POLITICAL HISTORY
In the history of India, which is predominantly an agricultural country, political upheavals had a telling effect on agriculture, the basis of the economy and of the land revenue administration. Any attempt to analyse land revenue administration even of a district must, therefore, take into account the historical background.

The later half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth was in India a period when the Mughal Empire was crumbling and gradually disappearing from the scene. The period witnessed a bitter rivalry among the European powers on the soil of India, the fall of the leading Indian powers and the rise of the new Indo-British power to sovereignty.

Initially, the purpose of the English East India Company, which was able to dislodge its French rival, was neither to govern nor to undertake mere sea-faring adventure in the manner of Queen Elizabeth's other adventures further to the west, on the Atlantic. The Charter granted by the Crown to a group of London merchants on December 31, 1600, to trade upon the high seas round the Cape of Good Hope up to the Straits of Magellan, and there to trade peacefully end to

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defend themselves only upon the high seas. But the situation obtaining in India in the eighteenth century, gradually led to the transformation of the role of the East India Company, an organization concerned in the seventeenth century primarily with trade, now appeared to bid fair to wield the sceptre in India. In this transformation the East India Company's realization that trade without sufficient political power and defensive capability would be of no avail also played a part.

The probable results of the activities of the British were foreseen by Indians. The Marathas, for instance, and Tipu had fairly and clearly understood that "the English were trying their utmost to encompass India," but as it had happened on many an occasion before, the Indian rulers failed to come together to oppose traders who meant to become rulers. The Maratha States were following the centrifugal tendency of independent growth. As a necessary consequence of such growth the death of Nana Phadnavis on 17th March, 1800 threw "the whole Maratha nation into bitter internal dissensions and the Maratha affairs were hopelessly confused." In these circumstances Lord Wellesley

3. Ibid., P. 125.
4. Ibid., P. 135.
(1798-1805) was able to exploit the situation to the
greatest advantage of his nation. The Treaty of Bassein
(31 December 1802) was a triumph of his imperialistic
design and diplomatic skill. That Treaty paved the way
for the Company to enter into definite relations with the
formal head of the Maratha Confederacy. The Maratha Chiefs
thus saw in this "the entire annihilation of their national
independence", and they tried to forget their mutual
rivalries and to organize a Confederacy against the British.
They did try, but they could not achieve any victory over
the British. The Treaties of Devgaon concluded on 17th
6
December 1803 and of Surji-Arjunage on 30th December 1803
moved the Maratha further towards their eclipse as a power.
Their attempt to regain supremacy made in 1818 proved to be
their last unsuccessful resistance. The head of the
Maratha nation, following the defeat of the Maratha
arms and the other Maratha Chiefs, met the same fate
as did the Peshwa. The success gained by Lord Hastings
(1814-1823) converted the British Empire 'in' India
into the British Empire 'of' India. Now "there was no
power in the whole of India, from the Himalayas to the
Cape Comorin and the Sutlej to the Brahmaputra, which
could challenge the authority of the British." The

5. Sarkar S.C., Dutta K.K. : Modern Indian History,
6. Sardessai G.B. : New History of the Marathas,
7. Majumdar R.C. (Ed.) : British Paramountcy and
Indian Renaissance, Vol. IX,
struggle for supremacy was over. But, as in the physical world, a force, once it gets a momentum, is apt to run its full course, so also in the political world, the imperialistic idea, once set in motion, is hard to stop and often runs beyond the limit which prudence or justice might dictate. So it happened in India.

The same policy of expansion was followed by Hastings successors; i.e. Lord Auckland (1836-1842) and Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856). The latter was of the view that "in the exercise of a wise and sound policy the British Government is bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory of revenue as may from time to time present themselves". Their operations up to 1857 ultimately established paramountcy as the fixed principle of British political system and finally confirmed the inferiority of status and unqualified subordination of the Indian princes, who were fortunate enough to retain their sinking territories and make-believe ruling rights. By the year 1857 one could say that there was no State in India which was free from their constant and nibbling interference and from this cramping superintendence and control of the British Government state sovereignty was a mere fantasy, and British paramountcy was a concrete reality.

The Act for the better Government of India, passed on August 2, 1858, resulted in the final extinction of the East India Company and the assumption of the administration of India by the British Crown. This was announced by Lord Canning at a darbar at Allahabad. A proclamation issued in the name of the Queen on 1st November 1858, described as the Magna Charta of the Indian people, was read at the darbar to convey to the chiefs and peoples of India the main features of the change in the system of administration and the new spirit in which the Government of India was to be carried on in future. The Act of 1858 did away with the intermediary bodies between the Governor General and the British Ministry. For the Court of Directors, the Court of Proprietors and the Board of Control, it substituted a secretary of state, aided by a Council appointed by the Crown.

The supreme authority in India was vested, by a series of acts of Parliament in the Viceroy or Governor-General—in-Council, subject to the control of the Secretary of State for India in England. Every executive order and every legislative statute used to run in the name of the "Governor-General-in-Council", but in certain

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cases (cases of high importance, and essentially affecting the public interest and welfare, cases of emergency) power was reserved to the Viceroy to act independently.

Though the Governor-General-in-Council was theoretically supreme over every part of India but his actual authority was not exercised everywhere in the same direct manner. Politically well-established, the Government of India under the British, had of necessity to think also of its duties and responsibilities to the people at large—in other words of administration. For ordinary purposes of administration, British India, was divided into Provinces, each with a Government of its own and certain of the Native States were attached to those Provinces with which they were most nearly connected geographically. Madras and Bombay Presidencies were administered by a Governor appointed directly from England. They had each an Executive and a Legislative Council; of the other Provinces, like Bengal, North-Western Province and the Punjab were administered each by a Lieutenant-Governor who was controlled by no executive council. Bengal however unlike the Punjab and North-Western Province had a legislative council also which was clear sign of its preeminence in the British em

of things. The other Northern Provinces, Assam, Oudh and Central Provinces, whether ruled by a lieutenant-Governor or a Chief Commissioner, may be regarded from a historical point of view as fragments of the original Bengal Presidency. There were certain Quasi-Provinces like British Burma, Central Provinces; Assam, Ajmer, Barar, Andaman Islands and Coorg.

The territories under the administration of a Chief Commissioner, lying between 17°47' and 24°27' North latitude and between 75°57' and 84°24' East longitude situated in the centre of the peninsula, comprising a large portion of the broad belt of hill and plateau country which separates the plains of India from the Deccan, was given the name Central Provinces by a resolution, Foreign Department No. 9 of 2nd November 1861 and thus in the words of Mr. J.B. Fuller "a veritable territorial Puzzle pieced together, and tracts were united which differed widely from each other in circumstances, people and language."

It comprised of the old Seugar and Nerudda territory, i.e., the districts of Sagar, Dhamoh, Jabalpur, Mandla, Seoni, Narsinghpur, Noshengabad and Betul; the Nagpur Country i.e. the district of Nagpur, Wardha.


Rhandere, Chanda and Balaghat; the Chhattisgarh Country i.e., the districts of Raipur and Bilaspur; the Sambhalpur Country, watered by Mahanadi, a hilly and jungly country; the Nimar district and the upper Godavari district which later on came to be known as Sironcha Tahsil of the Chanda District. The province was bounded on the North and North West by the Central India States, and along a small strip of Sagar district by the United Provinces, on the West by the States of Bhopal and Indore, and by the Khandesh district of Bombay; on the South by Berar, the Nizams Dominions, and large Jamidari estates of the Madras Presidency, and on the East by the tributary states of Bengal. The Central Provinces thus enclosed on nearly every side by native states and cut off geographically from other British Provinces were a mountainous country in which hill and plain, plateau and valley alternated with each other. The Northern districts, which rested upon the Vindhyen range formed a hilly and undulating country, to the south came the Nerbudde Valley between the Vindhyen and Satpura ranges, with hills always in view, then the Satpura with their wide plateaus and to the south of them the Nagpur and Chhattisgarh plains separated from each other by hills and bounded by hill and forest in the South.

In short, a sufficiently diversified theatre, both historically and geographically was presented with the formation of central provinces.

The Central Provinces - as a British administrative unit were divided into four divisions namely, Jabalpur division, Nerbudda division, Nagpur division, Chhattisgarh division and nineteen districts. The districts differed very considerably in size and population. The average was 4,454 sq. miles, but the Raipur district had an area of 11,880 sq. miles while the District of Narsinghpur had only 1,916 sq. miles. There were 50 sub-divisions in these nineteen districts. Alike in regulation and in non-regulation territory, the unit of administration was the district, a word of very definite meaning in official phraseology. Sagar lying between the Latitude 23°10' and 24°30', and the longitude 78°10' and 79°25', was formed in to a separate district of the British Government of the Central Provinces in 1857 and placed under the administration of


17. Ibid., P. 15.

18. Ibid., P. 15


a Deputy Commissioner with assistants and Tahsildars. The District of Sagar, situated in the extreme North West of the Central Provinces (now in the North Central region of Madhya Pradesh) comprises an area of 3,961 square miles.

It constituted part of the Jabelpur division, (now Sagar Commissioner's Division) and formed with Damoh an extension of the great Malwa Plateau and consists of a flat open black soil tract about 1,000 feet above the level of the Nerbudda Valley from which it was separated by the steep escarpment of the Vindhyen Hills. The shape of the district roughly had the appearance of a triangle with its vertex in the South and base in the North as it was narrowest at its South Eastern corner, and sloped towards the North East, gradually extending in width until it culminated in the heights overlooking the Bundelkhand plain.

The District was surrounded on the North by the Lalitpur District of the United Provinces and by the

States Panna, Bijaipur, and Charhadi (now by the Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh) on the East by Panna, and Demoh Districts (now by Demoh District) on the South by Narsinghpur District and the state of Bhopal (now by Narsinghpur and Raisten District) and on the West by the State of Bhopal and Gwalior (now by Vidisha District).

Now, on the North East and North West, the District adjoined Chhatarpur and Guna districts respectively.

The Vindhyang hills, encircled by the rivers Somar, Bebas, Dhasan, Bina and Betwa, endowed the major part of the Sagar district with a panoramic natural beauty. "The region marked the meeting ground of the Malwa and the Bundelkhand Janapadas in the past." In fact, the district, full of several lofty ranges of hills, gives an appearance as if hills, small and great, had been sown broadcast over the face of the whole district, but really speaking there are none of a height sufficient to entitle them to any special notice, or where a sanatorium could with advantage be formed.

Formation of the Sagar district was the outcome of the attempt to strengthen the British defensive position in Bundelkhand and Central India in order to deal with the Pinderies; "who" in the words of Sir John Malcolm had risen, like masses of putrefaction.

27. Bajpai K.D.; Sagar Through the Ages, Sagar, 1964, P.1.
in animal matter, out of the corruption of weak and expiring States," and the Marathas, whom "the genius and military ability of Shivaji the Great had brought into existence and who after a short period of decline, were revived by Bajirao I," and to ensure stable political condition in the neighbouring British territories. Lord Hastings the then Governor-General, therefore, decided to take this territory under British protection as a part of his bigger plan.

With this aim in view, J. Waughope, Agent of political Affairs in Bundelkhand, was entrusted with the task of negotiating a settlement with Nana Govindrao of Jalaun, whose claims over Sagar, after the death of Raghunath Rao without any issue, were considered to be most legitimate, but, as Rani Rukmas Bai and Subedar Vinayak Rao opposed his claim, and he had neither adequate resources nor influence to get the Sagar territory without foreign aid, it was decided to render assistance to him in securing the possession of Sagar for which he had to bear the


expenses and accept British protection. The letter of John Adam, then Secretary to Government, dated the 17th October 1814, discloses the designs of the British Government. " The Governor-General proposes to extend to Saugar that protection which the more northernly possessions of Nana Govindraj already receive from the British Government and to guarantee in perpetuity the territories of the Nana against the attacks of all foreign States and powers." However the terrible insecurity caused by the Pindaries prompted the British Government to postpone the execution of their plan and to give top priority to the extirpation of the growing evil, subversive to peace, order and good Government by a most drastic and well planned military action. In the meantime, the right of paramount sovereignty over Sagar formed a part of the British acquisition by the rigorous terms of the treaty of Poona, forced on Peshwa Baji Rao II on 13th June, 1817. Similarly, Appa Sahib the Bhonsle Chief of Nagpur, concluded


a treaty on January 6, 1818, by which he ceded all his territories lying to the North of Nerbudda. They were legally acquired by the British. The treaties of Poona and Nagpur added greatly to the influence of the English at the cost of the Marathas. The first dealt a severe blow to the power and prestige of the Peshwa; and the second cost the Nagpur State its independence and brought it under the subsidiary system, which had been evaded by Raghujir Bhonsale II but had been "so long and so earnestly desired by the British Government". The "defensive means" of the English were now greatly improved, and Malcolm observes, "in the actual condition of India no event could be more fortunate than the subsidiary alliance with Nagpur."

These treaties sounded the death-knell of the Maratha Power in the Satara and Nerbudda territories and conferred upon the Company the de-jure overlordship over them, although their actual occupation could not be acquired without military action until March 1818. In the assertion of that right subsidiary Vinsayak Rao,


34. Ibid., P. 708.

the de facto occupant of Sagar, was called upon, in September 1817, either to fulfil the terms on which the fief was held from the Peshwa by furnishing quota 660 horsemen to General Marshal for the suppression of the Pindaries and paying the tribute of a lakh of rupees to the British Government or to accept money commutation and transfer the territory to the company.

Vinayak Rao did not react favourably to the proposal. Probably he had no instructions from the Poona Government to treat the East India Company as the paramount power. He gave no indication of recognising their superior authority and rendered neither military service against the Pindaries nor help in procuring supplies to the British troops in that region. Nor did he show any disposition to transfer the territories. Even subsequent to the suppression of the Pindaries, notwithstanding the favourable turn of affairs for the British everywhere in India, he did not attempt to allay British resentment. On the contrary, reports and evidences of his connivance with the Pindaries and attachment to the cause of the Peshwa reached the ears of the Governor-General. He, therefore, regarded Vinayak Rao as a feudatory, who had incurred the forfeiture of his fief, and decided to reduce Sagar by force.
After the extirpation of the Pindaries and the deposition and removal of the Peshwa to Bithur, a British army under Major-General Marshall, reinforced by another under Brigadier-General Watson was ordered to proceed against Sagar with a battering train in February 18 to effect its reduction and annexation to the British dominions. On the 8th March they appeared before Sagar and asked the Maratha power to surrender under the threat of forcible removal. For sometime Radha Bai, Rukma Bai and Vinayak Rao resisted the demand, but ultimately, convinced of the approaching end of their political existence, they submitted finally to the British demands and surrendered on the 11th March, 1818 and promised not to create any obstruction for the British in their effort to capture all other forts and territories. On 10th March 1818 the British issued a proclamation assuring the people of Sagar. The proclamation read:" to all the Chaudharies, Kanungees, Zamindars and other inhabitants of the country of Saugor."

" Whereas the country of Saugor having come into the possession of the British, the Superintendent of Political Affairs hereby proclaims to the inhabitants of all classes that they will hereafter be governed by those established principles of Justice,
and indulgence which ever regulate the conduct of the British Government towards its subjects. They will be effectively protected against those destructive merciless cruelties and deprivations by foreign plunderers to which they have hitherto been exposed. The rights and property of all will be secured and protected and their religious temples and worship will be scrupulously preserved and respected. They transferred the administration of Sagar to the British agents and accepted a total stipend of 24 Lakhs of Rupees as a provision for their maintenance. This was to be met out of the total annual revenue of Rs. 69,8,000. Out of the remaining amount, a stipend of Rs. 1,18,360 was to be paid to Nana Govind Rao of Jalaun, the legal and hereditary claimant to the proprietorship of Sagar and Rs. 3,25,640 were to be earmarked as annual expenses for the administration of Sagar. The additional income which accrued in future became the profit of the East India company. The widows adopted Balwant Rao as their son who was ultimately sent to Jabalpur with the title of the Raja of Sagar.

The occupation of Sagar did not bring about peaceful surrender of all other places under the Marathas of Sagar. Resistance was kept up at several

important places. Hence several detachments of British troops marched in different directions and reduced to subjection all fortified places and outlying territories. On the 17th March, 1818 Marshall reached Dhamoni fortified town ceded to the British by the Raja of Nagpur in 1816, and asked the Lodhi Qiledar and the garrison to evacuate and surrender. On the refusal to comply with the order, unless the arrears of their pay for two years and half were paid to them he immediately invested the town, breached its fortification and compelled the garrison to surrender as prisoners on the 24th March 1818. They were dealt with as rebels and were sentenced to confinement in different forts, but were subsequently pardoned and released. The Qiledar was awarded an annual political pension of Rs. 2,400.

The fortress of Garhakota, 25 miles east of Sagar, was captured by General Watson in October 1818 from Arjun Singh. Shrimant Ramchandra Rao, who held Deori from the Peshwa, yielding about Rs. 10,000 a year was forced to surrender his estate and accept Pithoria, a rent-free estate with an annual income of Rs. 1500. Deori and its adjoining places were given to Sindhia who had put forward his claims for those places. Later
On, by 1826, the paraganas of Rahatgarh, Gerhakota, Deori, Gaurjhaner and Maharana, collectively known as Pach Mahals, were made over by Sindhis to the East India Company. Their possession was confirmed in 1844, and sovereignty over them was formally acquired in 1851. Ranjia was also made over to Sindhis who ultimately transferred it to the British Government in 1860. Malthone was acquired from him in 1820 in exchange for certain territory. Rehli was acquired from the Fadnavis family, related to the ruling family of Sagar, and political pensions were granted to its members. The Bhera paragan of the Banda Tahsil was acquired by transfer from Bundelkhand States in 1818. Seven villages were acquired from the Panna State. Several forts like Shangerh and Shahjpur and territories near Hirapur were acquired after the movement of 1857 as a result of confiscation due to disloyalty of their chiefs to the British power. Jaisinagar was given to Rukma Bei in 1826 as an apnagah but three years later, when she relinquished it for a cash payment, it was handed over rent-free to its manager, Ganpat Rao. Thus, Sagar District was consisted of tracts acquired from the Peshwa, Sindhis, and Bhonsla between 1818 and 1861. Among those who had rendered assistance to British troops in capturing Sagar territory in 1818 Ramchandra
Ballal was not prominent. He was rewarded with the
paragana of Etawa near Bina where he was permitted
to exercise civil and criminal jurisdictions. The
Dangis were allowed to retain the Jagir of Bilhers.

The British occupation of Sagar was not
followed by peace. Accustomed to a free and unfettered
life, several Cond, Lodhi and Bundela chiefs,
Thakur's and Zamindars became refractory and took to
plundering in 1818. Chain Shah, one of the Cond
chiefs, carried on some correspondence with Raja
Kirit Singh of Sagar district and revolted in Appa
Sahib's favour. This put back the British for some
time and created an impression that they were suppo-
rted by the Arab military adventurers in Western
India. When Appa Sahib escaped from custody, Jenkins,
the British Resident at Nagpur, detached a party of
horsemen to Sagar to intercept him and wrote to the
Patel of Sagar promising him a handsome reward, to make
the Raja captive and send him dead or alive to Nagpur.
A declaration was issued that all buildings, lands or
other property belonging to any person, who would
continue to be in arms against the British Government
after July 7, 1818, would be forfeited.

In the new administrative arrangements Sagar
district formed a part of the Sagar and Nerudda
Territories which were placed under an Agent to the
Governor-General, in 1820. Mr. Meddock was the first representative of Governor General, and Sleemun was his Junior Assistant in Charge of Civil Administration. On the constitution of the North-Western Provinces in 1835, the Saugor and Narbudda Territories were transferred to it. The period between 1818 was used for making the British hold over them as strong as possible. Sagar was made a military station with the Bengal native troops and a small European artillery, when Sleemun took over charge of the district as Deputy Commissioner in 1831.

Although a great part of the district had been under British rule since 1818, the fighting spirit of the local headmen had only been checked and not broken. This reappeared in 1842, when grievances against the Sagar Civil Court led to a local rising led by the Bundela chiefs, Medhukar Sheikh and Jawahar Singh. It was an outcome partly of the great dissatisfaction with the revenue, judicial and police administration of the East India Company and partly of the resentment caused by the loss of independence and the consequent economic ruin brought about by the foreign rule which


38. Ibid., P. 127.
It appeared more or less like resistance to foreign rule, which had failed to endear itself to the people and was regarded as an imposition on them. In a short time it spread like a wild fire and enveloped several districts but for want of resources, unqualified public support and talented popular and resourceful leaders, the movement could not cut much ice beyond keeping the British army engaged for some time and indicating to them the existence of not an altogether ineffective discontent against British rule. Yet in the history of British India the Bundela Revolt is an important episode. The Government was so greatly alarmed by it that Lord Ellenborough instituted a semi-official enquiry into its causes under Col. Sleeman who was best fitted for this work. Convinced of his findings and the weakness of the administration, he devised a forthright solution of the difficulties. "He inaugurated the newly gained peace by making a clean sweep of the British officials in Saugar and Nerbudda Territories which were placed under an Agent to the Governor-General. This arrangement, however, was not found to be satisfactory and Saugar and Nerbudda Territories were restored to the North-Western

Provinces in 1853 with Major Erskine as Commissioner. During his time Sagar, like other parts of India, felt the impulse of great official activity in every sphere. But instead of creating confidence in the people it tended to create suspicion. Although the revenue regulations of Lord Dalhousie's time were relatively better than the previous ones, yet the condition of the agriculturists was far from satisfactory. The years between 1854, 1855 and 1856 were marked by failure of successive rabi crops, scarcity of food, high prices, acute suffering and inadequate and discriminatory relief measures. Inability of the Government to mitigate public suffering earned for the British regime a great deal of unpopularity which got no occasion to subside.

By a Notification on May 9, 1855, the Lt. Governor of the North Western Provinces established a customs line for the levy of duty on ambhar salt imported into and passing through Sagar district. For this purpose, as well as for checking its illicit import a customs House was established at Sagar with C. Wright as

40. Imperial Gazetteers of India Provincial Series Central Provinces Calcutta, 1908, P. 19.

Collector. By this Sagar was subjected to the salt tax from which it was till then free. Consequently, customs officers began to patrol the district in search of salt clandestinely manufactured or illicitly smuggled. Frequent convictions; severe sentences; indiscriminate confiscations on mere suspicion and unauthorized executions greatly distressed the population, while the benefits accruing to the Government from their inquisitorial proceedings were very trifling. The business and agricultural communities remained in a state of constant alarm, on account of the apprehended search by the customs officers. The salt duty proved to be the gravest calamity inflicted on the poor and became a potent cause of resentment against the British rule which ultimately burst into the flames of 1857 movement.

The movement of 1857 in Sagar district was one of the most stirring and heroic events in the recorded history of this region. During this period Sagar and the surrounding territories posed a problem to the British Rulers. The movement was fated to failure but it created unsetlement in rural areas. Ultimately in 1861 Sagar became a district of the

Central Provinces and a part and parcel of the British Empire. Later on it continued the same with certain administrative changes.

Previously, Sagar district was subdivided into 18 Paragana and 1,385 Villages, two of the Paragenas belonged to Sindhis and were managed by the British for the Maharaja, and of the remainder the British Government acquired 13 from the Marathas, one from the Raja of Nagpur, and two from Raja Arjun Singh, the Bundela Chieftain of Shahgarh. Later on, Sagar District was placed under the administration of a Deputy Commissioner, who was the revenue authority and also the District Magistrate, "the Chief Officer with the executive administration of a District and exercising the powers of a Magistrate." In his revenue and criminal office he was assisted by an Assistant Commissioner. In order to cover and control the area, the district was divided into four Tehsils namely Sagar, Khurdi, Rehli, and Banda, each being supervised by its Tehsildar.

Sagar Tehsil, the centre of the district and

43. Fraser C. Report on the land Revenue Settlement of the Sagar District 1834-35 - 1853-54, Nagpur, 1876 P. 49.

44. Ibid., P. 49.

45. Central Provinces and Berar Police Regulations, Nagpur, 1937, P XVII.
most important of the whole, consists of four old Metropolitan Paragana's, the headquarters of which were always at Sagar itself. These Paragana's were Sagar, Naryolli, Rehatgarh, and Jaisingarh. Sagar paragana was divided into five puttees or parts, each of which bears the name of one of its principal villages. They were Bhapyle, Bilhera, Dhone, Ramakheraa and Kararapur. This tract was on all sides studded with hills, spur of the Vindhyas' ranges, this except in the immediate vicinity of the Military Cantonment and city of Sagar, covered with dense jungle, which affords shelter and protection to all description of wild animals, particularly the wild pig, which makes havoc of the growing crops. The area of this tract, previous to the exclusion of waste, amounted to 368,394 acres. After the exclusion, the tract comprised 229 inhabited villages and 24 uninhabited, of which 154 were meafe tenures with a total area of 325,925 acres, of which 244,000 acres was cultivable and 87,925 acres was hills and jungles and


48. Ibid., P. 52.
totally unculturable.

Rahatgarh and Maryaoli Paraganae lie to the west of Sagar Tehsil. The area of the tract, previous to the exclusion of waste lands, amounted to 2,44,728 acres, after the exclusion, the tract comprised 186 inhabited villages, thirty one uninhabited, of which two were mafee and two cobereee tenures, with an area of 2,04,806 of which 1,59,606 acres was cultivable and 45,200 was hills and jungles and 50 totally uncultivable.

Jaisingar paragana, situated to the south-west of the district of Sagar was hilly, with extensive forest and jungle prevailing in all directions. The area of this tract, amounts to 57,333 acres. After the exclusion of excessive waste, this tract comprises 52 inhabited villages and 5 uninhabited, and out of 49,991 acres, 7,342 acres of land were declared waste.

Khurai Tehsil consists of six old Maratha Paragana's namely, Malthone (sabik) Malthone (Hal) Khimlae, Khurai, Kren and Doogana. This tract


50. Ibid., P. 60.

51. Ibid., P. 65.
lies to the north-west of the district; bounded on the south by tahsil Sagar, on the east by Bends; on the west by Bhapel and Gwalior. It contains 370 villages (excluding the Jageer of Pithoria, rent-free for life of holder and excluded from settlement operations). Formerly Khimlasa was the headquarters of the Tehsil; it was transferred to Khurai in 1840 because the bankers and traders were drawn from Khimlasa to reside under the protection of British Officials and Police at Khurai. The area of this tract prior to the exclusion of waste land, amounted to 3,98545 acres after exclusion the tract comprised 212 inhabited villages, and fifty-nine uninhabited, of which six were nafasa tenures, and out of 325,937 acres of which 282,919 acres were cultivable and 43,018 acres were hills and jungle and totally uncultivable.

Rehli Tehsil, the largest Tehsil in the district, consists of five Maratha Paragana's namely Rehli, Garhakote, Deori, Gourjhamar and Nahar-mau Paragana. Rehli consists of 202 villages. It is nearly in

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52. Ibid., P. 70.
53. Ibid., P. 23.
54. Ibid., P. 71.
the centre of the Tahsil, with Garhakote to the north, Deori to the south, and Gourjhemar and Naherma to the south-west. The Sonar, Dehar, and Kopro rivers flow through its lands, as also a small stream named the Kekit. Many of the villages of this paragana are very extensive. Garhakote consists of 94 villages. It lies to the north of and merges into the Rehli villages; bounded on the north by paragana Pithoria on the east by Deoh, on the west considerable ranges of hills its natural boundary limits. It is watered by the Sonar and Kopro rivers. Deori contains 247 villages including what are termed, the Zamindaree Tuppas Adhurpur, Bhurruyee, Sehujpur, Murh Pipuria. It was divided from paragana Rehli to the north by a range of hills, to the east it was bounded by the forest of Tejgurh, to the south by the ghats of the Nerbude valley, which separates it from Chowrpatha and Tendukhera of Narsinghpur District, to the west by the Sindwa river, the Bhapel territory, and paragana Naherma. Gourjhemar contains 30 villages and constitutes a small valley situated about 12 miles south-west from Rehli it is watered by the Sonar river which flows through its whole length. To the east and west, it is confined by two ranges of wooded

56. Ibid., P. 87.
hills which converge towards the southern extremity, where the villages of Courjamgar are intermixed with those of a detached Puttee of Naharow separated from the east of that paragana by the western range of hills alluded to, and which divides this paragana from Naharow and Rehli, to the north-west in the direction of Burkotee. The eastern range, in like manner, separates it from another part of Rehli and from paragana Deori. Towards the north, the valley opens into the plains of the Rehli paragana. Paragana Naharow contains forty-six villages. It is bounded on the north by the paragana of Sager and Rehli, on the east by hills and paragana Courjamgar, on the west by hills dividing it from Bhopal, and on the south by a part of paragana Deori, and by Supas Turha and Kaislee belonging to the Jageer of Raja Balwant Singh of Pithoria. The area of this Tehsil prior to the exclusion of excessive waste, amounted to 6,62234 acres. After the exclusion of waste, the entire tract comprises of 457 inhabited, and 144 uninhabited villages, and out of an area of 4,97137 acres, 387145 acres were cultivable and 1,09,992 hill and jungle.

Banda Tahsil, situated to the north-west of the Sagar District consists of four Marathas parganas, namely Dhamoni, Bhora, Bembika-Paten and Sheugrah. Dhamoni, which comprises thirty-six villages, and forms the eastern boundary of the pargana, is a tract of dense and almost impenetrable forest and ravines; but the west is a small circular valley bounded by hills, which divides it from pargana Malthone and to the south also, other hills separate Dhamoni from pargana Malthone. The villages of Dhamoni were of trifling value, and the preponderance of Kharif crops prove the inferior quality of much of the land. Bineka-Paten containing eighty-one villages was first acquired by the Marathas from Raja Chhatreml and was a portion of the territory ceded to the British in 1817 by the Peshwa. Bhora comprises sixty-seven villages, and was acquired from Raja Arjun Singh of Sheugrah, in an exchange of territory with that Chieftain in 1818. The villages to the south of Bhora are the best in the sub-division.

58. Ibid., p. 35.
59. Ibid., p. 38.
60. Ibid., p. 38.
61. Ibid., p. 38.
The Shehgarh pargana which forms part of the Tehsil Banda was situated to the extreme north of the district of Sagar. It is bounded on the east by the State of Penne and Dhamoh district; on the west by the district of Leliqpur; on the north by the states of Bijewar and Penne and on the south by pargana Bineka Patan and Bhere of Tehsil Banda. The headquarters of the Tehsil was formerly at Patan, but in 1861 it was changed to Banda, as being more in the centre of the Tehsil. It contained prior to the exclusion of waste lands, 184 villages, and comprised an area of 2,50230 acres of land, but after the exclusions of excessive waste, this tract remained with 177 villages and an area of 1,98410 acres.

In the study of land Revenue administration, an important aspect being the most important economic resource in the Indian rural sector, is the land revenue and land-tenure system. In 1817-18, the revenue of the 'Sugor and Nerbudda Territories' (Jabalpur and Nerbudda Divisions, excluding Chhindwara & Nimer) was


63. Ibid., P. 35.
28½ Lakhs. "This" says Mr. Fuller, "could only have
been possible under a system of rack-renting pure and
simple, under which any rights which stood in the way
of the State-exchequer were swept aside".

The revenue administration of the Marathas,
in the earlier days of their rule, seems to have been
reasonable and considerate to some extent. Though
it is true that the natural resources, fertility and
high capabilities of the tract were not properly
utilised. R.M. Bird says, "It was impossible not to
be struck by the remark how little the hand of men had
done for its improvement". But in comparison to
the later period of the Marathas it is safe to say
that the Marathas for many years after the introduction
of their authority, contributed very largely to
the improvement of this territory, and their earlier
mild and moderate principles of Government augmented
its population and enhanced the value of its lands by an
accretion of emigrants from the less favoured provinces,
which the tract led to the excavation of a vast number
of wells for purposes of irrigation. But when their

64. Imperial Gazetteers of India, Central Provinces;
P.86.

65. Quoted in the Land systems of British India, Vol. II,
Oxford, 1892, P. 372.
power weakened and their grip relaxed in the early part of the century, the whole tract was overrun by the Pinderies, robber hands; and life and property of the people became insecure. Mistrust and want of confidence spread through all ranks and classes.

The annual incursions and ravages of the Pinderies and the hostile design of the Sindhis and the Raja of Nagpur compelled the late Government to maintain large bodies of the troops, and while the disbursments were thus necessarily increased, the desolation and desertion of villages in all exposed the situation from year to year and diminished the public resources. Agriculture was difficult in those days because of the onslaughter of the Pinderies, who had no fixed time and hence the cultivators had to be constantly on the watch to protect their crops, their stock and their houses. In Jaisalagar paragana, four villages or nearly 1/3 of the whole number, were depopulated. In Khurei Tahsil round about Bina river, the tract was abandoned, since the


banks of the streams were favourite robber routes. For example, the parsana of Eran had been so entirely devastated by the Pindaries that in the year 1228 Fasly i.e. 1818-1819 the British realised from it only seven rupees. Another example is that of Etawa and Mehassah. Out of fifty villages the Pindaries had laid waste 31 villages. Hence lands situated under the walls of fortified towns and villages acquired an enhanced value, and so the Marathas enhanced the land revenue of such areas, which remained under tillage previously, in order to counterbalance the losses in the plundered and abandoned tracts. This enhanced land-revenue was too high to be paid unless the outturn was exceptionally good. At length with the credit of the Government running low its creditors demanded security for their claims and a general feeling of insecurity having withdrawn the funds usually advanced by capitalists for the cultivation, both Malgujers and cultivators abandoned the most remunerative crops and irrigation fell almost entirely into disuse.

An idea of the extent to which the public revenue


69. Ibid., P. 34.
had been alienated by the Maratha authorities may be had from the annexed table 'A'; of the manner in which the villages of this tract were appropriated in the year 1225 Fasly i.e. 1817-18. Moreover, as a proof of prior extortion and over-assessment we may also give the accounts of former revenue collections made by the Marathas in these Paragana. Average collections from a few of the paragana shown in table 'B' make it clear. It is clear from the figures shown in the table that the collections increased till the year 1813 and declined so rapidly after wards that by the year 1817 they touched the lowest point. The sharp decline within a brief span of four years is a proof of prior extortion and over-assessment.

The Revenue system under the Marathas was one under which villages were either kept under Khalsa management or else they were farmed out to the highest bidder. In Khalsa villages the assessment was made annually, its amount was fixed in the first place for the paragana as a whole after the character of the season had become well known and then it was distributed among the village, by the Paragana Officer. Kama-vidar, the keeper of the Government accounts who
was called phreanvia, and the Barar Pandia, the recor-
der of village accounts. The distribution made was in consultation with the village Patel or headmen who was responsible for apportioning the village demand among the cultivators, whose share was based on a rough estimate of the capacity of their holdings. In villages, which were farmed out, leases were given for short terms from one to three years as explained earlier. The revenue of the previous year was adopted as the basis on which new engagements were framed, and it was with reference to it that all the changes were noted and acted upon. It was seldom, however, the case that the settlement of the preceding year was repeated for the current year, for an operation involving as many parties and interests could hardly be expected to conclude without discussion and change. The disputes were, however amicably eliminated, the details were entered in the revenue of the year and the settlement was complete.


After this, first the amount of assessment for the whole village was fixed, then it was collected by the lease holders, i.e., Patels who after collecting the amount used to deposit the receipts either personally at the office of the Kasavisdars or through confidential agents, "in cash or in drafts on Schukers. If the Patel of a trustworthy character was unable to pay, the Kasavisdar stood surety for him and a Schuker advanced the necessary amount. In case no surety was forthcoming, the Patel made over to the Schuker the entire collections of his village, or as much of it as was enough to cover the debt he owed to the Schuker.

On the expiry of the lease, the village became subject to its normal rate of the Paragan assessments, and it became the subject of the revenue officers to assimilate the rate of it, to that of the other villages of the district. In short, the terms, on which these leases were given, left but a very small margin of profit to the lessee. Any rights or consideration which the village headman may have enjoyed in the past were almost entirely effaced. No legal status was given to tenants, and the older cultivators were protected only by custom, which enjoined that so long as the annual rent demand was paid, their tenure should be
hereditary and continuous. Moreover, the lessee was also used to be squeezed by the revenue officials in many ways and was, therefore, compelled in self-defence to mete out similar treatment to his cultivators.

The principles of settlement adopted by the Marathas, as explained, detracted from the value of their village leases, for they required renewal every year and the Government demand never finally adjusted till the close of each year, but the value was reduced still more largely in another way, as lease holders were dispossessed without any pension or compensation whenever the Maratha authorities wished to provide for an individual, and the grant of a village as a Jagir or under any other denomination transferred to the new Jagirdar all the privileges and powers of the preceding lease-holder whatever the number of the years during which his connection with the villagers may have lasted. Still, the leases of several villages remained in the same family for more than one generation and such lengthy occupancy induced those families to undergo the severest hardship and trials in preference

72. Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Services Central Provinces, Calcutta, 1906, P. 175.

to the abandonment of their lands and dwellings. In brief, the Maratha demand was only an estimate of what could be obtained under the most favourable circumstances and the realisations were adjusted from year to year according to the yield of the crops. Moreover, under the Marathas the lessee was given a free hand in the distribution of each year demand over the agriculturists of his village and in squeezing them to the utmost. Mr. Fuller has stated that "the Marathas gave the Patel carte blanche in the apportionment of the village revenue, and with this advantage he was able to render to Government 80% to 90% of the rental without utterly breaking down."

As for as the Revenue Collection is concerned, every village had its recognised headmen, whose office was generally, but not always, allowed to become hereditary. The headman's title was Patel. The Patel was the agent of the Government for apportioning and collecting the revenue of the village under his charge. His remuneration for his work was technically one-fourth of the share of the Government, but actually it came to


one-sixth, being subject to various deductions proportionate to the parts of the many divisions into which the assessment was classified in revenue papers. The Office of the Patel was held at the pleasure of the Government. Where the Patel was strong enough to secure the payments with requisite punctuality, or where from any other cause, they thought it would pay better, the Marathas either reduced him to a nominal position, or gave the village to a revenue farmer, who engaged to pay in the whole sum assessed.

As far as the revenue officials were concerned every Paragan was supervised by the Paragan Officer who used to play an important part in the assessment of the land revenue of the whole Paragan and the distribution of it among the villages. He used to receive about two hundred to five hundred rupees per annum according to the value and extent of the Paragan. Another source of the income of the Paragan officer was the collection and disbursement of the amount of revenue enhancement by the superimposition of Patties. Paragan officer was assisted by two other revenue officers. One was the keeper of the Government accounts. The statement of receipts and disbursement of each
Paragana was sent to him. He used to receive from the Government an allowance of one hundred to two hundred and fifty rupees per annum. The second was the recorder of the village accounts, who used to received the records regarding the state of cultivation. He was paid by the Government an amount about one hundred and fifty rupees per annum besides a sum of two rupees for each village in the Paragana.

Under native rule there seem to have been 76 Patwaris throughout the Central Provinces except in Chhetisgarh and Sambalpur, where they were apparently unknown, but at that time every village did not have a Patwari: It was only in the bigger villages that they functioned. The office of Patwari had a tendency to become hereditary, and undoubtedly each Patwari looked to his son as a successor. But claims of this kind were not, as a rule, so strong as to override the voice of the Patel if for any reason he proposed to appoint an outsider. The cultivated lands of each village were divided into fields and a record there of was maintained by the Patwari, the kingpin of the revenue administration.


The state of these territories, when they passed from the hands of the Marathas was such as to render the settlement of its revenue, a work of extreme intricacy, for the people had been reduced to poverty by the excessive demand of the Marathas, and their habits of life had become unsettled and local attachments weakened, and not uncommonly destroyed by political revolutions, and the wanton cruelties and depredations of pindaries and other unprinciple confederacies; the fertility of land also presented a remarkable contrast in different tracts and village, those which had remained in cultivation under the preceding Government yielding a comparatively diminished produce, while such as had been lying fallow by the recovery of their original powers promised unusually abundant returns. The rent likewise required equalisation, and such villages as had been subject to extraordinary imposts were in need of relief, and above all the restoration of peace and dispersion of the pindaries naturally and necessarily effected most important changes in the value of land.

Under these circumstances, people were naturally unwilling to exert. Heaps of manure lay by the halting places of the sheoparies, which no one took the trouble
to collect and remove, amidst complaints of drought, fine springs were running to waste in every valley which a few hours labour in keeping together the loose rocks from the beds would have converted into reservoirs, for irrigating almost every field. Even from the large tanks which had been constructed in former times, the water was not drawn for the purpose of irrigation.

Though the Maratha Government, in spite of increasing the demands, tried best to solve the prevailing difficulties. For example, against the Pindaries, Government kept scouts on the lookout, and in Khurei a signal gun used to be fired on the receipt of information about the approach of Pindaries to give warning to cultivators to quit their fields and retire with their cattle to places of shelter. But there was no positive "incentive to improvement."


79. Ibid., P. 2.