: Perspectives & Problems of a "History from Below" (Calcutta, 1983), p.53. For instance when Raju attacked the Oudem Military Camp on 26th October 1923, it was reported that the whole of the village participated in it. See, M. Venkataramaiya, op.cit., Vol.III, p.90; Sneeny's Report to the Chief Secretary to Govt. of Madras for 27th, 28th & 29th Oct., 1923. Pub. Dept., (confid), pp.316-17

correct information as to their movement in time to round them up. For Sitarama Raju, popular social base in the hills was, in fact, a strategic link in his line of defence, whereas the ghats were strong footholds for his offensive attacks. Since Raju was also a "man of brain" his guerrilla tactics aided by an effective intelligence network became formidable.

In spite of careful planning and guerrilla tactics, the rebels did get a severe blow from the Government forces more than once. In these circumstances the rebels eventually fell back upon their village bases to recover from the shock and lick their wounds in peace. For instance, on December 6, 1982, a party of about fifty of Malabar Police succeeded in attaching the rebels in a village called Peddagaddapalem. Four of the rebels were killed, two were captured and several wounded. The rebels scattered into the hills, but were followed by another police party of fifty. At midnight in a rocky watercourse in the hills, a hand-to-hand fight ensued for about an hour in which eight rebels were killed, four captured and several more wounded. It was felt by the Government that the "offensive power of the gang has been broken and they can now have only a very small supply of ammunition".

109. For instance, see Fortnightly Reports, 2nd Dec., 1922, No.10746/A-1, Pub., p.53; 1st Feb., 1923, No.1189/A-1, Pub., p.4; Semi-official from F. Armitage to R.A. Graham, No.8 Narsapatam, 17th Sept., 1922, Pub. Dept., (confid), p.42. To quote Huggins, "It is clear from Mr. Sweeney's reports that a number of village munsifs are not reporting the arrival of the rebels in their villages and deliberately suppressing information. Mr. Hume also reports that the rebels have been visiting villages all over the Godem taluk and right across the hills as far as Gurtedu and Valamuru, but not a single report has been sent in..." Weekly Report from J.R. Huggins, Agency Commissioner, for 30th January 1923, Pub. Dept. (confid), p.186.


111. Fortnightly Report, 16th December 1922, No.11200/A-1, Public, p.54.
This was to prove wrong. The remaining rebels amazingly succeeded in eluding search by the police and came back into the scene with an increased number. This was possible. Within a short time became, as was officially reported later, the villagers fed them and concealed their movements from police searches in the villages when the rebels were in a bad shape.

**Military Repression**

To alienate the villagers or tribal masses from the rebels, rewards were declared for information, punitive taxes were imposed on villages, and inhuman repression was let loose.

Cash awards were declared to catch the rebels. For the apprehension of Alluri Sitarama Raju an amount of Rs. 1,500, for Gom Gantham Dora and Gom Mallaya Dora of Gannarlapalem Rs.1,000 each, for "any one who has been actively concerned in the fituri or for information which leads to the arrest of any one who has been actively concerned in the fituri". Rs. 50, and for a .303 rifle or a police musket Rs. 50, were declared as awards.

Massive "civil pressure" was brought to bear upon the inhabitants of the villages to alienate them from the rebels.

Proclamation under section 15 of Police Act, "imposing

112. Fortnightly Report, 1st Feb., 1923, No.1189/A-1, Public, p.4. It was reported that "After the two fights, the rebels have scattered and we have not been able to trace their whereabouts...many of the rebels are hiding in field manchas used for guarding crops and are being fed by their relatives...". Letter from J.R. Ruggins, Agency Commissioner, to the Chief Sec. to the Govt., dated, Waltair, 15th Dec., 1922, Weekly Report, Pub. Dept., (Confid), p.164; and some were reported hiding in the jungle near their homes. See, Ibid, dated 18th Dec., 1922 (Report from Hapbell), p.165.

additional police on the (disturbed) area and holding the
inhabitants liable for the cost" was issued. Special orders were
issued forfeiting the 'muttas' whenever the 'muttadar's were found
helping or harbouring the rebels. Martial Law was introduced
with special powers to the police to put "civil pressure" on
people. For instance, the Makaram 'mutta' was resumed and the
'muttadar' was imprisoned for helping the rebels. The village
munsif of Chintampadu was convicted for "helping the fituridars
and failing to give the information he was bound to give". Many
more 'muttadar's were suspended and some like 'muttadar' of Gangaraz
Madgole and the village munsif of Damanapalli were prosecuted for
helping the rebels. Perhaps it was felt by the Government that
breaking the propertied class in the hills consisting of
'muttadar's, munsifs and headmen was easier than breaking the tribal
masses' non-cooperation. This does not mean ordinary tribals
were spared from prosecutions, which were rather arbitrary. For
instance, in February 1923 "eight villagers have been convicted
and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for harbouring and
giving false information including a sentence of 18 months on a
rascal who harboured the rebels in Gudem and then gave Mr. Hume
false

115. Telegram from A.R. Knapp, dated Narasapatan, 30th
Sept., 1922. Pub. Dept., (confid), pp.15-16; G.O.No.3081,
Revenue, dated 28th August 1922, p.22 (By order of the
Government in Council); Pub. Dept., (Govt. of Madras) dated
23rd Dec., 1924, No. 915 (Mis); Pub. Dept., (Govt. of Madras)
dated April 30, 1925, No. 399 (Mis).
116. Telegram to the Agency Commissioner, No.1516, D/22-L, dated
1st October 1922, Pub. Dept., (confid), p.18; G.O. No. 3081,
Revenue, dated 28th August 1922; Report from Happell, for
28th Dec., 1922, Sec. Proclamation enclosed therein, Pub.
Dept., (confid), pp.168-69; Pub. Dept. (Govt. of Madras)
dated, June 11, 1925, No. 566 (Mis).
information. These harsh sentences on the villagers were also used to create a scare among others in the villages. Immediately after the prosecution of the 8 villagers, A.J. Happell, Officer Commanding, Agency Operations, addressed the "assembled muttadars, village munsifs and villagers and explained to them at length the meaning of punitive police and made it clear to them that this was absolutely their last chance (to give information regarding the rebels for the police). This type of sentences continued till the end of the rebellion, however, without much change in the attitude of the villagers.

Simultaneously "economic pressure" was brought to bear upon the villages "frequented by the rebels" or upon those villages which rendered assistance to or concealed the rebels in any way. The best method adopted to put "economic pressure" was quartering


119. Ibid

120. See, Report on Agency Operarions, for 26th Feb., 1923, Pub Dept., (confid), p.202. For failing to report the movements of the rebels, the Izadars of Badlagondi, Tallapalem and Kirabu have been sentenced to 6 months rigorous imprisonment under Section 176 IPC.


additional police under Section 15 of the Police Act on the localities which were strong social bases for the rebels. In spite of the poverty of the tribals these cruel punitive taxes were collected, often with the use of brute force. The magnitude of the "economic pressure" exercised upon the poor tribal masses can be gauged from the fact that "the estimated monthly cost of a force of 100 men not including officers (was) Rs. 5,052-8-0 for the Malabar Special Force and Rs. 4,312-8-01 for the East Coast Special Force. Including officers the cost would be Rs. 6,353 for the Malabar Special Force and Rs. 5,603 for the East Coast Special Force. This estimate includes the pay, the travelling allowance and the rations of the force".

The collection of the punitive tax were often made at gun point, mostly once in a week. By 2nd June, 1923, the total amount collected was Rs. 1,761-9 i.e. out of Rs. 3,200 for a period of

---


two months; by 13th June, 1923 it was around Rs. 2,764 and by 23rd June, 1923, it had reached Rs. 3,571. A total demand of Rs.5,761 was imposed on the Agency division alone (excluding collections in the Godavari and Vizagapatam districts) out of which only around Rs. 1,705 were due by 21st July, 1923. Adding insult to injury, from August 1923 onwards, the punitive tax was doubled on those villages which were once subjected to punitive tax, but were visited second time by Raju's force and prompt information about which was not sent to the nearest police posts in spite of the imposition and collection of punitive tax earlier. But, even this weapon of "economic pressure" proved futile and the Government failed to break the popular non-cooperation of the tribal masses.


127. Ibid., (Weekly Reoport) dated, Waltair, 21st July, 1923 p.282. The "Muttas and villages covered by the punitive tax were Lotugeda, Gudem, Dharakonda, Peddavals, Antada, Koyyuru and Makaram 'Muttas' of the Gudem taluk; the Kilankota 'mutta' of the Padha taluk; 38 villages of Gudem taluk; 6 villages of Golugonda taluk; Vizagapatam district; the Gurtedu and Pandropolu 'muttas' of the Yellavaram taluk; 16 villages of Yellavaram taluk; Velangi village of the Peddapur taluk; Godavari district and Aannavaram and Sankavaram villages near ghatst. See G.O.No.137, Judicial (Police), dt.24.3.1923; G.O.No.262, Judicial (Police), dt.6.6.1923.

As a result the Government resorted to police repression in the villages. Almost any house in the villages of Rampa hills was subjected to "thorough searches". The main targets were the houses which furnished rebels (manpower) to Raju and which were inhabited by the relatives of the rebels.

Unflagging Social Support of the Masses in the War

Yet the tribal masses did not betray the rebels. On the other hand, they were more active in helping the rebels once the repression was stepped up by the police; and on some crucial occasions they even fought in the guerrilla war shoulder to shoulder with the rebels and Sitarama Raju.

One such extraordinary instance was that of an attack on the post of Gudem by Raju and his followers on 26th October 1923. C.E.

Sweeney one of the officers of the Malabar Police, reported that:

The most extraordinary part of this attack is that all in Gudem village participated and most probably men from other villages of the Gudem taluk. Gudem village is now almost deserted and it is believed that the male population has joined the rebels. The rebel front at the time of the attack extended for 150 yards and at one time the air was singing with the flight of arrows..... Since this attack they completely disappeared.

Due to sheer failure in achieving its objective the punitive tax was discontinued in September, 1923. For instead of breaking the

129. Ibid., for 19th, 20th and 21st October 1923, Pub. Dept., (confid), p.314; Also see Pub. Dept., (Govt. of Madras), G.O.No.400 (Mis), dated 14th May 1923.


back of the rebels it along with military repression forced the tribal masses to come into the open and support the cause of the rebels. Unless the rebels "became desperate" and made mistakes, it was felt by the Government that the rebellion could not be suppressed in near future, nor could Raju's social base in the hills be weakened. No wonder it was the capture and killing of

132. It was reported that "we appear to be no nearer the end of this business than we were a year ago... It will be seen by a perusal of the above papers that as much as possible has been done in the way of persuading or compelling the inhabitants to cooperate with the authorities in combating or betraying the Raju and his followers but these efforts have not really been successful...." Report from G.R.F. Tottenham. Ibid.

133. Ibid.


In the above government source it was recorded that Raju "was shot dead... while escaping". However, it was proved a lie, for a photograph of Raju was published by Raghavaiah (provided by Bantian in 1930's) in which gun shot wounds on the chest are clearly visible. This author also published an eye witness account of the killing and an altercation that ensued between Raju and the Major Goodall at Mampa village, where the rebel leader said to have demanded the prisoner of war treatment. This account also says that Raju surrendered on his own to Major Goodall's Jamedar of the East Coast Special Police to save the tribal masses from the military suppression but was shot dead by the Jamedar at the orders of Major Goodall.

Raju on 7th May, 1924 which ultimately gave a death blow to the anti-colonial war in the hills.

Thus the rebellion demonstrated its solid social base among tribal masses, but not so much among muttadars. From the beginning, to quote Henderson, District Magistrate, Vizagapatam that "Most of the muttadars seem to be trying their best to sit on the fence". Even though the munsifs and muttadars supported and helped the rebels when the rebellion was at its height, they quickly helped the police to find out the rebels; in some cases they caught the rebels and in one case they even killed a rebel, once the rebels' resistance cracked in 1923-24 under the pressure of police repression and encounters. This was not so in the case of the basic tribal masses, for till the end they supported the rebels and never betrayed the cause of Raju. In fact, "it had puzzled every officer on active duty in the Fituri (area) how this miserable looking population has persisted in their attitude of non-cooperation not withstanding the very considerable pressure and discomfort of parties of police and the Assam Rifles moving all over the country". Ultimately it was a clash between


136. For instance Gam Mallayya Dora was captured only when three village munsifs had informed the police on 17th Sept., 1923. See, letter from J.R. Huggins dt. Waltair, 22nd Sept., 1923 (Weekly Report), Pub. Dept. (confid), pp. 301-302.


the hill masses, who articulated their grievances into a rebellion, and the colonial rulers. Throughout this period, it was the villagers and in some cases village munsifs, headmen and muttadars who ensured a constant supply of daily provisions to the rebels. Initially, the Agency Commissioner felt that "the villagers knew that the fituri was intended and were supplying it with food as it passes through, perhaps, willingly, perhaps under compulsion. There is, however, no general grievance which would make them support the fituri wholeheartedly". These assumptions were to be proved wrong by the later course of events and the official enquiries into the causes of the rebellion. By the end of September, 1922, in fact, it was established beyond doubt that there did exist a deep rooted dislike of and antagonism against colonial rulers in the hills, which, in turn, helped the rebels to command the wholehearted support and loyalty of the tribal masses as well as propertyd groups in the hills. Consequently not only the tribal masses but also the village munsifs were seen "pretty active" in supplying provisions to the rebels. There was a harmonious relationship


139. Rutherford on the Causes of the Rampa Fituri, in M. Venkatarangaiya, op.cit., Vol. III, pp.365-70; Pub Dept., (Govt. of Madras) G.O. No.974 (Mis), dated 21st Nov. 1922; G.O. No. 924 (Mis) dated, 10th Nov., 1922; G.O. No.499 (Mis) dated, 16th 1924; G.O. No. 894 (Mis) dated, 20th Dec., 1924; G.O. No. 108 (Mis) dated, 2nd Feb., 1925 (Papers recorded); G.O. No. 402 (Mis), dated 30th April, 1925.

140. For some instances see, Letter from Stewart, Agency Commissioner in-charge, to the Chief Sec. to Govt. dated 23rd Sept., 1922, Pub. Dept., (confid), see Case Diary No. 13, Chintapalli, pp.8-11.
between the rebels and the villagers. Not surprisingly, Sitarama Raju never permitted "looting of villages, although demanding supplies for a day or two from villages he passes through". And this probably increased his "hold on the villagers". Even at the height of desperation, Raju would not allow the looting of the countryside. For instance, when he was in need of new recruits, he went to Kondapalli on 2nd to 4th May, 1924. It was reported by some of the captured rebels to the Chief Intelligence Officer that Raju went to Kondapalli "to negotiate with a number of inhabitants of that village who are either old fituridars and dacoits or the descendants of such for them to join his gang. They had apparently made previous overtures but wanted to be allowed to loot and rob the countryside which the Raju would not agree to". This explains a strong bond that existed between Raju and the villagers which gave amazing strength to the rebels. Consequently, whenever, and wherever, the rebels camped "several village munsifs and a number of villagers were also (seen) with the gang", supplying food as well and manpower.

Sometimes the muttadars also furnished food supplies to Raju; but


142. Ibid.


they often later reported to the Government that this was done under compulsion. As we have pointed out earlier, unlike villagers the dominant group comprising of 'muttadars', headmen and munsifs was, in fact, sitting on the fence to jump to the safe side if the rebellion failed in the face of police repression. When the rebellion was at its height and as long as the rebels could retain their thrust against police forces, 'muttadars' and village munsifs were "pretty active" in supplying and supporting the rebels. However, once the rebels' power was on the wane, these dominant groups were quick in jumping to the other side of the fence. There were many instances of village munsifs being very active in bringing some rebels for surrender and passing on information on the rebel movements leading to the arrest of important leaders. For instance, Gam Mallayya Dora could be captured easily when he was in the house of a Konda Dora girl at Nadimpalem village on 18th September, 1923, for information was passed on by "three village munsifs" to the police. "But they


(three village munsifs) were anxious that their share in the matter should be kept confidential and rewards be given only at the close of the fituri, because they were afraid of openly disassociating from the rebellion which was still going strong in the hills. The killing of Yendu Padal was also the same sad story of 'elite' betrayal. The village munsif and his henchmen of Pada Jeruvu near Peddavalasa captured and brought Padal's son to the officials on 23rd May 1924. When Padal after hearing this came to the village to rescue his son he was killed by them on 26th May, 1924. In this case the dominant groups openly helped the Government, for the rebellion had been almost crushed.

Thus the unflagging social support of the tribals and a continuous supply of daily provisions from the villages helped Sitarama Raju to carry on his guerrilla war from deep woods to establish "Swarajya" in the hills. Even geographically speaking the social base of Sitarama Raju and his followers was very wide, for the rebellion had its social roots not only in the Agency division but also in the border villages of Vizagapatam and Godavari districts. In March, 1923, a Government proclamation clearly identified the geographical base of Raju in order to impose punitive tax. The muttas of Lotugedda, Gudem, Dharakonda, Peddavalasa, Antada, Koyyuru and Makaram of Gudem taluks, the Gurteedu and Randonpolu muttas of Vallavaram taluk and the Kilamkota mutta of Padva taluk were declared as the most


disturbed areas. This proclamation further identified a total of 38 villages in Gudem taluk, 16 villages in Yellavaram taluk, 6 villages in Golagonda taluk of Vizagapatam district and Velangi village of Peddapur taluk, Godavari district, as most active in helping Sitarama Raju.

Lastly it is essential to point out that in course of the bloody prolonged guerrilla warfare, some individuals from ex-muttadars, outlaws, landholders, and badits joined the rebel group due to their own grievances against colonial authority. It would be, however, misleading to characterise the rebellion in terms of the interests of these individuals, as has been done by David Arnold. For the programme of Raju was never 'hegemonised' by the aspirations of these individuals. They either continued to serve the rebellion by subordinating their personal or group interests or faded out in course of the rebellion by disassociating from it.

One example of this was that of Mattadam Virayya Dora, who had tried his luck rather unsuccessfully to restore his claim to the Gudem Patavidi mutta by joining the Lagauri rising of 1915-16. He had since then been detained as prisoner under Regulation II 153 of 1819 at Vizianagaram. In 1922, Virayya Dora escaped from prison and tried to muster support for his claim over the mutta, but in vain. He was captured and kept at the Rajavomangi police station.


152. David Arnold, op.cit., for instance, p. 137.

153. Letter from R.A. Graham, I.C.S. Chief Secretary to Govt. to the Sec. Govt. of India, Home Dept., dt. FSG, 16th Sept., 1922, No. 7363-3, Public.
station from where he was released by Sitarama Raju on 24 August, 1922. "It was at first supposed" by the government that "the object of the rising might be to restore him (Virayya Dora) to his mutta. It appears, however, that he was not at all willing to go with the rebellious band he soon separated from it and was recaptured". Raju might have released Virayya Dora with the hope that he would join him in the cause, or, more probably, he might have been influenced by the "public feeling in Gudem mutta that Muttadam Virayya Dora was not being treated fairly (and released him) from custody at Rajavommangi where his case has been posted for trial on the 24 August". Ultimately, though Virayya Dora failed to associate with Raju's rebellion, the rebels' gesture of releasing him from the police lock-up probably enhanced Raju's prestige as a 'justice giver' among the people in that area. It certainly enabled him "to raise recruits from that mutta". It is interesting that in spite of Government's speculation that Virayya's rescue was aimed at restoring him to his mutta, Sitarama Raju did not resort to restorative justice of this sort which would have ultimately forced him to get involved in internal bickerings of muttadars and thereby endanger the wider cause of anti-colonialism. In other words, Raju did not


157. Ibid.
compromise with Muttadars to get their support. He aimed at mobilising these elements by integrating their grievances with the wider cause of liberating Rampa tribals from the British yoke. Those who got involved in the wider cause joined the rebellion and others like Virayya Dora who had not believed in it, left Raju.

Political Ideology of the Rebellion

Turning towards the character of the rebellion and its links with nationalist ideology in the plains, it is essential to go through the scattered opinions on the objectives of the rebellion, to form a vague picture of what the rebels and Raju actually stood for in their uprising against British Rule.

Initially the officials held diverse views regarding the object of the fituri. According to some, it was to establish Raju "as king of Guatem, his kingdom extending throughout Guatem taluk". He was said to have addressed a meeting of village headmen, "demanded a poll-tax of four annas a head and said that he was going to establish his own kingdom". Some of the rebels captured in the early months of the rebellion were reported to have said that "the Government has not done justice to Raju by not recognising him as king of Guatem" and that, hence, they sympathised with Raju. However, some of the officials...


had a different views of the motives of the rebellion. According to some intelligence sources "the rebels were said to have moved towards Jeypore via Anantagiri and ... (there was) rumour that the Raju has raised this show to get guns and ammunition for non-cooperation in northern India, and that he intends to make tracks across the Central Provinces when he has got enough". These contradictory opinions were the natural outcome of the initial bewilderment and "complete ignorance of the motives and objectives of the gang", for neither Raju nor any of the rebels were vocal about their objectives. Consequently, the Government seems to have believed rumours and thought that the rebellion was "a sort of quasi-religious megalomania which actuated the Pachipenta fituri".

The mist started clearing once the intelligence officers began to probe into the causes of the rebellion. It was now felt that the leader was, in fact, "actuated by ideals inspired by the non-cooperation movement". It was alleged in the Madras Legislative Council that a Sub-Inspector of Police had earlier reported that a non-cooperator was preaching rebellion in the hills but the


163. Ibid.
civil authorities had allowed him to go on. This preacher was no
other than Sitarama Raju. In February 1924, answering a
question by S. Satyamurti, a Member of the Madras Legislative
Council, Sir Arthur Knapp, Home Member in the Council, was quite
categorical in characterising the rebellion. "The cause... is
undoubtedly to a very large extent the activities of a certain
party (Raju) which has been advocating non-cooperation with
Government". And "it is true that there were complaints regarding
the treatment of labourers at the hands of certain officers.
It is also true that there were complaints in connection with
podu cultivation. But these complaints had nothing to do with
the leader of the fituri, Raju, who was neither oppressed by

164. Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, Third Session, 13th
Nov., 1922, Vol. IX, Nos. 1 to 5, p. 538.
our Officers nor has anything to do with podu cultivation, and I attribute his action to the political motives to which I have already alluded". (Emphasis added).

In a personal letter dated 16th September, 1922, written to his friend in Tuni, inviting him to join the rebellion, Raju had written that "I commenced battle... thinking that battle is inevitable in the interests of the country's safety". The main object of the rebellion was said to have been the establishment of Swarajya. This fact was corroborated by the testimony of a Sub-Inspector C. Shrinivasarao, in the court at the trial of the rebels. Others deposed before the court that Raju had delivered the message of Swarajya to his lieutenants, the Gam Brothers. Annapurniah in his report to Gandhi, reproduced a discussion that Raju had with a non-cooperator in Annivaram, East Godavari district on 18th April, 1923, which clearly brings out the political objective of the rebellion:

Non-cooperator : With what object are you running this campaign?

Raju : For the freedom of our motherland.

Non-cooperator : By what means?

Raju : Unless we wage war against the bureaucracy we cannot win Swarajya.


168. Ibid; Also see Dantuturi Venkata Rama Raju, op.cit., pp.171-74; Andhra Patrika, 21 April 1923.
Non-cooperator: Do you really believe you would thus get Swarajya?

Raju: Undoubtedly, in two years we do get Swarajya.

Non-cooperator: How do you hope to get Swarajya in two years? Is it through your present means?

Raju: Yes, emphatically yes. I have a great following; there is no dearth of men for me but I want ammunition. I am in search of that.

He was so confident of winning the war that he was reported to have said that "he did not care if the Government sent lakhs of troops against him, he had followers all over India and was quite prepared to deal with any forces sent by the Government.

Thus, the objective of the Manyam rebellion was much wider than that of establishing "his kingdom in Gudem" actuated "only by his ambition to set himself up as an independent chief". It was undoubtedly anti-colonial in character and thereby political.

Neither the tribals nor Raju were isolated from the major political movements sweeping the plains. There were instances of 'Pracharakas'(propagandists), sent by the Congress, spreading the programme of non-cooperation in the Agency region and also the Gandhian promise of 'Swaraj in one year', at a time when non-


cooperation movement was radicalising the nationalist politics
in the plains. In the same period Raju was seen actively working
among the tribals for the spread of khaddar, anti-drink campaign,
establishment of panchayat courts, etc., of Congress programmes.
It is not at all surprising to see such a militant man raising
slogans like "Gandhi-ki-jai" after looting the Chibntapalli
Police Station; and at some other occasions he "spoke highly of
Gandhi". This means that Raju was in "close communication with
the plains" and the main currents of the nationalist movement
led by Congress. In course of his discussions with the Deputy
Tahsildar, Malkanagiri on 11th June, 1923 he reported to have
said after praising Gandhi that "violance is necessary. He will
continue his campaign till 'swaraj' is established. He has no
faith in the (British) Government. He desires to visit
Rajahmundry and other plains villages to test if he could get
sufficient following, make a bold stand against Government

171. Daily Report on Agency Rebellion for 8th Oct., 1922 from
A.J. Happefl, Officer Commanding, Agency Operations, Pub.
Dept. (confid), p.59; Letter from T.G. Rutherford dated 22nd
366; The Hindu December 8, 1921.

172. M. Venkatasarangaiya, Ibid., p.366; Semi-Official from F.S.S.,
George, dated Narsapatam, 28th August 1922, (upto 5th
Stewart, op.cit., dated, Narsapatam, 11th Sept. 1922, p.4;
Govt. of Madras, Pub. Dept., dated November 21, 1922, No.
974 (Mis); December 20, 1924, No. 894 (Mis); Feb. 2, 1925,
No.108 (Mis); Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, 13th
Nov. 1922, Vol. IX, Nos. 1 - 5, p. 538

173. Letter from Stewart, op.cit., dated 11th Sept., 1922, p.4;
Weekly Report from Ruggins, dated 23rd June 1923, enclosed
report from Deputy Tahsildar Malkanagiri, to the Agency
Commissioner, dated 13th June 1923, Pub. Dept., (confid),
p.270.

174. Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, 13th Nov., 1922,
Vol. IX, Nos. 1 - 5, p. 535.
forces. He hopes to get help from Punjab". One Intelligence Officer, Mr. Saunders, quoted an interesting report from the Dharakonda Muttagar sent on 13th October, 1922, in which it was said that "Raju was talking of moving on towards Gurpedu, Addatigala, Rampa Chodavarum and the Papi Hills, then to Bastar. After touring in Bastar that he would return with a large army and establish 'swaraj'.

If not in the interior, at least in the surrounding plains villages there were many "non-cooperators" who "without doubt" at heart sympathised with Raju's rebellion and his objective of establishing "Swaraj". One non-cooperator and a khaddar propagandist, Shri Rai Jagpathi Varma Raju of Pithapuram, Godavari district, observed in his interview in October 1922, with an officer of C.I.D. Special Branch that "several influential estate-owners and others living in and around the Agency were expected to help the present fituri rebellion for political reasons; but Alluri Srima Raju, the leader of the rebels, precipitated matters by bringing it about before the materials for a general republican movement in the country was ready". The people from the plains villages may not have actually participated in the rebellion, but at least they were in sympathy with the cause of the rebels. They helped the rebels materially, for it was reported in the

Government files that Raju's supply of country guns and ammunition came from "his non-cooperation friends in the Godavari district". So Raju was not showing merely the "romantic idealism of his class", when he claimed to be gathering followers all over India. This claim shows at least his basic understanding of the political developments in the plains.

If we integrate the "folk tradition" with other materials on Manyam rebellion, it would appear that Raju was not only aware of the Nationalist movements under the leadership of Gandhi/Congress but was most probably in touch with the terrorist movement in India. It was observed in the official sources in February 1924 that Raju was "a member of some Calcutta Secret Society which (was) engaged in the manufacture of bombs, etc. and that having come under the notice of the police, he returned to his native haunts, and the Non-Cooperation Movement being in full swing at the time. He, with the help of Non-Cooperation friends, decided that stirring up the Agency villagers would be a good move as regards embarrassing Government". He claimed more than once that "he had followers all over India", and he hoped to get help from "Punjab", "Central Provinces" as also from the


183. See Footnote No. 175.

adjacent plains villages and regions like "Bastar" and towns like "Rajahmundry". According to popular tradition in course of the all India tour which Raju undertook to acquaint himself with conditions under colonialism, he attended one underground revolutionaries' meeting in Chittagang and was convinced of the necessity of waging armed struggle to liberate India from British rule. This conviction of Raju was likely to have been strengthened further by the widespread disillusionment among the peasants as well as middle classes in the plains once the non-cooperation movement was withdrawn rather abruptly by Gandhi in March 1922, that too at a time when peasants' pressure from below was radicalising the tone of nationalist politics in Andhra. Raju probably thought that there would soon occur rebellions all over India consequent upon the disillusionment with non-violent congress politics, and he could then link his war of liberation with the other Indian rebellions. In reality his revolt did not cross the boarders of Rampa, barring a few adjacent plains villages, obviously due to the successful encirclement of the region by the British army.


187. The popular version of "folk tale" on Manyam rebellion was published in a drama by Padala, Alluri Sitarama Raju (Telgu). This drama originally written in late 1940s is still very popular in Andhra villages; Also see, Yerramilli Narasimha Rao, Sri Alluri Seetarama Raju Charitra (1922-24, Raju Vilapavam) (Telugu, Pub. by Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Not dated); A recent historical film "Alluri Seetaramaraju" (Telugu, scope, colour, 1975, Padmalaya) is the best available account based on both historical and folk tradition mixed in a balanced way.
To Raju's utter disappointment, while the reaction of the Congress in the plains was hostile, the response from other political elements was either passive or negative. For instance, no doubt that a prominent nationalist paper, Andhara Patrika, demanded an immediate enquiry into the grievances of the hill tribes, but it was also the first to disclaim that Raju had any links with the non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Gandhi in the plains. After Raju's death the same paper observed in its editorial that "the Fituri conducted by Raju is once again illustrates that violence is quite a useless weapon. Hence all will do well to adopt the excellent non-violent non-cooperation preached by Mr. Gandhi. The Rampa Fituri is a good example to illustrate that the adoption of violent methods like revolutions and fituris not only prove self-destructive but also prove very harmful both to the people and to the country".

Another so-called "militant" Telugu Journal, the Congress, was openly hostile when it wrote that it would be "gratified" if the "Rampa Fituri" could be completely put down. And the Kistna Patrika was not an exception. It denounced the Manyam rebellion and was, in fact, a step ahead in criticising Government's failure to supply more "arms" to the people and the "police stations" to fight the rebels. It justified the brutal

188. Andhra Patrika, 28th August & 5th December 1922; 15th June 1923; 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 17th May, 1924; Also see, RNNPM, Reel No.27, 19123, pp.1098-99 for the translation of one report from Andhra Patrika which demanded for an enquiry.

189. Andhra Patrika, 17th May 1924, this English para is taken from RNNPM, Reel No. 28, 1924, p.701.

190. See Congress, 5th April and 11th October 1923, in RNNPM, Reel No. 27, 1923, pp. 1335 and 1486-87.

suppression of the rebellion. It was rather uneasy till Raju was put to death. Similar hostile reaction against Raju's rebellion could be seen in all other Andhra newspapers.

Once Raju was shot dead and the rebellion was ruthlessly put down, many of the Andhra nationalist papers and journals were quick in romanticising him as a great "national hero". They elevated him to the level of "Shivaji and Rana Pratap", and in one case he was praised as "Lenin". Andhra Patrika bestowed upon him the "bliss of Valhalla" and hoped that "Raju will enjoy the Heaven of heroes". The Savagrai compared Raju with George Washington.

192. Krishna Patrika, 14th October and 2nd Sept. 1922; 5th May 1923; 24th May and 25th October 1924; especially see RNNPM, 1924, pp.1443-45, also reproduced in M. Venkatarangaiya, op.cit., Vol. III, pp.404-05.

193. Janmabhumi, 15th May 1924; Andhravani (Berhampur), 29th October 1922 and Godavari Patrika (Rajahmundry), 31st October 1922, in RNNPM, Reel No. 26, 1922, pp.1433-34; Simhapuri (Nellore), 10th May 1923; Guntur Patrika (Guntur), 8th and 15th May 1923; and Pinakini Patrika (Anantapur), 19th May 1923, in Ibid., 1923, pp.99, 669-70, also see pp. 82, 486, 671, 752, 1098-99, 3150 and 1443; Swatantra (Weekly, Rajahmundry) was most harsh and said that "such people (Raju) should die". See 13th May and 20th May 1924, in Ibid., Reel No.28,1924, pp.70-71 and 765-66; Some of the extracts are available in M. Venkatarangaiya, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.389-90, 392-95 and 401-07.

194. Andhra Patrika, 8th and 17th May 1924.


197. Andhra Patrika, 17th May 1924.

198. Savagrai, 8th July 1929, quoted in op.cit.
On 20th October, 1984, in the Andhra Provincial Conference, a resolution was proposed by Mr. A. Kaleswara Rao, to the effect that "while condemning the violence of the late Alluri Sitarama Raju, the Fitzuri leader, this Conference places on record its appreciation of his patriotism, courage and self-sacrifice and prays that his soul may rest in peace". However, since there were rumours to the effect that Raju was alive, an "amendment proposing the adjournment of discussion on the resolution" was passed. The resolution on Raju was probably put off not because of doubts regarding his death, but owing to opposition from other Congressmen. This opposition was reflected, for example, in some comments passed by Kistna Patrika on this issue. It said that "these resolutions express the same kind of mental perversity as was shown by the resolution expressing admiration for the conduct of the anarchist Saha in Bengal" (emphasis added). There was a similar hostile reaction in the Madras Legislative Council, where majority of the members pleaded with the Government to put an early end to the rebellion.

It is ironic that the rebellion, which was seen as "very harmful both to the people and to the country", when the rebels were engaged in a prolonged guerrilla war against the British came to be seen, once it was stamped down, as a peoples war and its leader as great as Shivaji, Rana Pratap, Lenin and George Washington.


rebellion, David Arnold observes that the "basic reason for the
hostility of the Aundhra Congressmen was that they represented
precisely those interests - the traders, money-lenders, contractors, immigrant cultivators, and lawyers - whose hold on
the hills the fituridars were fighting to overthrow". Here again
Arnold is wrong for, first of all, the rebellion was neither in
the beginning nor in the end aimed at "overthrowing" the
"interests" of the plains people. Rather Raju was very much
successful till the end in subordinating all the contradictions
with plains people to the basic anti-colonial war. We have seen
above that many of the plains people were in sympathy with the
cause of rebels but could not come out in its support, for the
hegemony of Gandhian nationalist ideology and Gandhian paradigm
was very strong in the plains. Secondly, it is wrong to
characterise the Congress as solely representing a few interest
groups and hence to use this characterisation as an
explanation of its hostile reaction to the "Rude Koyas". The
class base of the Congress in Aundhra was much wider.

202. David Arnold, op.cit., p.139.

203. In 1929 in course of an Aundhra tour, a Potrait of Raju was
presented to Gandhiji. Reacting to this at a later date, he
wrote "though I have no sympathy with and cannot admire
armed rebellion I cannot withhold my homage from a youth so
brave, so sacrificing, so simple and so noble in character
as young Shri Rama Raju.... Raju was (if he is really dead)
not a 'fituri' but a great hero. Would that the youth of the
country cultivated Shri Rama Raju's daring, courage, devotion
and resourcefulness and dedicated them for the attainment of
Swaraj through strictly non-violent means. To me it is
daily growing clearer that if the teeming millions whom we
the articulate middle classes have hitherto suppressed for
our selfish purpose are to be raised and roused, there is no
other way save through non-violence and truth. A nation
numbering millions needs no other means". Young India,
than is assumed by Arnold. In reality, its hostile reaction was consistent with its bourgeois nationalist ideology and the nature of the basic forms of struggle it adopted which we have analysed elsewhere.

Conclusion

The tribals worked, lived and conceptualised the world under such oppressive colonial socio-economic conditions that the emergence of a dominant strand of anti-colonial consciousness was inevitable. Their alienation from their old forms of processes of production which had hitherto guaranteed their existence; their alienation from the old forms of justice and forced dependance on an alien form of (British) law and order and judicial administration which was consistently weighted against them, the imposition of "unjust" and "Jubberdust" rule by notoriously corrupt forest bureaucrats, and so on, explain the pervasive anti-colonial consciousness which underpinned the collective action of the tribals during the Manyam rebellion 1922-24.

Thus, in our views, the Manyam rebellion was basically a radical reaction against British rule and was based on a anti-colonial consciousness among the hill peasants. Unlike in the earlier decades, the grievances of the hill peasants had acquired a different social meaning in the face of the colonial rulers' monopolistic exploitation of hill resources which threatened the very existence of the tribal 'moral' economy and society during the first decades of the 20th century. The peasants' perception of this objective reality obviously changed the direction of their hostility towards the "Jubberdust" British rulers, the perpetrators of the exploitation in the hills. This
newly acquired perception of peasants/tribals under colonialism has not been adequately grasped by Sumit Sarkar and David Arnold in their analysis of this rebellion. For instance, Sumit Sarkar argues that "the grievances were very similar to those which had already inspired so many rebellions in the same region - moneylender exploitation, forest restrictions, use of unpaid tribal labour by officials". Even David Arnold misses this point and dismisses the analysis of the grievances in a few lines. We hope we have, on the other hand, demonstrated in the earlier sections that what is really 'striking' is not just the continuity of the grievances, but the new meaning which they acquired by the beginning of the 20th century in the colonial context and the consequent pushing into background of the internal grievances. It is not at all surprising that not a single shot was fired at the native police, plains' merchants, landholders and so on. Neither any plains (Indian) exploiters were attacked in course of the two years war nor any grievances associated with exploitation by the plains people were brought into the rebellion be it directly or indirectly. The sole object of the rebellion was to drive out of the hills the British who threatened their very existence.

Thus the rebellion was not a simple response to a localised problem of the dominant groups in the hills rather it was an

204. Sumit Sarkar, 'Popular Movement... op.cit., p.53 he has also argue on the same lines in his article "Primitive Rebellion and Modern Nationalism: A note on Forest Satyagraha in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements", in K.N. Panikkar (ed), National and Left Movements in India (Vikas, 1980), p.16.

organised reaction to a major dislocation at societal level by
British rule. In this rebellion, the leadership was invariably
provided from outside by radical elements, for the tribes were
handicapped in passing from objective recognition of colonial
wrongs to organised political action as a means for setting them
right. Thus, when the radical political elements like Sitarama
Raju lit the torch of rebellion, the edifice of the hill
society, already smouldering and ready to take fire, naturally
produced a fierce war against British rule in the hills.

We therefore do not agree that it was, as has been argued by
206
David Arnold just an extension of a "fituri tradition (?)" into a
war by the manipulative opportunists and idealists from the
plains for their own ends. For the earlier "fituris" in this
region were directed against the localised problems created by
local dominant groups such as succession to 'muttas' but not
against a distant superior or oppressor. Moreover, popular
participation in these "fituris" was far less and often even
absent. On the other hand, the Manyam rebellion of 1922-24
emerged out of an anti-colonial consciousness in the popular mind
which made it a war against British rule in the hills. It was
thus an anti-colonial war due to pressure from below, which no
doubt used the "fituri tradition" as well as other forms of
beliefs and myths to rally the tribal masses behind this "just"
war. Unlike the earlier "fituris" the popular participation in
Manyam rebellion made it a form of hill peasants' protest from
below.

What makes this rebellion all the more interesting was its direct
and indirect links with nationalist ideology and movements in the

206. Ibid., p.141
plains. The indirect and to some extent even direct - influence was that of revolutionary terrorism of Bengal and Punjab through its leader Raju. Both "folk tradition" and official sources suggest that Raju had his links with terrorists and revolutionaries in far off North Indian towns.

At another level the rebellion had a direct links with the non-cooperation movement under the leadership of the Congress in the plains. First of all, the tribal masses were activated by the Congress pracharakas who kindled hope in the popular mind with their slogan of "swaraj" in one year. Later, Raju himself was active in spreading the passive programme of Non-Cooperation - establishment of Panchayat courts, anti-drink campaign, khaddar etc. - in the hills. When Gandhi called off Non-cooperation in 1922, like many peasants and middle class persons in the plains, both Raju and tribal masses must have also felt disillusioned with Congress politics, for neither swaraj was established nor any grievances of the peasants and tribals were removed. Especially Raju, due to his radical ideas, was likely to have perceived this disillusionment as an ideal opportunity to raise the masses against British rule and establish "swaraj". He also attended, in the disguise of a Punjabi youth, the Godavari District Congress.

207. This in fact proves that Arnold's assumption of "territoriality" acting as a strong break in extension of the rebellion into plains is wrong. Ibid., pp.140-42.

208. Arnold argues that Raju started the war "in keeping with his Kshatriya Traditions" and also due to the fear of his arrest by police in January 1922. Ibid., pp. 135-36. But we have clearly shown how Raju had developed his own political ideology before starting the anti-British war in the hills. Surprisingly, Arnold ignores the role of Raju's political ideology and the influences on the formation of that radical ideology.
Conference in 1923 and emphasised the necessity of a war to liberate the country from foreign rule. He was very specific in saying that he was not against Gandhiji, but his path was different from that of the Congress and Gandhi. The failure of Raju in transforming this vision into reality was due to the might of the British army in the immediate sense. At an ideological level Raju failed to perceive the strength of the Gandhian paradigm and the nationalist movement under his leadership in the plains. For, neither the dominant political forces were ready to merge with the Manyam rebellion, nor was there any kind of spontaneous or organised peoples' rebellion against British (once they were left by the Congress leadership without achieving anything in concrete terms) on the horizon.

Moreover, the national movement based on the Gandhian paradigm was very much against any form of violent rebellions and hence the hostile reaction from the plains against Manyam rebellion. True to their loyalty to the Gandhian leadership, the contemporary press was against the Manyam rebellion. The dominant political groups in the plains want to the extent of pressurising the Government to put an early end to Raju and his band of national rebels. Yet they were ready to romanticize Raju as a "national hero" at a later stage in order to integrate the tribals into their form of political action in the 1930's.

209. Talking about Congress's hostile reaction Arnold argues that "a more basic reason for the hostility of the Andhra Congressmen was that they represented precisely those interests - the traders, money-lenders, contractors, immigrant cultivators, and lawyers - whose hold on the hills the fituridars were fighting to overthrow", Ibid., p.139. First of all his assumption of the Congressmen's narrow social class base is wrong. Secondly, the rebels were not fighting to overthrow the plains 'interests', for the objective of Raju was to drive the 'white' men out of the hills but not the plains people.