

THE ROLE OF THE ZAMINDARS IN BENGAL
(1707--1772)

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by

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ABSTRACT

This work is a study of the different roles of the zamindars in Bengal during the period 1707-1772. It reviews the operational aspects of the revenue, military, police and judicial administration of the Mughals in the province of Bengal and examines how the zamindars fitted into that structure and discharged their duties. The key issues and approaches have been studied against the background of (i) the Mughal political system at the zenith of its power, (ii) the declining days of the imperial authority when virtually an autonomous Nawabi was established in the province, and (iii) the emergence of the East India Company as a political force.

The opening chapter deals with the peripheral aspects of the zamindari system which have some bearings on the role of the zamindars. It also attempts at a classification for better understanding of the institution as well as judging one category of zamindars against others of the same genre.

Chapter II analyses the genesis of the zamindaris and the mobility within the traditional pattern of the zamindar class as a result of some historical forces at work.

Chapter III dwells on the revenue management, which also embraces some allied responsibilities, such as the development of agriculture, reclamation of the waste

lands and the maintenance of the roads, bridges and embankments.

In Chapter IV, the military obligations of the zamindars with their attendant implications are discussed and the roles of the zamindars are evaluated in this context.

Chapter V is devoted to the question of enforcing law and order in the territories of the zamindars and the role of the zamindars as the custodian of peace.

The issue involved in enforcing law and order in turn prompts inquiries into the right to administer justice granted to the zamindars. Chapter VI is addressed to this problem and examines further the impact of the role of the zamindars as judge-magistrate on their subjects.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Ain</u>	<u>Ain-i-Akbari</u> , Abul Fazl, Tr. H.S.Jarrett
<u>A.Q.R.</u>	<u>Asiatic Quarterly Review</u>
<u>A.R.</u>	<u>Asiatic Researches</u>
<u>Baharistan</u>	<u>Baharistan-i-Ghaybi</u> , Mirza Nathan, Tr. M.I.Borah
<u>B.D.G.</u>	<u>Bengal District Gazetteers</u>
<u>B.D.R.</u>	<u>Bengal District Records</u>
B.M.ADD.MSS	British Museum Additional Manuscripts
B.P.C.	Bengal Public Consultations
<u>B.P.P.</u>	<u>Bengal Past and Present</u>
B.R.	Board of Revenue
B.R.C.	Board of Revenue Consultations
B.R.M.P.	Board of Revenue Miscellaneous Proceedings
B.R.P.	Board of Revenue Proceedings
B.R.J.C.	Board of Revenue and Judicial Consultations
B.S.C.	Bengal Secret Consultations
C.C.	Committee of Circuit
C.C.K.	Committee of Circuit at Kasimbazar
C.C.R.	Calcutta Committee of Revenue
C.C.R.M.	Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad
C.C.R.P.	Calcutta Committee of Revenue Proceedings
C.N.L.	Committee of New Lands
<u>C.P.C.</u>	<u>Calendar of Persian Correspondence</u>
<u>C.R.</u>	<u>The Calcutta Review</u>

D.F.R.	Dacca Factory Records
<u>E.B.A.D.G.</u>	<u>Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers</u>
<u>E.B.A.D.G.</u>	<u>Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers</u>
G.V.P.	George Vansittart Paper
H.M.S.	Home Miscellaneous Series
<u>I.E.S.H.R.</u>	<u>The Indian Economic and Social History Review</u>
<u>I.H.C.</u>	<u>The Indian History Congress</u>
<u>I.H.Q.</u>	<u>Indian Historical Quarterly</u>
<u>J.A.O.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
<u>J.A.S.B.</u>	<u>Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal</u>
<u>J.S.A.S.</u>	<u>The Journal of South Asian Studies</u>
<u>J.R.A.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</u>
<u>L.C.B.</u>	<u>Letter Copy Book of the Resident at the Durbar</u>
<u>L.C.B.S.R.</u>	<u>Letter Copy Book of the Supervisor of Rajshahi</u>
<u>Mirat</u>	<u>Mirat-i-Ahmadi</u> , Ali Muhammad Khan, Tr. M.F.Lokhand- wala
M.R.F.	Murshidabad Factory Records
P.C.C.D.	Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Dacca
<u>P.C.C.K.</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at</u> <u>Kasimbazar</u>
<u>P.C.C.R.M.</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Controlling Council of Revenue</u> <u>at Murshidabad</u>
<u>P.C.N.L.</u>	Proceedings of the Committee of New Lands
<u>Q.J.E.</u>	<u>The Quarterly Journal of Economics</u>

<u>Riad</u>	<u>Riad-al-Salatin</u> , Ghulam Husain Salim, Tr. Abdus Salam
<u>Seir</u>	<u>Seir-al-Mutakhkherin</u> , Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai Tr. Haji Mustafa
<u>S.A.B.</u>	<u>A Statistical Account of Bengal</u>
<u>S.C.</u>	Select Committee
<u>S.C.C.</u>	Select Committee Consultations
<u>T.B.</u>	<u>Tawarikh-i-Bangalah</u> , Salim Allah, Tr. F.Gladwin
<u>W.B.D.R.</u>	<u>West Bengal District Records.</u>
<u>B.S.</u>	Bengal sal.
<u>Bs.ks.chs.</u>	Bighas, kathas and chataks.
<u>Bs.ks.gs.cs.</u>	Bighas, kathas, gandas and cawras.
<u>Rs.as.gs.cs.</u>	Rupees, annas, gandas and cawras.
<u>Rs.as.ps.</u>	Rupees, annas, pais.

PREFACE

The Mughal conquest of Bengal did not bring about any revolutionary changes in the existing administrative set-up. The subah with its fairly distinct physiography, situated at a distance from the imperial capital and surrounded by half-subdued neighbours, could not be brought under thorough administrative control of the central government. The policy of the Mughal sovereigns of collecting land revenue directly from the peasants as followed in the Upper India, could not be implemented in Bengal. Thus the basis of revenue settlement there remained more zamindari than raiayatwari. The partial introduction of the raiayatwari settlement effected in some parts of the subah at the behest of Murshid Quli Khan did not survive the Nawab's death long. From the later part of the seventeenth century till the middle of the eighteenth and a little beyond, the emphasis in the zamindari tenure visibly moved away from the notion of contract to that of status.

The eighteenth century was a period of trial in the history of India as a whole and Bengal in particular. Four factors dominated the history of the period: the gradual erosion of the Mughal political system, the attempts

of the provincial powers to achieve virtual independence, the Maratha depredations, and the ascendancy of the English East India Company. These historical forces at work brought forth marked changes in the revenue administration of the province of Bengal.

The traditional and organizational arrangements reflect the nature of the responsibilities of the zemindar class. Initially the role of the zamindars was a limited one, stemming from the search for revenue personnel and political allies. But the frontiers and characters of their role changed under the varying circumstances. New responsibilities, new terms of reference contributed to the changing pattern. Many powerful zamindars developed new instruments of control. The government recognized their authority occasionally bestowing upon them titles and khilats. Many influential zamindars forayed into the realm of politics where they challenged the Nawabs and the East India Company in an attempt to maintain their territorial autonomy and economic privileges. But in the long run the zamindars had to give in before the mounting pressure of the new rulers.

In the recent past the agrarian history of Mughal India has attracted the attention of a host of scholars. Of these mention should be made of W.H. Moreland, I. Habib, S.N. Hasan,

B.R.Grover, B.S.Cohn, and N.A.Siddiqi. Despite its wealth of information and analytical review W.H.Moreland's The Agrarian System of Moslem India is not a comprehensive study of the Mughal land revenue history. His observation has given rise to the controversies as to whether the word zamindar carried the same significance in the Mughal period as in the eighteenth century, and whether the zamindars existed in all parts of the Mughal Empire. These points have been taken up by I.Habib. His article "The Zamindars in the Ain" and the book entitled The Agrarian system of Mughal India dwelling on many of the tenurial rights of the zamindars and their relations with the government and the peasants, have established the position of the zamindars in the revenue history of Mughal India. His use of extensive Persian sources has broadened the scope of the study of the Mughal agrarian system. N.A.Siddiqi's Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals, another study based on Persian source material, helps greatly in understanding the working of the Mughal zamindari institution. But in spite of the valuable information and critical analysis of many agrarian problems of pre-British India, these works deal with the whole of India and are inadequate in casting light on the land revenue history of Bengal and even more so on the landed aristocracy.

The zamindars occupied an important place in the administrative, economic and social history of rural Bengal. Their life and exploits which coloured the imagination of so many, are engagingly presented in stories, poems and folk-songs. But little has been done for a correct appraisal of their historical role. In the past few years a trend can be seen among the scholars to concentrate their studies on the local history of the Subah of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The London University theses by A.M.Serajuddin, K.M.Mohsin, A.B.M.Mahmood, and K.P.Mishra illustrate such trend. Their studies help to a great extent in understanding the administrative set-up at local levels, the local forces at work and the varying customs and practices which influenced the general policy making of the government. A.B.M.Mahmood's study - the only thesis dealing with a zamindari of Bengal has, however, been limited to the discussion of the land revenue history solely of the Rajshahi zamindari from the commencement of the British period (1765-1793). The work does not present a full picture of the various aspects of a zamindari. A comprehensive study on the role of the zamindars of Bengal is necessary and important both in its own right to supplement the local history, and to complement the political, and economic history of the subah during the declining days of the Mughal rule and the transition of the

East India Company from its commercial enterprise to the ruler of the country.

The present study has been limited to the period from 1707, the year of the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, to 1772, when the English East India Company assumed directly the full Diwani power of the Subah of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This has been done as a matter of convenience. It may, however, be pointed out that during the intervening period between the assumption of the Diwani and the promulgation of the Permanent Settlement of 1793, the continual changes of the Company's policies on the administrative and revenue matters had unsettling effects on the zamindars, - their position became gradually uncertain and their role limited.

Bengal in its contemporary sense denoted the Mughal Subah of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. To deal with the subah in its entirety would have meant ignoring the regional diversity in its component parts. In order to avoid making sweeping generalizations and imposing a patched-up uniformity, I have confined my attention exclusively to Bengal proper, now the province of West Bengal and the newly formed state of Bangladesh. Nevertheless, in many cases, studies on the residual parts of the subah have been incorporated and presented to give a clearer view of the situation.

The work aims at an evaluation of the role of the zamindars during the period mentioned above without being enmeshed in some of the highly controversial and much-discussed land rights of the zamindars. Even a cursory review of the subject makes it clear that many of the functions of the zamindars were intricately involved, inseparable in relation to other duties - but by no means convergent on a common responsibility.

The study is based mostly on the original sources. For a study of this type the family archives of the zamindars are of immense importance. Unfortunately the practice of keeping diaries or writing biographies was not as popular among the landlords of India in the eighteenth century as it was in England. Again, the individual zamindari records as far back as the period under study either have perished or in a few cases where they still exist in the possession of some are not readily available for research. However some of the sanads referred to in the secondary works relating to the Burdwan zamindari were kindly placed at my disposal by Rajkumar P.C. Mahtab of the Burdwan family.

Of the Persian sources the British Museum Add. Manuscripts containing dastur-al-amal (administrative procedures), sanads and parwanas of the Mughal government have

been found useful. Extensive use has also been made of the contemporary printed Persian works which have been translated. The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, the Tawarikh-Bangalah, the Riad-al-Salatin, the Muntakhabeul-Lubab, the Mirat-i-Ahmadi, and the Seir-al-Mutakhkherin containing information about the central and provincial governments of the Mughals were of immense value to the present study. The accounts of the European travellers and contemporary writers were utilized in supplementing the documentary evidence.

But most of the material has been drawn from the voluminous records of the East India Company systematically preserved in the British Museum, the India Office Library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The gaps in the official documents of the Mughal government in Bengal have been breached by the valuable revenue literature of the early British period. Of the early manuscript sources of the East India Company, the Diary and Consultations of the English Council at Calcutta catalogued as Bengal Public Consultations in the India Office Library deserve particular attention. Recording day-to-day events from an early date of 1704, these manuscripts are mines of information for a study of the early eighteenth century Bengal. These aside, the Factory Records, the Select Committee Consultations, the Home Miscellaneous Series, the Bengal Revenue Consultations,

the Board of Revenue Proceedings, and the Proceedings of the Murshidabad Council were extensively utilized. Since these records contain important minutes, observations and letters of the British and native officers as well as many petitions from the zamindars, their importance in writing any history of Bengal can hardly be minimized. The Amin Accounts, catalogued as the Hastings Papers (also British Museum Additional Manuscripts) supply ~~much~~ useful statistical information on the Districts of Bengal where the amins were sent. The correspondence between the Court of Directors and Fort William, and the Reports of the Parliamentary Committees appointed to enquire into the affairs of the East India Company were also found useful. Another informative source is the District Records. Bengal District Records of Chittagong, Dinajpur, Midnapur, Rangpur, and Sylhet published by W.K. Firminger reveal ~~much~~ important information.

Of the secondary sources mention should be made of the District histories, such as the Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of the Dinajpur District, A Report on the District of Rangpur, The District of Bakarganj, A Report on the District of Jessore, History of Midnapur, and A History of Murshidabad District. Written by the British officers serving in the different Districts of Bengal, these works

though limited in their scope are valuable for any local studies.

Lastly, the contemporary Bengali literature, yet another source of immense importance has also been utilized. Many aspects of life spiced with poetic imagination or masked by literary extravagance feature prominently in the contemporary literature. But if we brush aside much of the rhetoric in diatribes and panegyrics, a picture of the society is presented. From it the socio-economic history of the period can be reconstructed.

In the quotation of extracts from the Company Records, the indiscriminate use of capital letters has not been reproduced. And finally, the term District has been used keeping in view its current meaning and application in denoting modern boundaries. The zamindaries have been located accordingly.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

ZAMINDAR AND ZAMINDARI

With the conquest of India, the Mughal government had to ensure the receipt of a constant flow of income for its survival. This could be done by carrying the state dues from different parts of the Empire to the central seat of the government and then redistribute them for the maintenance of the different cadres of administrative staff - a measure which could cause delay and difficulties. These difficulties could be averted by employing the local chiefs to collect the taxes and hand them over to the government after taking their share. Acting on this principle, the House of Timur utilized the existing 'separatist, localist and parochial' influence to serve that end. This was often likely to cause erosion of power of the central government. But the alternative against this evil was the bureaucratic solution which was difficult to achieve and required substantial restructuring of the basic pattern of the existing land tenure and tax system. Particularly before the disintegration of the Empire set in, such evils as inevitably followed in the train of programme of zamindari tenure seemed insignificant in the light of extra-

ordinary benefits enjoyed by the Mughals.

The assignment of land on condition of payment of revenue or military service to the state was an old practice in India. Under the Hindu rule, the bhuiyas, bhumis, chaudhuris, mandals (or muqaddams) and others were the agents of the crown for the collection of the share of produce claimed by the state. These intermediary landed interests though removable at the pleasure of the crown, tended to become hereditary and thereby "transformed their right to the revenue into a right in the land itself."¹ By the time the Muslims came to power some of these hereditary tenure-holders had already developed into an overlord class by depressing the position of the peasant into that of a tenant. The Mughal revenue policy was attuned to this ancient fiscal practice. The application of the Muslim theory of sovereignty claiming that all lands belonged to the crown, did not substantially alter the situation. The assignment of lands to the former Kings and chiefs, and farming of land tax were followed.² Two remarkable changes - the enhancement of the state's share of

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1. R.K.Mukherjee, "Land Tenure", Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, IX-X, 110; C.D.Field, Introduction to the Regulations of Bengal Code, 28; See also J.Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 738.
 2. F.Bernier, Travels in the Mughal Empire, A.Constable (tr.), 224-225; W.H.Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 247-248.

the produce to $\frac{1}{3}$ or more up to $\frac{1}{2}$, and the introduction of cash payment instead of crop-sharing were effected.¹

The Mughal sovereigns attempted to control the revenue management by placing officials throughout the administrative divisions of the Empire. Despite this, the direct contact with the peasants through the amils - the imperial revenue collectors,² could not be fully materialized. The variegated physical features, different agricultural conditions, diverse social customs and revenue practices of the extensive Empire rendered the task very difficult. The immense problem of land revenue management in India has been aptly described by Baden-Powell:³

"The 'land-tax' in England is only one item, and not a very large one, among a host of other taxes; it falls on a small class. In India the land-revenue is a totally different thing. With the necessity for fairly adjusting the amount of revenue which each class of land has to pay, comes the necessity of thoroughly understanding the agricultural conditions of the country, the caste of the people as it affects their cultivating capacity, the modes of holding land, the interests each class has in the land, and on what classes, and to what extent on each respectively, the revenue burden is to fall."

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1. B.H. Baden-Powell, The Land-Systems of British India, I, 182-183; R.K. Mukherjee, "Land Tenure", EncyclopaediaIX-X, 111.
 2. Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari, H.S. Jarrett (tr.), II, 44-45.
 3. B.H. Baden-Powell, The Land-Systems.....I, 25-26.

The Mughal faujdars, shikdars or amils, with no close experience of the complex revenue system of the natives, had to leave the detailed management of revenue affairs to the existing intermediary agents.

Some measures, tailored to the imperial needs of the Mughals bred a class of landed interest. The ancient policy of granting land as a military reward or to encourage enlistment was immediately adapted to the Mughal imperial requirements. Land was assigned to the military chiefs or their principal cohorts subject to rendering military services. Many of them as time went on, commuted their liability for a quit rent. The planting of defenders at some strategic points ~~were~~ achieved by offering lands to prospective partisans with the stipulation that they maintain armed retainers to resist an invader. An additional spur to the landed interest was furnished by the grants of lands to the reclamer of wastes.

The assignment of land carried with it certain responsibilities. The protection of life and property - a function of the state, was to be found in the local landed class who derived their strength and authority partly from the share of the produce of the peasants and partly from their traditional superior position in the society. The landed aristocracy affording the organizational need for protection and settlement of dispute could enforce decisions. The Mughals found it convenient to wade through the morass

of revenue, police and judicial administrations expressed in the zamindari institution.¹

Definition of zamindar and zamindari

The term zamindar² has passed into historical vocabulary of India to denote a landed class. The appellation itself lacks clarity and a precise definition; literally it means holder of land without signifying any specific type of right in the land. "The possessors of zamindari rights", to quote Habib,³ "were not possessors of a visible article of property, like any other, but of a title to a constant share in the produce of the society." In the revenue practice of the Mughal Empire, zamindar came to signify a person who held a portion of land registered in the Khalsa (revenue department) as his zamindari, and was answerable for the fixed amount of revenue due to the state from that land. In this sense zamindars were farmers of the government revenue i.e., intermediaries between the government, and the inferior revenue farmers and rai-yats (peasants).

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1. A.Constable (tr.) Travels,225; B.H.Baden-Powell, The Land-SystemsI,183.
 2. From the Persian words, zamin meaning land, and dar which is an inflexion of the verb dashtan, denoting to have, hold or possess.
 3. I.Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 184; See also B.H.Baden-Powell, "Is the State the owner of all Land in India," A.O.R., July, 1894, 7.

In Mughal India the zamindari system prevailed both in the Khalsa land¹ and jagir land.² The reason is not far to seek. During the Mughal rule, land grants in lieu of immediate cash payments had been frequently used to remunerate their officials.³ Sooner or later some of the assignees commuted their liability of managing and collecting the revenues of their jagirs to contractors in return for a fixed sum. The difference between the zamindars in the Khalsa and those in the jagir lands lay in the fact that the latter had to pay their revenues to the jagirdars (holders of the jagirs) instead of paying directly to the government.⁴

It appears that the appellation zamindar was a straightforward translation from the current native terms signifying the hereditary landholders in pre-Mughal India. The term bhumi, bhaumik or bhuiya which literally means a landholder was in general use in Bengal in the period preceding the Mughal rule. This explains why the country

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1. Land the revenues from which was directly collected by the crown.
 2. Land the revenues from which were assigned to another by the crown.
 3. W.H. Moreland, The Agrarian System of Moslem India, 93.
 4. SN. Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E. Fry-Kenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, 18; N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, II, 2.

was called by some as the 'Bara Bhuiya Mulk' (country of the twelve bhuiyas).¹ In Orissa too, the native landlords bore the titles of bhuiyan, bhumi or bhupati.² The design of the Mughals to mould the existing land tenure into a new machinery to serve their economic and political interests perhaps necessitated the coining of a new term to signify that system. This accounts for the popularization of the term zamindar then onward, though the literal meaning remained the same as bhuiya or bhumi.

The zamindari institution as it took shape under the Mughals, eludes specific definition. In fact, the zamindari connotes 'a variety of superior interests in the land or its usufruct.' The appellation zamindar having a wide spectrum of meanings in Mughal administration, gave the institution a complex character. The zamindar became a generic title embracing people from different strata of the ruling hierarchy - the chiefs of princely territories like rajas, ranas, rais down to the inferior revenue collecting agents such as chaudhuris, muqaddams, khots and so on.³ The underlying principle was perhaps to mould all the different holders of land tenures into a group of loyal agents under the Mughal

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1. J.Wise, "On the Bara Bhuyas of Eastern Bengal", J.A.S.B., 1874, 197; H.Hosten, "The Twelve Bhuyas or Lords of Bengal", J.A.S.B., N.S. 1913, 437.
 2. A.Stirling, "An Account, Geographical, Statistical and Historical of Orissa Proper or Cuttack", A.R. 1825, XV, 222.
 3. I.Habib, "The Zamindars in the Ain", I.H.C., 1958, 322; S. N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.) Land Control & Social Structure.....18.

bureaucracy. Thus "a chain of local despotisms, covering the whole Empire, here semi-independent, there fairly subdued, here represented by chiefs, there by ordinary zamindars",¹ being tied organically and inevitably to the task-oriented bureaucratic entities such as the subahdars, faujdars, ganungos, shikdars, amils and gazis were harnessed into the imperial service of the Mughals. By placing the autonomous tributary chiefs and the ordinary revenue farmers under a common denomination, the Mughal government attempted to depress the status of the traditional princelings. But in actual practice, the separate entity of the autonomous chiefs was acknowledged by the Emperors. The relationship between the ruling authority and these zamindars was based specially on military and political interests rather than on fiscal considerations which mainly characterized the bulk of the zamindar class.² Apart from this, the position of the intermediary and petty zamindars being within the direct administrative control was quite different. Stationing a chain of imperial officers the Mughal rulers sought to keep these zamindars under surveillance.³

1. I.Habib, The Agrarian System....., 184.

2. Ibid, 182-189 ; N.A.Siddiqi,
Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals, 22.

3. B.M.Add. MSS 1779, 217a-218a; B.M.Add. MSS 19505, 7a;
I.Habib, The Agrarian System....., 173; P.Saran, The Provincial Government of the Mughals, 111.

It is to be noted that the term zamindar did not carry the same significance in all parts of the Empire. In Northern India till the eighteenth century the appellation zamindar was confined to those chiefs whose possession of property was denoted by a particular title antecedent to Muslim rule.¹ The zamindars in Bengal were distinct from the village zamindars of Bundelkhand,² but closely resembled the talukdars of Upper India.³ In the subah of Bengal itself, the zamindari tenure of Bengal and that of Bihar differed to some extent.⁴ The nature of zamindari tenure was marked not only by provincial practices but by regional practices too. "Thus, in Rungpur, we have what", said Glazier⁵,

"for want of better terms, may be styled the semi-feudatory estates, such as Bykuntapore and the Chaklas, held by the Rajah of Cooch Behar; the sub-feudatory or the rest of Coochwarra, held by descendants of Cooch Behar officers, who had a century before been inducted by the Moguls into their estates as zemindars; the new purchasers, such as Baharbund and Sorooppore, who could pretend to no rights beyond any limitations the Government might have chosen to have entered in their deeds of possession; the large zemindars, owners of what had been principalities, such as Edrakpore and Dinagepore; and lastly, the smaller ones, which were generally holders of talooks, which had been separated from the larger estates."

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1. W.H. Moreland, "The Agrarian System....., 191-192, 194.
 2. In Bundelkhand the zamindars were the actual tillers of the soil.
 3. C.D. Field, "Introduction to the Regulations....., 39.
 4. J. Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788 and Sept. 18, 1789, W.K. Firminger (ed.) The Fifth Report..... II, 478-480, 746-747.
 5. E.G. Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur, I, 36.

Types of the zamindars

A classification purporting to show the cardinal ingredients and the differential characters of the zamindar class of Bengal will facilitate not only a better understanding of the zamindari institution but also resolving partially the semantic confusion centering around it. Because of the complex nature of the zamindari institution the classification based mainly on fiscal and socio-political aspects are not always sharp in their delineations. In many cases, the border line of one category slides over the other.

Almost all the zamindars were subjected to some sort of financial obligations by the state. If this primary bond of relationship between the zamindars and the imperial authority is taken as a criterion for zamindari, one could put the Maharaja of Kuch Bihar or the Rajabahadur of Burdwan, and Devi Basanta, a petty zamindar of Chittagong paying only one rupee and two annas as the jama of his zamindari¹ bracketed together. But the monetary contributions of the zamindars differed not only in amount but also in nature - one being tribute (or peshkash), and the other land revenue (or mal-wajib).²

There were zamindars who as a token of nominal allegiance paid a fixed tribute or peshkash to the Mughals.

1. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 303, 338.

2. N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....,21.

The peshkash jama was not based on any measurement of the cultivable lands or the assessment of the sair collections.¹ No qanungo was placed in such territories to regularize the revenue management as was required for the other category.² The number of the peshkashi zamindars in Bengal was limited to the autonomous chiefs and some zamindars of the outlying areas.

The mal-wajibi zamindars on the other hand, had to pay the dues of the state assessed on cultivable lands and sair duties in their zamindaris. Their share of the revenues was variable depending on the estimation of the actual yields. The mal-wajibi zamindars' rights and duties as tax-gatherers from all landholders subordinate to them, were more specific and subject to scrutiny by the imperial authority. This category constituted the bulk of the zamindars in Bengal and formed the backbone of the Mughal revenue system.

But such a classification of the zamindars does not reveal all the palpable differences in the extent of their obligations and autonomy enjoyed. Disparity existed within the peshkashi zamindars and so was within the mal-wajibi zamindars. Since the diversity of the forms of zamindaris is great and, when taken on the province-wide basis, bewilderingly so, a framework has been charted to establish valid uniformities

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1. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan and His Times, 75; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....,22-23.
 2. N.K.Sinha, The Economic HistoryII, 12.

by use of a classification. Founded on the criteria of the magnitude of their obligations, the dynamics of their powers and privileges, their relations with the government, their economic resources and military potentiality, and the regional customary practices, the zamindars in Bengal may be classified into four types - the autonomous chiefs, the frontier zamindars, the big zamindars, and the petty or primary zamindars.

The autonomous chiefs

This group comprised the Hindu chiefs of great antiquity such as the Rajas of Kuch Bihar, Koch Hajo, Assam, and Tippera who after their capitulation to the Mughals became their tributary subordinate allies.¹ The Mughals recognized the traditional hereditary rights of these rajas over certain portions of their territories but appropriated the residual portions.² Theoretically these princelings were brought within the fold of Mughal administrative system by

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1. Mirza Nathan, Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, M.I. Borah (tr.), II, 521; H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, & Assam, in the 16th & 17th centuries,....." J.A.S.B., 1872, 52, 93; J.N. Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 415; T. Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 2.
 2. H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, & Assam, in the 16th & 17th Centuries....." J.A.S.B., 1872, 94; Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, H.M. Elliot & J. Dowson, History of India, VII, 268; E.G. Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur I, 13-15.

conferring on them the generic appellation of zamindar. But from the very beginning the rights, privileges and status of these chiefs contrasted substantially from the rest of the zamindars.¹ Their title to zamindari emanated from their longstanding leadership over their territories, not from revenue contracts, right of occupancy or the official grants. In respect of the tributary chiefs, the hereditary right to succession was not subject to the renewal by the Emperor;² the discretionary power of the sovereign was exercised, only as a measure of expediency, or when sought for by the rajas themselves.³ Such intervention might have superseded the right of the eldest son in favour of some other member of the family but not of an outsider. As long as these potentates remained loyal, made the punctilious remittance of the tribute, and rendered military service on demand, they were left sovereign in all affairs of their territories. The contemporary records reveal that these chiefs withheld the payment of their

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1. For instance if any of these rajas was defeated and captured, he was accorded with treatment befitting his dignity (Azad-al-Husaini, Naubahar-i-Murshid Quli Khani, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 7-8).
 2. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis of the Bengal Regulations, 149.
 3. Salim Allah, Tawarikh-i-Bangalah, F.Gladwin (tr.), 142.

tribute very often and violated their agreements on many occasions.¹ Salim Allah's account² of these autonomous chiefs vis-a-vis the Mughal authority is quite illuminating:

"Before the time of Moorshed Kuly Khan, the Rajahs of Tipperah, Coatch Bahar, and Asham preserved an entire independence. They refused all obedience to the Court of Dehly, used the imperial chetr, and coined money in their own names.....

As soon as the rajah of Asham received advice of the appointment of Moorshed Kuly Khan to the joint offices of soobahdar and dewan, he sent Budellee Bhookum to him as ambassador, with an ivory throne and palkee,³ pods of musk and other rarities. His example was followed by the Rajah of Coatch Bahar, who also sent an ambassador with a nuzzir and peishkush. The Rajah of Tipperah no longer withheld the customary annual tribute of an herd of elephants, and other tokens of submission. Moorshed Kuly Khan, in return, sent them dresses; and this interchange of presents and compliments became an annual custom during the whole time of his government."

Signs of weakness in the government often prompted them to shake off the imperial yoke. They attacked the border lands of the Mughal subah, and contrary to the Mughal interest, incited the frontier zamindars to rebellion.⁴

The annual tribute paid by the autonomous chiefs was not determined on the basis of any general rent-roll.

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1. Saqi Mustad Khan, Maasir-i-Alamgiri, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), 24; F.Gladwin (tr.) T.B. 147-148, G.Vansittart to Mir Qasim, March 10, 1761, C.P.C. I, 1008.
 2. F.Gladwin (tr.) T.B. 47, 56.
 3. Palanquin.
 4. W.M.Thackeray to R.Barwell, Jan 4 & 8, 1774, D.F.R., 7; S.N.Bhattacharya, Mughal North Eastern Frontier Policy, 356.

The Mughal revenue system operative in the directly administered parts of the Empire were not applied to any of these states. The contemporary accounts suggest that the Rajas of Kuch Bihar followed a different course of revenue collection which was more flexible than the Mughal system.¹ In the Assam valley, the rajas held proprietary rights not only on the lands but on their subjects as well.²

It is evident from the above discussion that the relationship between the autonomous chiefs and the Mughals was more of a political nature. The present study excludes further examination of their role.

The frontier zamindars

This category of zamindars too, enjoyed a very large degree of independence. Because of the situation of their estates in the outlying parts of the subah, the chiefs of the north-eastern and western frontiers of Bengal could not always be kept under the complete control of the Mughals. On payment of nominal peshkash and in return for defending the country from the outside enemies, the great zamindars of the borders were left free within their jurisdictions.³

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1. Fathiya-i-Ibria 47b-48a; Alamgirnama 781-782 quoted in I.Habib, The Agrarian System..... 185-186.
 2. A.C.Barua, Aspects of the Economic Development of the Assam Valley, 39; See for Tippera State, J.B.Tavernier, Travels in India, V.Ball (ed.), II, 275.
 3. Naib Diwan's Note, P.C.C.R.M., Jan.14,1771, III, 49-50; N.K. Sinha, The Economic History.....II,12; T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 21.

The Rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur were more like feudal lords acting as guardians of the western marches.¹ Even during the vigorous rule of Murshid Quli Khan, the Rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur in spite of being summoned at the court did not make their appearances before the subahdar. Instead they sent their wakils with peshkash, nazrana and gifts.² During Nawab Shuja Khan's tenure (1727-1739), Raja Badi-al-Zaman of Birbhum withheld the customary tribute. An expedition launched against him resulted in his submission, and an agreement of payment of Rs.3,00,000 as fixed tribute.³ The Birbhum zamindari, however, lapsed into a mal-wajibi zamindari during the time of Nawab Alivardi Khan.⁴ The Raja of Bishnupur remained throughout the period as unvanquished as ever and continued to pay the tribute in an irregular manner⁵.

Of all the border zamindars the most turbulent were those of the 'Jungle-mahals'.⁶ The Rajput Rajas of Pachet,

1. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 196; B.D.G., Bankura, 26-28.

2. F. Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 46; Ghulam Husain Salim, Riad-al-Salatin, Abdus Salam (tr.), 256-257.

3. B.M. Add. MSS. 6586, 139; F. Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 151.

4. N.A. Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration22-23.

5. J.Z. Holwell, Interesting Historical Events I, 198.

6. The vast tracts of lands beset with dense forests and hills known as the 'Jungle-mahals' included the areas, now forming parts of the Districts of Midnapur, Birbhum and Bankura.

Chandrakona, and Maynachora were peshkash paying zamindars, and came to enjoy the same privilege as the ancient lineage territorial lords;¹ their strength lay in their warlike followers and numerous forts. Protected by the natural barriers of hills and jungles some of these rajas were the least affected by the Muslim conquest. The Mughal rulers had to content themselves with their nominal submission and the tribute of a very irregular nature.² These sub-feudatory zamindars of the 'Jungle-mahals' gave no less trouble to the Company when Midnapur was ceded to it. "The zemindar of Myna", remarked Bayley³, "like his brethren of the jungles, was not then, as now, a peaceful subject; and used to shut himself up in his Fort, whenever called upon to settle for his lands, or to pay their revenue".

Again most of the zamindars on north and north-eastern borders of Bengal, though not as powerful as those of Birbhum and Bishnupur, were untamed. They too withheld the payment of dues when they deemed it opportune. Situated in the fringe of the subah and in close proximity to their former

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1. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 184, 198; T. Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 18-19; A. Karim, Murshid Quli Khan76.
 2. G. Vansittart to J. Alexander, Jan. 24, 1769, B.D.R. Midnapur, I, 132; A. Higginson to C.C.R.M. Sept. 30, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Oct. 30, 1771, VII(A), 104-105.
 3. H.V. Bayley, History of Midnapur, 3.

overlords, the zamindars in the sarkars of Ghoraghat,¹ Kuch Bihar², Bangal Bhum³, Dakkinkole⁴, Dhekri,⁵ Kamrup⁶, and Udehpur,⁷ were lukewarm in their loyalty to the Mughals. The old bonds with and obligations to their former masters namely the Raja of Kuch Bihar, Assam or Tippera were too strong to be severed even under the pressure from the government. Encouraged by their former patrons, these frontier zamindars often defied the Mughal authority. With the establishment of the British power, the zamindars of Boda and Baikuntapur openly declared their allegiance to the Raja of Kuch Bihar.⁸ In 1770 Becher recorded the position of the zamindars on the northern frontiers:

"..... I cannot help remarking that if the frontier Rajahs whose subordination has never been perfectly effected, continue to pay us the customary Revenue we ought to be contented. By lenity and moderation we may gradually reconcile them to our Government, but by unusual demands, and exertions of our authority we may entirely extinguish the small spark of allegiance they have yet been possessed of" 9

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1. It was composed of the greater part of the modern District of Rangpur and parts of Dinajpur, Pabna and Mymensingh.
 2. Composed of parts of Rangpur District.
 3. Consisted of the parganahs of Bahirband and Bhitambar, between Rangpur and the Brahmaputra river.
 4. Composed of the areas on the eastern and opposite side of Brahmaputra, including Kuribari.
 5. Was situated on the frontiers of Assam.
 6. Consisted of the adjoining areas north of sarkar Bangal Bhum on the west and north side of the Brahmaputra, and included a great deal of modern Rangamati and Bisni.
 7. Composed of the whole area now included in Tippera.
 8. J.Grose to R.Becher, July 21, 1770, L.C.B.I., 37-38.
 9. R.Becher to J.Grose, Aug.4, 1770, L.C.B.I., 133; See also petition of the faujdar of Rangamati, P.C.C.R.M., Jan.20, 1772, IX, 51-52.

In this part of the country dominated by 'semi-feudatory' rajas, the Mughal rulers had to adopt different revenue measures. These zamindars till 1184 B.S. (1777-1778) were not the direct contractors for the government dues. Instead, royal revenues were farmed to ijaradars.¹

The zamindars of the southern frontiers of Bengal, however, differed very little from those of the interior of Bengal. Having a history of later origin, the zamindars of this region, more especially of Chittagong, could not firmly establish their hold for long. Plagued by chronic piracy, security became their primary concern. Such zamindars, bereft of outside allies or patrons as the zamindars of the north and north-eastern frontiers of Bengal had, could not be expected to be turbulent.

Thus it is evident that the border zamindars with some exceptions enjoyed much more freedom from those of the interior and settled areas of the subah. Since some of the frontier zamindars had strategic importance, the security of the country depended to some extent on the loyalty and goodwill of those zamindars. Consequently, the treatment they received from the government was that of allies rather than tax-paying subjects. Some of these important zamindars were drafted into the imperial service as mansabdars and adorned

1. B.R.C., Oct. 30, 1777, R50/3; E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur I, 20.

with titles and khilats.¹

The big zamindars.

These zamindars constituted by far the most important element in the Mughal revenue system. They acted as the real intermediaries between the imperial authority and the various subordinate landed classes - sometimes including the petty zamindars. The great lineage zamindaris with traditional family background predominated the main zamindar class. The founders of these families grew in power along with the acquisition of lands, and got their zamindari rights and privileges recognized by the Emperor. Unlike the autonomous chiefs, the hereditary status of the rest of the zamindar class was circumscribed by the Mughals, and the succession of the heir depended to a certain extent on the pleasure of the sovereign.² Again, these zamindars were removable for insurgency³ or failure to pay the stipulated revenues.⁴ Apart

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1. At the time of the annual punya ceremony the Rajas of Cassijora, Maynachora, Midnapur and Narayangarh were presented with horses and dresses with gold flowers (H.V.Bayley History of Midnapur, 1).
 2. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M., Oct. 16, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 144; Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis149, 158.
 3. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 61-63, 106-107.
 4. B.R.C. April 6, 1773, R49/39; B.D.G. Midnapur, 225; E.B.A.D.G. Bogra, 112.

from these restrictions, an imperial order was necessary for the recognition of the rights of any incumbent to succeed to the zamindari. It was customary for the heir of a deceased zamindar to apply to the Court for the sanad or patent confirming the succession.¹ The indispensability of the sanads to the intermediary zamindars is evidenced from an arzi of Raja

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Ramkanta:

"From the commencement of the Bengal year 1137, subsequent to the death of Ram Jewan, your dependent has been raised to act in the capacity of zemindar of the Purgunnah of Rajshahi, &c. and henceforth with much assiduity collected the whole Revenue proceeding from both the Khalsa and Jageer lands till the year 1140. But the dependent Purgunnahs being dispersed in remote chuklahs contiguous to the possessions of powerful zemindars, whilst your petitioner has not yet been favoured by a sunnud, his want of authority, from a precarious establishment in the zemindary, leaves the Ryots and frontier lands exposed to the oppressions of these zemindars, which equally divert the attention of the Ryots from the operations of agriculture; and of the Gomastahs (his agents) from their duty in endeavouring to promote an increase of population. He therefore hopes to be honoured with a Firman or royal sunnud and Perwannah from the Soubadar and Dewan, for the zemindary of the above Pergunnah which will be productive of infinite credit and advantage." ³

The relationship of the major zamindars with the government differed from those of the petty ones. The big

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1. Mirza Mohsin quoted in K.C.Mitra, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - the Rajas of Rajshahi", C.R. 1873, LVI, 14; J.Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 745.
 2. Quoted in J.Grant, An Enquiry into the Nature of Zemindary Tenures in the landed property of Bengal, 79.
 3. See also arzi of the zamindar of Tahirpur, P.C.C.R.M., Feb.6, 1772, IX, 150; C.Purling to C.C.R.M. June 11, 1772, P.C.C.R.M., June 18, 1772, XI, 187.

zamindars had the privilege of admittance to the presence of the Emperor or the Nawab. But it was not so easy in respect of the petty zamindars.¹ The procedure concomitant to the confirmation of the succeeding zamindars documents the difference in the relationship between the government and the zamindars of the various ranks:

"Upon the demise of a zemindar, his heir or heiress transmitted an account of the event in a petition to the Dewan of the Soubah and the Roy-Royan, or if landholders of the first rank, to the Soubahdar himself, with letters to all the principal men of the Court, soliciting their protection.

To an heir or heiress who paid a large revenue to the state, the Soubahdar returned answer of condolence, accompanied with an honorary dress to the former, and with a present of shawls to the latter....

After performing the funeral rites of the deceased, the heir, if of age, was presented to the Soubahdar by the Dewan and the Roy-Royan, and after receiving the beetle leaf, and an honorary dress, was permitted to assume the management of the affairs of his Zemindary.

Minor heirs or heiresses received the honorary dress and shawls, above-mentioned, through agents deputed for that purpose, to the court of the Nazim.

Zemindars of a secondary rank were entitled not only to a pair of shawls, and a perwannah of condolence from the Soubahdar, and for those of an inferior class, an answer from the Roy-Royan, accompanied with the beetle leaf was deemed sufficient." 2

Many of the intermediary zamindars also held the official position as ganungos, chaklahdars, or chaudhuris, and this facilitated closer personal contact with the Court.

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1. J.Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788, W.K.Firminger (ed.) The Fifth ReportII, 745.
 2. C.W.B.Rous, Dissertation concerning the Land Property of Bengal, App.III, 232-234.

The intermediary zamindars formed an important element of the imperial administration.¹ The great zamindaris developed in the settled areas under the control of the subahdar and the faujdars as it were to fill up the gap of the administrative hierarchy. As a recognition of the enormous power and influence of these zamindars, the Emperors and Nawabs conferred on them the titles of 'Raja', 'Maharaja' or 'Maharadhiraj', and Khilats according to their rank and status.² The magnificent courts, palatial houses, forts and large bodies of armed retainers of these big zamindars widened the gulf from their petty counterparts. There existed a constant clash of political and economic interests between the government and the major zamindars.

The petty zamindars.

The petty or the primary zamindars formed the overwhelming majority of the zamindar class and included the proprietors of a taraf, tappa or simply one village, even the peasant proprietors cultivating their own lands. The farming of imperial revenues to the intermediary agents which gained

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1. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....181; S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure....., 24.
 2. Yusuf Ali, Abwal-i-Mahabat Jang, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 155.

widespread currency by the time of Farrukh Siyar,¹ the Mughal policy of reclaiming more waste lands to augment the land revenue,² and the considerable grants of madad-maash lands for religious and scholastic bounties³ spawned numerous petty zamindaris. The dividing tendencies of the moderate zamindaris contributed to swell the number of this category of zamindars. The petty zamindars who may be termed as the real 'farmers' of revenues, had their origin as simply collectors of government dues 'during one or two, or more generations and who had thus established a prescriptive right'.⁴ Their rights and position depended to a great extent on the fulfilment of their revenue contracts. The tenure of these zamindars was, by custom hereditary. But they did not derive their zamindari rights from the imperial

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1. Gholam Husain Khan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....114; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....2-3.
 2. Reza Khan's Note quoted in N.K.Sinha, The Economic HistoryII, 7-8; S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....27.
 3. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 203; S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....27-28.
 4. W.W.Hunter, Bengal Ms.Records I, 31.

sanads.¹ The scope of the petty zamindars for participation in general administration was limited, so was their hold on the society. These zamindars were usually under the sphere of influence of the principal zamindars.

The inferior zamindars of recent origin were little different from the talukdars², more specifically the huzuri talukdars.³ It may, however, be safely presumed, that some of these zamindars were originally talukdars, but gradually elevated themselves to the position of zamindars. When the Rai Rayan, and Qanungo Lakshminarayam stated that the jurisdictions and privileges of the talukdars were of the same nature as those of the zamindars⁴ - they probably meant the petty zamindars.

As has been observed numerous zamindaris existed in different parts of the country under varying circumstances to serve multifarious purposes, it was quite

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1. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....149; S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....27.
 2. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....157; I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....171-172; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....26-28.
 3. In Bengal talukdars were of two types - huzuri and muzkuri (or shikami), the former paying their revenues directly to the government and the latter through the zamindars.
 4. B.R.C. May 12, 1790, R50/10.

natural that there existed some degree of differences in tenurial rights and interests. However, despite some distinctive features within the zamindar class itself, zamindars in Bengal had always occupied a superior position in the agrarian relationships. A confirmation of this view comes from the Amini Commission:¹

"A zamindar, whatever rights his Tenure or his office may convey, is the superior of a district; of which (unless his authority is suspended) he collects the rent for which he pays a Revenue to the Government. He is the first in point of rank amongst the several landholders."

Size and formation of the zamindari units.

A zamindari could comprise a part of a parganah, embrace one whole parganah or extend over a number of them. For instance, the Rajshahi zamindari in 1748 comprised as many as 164 parganahs.² Offering sharp contrasts one Ramkissen was the zamindar of parganah Nurullahpur only.³ While zamindar Shaker Khan was in possession of tappa Faizabad.⁴

1. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,086, 2.

2. J.Grant, Historical & Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 307.

3. T.Kelsal to R.Becher, July 30, 1770, L.C.B. I, 78.

4. Ibid., 80.

The farming of a single village, common in other parts of India, was rarely practised in Bengal.¹ The paucity of data precludes the presentation of an elaborate quantitative information of the zamindaris during the period under review. On the basis of the available evidence we can presume that estates of small dimensions happened to be a characteristic of the frontier Districts with the notable exception of Birbhum, and most of the eastern Districts of Bengal.²

The extent of zamindaris though varied, had a close relation with the circle called parganah formed of a number of villages. A zamindari signifying a unit of revenue collection might have originally corresponded to the size of a parganah.³ "The limits of a pargana", said Elliott,⁴ "hardly ever coincide with physical or geographical boundaries and the only other cause for their irregular tracing seems to

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1. B.H.Baden-Powell, "Origin of the Zamindari Estates in Bengal", Q.J.E., 1896, XI, 40.
 2. P.C.C.D., Oct. 10, 1772, R70/15; B.M.Add.MSS. 29,088, 27-54; A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 304; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 17.
 3. According to H.Beveridge, "If a landholder owns a pargana, or an aliquot portion thereof, he is called a zamindar..... but if his estate bears no relation to a pargana or its divisions, he is merely a taluqdar". (The District of Bakarganj, 56.)
 4. C.A.Elliott, The Chronicles of Oonao, Allahbad, 1862, quoted in I.Habib, "The Zamindars in the Ain", I.H.C. 1958, 322.

be proprietary (he means zamindari) right". Where the hereditary representative of an ancient Hindu sovereign or an intermediary revenue agent was not available, it is likely that an 'artificial atmosphere was created on a miniature scale through the institution of the semi-official class of the Zamindars'. For administrative and political reasons, the division of the Empire into different units was consonant with the realities of the time. To quote Stirling:¹

"At different periods of the Mogul and Mahratta government Zemindaris were occasionally created in imitation of the Hindu practice, either by separating off a number of villages from adjoining Pergunnahs, or by allotting one or more Pergunnahs of the Khaliseh land, as fixed assignments, to some distinguished Chief or able Revenue Officer, Musselman or Hindu, to answer a particular purpose. These creations were apparently common in Bengal,....."

Even during the first half of the eighteenth century, new parganahs were created in Bengal to mark the formation of some new zamindaris. The creation of parganahs of Rajngar,² and Kantanagar³, carving out lands from different existing parganahs lend support to the view:

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1. A.Stirling, "An account, Geographical, Statistical & Historical of Orissa Proper or Cuttack", A.R., 1825, 239.
 2. Vide infra, 77.
 3. F.Buchanan, Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of the District of Dinaipur, 253.

"When the East India Company assumed the Dīwānī of Bengal in 1765, the zamīndārī continued to bear in very many cases the same relation to the pargana; but the latter had been broken up into minor divisions called tappās, kismats, and tarafs, whilst the word zamīndārī had begun to assume the meaning it now usually bears, that of the English word "estate", a landed property of more or less considerable extent.....". 1

Again, it may be noted that the caste and clan organization had a bearing on the origin of parganah as well as that of zamindari. A parganah might have been formed taking into consideration the preponderance of the individual clan population of a particular locality.² In fact, the origin of land-tenure suggest so. The earliest history of agricultural people in Indian society relates that a number of people with some affinity among themselves selected a tract of land to cultivate and live on. The tract in course of time got a name and formed the territorial unit called village (or mauza or dih). The "term 'village', as we use it", said Baden-Powell,³

1. J.N.Gupta, E.B.A.D.G., Bogra, 114.

2. C.A.Elliot, The Chronicles of Oonao, Allahbad, 1862, quoted in I. Habib, "The Zamindars in the Ain", I.H.C., 1958, 322.

3. B.H.Baden-Powell, The Land-Systems I, 97.

"means a group of landholdings, with (usually) a central aggregate of residences, the inhabitants of which have certain relations, and some kind of union or bond of common government." The view appears to hold good for whole of India. In the Punjab and the United Provinces the village communities were founded mostly by agricultural tribes, clans and castes who formed compact brotherhood called 'bhaiachara'.¹ Since a parganah was composed of a number of villages it is probable that the determination of its bounds was influenced by the identical population. Having accepted the view that the organization of parganahs on the basis of clan or tribe was common in Northern India, Baden-Powell pondered whether the same factor was in operation in Bengal. On the division of Dinajpur District into a number of parganahs, he remarked:²

"I cannot discover the origin of this, except that it does not (positively) appear that they were the areas of which different tribes or clans had once taken possession".

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1. B.H.Baden-Powell, A Short Account of the Land Revenue and its Administration in British India, 84-85, 92-93.
 2. B.H.Baden-Powell, "Origin of the Zamindari Estates in Bengal", Q.J.E., 1896, XI, 52.

Such ethnographical analysis of the formation of the parganahs sounds reasonable in India, where the society was stratified into religious, clan and caste groupings. The people of different groups usually resided in segregated quarters in the rural areas though not rigidly so in towns and cities.

The fact that the zamindaris often belonged either to the most influential minority or to tribe, clan or caste which commanded majority in a locality¹ underlines the importance of caste and clan organizations. The Rajas of Birbhum belonged to the Pathan race. They maintained their dominance by virtue of a militarist Muslim peasantry, who formed a class socially important though numerically insignificant.² Data of later dates also support the role of caste or clan organization on the formation of zamindaris. In the District of Rajshahi which contained the largest number of Brahmin zamindars, the majority of the population were Brahmins.³ In Bakarganj, the number of the Kayasthas was the largest excepting the Namasudras. There most of the zamindars were kayasthas including the principal one - the Raja of Chandradwip.⁴

1. B.R.Grover, "Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", I.E.S.H.R., 1963, I, 11.

2. W.W.Hunter, The Annals of Rural Bengal, 88.

3. B.D.G., Rajshahi, 54, 56.

4. B.D.G., Bakarganj, 34.

The number of the Brahmin population comes next, so is the number of the zamindars. In Midnapur District the Sadgops constituted a considerable section of the population, and this was probably the only District in Bengal where some Sadgop zamindars could be traced.¹ In the case of Bishnupur the raja including the aristocracy and the population were all Hindus.²

Though great lineage zamindaris dominated the structure of land control system in Bengal, co-percenary zamindaris were not wanting. The Hindu and Muslim laws of inheritance operating in the country,³ a zamindari was likely to be divided among the different shareholders. The law of primogeniture could not keep the zamindaris as a united whole⁴ excepting in a few aristocratic families.⁵ In the case of inferior zamindars the successors shared usually equal division of the zamindaris, and if agreed, took unequal dividends.⁶

1. B.D.G., Midnapur, 57.

2. W.W.Hunter, The Annals.....88.

3. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....155.

4. Qanungo and Pandit's Note, B.R.C. Feb.28, 1776, R49/60; B.H.Baden-Powell, The Land-SystemsI,101.

5. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M. Oct. 16, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 31, 1770, II, 144.

6. Qanungo and Pandit's Note, B.R.C. Feb. 28, 1776, R49/60; See also B.R.C. Sept. 12, 1774, R49/47.

In fact, the widespread practice of polygamy both among the Hindu and Muslim zamindars, and of adoption in the absence of any issue specially a male one, complicated the succession issue and often led to the subdivision of the zamindari estates. The disharmony among the different wives, step-brothers and sisters sometimes impeded the continuation of zamindaris as a single unit. This is borne out by many instances, a few of which are cited here. The originator of the Mominshahi zamindari Sri Krishna Chaudhuri married more than once. Soon after his death the family became entangled in internal feuds resulting in the division of the zamindari.¹ Again, Sayid Ahmed Chaudhuri the second founder of the Silbersa zamindari² had no male issue and of his four wives the last two were childless. His death heralded a prolonged dispute between Duni Bibi, the youngest wife who forcibly succeeded to the whole zamindari, and the other wives and children. They petitioned to Nawab Shujauddin who granted a sanad in the name of Raziuddin, a grandson of Sayid Ahmed.³ Since Duni Bibi would not give in, the wrangle lingered. Ultimately during Nawab Alivardi Khan's tenure, the Silbersa zamindari was divided into

1. B.D.G. Mymensingh, 155-156.

2. The zamindari was transferred to Sayid Ahmed Chaudhuri from Duni Chand who became a defaulter in 1688.

3. P.C.Sen, Bagurar Itihasa II, 253-254; E.B.A.D.G. Bogra, 112.

two nine-anna and seven-anna shares between Sayid Ahmed's two grandsons Raziuddin and Badiuzzaman at a joint rental of Rs.60,000.¹ Similarly, the Midnapur or Narajol zamindari remained as a whole only for a short while after it changed hands to Ajit Singh. Following his death the property was divided between his two wives.²

Despite the fact that the moderate and petty zamindaris often fragmented after one or two generations, the co-sharers could arrange the collection of rents jointly or separately on the basis of an informal partition.

Before concluding the introductory discussion on the genesis and the structural pattern of the zamindari institution, and the factors underlining the formation of the zamindaris as distinct revenue units, the composition of the zamindar class in the socio-economic context may be examined. In Bengal as in England the "landlords of the eighteenth century did not constitute a closed social class".³ Diverse professional and ethnic elements were ushered into the zamindar class. From humble beginnings in petty clerical, legal or military careers many made their way within a few years to the elevated position of the ruling gentry. Since landownership

1. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M. Oct. 16, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 147; E.B.A.D.G. Bogra, 112.

2. B.D.G., Midnapur, 213.

3. G.E.Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century, 26.

is the only single occupation in the caste-ridden Hindu society of India which people of every varna could accept without the fear of being degraded, or trespassing the occupation of the upper varnas,¹ zamindarship offered a prospective opening to all classes of people. Though there were preponderance of Kayastha zamindars in Bengal, numerous Brahmin and Kshatriya zamindars were also found. Zamindars from the low caste groups as the Tili, Sadgop, Bagdi were not also wanting. Again, when the sources of high civil and military professions became meagre, the Muslims to whom the professions of the pen and sword were the honourable way of living, looked up to farming as the only alternative profession suitable and not derogatory.² In the early part of the East India Company's rule when the policy of disbanding the native armies was followed, many Muslim chiefs who had grants of lands left the capital to settle down as Landlords while their followers and soldiers took up the profession of agriculture.³

Moreover,

"In traditional Indian society, wealth and status attained outside of agriculture were transmitted into landed status, since other kinds of activities, such as trade and service, were not of as high social status as being a zamindar".⁴

1. Collection of Smritis quoted in G.S.Ghurye, Caste and Race in India, 89.
2. F.Rubbee, The Origin of the Mussulmans of Bengal, 107.
3. W.W.Hunter, Indian Mussalmans, 151.
4. B.S.Cohn, "Structural Change in Indian Rural Society", R.E. Frykenberg (ed.) Land Control & Social Structure.....112; See also R.Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, 58.

To the people of Bengal, long 'accustomed to a system of local government, based upon prestige and numbers of followers', acquisition of landed estates with its attendant power and privilege was a hallmark of respectability.

The economic security attached to the occupation of the zamindar might well have been a prime mover of this enterprise. In the absence of modern saving facilities, investment in land was safe and secure. Nawab Murshid Quli Khan bought the zamindari of Kulheria, part of parganah ¹Chunakhali from Muhammad Amin and registered it in the name of his grandson Mirza Asadullah (Sarfaraz Khan), Asadnagar ²

"The reason for Jaffer Khan's M.Q.Khan conduct herein was, that in case of a decline of fortune, there might be left for his posterity a plate of victuals, a bare competence to sustain the vital spirit; and that after paying the royal revenue, the profit might come to them, and their name remain, and be preserved in the pages of time." ³

The practice gained popularity in the subah. In 1766, Vansittart reported ⁴:

"When a man rises himself either by the army or finances - he is desirous of getting his native village and two or three about it, that he may keep his holydays in pomp with his family or if a foreigner he covets an estate in land, that he

1. Situated in the District of Murshidabad.

2. F.Gladwin (tr.) T.B., 100-101.

3. Ibid., 101; See also C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M. Dec. 22, 1770 P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 31, 1770, II, 165.

4. "March from Ballasore to Sommulpoore", G.V.P. Dep.b.66,6.

may secure to himself a retreat of the time when fortune may cease to smile. He accordingly either purchases from a Zamindar, or gets a grant from the Nawab of five or six villages at a rent much below their real value. He dies and the eldest son inherits from his father."

Thus, the political and fiscal needs of the Mughals, strengthened by the social and cultural pattern of the country fostered the development of the zamindari institution. The authority closely woven into the fabric of the institution and the respectability associated with it rendered the zamindari profession a coveted and enviable one.

CHAPTER II

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN THE ZAMINDAR CLASS

During the first half of the eighteenth century the subah of Bengal witnessed the establishment of a regional semi-independence, created at first by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, which became more complete under his successors. The epoch also saw the civil war among Murshid Quli Khan's successors for the Nawabi, the recurring invasions of the Marathas and their rapacity, the battle of Plassey and the advent of the English East India Company on the political scene of the subah. The grant of the Diwani right to the English East India Company (1765), the devastating famine of 1769-1770, and the assumption of the full Diwani power by the Company in 1772 heralded a new era in the history of the Indian sub-continent. It is the aim of this chapter to examine the fortunes of the zamindar class in these disturbing political turmoils of the period.

The unsettled situation in Bengal provided an opportunity for the nobility, the army, the bureaucracy and financial interests to increase their sectional powers. The zamindars naturally joined in the scramble for power directing their energy mainly to their territorial gains. Before setting out to discuss the changes within the zamindar class some

brief comments are necessary on the period of Murshid Quli Khan. An elaborate analysis of this has not been attempted because Karim has already written a book¹ on the subject. But Murshid Quli Khan's period of office is vital for a study of Bengal zamindars, since it saw the establishment of a de facto independent Nizamat rule in the subah. From the accession of Farrukh Siyar to the throne of Delhi in 1713, the practice of sending officers (mansabdars) from the centre to fill provincial posts was practically stopped. Individual adventurers still arrived, seeking refuge and employment in Bengal, as Reza Khan's family did.² But the routine circulation of Mughal officials between Delhi, Dacca and Murshidabad came to a halt. Muslim officers still occupied most of the senior posts in Bengal, but they were members of local groups, at first centered around Murshid Quli Khan and his family,³ and they no longer had the whole military and civil support of the Mughal mansabdari system behind them. At the same time it seems possible that the regional mansabdars had lost ground, as part of the economy drive started throughout the empire by the imperial vizir Nizam-ul-Mulk in the 1720s. The English Council at Calcutta in 1722 reported:⁴

1. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan and his times.

2. A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 12, 17.

3. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....69-70.

4. B.P.C., April 16, 1722, R1/5.

".....the vizier has reduced the allowance of all the omrahs at court and turned out a great many, and that Jaffer Cawne's allowances are reduced from seven thousand munsub to five thousand, and the duans in proportion."

Karim has demonstrated that the basis of Murshid Quli Khan's long tenure of high office was his ability to secure for the Emperor a constant and an increased flow of revenue from Bengal. Calkins has argued¹ that to secure that increase Murshid Quli Khan made a deal with one element in the zamindar class who joined in extracting more from the remaining minor or village zamindars. Karim has noted² that Murshid Quli Khan made strenuous efforts to achieve a more realistic valuation of the province, turning out defaulting zamindars or revenue farmers, putting in his amils to investigate resources, and that when he had achieved his revision of the so-called Todar Mal settlement, he insisted upon prompt and full payment of the new demand. Under his Jama-Kamil-Tumari of 1722, moreover, the small zamindars were placed under the supervision of a handful of greater zamindars, nominated chaklahdars, through whom they paid their revenues.³ This measure was confirmed by Shuja Khan, Murshid Quli Khan's successor in the Jama-Tumari-

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1. P.B.Calkins "The formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740", J.S.A.S. 1970, 800,803.
 2. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....89-93.
 3. N.K.Sinha, The Economic HistoryII, 14, 18.

Tashkhis of 1728 which divided much of the subah into fifteen great zamindaris¹, extending over 615 parganahs yielding sixty five lakhs in yearly revenue - about half of the total revenue of the subah.² The remaining parganahs were parcelled out among smaller zamindars. It is clear that chaklahdars or major zamindars were installed as stewards over their juniors, as officials and not owners - as instruments in the more efficient collection of revenues. The older view that Murshid Quli Khan dispossessed and subverted the whole landed proprietorship of Bengal³ cannot be sustained; but that the balance between mansabdars and zamindars, and between great zamindars and revenue intermediaries changed rings true.

Calkins has taken up this point and stated that "a partnership between the Mughals and the more important members of the indigenous landed ruling group developed" - adding that the partnership was finally completed by the addition of a class of great bankers, moneylenders, merchants, the necessary financial assistants to the great zamindars.⁴ He sees the

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1. The names of the zamindaris are: Birbhum, Bishnupur, Burdwan, Dinajpur, Nadia, Rajshahi, Tippera, Pachet, Mahmudshahi (Naldanga), Yusouffpur (Chanchra), Rokunpur, Lashkarpur, Edrakupur, Futtehsingh and Calcutta.
 2. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.) The Fifth Report.....II, 194-198.
 3. J.N. Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 409.
 4. P.B. Calkins, "The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740", 1970, J.S.A.S., 800, 803-804.

power of these new classes finally demonstrated in their overthrow of Sarfaraz Khan in favour of Alivardi Khan in 1740.¹ In fact, the political affairs of the subah by 1720s assumed a complicated complexion. The English and some European trading companies were vying with each other to exact greater concessions from the ruling authority. The English East India Company having a strong foot-hold in the country extended their realm of interest in the making of the Nawabs favourable to their cause. In July 1727 the Calcutta Council recorded:²

"On 15th Instt. we received a letter from Worp Edward Stephenson Esq Chief &c. Council at Cossimbuzar dated the 11th Do acknowledging the receipt of ours in answer to the advising of the death of Jaffer Cawn. They promise a due regard to our directions to make the best use they can of the change of Government for our Hon^{ble} Masters Ints & prejudice that of the Ostenders what they can, and that they are in hopes of procuring from Sauffrage Cawn a confirmation of Furruckseers Phirmaund /farman/ as well as some other favours."

The principal zamindars and bankers, all of whose interests were bound together with that of the Nawabs, wielded much influence in shaping the political developments of the subah.³ It is borne out by the report from the Calcutta Council:

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1. P.B.Calkins, "The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740", 1970, J.S.A.S., 805-806.
 2. B.P.C., July 17, 1727, R1/6.
 3. B.P.C., August 14, 1727, R1/6.

"That Soojah Cawn being arrived on this side Ballasore, great numbers from Muxidevad are gone to meet him. That several of the Rajahs & Zemindars vacqueels /wakils/ have visited and received seerpaws /sar-o-pa_¹ from him. That on his approach they will send their vacqueels to pay their compliments, & if the Nabob approves of it, they will pay their respects to him also, and if they find Futtichundsaw has not the sway with him as he had with Jaffer Cawn, they will not fail to sollicite him for the mint."

At the death of Murshid Quli Khan, a rivalry developed between the two contenders for the subahdari, Sarfaraz Khan², the diwan of the subah whom Murshid Quli Khan nominated as his successor³ and Shuja Khan. The English thought that Sarfaraz Khan could be won over to their cause. The zamindars, on the other hand, probably attracted by the 'equity and humanity' of Shuja Khan and with the expectation of some relief from the long rigid regulations of the deceased Nawab⁴ rallied behind Shuja Khan. The dispute over subahdari was settled when Sarfaraz Khan stepped aside from the contest in favour of his father. Despite this happy ending of the episode, another storm was gathering. Alivardi Khan, Nawab Shuja Khan's naib-subahdar of Bihar was scheming to install himself as the Nawab of the subah. He and his brother, Haji Ahmed entered into a conspiracy with Alamchand, the diwan of the subah,

1. A complete dress of honour.

2. Grandson of Murshid Quli Khan and son of Shuja Khan.

3. F. Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 122.

4. Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai, Seir-al-Mutakhkherin, Haji Mustafa (tr.), I, 279.

and Jagat Seth, the most influential banker of the subah.¹ The plot ultimately brought forth the military victory of Alivardi over Nawab Sarfaraz Khan, who succeeded to the vice-royalty after the death of his father in 1739. The zamindars supplied troops to the Nawab,² as did some to his rival Alivardi Khan.³ The imperial authority still reeling under the mighty stroke of Nadir Shah, had perhaps little to do in the affairs in Bengal.

"When Mohammed Shah received intelligence of the death of Sirfaraz Khan, and the usurpation of Alyviridy Khan, he appeared much affected at the relation; but afterwards acted in a manner very unbecoming the dignity and duty of an emperor; for, instead of punishing the traitor, he had the meanness to participate of his plunder; and in return conferred upon him the nizamat of the three soobahs." ⁴

That a new division of power, resulting in a new balance and perhaps yielding advantages to all three parties emerged, is clear. Whether it is right to use the word partnership, meaning a deliberate agreement to co-operate, to describe the relationship between the Nawab, from Murshid Quli to Mir Qasim, and the larger zamindars, is not so evident. During the crisis in the Nawabi, the zamindars lost no time in bringing about changes in relationship favourable to

1. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir I, 326; F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 140.

2. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 161.

3. Ibid., 166.

4. Salim Allah, T.B., F.Gladwin (tr.), 175.

them. Many of the zamindars who had 'shewn token of submission and attachment' towards Nawab Shuja Khan were no less ready to switch their allegiance over to Alivardi Khan - the usurper, in disregard to the interest of Nawab Sarfaraz Khan. Again, though the zamindars remained faithful to Nawab Alivardi Khan throughout the period of the Maratha invasion,¹ very soon after they changed their loyalty. During the unsettled years of 1756-1765, zamindars first sided with the English and Mir Jafar to bring about the downfall of Nawab Sirajud-Daulah, Alivardi Khan's successor, with whom they did not get on well.² Afterwards the zamindars in order to retain their autonomy and fiscal advantages in full turned against both the English and the Nawab. In this context Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai's³ comment on the nature of the zamindars is quite apt:

".....they are a set of men faithless to a high degree, short-sighted, impatient of controul, ever ready, on the least appearance of revolution, to turn their backs on their masters, and to forget the most important favours received at their hands, losing no opportunity to execute all the mischief which occasion presents, and on that account, as well on account of their strange and inconsistent character....."

1. Vide infra, 1159-1160.

2. Vide infra, 176-178.

Mir Jafar's pledge not to exact more from the zamindars than what had been fixed by Murshid Quli Khan must have contributed to the zamindars' leaning towards him (S.C.C. May 17, 1757, R/A,I).

3. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir II, 393-394; See also J. Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788, para 8, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 744.

The growth of the greater zamindaris is to be examined in this context. The articles by Cohn¹ on the balance of power in the Banaras region in the eighteenth century, and Mishra's thesis on the Banaras Raj², would suggest that the growth of major zamindaris was achieved with no reference to the policies of the Nawabs of Oudh and in no sense with their encouragement. The abuse of chakladari powers by the bigger zamindars may well have been equally at the cost of and against the will of the Nawabs of Bengal.

It may also be enquired whether the growth of the new class of major zamindars stemmed solely from economic circumstances and the specialities of the revenue system of Bengal. It seems probable that the peculiar military situation also played a part in determining the power and privileges of the zamindars. Because of the somewhat distinctive physiography and the political condition of the subah, the Mughals had to lean heavily on the military assistance of the local chiefs.³ The growth of larger zamindaris, with greater forces was perhaps in part a response to the military as much as financial needs of the Nawabs.

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1. B.S.Cohn, "Political Systems in Eighteenth century India: The Banaras Region", J.A.O.S., 1962, 314-315; "Structural Change in Indian Rural Society - 1596-1885", R.E.Frykenberg, (ed.), The Land Control and Social Structure.....85.
 2. K.P.Mishra, The Administration and Economy of the Banaras Region (1738-1795).
 3. Vide infra, Chapter IV.

Moreover, in considering the validity of Calkins' argument it is necessary to ask whether the growth of some zamindaris and decline of others was as new as he suggests. Of the greater zamindaris in the eighteenth century Bengal, only three - Rajshahi, Muktagacha and Momenshahi are the creation of Murshid Quli Khan. Karim lists a number of the great zamindaris whose rise began well before Murshid Quli's tenure of subahdari.¹ From moderate territorial possessions large estates were built up by marriage, piecemeal purchase and inheritance. Machination, bribery, and even force were resorted to whenever they were found expedient. The lesser zamindars often felt the brunt of their aggressive attitude. The rise and decline of zamindaris might have been accelerated by the waning of the imperial power, and to some extent by the revenue regulations of Murshid Quli Khan, but the process was not a new one.

The transfer of landed interest was already in motion from the first Mughal conquest of Bengal. The Mughal rulers accepted the nominal submission of the semi-autonomous frontier Rajas of Bishnupur, Chandrakona, Pachet, Birbhum and Susing, and the numerous 'Jungle-mahal' chiefs of Midnapur, on being assured of payment of tribute or peshkash.² The

1. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....92.

2. J.Grant. Historical & Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 184, 196, 198; J.Graham to Fergusson, March 12, 1767, B.D.R.Midnapur I, 115; E.Baber to Hastings, Feb.6, 1773, B.D.R.Midnapur IV, 106-107.

remaining chiefs, mostly of the interior were either reduced to submission or replaced. At the end of the campaigns against the 'Barabhuiyas' as well as the rebellious Afghan chiefs, the Mughal generals made new revenue contracts with the dependable soldiers, adventurers and native revenue agents who had come to their assistance.¹ Lands taken from the territories of the fallen chiefs were distributed among them. This accounts for the rise of the zamindaris of Putiya², Chanchra,³ Naldanga⁴, Bikrampur⁵, and many others in the seventeenth century. The chaklahs Fathpur, Kazirhat, Kankina ceded to the Mughals by the Raja of Kuch Bihar in 1711⁶ formed the nuclei of the zamindaris of Fathpur, Bamandanga, Panga, Manthana, Gharialdanga,⁷ Kazirhat, Mahipur, Tusvandar, Tepa, Dimla⁸ and Baikunthapur⁹. Most of the assignees of these estates were

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1. T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 20, 23.
 2. B.D.G., Rajshahi, 177; N.K.Bhattachah, "Bengal Chiefs' struggle for Independence in the reign of Akbar & Jahangir", B.P.P., 1928, 36.
 3. Vide infra, 74.
 4. J.Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 55; S.C. Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihasa, II, 462-463.
 5. Y.Gupta, Bikrampur Itihasa, 129.
 6. J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 377.
 7. All belonged to chaklah Fathpur and afterwards formed parts of Rangpur District.
 8. Previously belonged to chaklah Kazirhat and later on were included in the District of Rangpur.
 9. In Jalpaiguri District.

the relations, revenue agents or army officers of the Kuch Bihar Raja.¹ Subsequent to the conquest of Chittagong from the Arakanese in 1666, lands were again distributed among the officials of the former rulers, the Mughals and also the military followers who went to Chittagong in the train of the Mughal army.² Thereafter the gradual process of the reclamation of waste lands in the district led to the creation of numerous petty estates.³

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries provided remarkable openings for the zamindarship in Bengal. The anxiety of Emperor Aurangzeb to consolidate his position in the remote province of Bengal led to the conferment of zamindari rights on many parties.⁴ So did the policy of Murshid Quli Khan to secure an increasing and punctilious flow of revenues to the centre. The zamindaris of Seoraphuli,⁵ Burdwan, Silbersa⁶, Rokunpur,⁷ Rajshahi, Muktagatcha⁸ and Mominshahi⁹

1. J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 377; A.A.A.Khan Chaudhuri, A History of Kuch Bihar I, 269-371.
2. H.J.S.Cotton, Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, 3-4; A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 309-311.
3. H.J.S.Cotton, Memorandum.....79-80; A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 196-198, 200-201.
4. C.W.B.Rous, Dissertation.....39.
5. In Hugli District.
6. In Bogra District.
7. In Murshidabad District.
8. In Mymensingh District.
9. In Mymensingh District (Mominshahi was the former name of parganah Mymensingh).

belong to the genre that came into being and grew as a result of the policies discussed above. It is interesting to note that the creation of zamindaris during this period was mainly centred around the Hindus who manned the revenue department as ganungos, chaudhuris, diwans and naibs.

Thus the long process of conquest, assimilation and subsequent need for a stable and loyal financial group led to the emergence of the zamindars as an indispensable element of government machinery in Bengal. The policy of making the principal zamindars immediately responsible to the Khalsa for the imperial share of the revenues, added to their power and position. The frontiers of their influence extended beyond their territories. Government employments offered to the promising zamindars wide scope for making their marks in the court, and abusing their official positions to further their own cause. Thus the process of 'change from revenue-managers to landlord' was complete by the middle of the eighteenth century.¹

The economic drain from the subah to meet the increasing imperial demand was worsened by the Maratha raids. As no assistance was forthcoming from the decaying imperial government, the Nawab facing a serious menace leaned more and

1. B.H. Baden-Powell, The Land-Systems....I, 183-186.

more on the zamindars' financial help,¹ and more so on their military assistance. At a certain stage of the Maratha invasion Alivardi Khan used the influence of the Raja of Burdwan for a settlement with the Maratha leader Baskar Pandit.² In the altered political situation of the country considerable zamindars had ample opportunity to influence the political affairs of the subah. Their support for the Nawabs hinged mainly on the grant of a broad measure of autonomy to them and non-intervention in their territorial aggrandizement. The less powerful zamindars were, however, removed for default in payment and their zamindaris given to favourites of the Nawabs or of the faujdars.³ There are instances where the hereditary rights of lawful heirs were sacrificed to dispense favour to political allies.⁴

Keeping in view the historical forces at work it may not be out of place to survey briefly the rise of a number of zamindaris.

The Nadia zamindari claiming origin in the eleventh century developed into one of the prime estates in Bengal in

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1. R.Becher's Minute, Dec.3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 3, 1770, II, 7; C.Stewart, History of Bengal.....,491; J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 449.
 2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir I, 382.
 3. B.R.C. April 6, 1773, R49/39; J.Grant, An Enquiry into the Nature of Zemindary Tenures.....89-90; B.D.G.Midnapur,225.
 4. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M. Oct.16, 1770, P.C.C.R.M.Dec. 31, 1770, II, 144; Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....158.

the eighteenth century. Its originator Bhattanarayan, the chief of the five Brahmins who had come to Bengal at the invitation of King Adisur, created an estate out of lands he received as grants and purchased himself.¹ Biswanath, one of his descendants was the first to be acknowledged by the Muslim rulers as the raja on condition of payment of an annual tribute.² Kasinath, one of the lineage of Biswanath was put to death and his patrimony confiscated by Emperor Akbar for an act of violence by him. Kasinath's posthumous son Ram founded a new estate with the property he inherited from his foster father.³ The family came to prominence during the time of Durgadas, son of Ram. The then governor of the subah in appreciation of Durgadas's merit appointed him a muharrir of the ganungo daftar at Hugli.⁴ However, Durgadas Bhavananda Majumdar soon gave up the post and returned to his estate at Palkabari.⁵ For Durgadas' military assistance to the Mughal general Man Singh against Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, Emperor Jahangir restored to him the confiscated

1. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R., 1872, LV, 86-87.

2. Ibid.; L.Ghose, The Modern History of Indian Chiefs, Rajahs, Zemindars.....II, 359.

3. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R., 1872, LV, 87-88.

4. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 196, 359.

5. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/60; The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R. 1872, LV, 88.

territory of his ancestor Kasinath. The Emperor also evinced his gratification by conferring on him the title of 'Maharaja'.¹ Thereafter the story of the Nadia zamindari is that of a gradual expansion by occasional receipt of gifts from the ruling authority, by purchase, gutchauy (exercise of official influence) and sometimes by the use of force.² The good relations maintained by the successive rajas with the Emperors went a long way to achieve their territorial expansion. For his acts of public utility Raja Rudra Raya received from the Emperor the parganahs of Kari and Juri.³ The most remarkable extension of the jurisdiction of the Nadia zamindari took place during the time of Raja Raghuram. Between the years 1722-1729 nine parganahs were added to the Nadia zamindari.⁴ Krishnachandra, son of Raghunandan enlarged the estate by the purchase of some parganahs.⁵ Bounded on the north by Murshidabad, the Bay of Bengal on the south, Dhulpura on the east and by the river Bhagirathi on the west, the Nadia zamindari at the time of Maharaja Krishnachandra (1728-1782) included 84 par-

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1. K.Raya, Kshitisavamsavalicharita, 79-80, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R. 1872, LV, 89.
 2. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66; K.Raya, Kshitisavamsaralicharita, 5; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R., 1872, LV, 91-92, 94-95.
 3. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R., 1872, LV, 92; L.Ghose, The Modern History of Indian Chiefs, Rajahs, Zemindars.....II, 360.
 4. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66.
 5. Ibid.

ganahs extending over 3,151 sq.miles.¹ It is evident from the history of this long process of growth that the pattern postulated by Calkins may need modification.

The Dinajpur zamindari, another apex estate, originated, according to tradition in the early seventeenth century. It started with one Kasi, a Kayastha possessing six parganahs.² Kasi's successor Srimanta Datta acquired considerable lands abusing his position as the naib-danungo. His elevated position as the zamindar of sarkar Pinjara was recognized by Emperor Shah Jahan.³ Before his death Srimanta Datta divided his estate between his son and daughter. The son died childless; Sukdev, the grandson by Srimanta's daughter inherited the entire property.⁴ The estate was subsequently enlarged by the patrimony of Sukdev, whose grandfather Devakinandan Ghosh was the diwan of the Bardhankuthi Raja and holder of a seven-anna share of the Idrakpur estate.⁵ Within a few years the Dinajpur estate grasped fifty-five out

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1. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandr'er Granthavali, 7; J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 249.
 2. E.V.Westmacott, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Dinajpur Raj", C.R.1872, LV,205; B.H.Baden-Powell, "Origin of the zamindari Estates in Bengal", Q.J.E. 1896, 40.
 3. F.Buchanan, Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of the District of Dinajpur, 254.
 4. E.V.Westmacott, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Dinajpur Raj", C.R., 1872, LV, 211.
 5. Ibid., 211-212; P.C.Sen, Bagurar Itihasa II, 123.

of the total of ninety-eight parganahs belonging to the District of Dinajpur. Some of these were purchased from the defaulting neighbours, a few were acquired by questionable means and even by violence.¹ Raja Prannath, during his long (1682-1723) tenure of zamindari annexed by 'force or fraud' a large number of neighbouring small zamindaris to the Dinajpur estate.² About the year 1745 Raja Ramnath of Dinajpur and Raja Ramkanta of Rajshahi became involved in a fight over the possession of Khatta parganah belonging to one Eladat Khan. Consequently Raja Ramnath got possession of thirteen parts of the disputed parganah whereas his rival had to content himself with only three parts.³ Following Raja Ramnath's death (circa 1760), his eldest son Boidyanath succeeded to the zamindari but could not hold it for long. His jealous half-brother Cantanath was intriguing to remove him. When Boidyanath was confined in the fort of Mungher for his inability to meet the increasing demand by Nawab Mir Qasim,⁴ Cantanath managed to persuade the Nawab to confer the zamindari on him.⁵

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1. F.Buchanan, Geographical, Statistical & Historical Description of the District of Dinajpur, 256-257; B.H.Baden-Powell, "Origin of the Zamindari Estates in Bengal", O.J.E., 1896, 54-56.
 2. E.V.Westmacott, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Dinajpur Raj", CR., 1872, LV, 213.
 3. H.Cottrell to R.Becher, Jan.17,1771, P.C.C.R.M. Feb.4,1771, III,103; C.W.B.Rous to S.Middleton, Feb.14,1771,P.C.C.R.M. Feb.18,1771, IV, 4.
 4. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66; See also R.Becher to S.C. Aug.26,1769, S.C.c.R/A, 9.
 5. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66.

A letter from Vansittart read:¹

".....Bedinant the present Rajah having been deposed by Meer Cossim was reestablished by Mir Jafar in opposition to Cantoonaute - who had been appointed by Meer Cossim and sided with him in the course of the war....."

This piece of information suggests that Nawab Mir Qasim needed loyal supporters for the consolidation of his position in the subah and hence his interest in Cantanath. The flourishing Dinajpur zamindari consisted of 121 parganahs in 1765.

The Chanchra (or Yusoufpur) estate traced its origin to one Bhaveswara Roy, a Kayastha, who came to Bengal in the wake of the Mughal campaign towards the end of the sixteenth century. Bhaveswar was rewarded for his military services with the assignment of the parganahs of Sayedpur, Amidpur, Mudagacha and Mallikpur which formed parts of the territory of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore.³ Bhaveswar Ray's son Mahtap who assisted the Mughal troops under Man Singh was confirmed as the zamindar and succeeded to his patrimony.⁴ It was from his successor Kandarpa Ray's time in the first half of the seventeenth century that the new acquisition of lands started

1. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M., Oct. 16, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 144.

2. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 332.

3. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 57; L. Ghose, The Modern History of Indian Chiefs, Rajahs, Zemindars.....II 316.

4. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 57; B.D.G. Jessore, 143.

on a large scale. He extended the zamindari south-westward by gaining possession of five parganahs.¹ His successor Manohar Ray (1649-1705) then acquired many more neighbouring parganahs. He apparently obtained possession from the subahdar the authority for collecting and paying the revenues of all the surrounding smaller zamindaris, well before the Jama-Kamil-Tumari of 1722. By a stroke of fortune as Westland puts it, or perhaps under Murshid Quli Khan's stricter collection as Karim argues, many of these estates began to default in revenue at this time. In accordance with the revenue practice, Manohar Roy, by paying the arrears due on them, and engaging for the future revenue contracts, obtained possession of many of those parganahs. Thus between the years 1682-1703 he acquired some ten parganahs.² During his successor Krishna Roy (1705-1729), two more parganahs were acquired from defaulting zamindars, another was purchased from the Nadia zamindar, while some smaller parganahs were annexed by questionable means³. Following his death the estate was divided between his successors, Suk Dev and Syam Sundara. In the twelve-anna share Suk Dev's line was continued by his son Nilkanta. But the four-anna share became untenanted sometime in between 1756-1758, because of the deaths of Syam Sundar and

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1. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore 58; B.D.G. Jessore, 143.
 2. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 58; S.C. Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihasa II, 481, 483, 486.
 3. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 59; S.C. Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihasa II, 488, 489.

his infant son. This share was transferred, on request, to one Mirza Salah-ud-Din whom the Company had dispossessed of his lands near Calcutta.¹ Since the major portion of the four-anna share of the Chanchra zamindari was within Sayedpur parganah, it came to be known as the Sayedpur estate. While the twelve-anna share of the Chanchra zamindari, also called the Yusoufpur estate for the inclusion of the Yusoufpur parganah within it, was inherited by Srikanta in 1764.²

The rise and prosperity of the Rokunpur zamindari exemplify the abuse of official position. The estate had its nucleus in the purchase of some lands in the home District of Burdwan in the early seventeenth century by Bangabinod³, the chief qanungo of the subah.⁴ Following Emperor Aurangzeb's policy of appointing two chief qanungos in Bengal, two nephews of Bangabinod were appointed to the posts after his death.⁵ The first mention of the Rokunpur zamindar is found in the revenue settlement of Shujanddin, in the name of Qanungo Shivna-

1. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....158.

The English Council turned down Nawab Mir Jafar's request to allow Mirza Salah-ud-Din to continue in his zamindari inasmuch as it was the most vital part of the ceded lands south of Calcutta (S.C.C.January 4, 1758, R/A, 2).

2. J.Westland A Report on the District of Jessore, 60; B.D.G., Jessore, 143-144.

3. Brother of Bhagwan, A Kayastha, who was appointed the first chief qanungo of Bengal.

4. K.P.Bandopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa, 102.

5. Ibid., 102-103.

rayan, son of Qanungo Darpanarayan. The reason for assigning zamindari right of such an extensive area to Qanungo Shivnarayan is difficult to ascertain. In the opinion of Grant¹ the act was,

".....either as matter of special favour, or more probably as a favour for the lesser portion assigned to him of the russoom, or usual commission of 2½ per cent, on the revenue, when this emolument of office came to be divided unequally between the two branches of the same family, for the political purpose of creating rivalry, and by that means, lessening the power of either to abuse the highest confidential trust under government."

The very fact that the Rokunpur zamindari lay scattered over different and far off districts without a common border testify that the qanungos managed to pick up 'what they thought most likely to prove advantageous from the different districts'.² The zamindari when passed to Lakshminarayan, successor of Shivnarayan, comprised an area of 600 sq. miles, dispersed in eight chaklahs.³ The Rokunpur estate acquired from Selbersa zamindari alone lands worth rental of Rs.8000.⁴ According to Pravaschandra Sen,⁵ in early eighteenth

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1. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 197.
 2. R.Becher to S.C.March 1, 1770, S.C.C. March 29, 1770, R/A, 10.
 3. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 385-386.
 4. P.C.C.K., July 11, 1772, I-III (in one), 48.
 5. P.C.Sen, Bagurar Itihasa II, 114.

century, Qanungo Darpanarayan farmed one-anna portion of Selbersa zamindari in favour of his son Shivnarayan, and named it the Shivpur parganah after him. Referring to the forcible occupation of parts of the zamindari of Haveli Tandeh by the Rokunpur zamindars, Harwood, the Supervisor of Rajmahal commented:¹ "As the richer Zemindars and Talookdars too often take advantage of the less considerable, and increase their own possession by an undue exertion of their power,.....". One of the richest zamindaris in Bengal, the Rokunpur estate comprised sixty-nine whole or broken parganahs in 1769.²

The chaudhuri zamindari of Momenshahi parganah owes its rise mainly to the favour shown by Murshid Quli Khan. The family traced back its descent from Shusen, one of the five Brahmins, who came to Bengal during the tenth century.³ The erudition of some members of the family drew the attention of the Emperors as well as that of the subahdars. Some of them were recruited to the imperial service from time to time.⁴ This opened a vista of opportunities for the general prosperity

1. W.Harwood to C.C.R.M. Jan. 21, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. Jan. 24, 1771, III, 90.

2. R.Becher to H.Verelst, Nov. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Dec. 7, 1769, R/A, 9.

3. B.D.G., Mymensingh, 155; S.K.Ray Chaudhuri, Maymansingher Varendra Brahmin Zamindar, I, 2.

4. S.K.Ray Chaudhuri, Maymansingher Varendra Brahmin Zamindar I, 6-8.

of the family. The first substantial territorial acquisition by the family took place during the time of Jai Narayan Talapatra, the ganungo, in the first decade of the eighteenth century. As a reward for some important services, Murshid Quli Khan granted to him the zamindari of Taraf Karai and tappa Hindi¹. The Nawab also promoted Srikrishna Talapatra, the accomplished son of Jai Narayan to the post of the ganungo.² Srikrishna rendered valuable services to the Nawab in subduing some defying zamindars in parganah Mominshahi. For such an act he was rewarded with the offices of chaudhuri and zamindar of parganah Mominshahi.³ Chand Ray, son of Srikrishna, was the chief of the Khalsa department and exercised great influence at the Court of Nawab Alivardi Khan. At his intermediation the extensive Jafarshahi parganah⁴ was added to the zamindari of Srikrishna.⁵ Reclaiming vast tract of waste lands which abound in Mymensingh District, alluring with generous offers peasants from Western Bengal to settle, Srikrishna built up an extensive estate, steadily increasing in its resources.⁶

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1. Taraf Karai and tappa Hindi are included in modern Bogra District:
F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B.40; J.N.Sarkar(ed.), History of Bengal, II, 414.
 2. S.K.Roy Chaudhuri, Maymansingher Varendra Brahmin Zamindar I, 16-18.
 3. Ibid., 18-19; J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 414-415.
 4. Situated in the District of Mymensingh.
 5. J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 415; B.D.G.Mymensingh 155
 6. S.K.Roy Chaudhuri, Maymansingher Varendra Brahmin Zamindar I, 29-33.

The Rajnagar zamindari of Maharaja Rajballabh originating in the 1720s affords another typical illustration of the formation of a zamindari by a government official. A Vaidya by caste, Rajballabh was the son of Krishnajivana, a muharrir of the nawara mahal and later on the majumdar (treasurer)¹. This official position enabled Krishnachandra Majumdar to put his family in a stable footing and acquire a fortune.² Rajballabh started his career as a muharrir of the ganungo department in 1717³. From that petty official position he rose to the post of deputy of the Nawab of Dacca (1756-1757), the diwan, and subsequently the Subahdar of Munger. His son Krishnadas was appointed a minister of Nawab Mir Jafar.⁴ Their elevation to the coveted posts undoubtedly accounts for the expansion and flourishing state of the Rajnagar zamindari from its modest origin. With the sporadic acquisitions of lands from the Districts of Dacca, Faridpur, Bakarganj and Tippera, Rajballabh formed the new parganah of Rajnagar.⁵ In the Jama-Tumari-

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1. A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 21fn; J.Wise, Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal, 317-318.
 2. Y.Gupta, Bikrampur Itihasa, 137.
 3. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 150; Y. Gupta, Bikrampur Itihasa, 139.
 4. H.Beveridge, The District of Bakarganj, 96-97; J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 471; B.D.G.Bakarganj, 20.
 5. F.D.Ascoli, Final Report on the Survey & Settlement Operations in the District of Dacca, 55.

Tashkhis of 1728, the Rajnagar parganah was entered with a jama of Rs.86,298.¹ It is interesting to note that the proprietor's name has been given as Lakshminarayan,² after the name of his household god.³ The reason for this is not far to seek. Occupying government posts, Rajballabh created the estate in the name of god Lakshminarayan with a view to avoiding complications. His enviable position at Dacca as the deputy of the Nawab, and that of the peshkar of the nawara enabled him to reap a rich harvest of the unlimited resources of the country which lay at his command. In 1753 Buzurgumedpur estate was taken over by Rajballabh after the death of its zamindar Aga Baquer.⁴ The gradual extension of the zamindari around Buzurgumedpur was effected by the reclamation of waste lands in the Sundarbans.⁵ The Rajnagar Rajas also took to arms in their territorial aggrandizement. The rivalry between Raja Rajballabh and Imaduddin Munshi of Rasulpur parganah⁶ over the possession of Kartikpur culminated in a sanguinary battle with a large loss of lives on both sides.⁷ The

1. J.Grant, Historical & Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 352.

2. Ibid.

3. S.A.B. V, 222; A.N.Ray, Faridpur Itihasa II, 29.

4. B.D.G., Bakarganj, 20; H.Beveridge, The District of Bakarganj, 96.

5. H.Beveridge, The District of Bakarganj, 95.

6. In the District of Faridpur.

7. A.N.Ray, Faridpur Itihasa II, 49-50.

disputed parganah eventually passed to Gopalkrishna, son and successor of Rajballabh.¹

The annals of the growth of these great territorial zamindaris in the interior and settled areas of Bengal, were much in line with the traditional pattern of gradual accumulation of lands in the hands of some influential families occupying key posts mainly in the revenue department. The history of the rise of the Birbhum, and Burdwan zamindaris on the other hand, exemplify the expansion of the Pathan and Rajput zamindaris in the Western borderlands of Bengal, mainly by virtue of military enterprise.

The Birbhum zamindari traced its origin in the early seventeenth century to the capture of power from the last Hindu Bir Raja of Nagor. The Pathan family of Shams Khan had emigrated from Kashgarh during the time of Emperor Akbar² and entered the service of Raja Bir Singh³. As the diwan of the raja, Shams Khan and his sons wielded enormous influence in the Kingdom. Subsequently Junaid Khan, son of Shams Khan killed Raja Bir Singh, overthrew the family of his master and appropriated the territory.⁴ Realizing the advantage of having

1. W.Douglas to B.R., April 6, 1790, B.R.P. April 29, 1790, R71/24.

2. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.) The Fifth ReportII, 196; B.D.G.Birbhum, 10-11.

3. B.M.Add. MSS. 6586, 139; W.W.Hunter, The Annals.....430.

4. B.M.Add. MSS. 6586, 139; W.W.Hunter, The Annals430-431.

a loyal zamindar in a region of strategic importance, Murshid Quli Khan confirmed Raja Asadullah Khan, a lineage of Shams Khan, to the zamindari of Birbhum on condition of paying peshkash to the Nawab.¹ Acting as warden of the marches Raja Asadullah and his successors extended their jurisdiction like true militarists.² As late as the year 1760, Birbhum Rajas were found carrying on depredations in some parganahs of the neighbouring Burdwan zamindari.³

The genesis of the Burdwan estate, the richest zamindari in the eighteenth century Bengal centres round Sangam Ray, a Kapur Kshatriya from the Punjab who had settled down in Baikunthapur, in the outskirts of Burdwan in early seventeenth century.⁴ Sangam Ray established a flourishing business which also included money lending.⁵ But it was not until the time of his grandson Abu Ray that the family came to prominence. As a reward for rendering timely assistance to the faujdar of Burdwan, Abu Ray was given the posts of chaudhuri and Kotwal of Gowanee, a town in Burdwan and parganah Bazar

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1. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 46; J.Grant, Historical & Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 196.
 2. P.C.C.R.M. Feb.5, 1771, III, 124-125.
 3. Raja Tilakchand to Burdwan Council, Sept. 1760, J.Long, Selections503.
 4. B.D.G.Burdwan, 26; D.K.Mukherji, "The Annals of Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1910, 119-120.
 5. B.D.G.,Burdwan, 26-27; D.K.Mukherji, "The Annals of Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1910, 119-120.

Ibrahimpur and Bekanee Bazar¹. Babu Ray who succeeded his father as the chaudhuri, laid the real foundation of the Burdwan zamindari. He leased parganah Burdwan and three other mahals on the dismissal of their former zamindar.² The territory was further extended with the acquisitions of new estates by Krishna Ram, the grandson of Babu Ray. In 1694, Emperor Aurangzib confirmed Krishnaram as the zamindar and chaudhuri of Burdwan.³ About this time Subha Singh, zamindar of Chitwa-Barda accompanied by the Raja of Bishnupur and the talukdar of Chandrakona, and assisted by the Afghan chief Rahim Khan took up arms against the rising power of the zamindars of Burdwan. The revolt of Subha Singh though quelled with the help of the then subahdar, cost the life of Krishna Ram Ray.⁴ His son Jagat Ram Ray was restored to his patrimony and a part of the estate of Subha Singh was assigned to him. When Jagat Ram died in 1108 A.H. (1696-1697), the zamindari had grown considerably in size.⁵ During the time of his adventurous son Kirtti Chandra/^{the} neighbouring parganahs of Chitwa-Barda,

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1. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R. 1872, LIV, 173.
 2. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66.
 3. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R. 1872, LIV, 173; D.K.Mukherjee, "The Annals of Burdwan Raj", C.R. 1910, 122.
 4. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 5-22; D.K.Mukherjee, "The Annals of Burdwan Raj", C.R. 1910, 122-123.
 5. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R. 1872, LIV, 174.

Bhursut, Manoharshahi were annexed to the ancestral zamindari. According to the Diwan's report,¹ Nawab Azim-al-Shan and his successor Murshid Quli Khan dispossessed the zamindars of Manoharshahi, Bhursut, and Chitwa-Barda for their irregularity in payment and rebellious nature and transferred their zamindaris to Raja Kirttichandra Ray of Burdwan. This piece of information, however, is not corroborated by others. "Kirthi Chandra Rai was", remarked Ghose²,

"apparently a sort of Rudolph of Hapsburgh in the family. Fighting with the Rajas of Chandrakona and Barda, near Ghatal, he defeated them completely and dispossessed them of their estates, he seized and appropriated the several zamindaris of the Raja of Balghara.....in the Hughli District, and, with a similar object probably, waged war against the Raja of Bishnupur....." 3

During Raja Kirttichandra's time, the Burdwan zamindari grasped the major part of the Bansberia estate. When Raja Govindadev

1. B.R.C. April, 7, 1786, R50/66.

2. L.Ghose, The Modern History of Indian Chiefs, Rajahs, Zemindars.....II, 6.

3. The view finds support in Nawab Mir Qasim when he wrote:

"The zemindar of Chutwar Burda and Chunder Coomer [Chandrakona] has been in that station for many years, but is now deprived of his country by the Burdwan Rajah, who takes to himself all the advantages that arise from it and will not return it to him, and therefore it is my intention to send for the old zemindar and give him a surpan, make him happy and reinstating him in the zemindary. This will be one means of distressing the Burdwan Rajah"

{J. Long, Selections.....508}; See also "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj". C.R. 1872, LIV, 174.

of Bansberia died childless Manik Chand, the diwan of Burdwan petitioned the Nawab to transfer the heirless zamindari to his master concealing the fact that the wife of the deceased raja was pregnant.¹ Nawab Alivardi could not disoblige a powerful ally in the face of the immense pressure from the Marathas.² Accordingly Raja Kirttichandra's forces occupied the major part of the zamindari in the teeth of armed resistance by the Rani of Bansberia.³ The Burdwan zamindari also saw its expansion during the time of Chitrasen Ray, son and successor of Raja Kirttichandra.⁴

The growth of the Burdwan zamindari from 1657 until the restoration of Jagat Ram Ray by Murshid Quli Khan, antedated the policy of creating chaklahdars, or in Calkins' phrase the policy of partnership. The forcible enlargement of the estate under Kirttichandra and Chitrasen Ray, however, seems to have occurred with some references to the policy of the Nawabs. The Maratha invasion heightened the strategic importance of the zamindari enhancing indirectly the power and influence of the Rajas of Burdwan. By granting the titles of 'Raja' on Chitrasen Ray in 1744 and 'Rajadhiraj Bahadur'

1. S.C.Dey, The Bansberia Raj, 32-33.

2. B.R.C. April 6, 1773, R41/39.

3. S.C.Dey, The Bansberia Raj, 33-34; W.K.Firminger, "A Note on Bansberia", B.P.P., 1908, 76. Raja Nrisinhader, the posthumous son of Raja Govindader was restored to his ancestral zamindari during the time of Hastings.

4. B.R.C. April 7, 1786, R50/66; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1872, LIV, 174.

on Tilakchandra Ray in 1765, the Mughal Emperors recognized and legitimated an acquisition of land and power demanded by the exigency of the period.

Thus the origin and development of the zamindari tenure in Bengal is to be traced back to the age-old revenue practice of the country and the structure of the Mughal fiscal system. In this perspective Baden-Powell's remark¹ that "the tenure of the 'Zamíndár' of Bengal represents a late - if not the latest - development in land-interest, and was the localized outcome of a dying and corrupt system of state management" does not stand scrutiny.

The changes in the politico-economic affairs of the subah during the mid-eighteenth century had, however, repurcussions on the landed aristocracy. In fact, the pattern of landholding rested on the extent of the authority exercised by the government. The zamindars required "at all times the strong grasp of a curbing hand". But the period following Aurangzeb's death foreshadowed the gradual decline of the central control particularly over a distant province such as Bengal.² Moreover, since the death of Alivardi Khan, the government of the subah of Bengal became, with the exception of Mir Qasim's tenure of office³, less effective in

1. B.H.Baden-Powell, The Land SystemsI,3.

2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir I, 269.

3. H.Vansittart, A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal, III, 381-382.

exerting its authority on the zamindars. Taking advantage of the unsettled political situation throughout the length and breadth of the subah, the zamindars tried to assert their position.¹ The powerful zamindars even went so far as to ignore Nawab Mir Qasim's demand for additional contributions.² The growing polarization of political and economic interests characterized the relation between the powerful zamindars and the government.

The triumph of the English at Plassey in 1757 not only shattered the political supremacy of the Nawab but also heralded an era of change in the economic system of the country. The new Nawab Mir Jafar failed to pay the promised sum to the Company to make good the loss sustained by it at the time of the siege of Calcutta by the late Nawab.³ He was obliged to cede in early 1758, the districts of Nadia. Burdwan, Hugli, Hijli and some zamindaris of Dacca by way of redeeming the debts of the Company.⁴ Such "unusual phenomenon of the

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1. In 1768 Naib Diwan Sitab Ray reported from Bihar:
 "The zamindars of the province have long been characterised by a seditious and ungovernable spirit, continually breaking forth into insurrections, and never proceeding from any real grievance. Besides, who is able to calculate so well as to mark out what zamindars will revolt and become unruly or whether they will revolt in the middle or the end of the year?" (C.P.C. II, 922).
 2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir, II, 394-395.
 3. S.C.C., May 17 and 19, 1757, R/A, I; N.K.Sinha (ed.), The History of Bengal, 29.
 4. S.C.C., Dec. 8, 1757 and Jan. 21, 1758, R/A, I, II; A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 23.

assignment of the revenue of extensive territories to the English was an indication of the deepening economic crisis of the state."¹ But the move had deeper implications. It prepared the way to pass to the Company the direct administrative control of the country. In 1760, Nawab Mir Jafar at the behest of the Company reluctantly consented to appoint Omichund as diwan of the Raja of Burdwan.² This act infringed the customary autonomy of the zamindar in his internal administration.

"The traditional image of the Nawab's government was seriously injured by this measure, for not only was MirJafar prevented from exercising his legitimate authority in the assigned districts, but also the English, particularly at Dacca, used their power to extend their trade privileges at the cost of the Nawab's own revenues." ³

The inability of Nawab Mir Jafar's bankrupt government to fulfil all financial demands of the Company precipitated an agreement with Mir Qasim, the next prospective candidate to the vice-regal throne. The English pledged to champion the cause of Mir Qasim if he would cede to them the districts of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur (yielding about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total revenues of Bengal). The assignment of the three districts

1. N.K.Sinha (ed.), The History of Bengal, 26.

2. Hastings to Clive, Jan. 19, 1760, B.M.Add. MSS. 29096, 201; See also the petition from the Rani of Burdwan, B.R.C. Dec.27, 1774, R49/48.

3. A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 23-24.

on jagirdari tenure to the Company in 1760 by Nawab Mir Qasim¹ was a departure from the normal revenue practice of the subah. Finally, by the grant of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the Company by Emperor Shah Alam on August 12, 1765, the Company was empowered to manage the revenues of the subah in return for an annual tribute of Rs.26,00000.² Thus the period of partnership between the Mughals and the zamindars ended yielding place to a new relationship. The Company controlled the revenue affairs of the country and the Nawab remained as a figure-head.

In the previous set-up the zamindars on the strength of the imperial farman enjoyed their zamindari rights paying fixed sums assessed on their estates. The subahdar, the diwan-i-subah and other imperial representatives who supervised the affairs of the government were not contractors of the imperial revenues. Though the political situation of the subah changed to a certain degree during Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, the zamindars still remained the contractors of the public revenue enjoying the "intermediate profits between the Ryot and the Government."³ But with the cession of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur and the transfer of the Diwani to the

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1. B.P.C. Nov. 10, 1760, ERI / 32, 644-645; A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 18-19.
 2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 9; C.U.Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads II, 241.
 3. P.Francis' Minute quoted in R.Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, 110-111.

Company, which had entered into a contract to defend the subah and pay a fixed sum, zamindars who stood hitherto at the interface between the government and the rai-yats, were being replaced by the Company itself. The status of the former intermediary revenue agents was made to recede consciously or unconsciously to that of the underfarmers - enjoying their position at the pleasure of the Company. Thenceforward the Company was to pay a fixed sum and enjoy all benefits arising from the domain granted to them by the imperial farman.

Consolidating its newly acquired power and position, the Company exerted an effective pressure on the zamindar class, unforeseen during the days of the decaying Mughal government or the feeble government of the Nawabs. The traditional pattern of the zamindari system was being altered. Emphasis had moved away from the notion of the hereditary rulers to mere revenue farmers. To quote Khan¹, "The actions of the Company's servants put the profits - and more important still - power and influence of the zamindars in jeopardy". The frequent imposition of amils or sazawals (land stewards) in the zamindaris², and the leasing of zamindari lands to the highest

1. A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 276.

2. R.Becher to S.C. May 24, 1769, L.C.B. I, XI-XII; G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher, S.C.C. Oct. 12, 1769, R/A, 9.

bidders¹ or keeping them Khas² with little regard to the customary rights of the zamindars³ precipitated before long a crisis in the zamindari tenure. To make matters worse, a devastating famine visited the country undoubtedly causing strain on the economy of the zamindars in the badly hit areas.⁴ In 1770, Becher⁵ outlined the change in the position of the zamindars:

".....Be it remember'd also the situation these Zemindars &ca found themselves in when under the Government of the Soubahs⁶, who tho' arbitrary and despotic to the highest degree, left the zemindar to live in a state of power, parade & independence in their zemindarries, (demanding from them except on emergent occasions) only the punctual payment of the Malguzzary settled annually to be paid to the Government, indeed the policy then pursued, seems to have been to allow the zemindars to grow rich, & the Soubahs knew they could when necessary on extraordinary occasions draw their resources from them, which they experienced, the truth of, by obliging the zemindars to pay large sums when the Country was invaded by foreign enemies, or when the Soubahs chose to exercise the despotic power which seldom happened. As certain it is that since the English have been in possession of the Dewannee, the zemindars have been reduced to a much inferior situation to that they enjoyed under the Soubahs, & that in general they

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1. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress of the Present State of the English Govt. in Bengal, 70; C.P.C.II, 1476; R.Wilmot to R.Becher, Oct.22,1770, P.C.C.R.M., Oct.29,1770, I,132; S.Middleton to C.C.K., July 14,1772, P.C.C.K., July 16, I-III (in one), 49.
 2. W.Harwood to C.C.R.M. Oct.28,1770, P.C.C.R.M., Nov.6, 1770, I, 170.
 3. Petition from the principal zamindars, B.R.C. Feb.15,1786, R50/64.
 4. S.C.C. April 28,1770, R/A,10; C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M. June 4, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. June 10,1771, V,253.
 5. R.Becher's Minute, Dec.3,1770,P.C.C.R.M. Dec.3, 1770,II,7.
 6. He meant the subahdars.

are now poor, when it is considered what numerous families and dependants they have to provide for; thus already reduced is it surprizing they should be very much alarmed when they see such strict scrutiny making into their remaining advantages, priviledges, & immunities, & are uncertain what we shall allow them to retain,....."

Being unable to respond quickly to the rigid revenue policy, a number of zamindars forfeited their zamindaris.

In fact, the early British authorities were posed with the problem "of breaking down a whole structure of living authority vested in the zamindar."¹ However, the many experiments in the revenue administration culminated in 1793 in the historic introduction of the permanent settlement with the zamindars, making them the actual proprietors enjoying absolute ownership in land as long as they did not default.

1. R. Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, 52.

CHAPTER III

THE ZAMINDARS AND THE REVENUE MANAGEMENT.

Among the host of duties performed by zamindars, foremost was the collection and punctual remittance of the revenue and in most cases it is this pivotal role that defined their relationship with the government. The sanads conferring zamindari rights categorically enjoined the function. The sanad¹ granted to Raja Ramkanta of Rajshahi zamindari in 1735-36 read that "he pay into the royal treasury the peishcush, etc., and the balances, according to Kistbundy;² and discharge year by year at the stated times and periods, the due rents, after receiving credit for muzcoorat³, nankar,⁴ etc. agreeable to usages."⁵ Ancillary to the principal duty of revenue collection, it was laid down,

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1. From J. Shore's Minute, April 1788 quoted in W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, xlvi-xlvii.
 2. Kistbandi - contract stating portions of the annual assessment, dates when due and like terms of the agreement.
 3. Muzkurat - items of deductions allowed to cover the zamindar's expenses of managing and collecting the revenues, fees and personal allowance of the zamindar, and some petty assignments for religious or charitable purposes.
 4. Subsistence allowance granted to the zamindar.
 5. See also the zamindari sanad granted to the East India Company in 1757, H. Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress....147

the zamindars should also "conciliate and encourage the ryots, and promote the advancement of cultivation, the improvement of the country, and the increase of its produce".¹ These responsibilities were assigned to the zamindars in order to ensure a regular and increasing income from a prosperous and contented peasantry.

The imperial revenue was largely made up of rents from arable land, uncultivated lands containing woods, groves, marshes and ponds. The taxes on the merchandise, and the commodities of the artisans, and the receipts from fines and forfeitures contributed also substantially to the revenue. The zamindars were to collect rents and taxes from these sources which may well be classified into three broad categories, namely, mal, sair and bazi-jama.²

Under the head mal comes land revenue. It included the duty on salt manufacture, income from orchards, and a few other minor sources of revenue. In fact, land revenue constituted such a major portion of the mal that the term came to signify almost exclusively rents from land.³

1. Sanad to Raja Ramkanta, from J. Shore's Minute April 1788, quoted in W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, xlvii.

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29,086, 1a.

3. Ibid; H.H. Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 322.

In most parts of Mughal India, land revenue was assessed as a certain share of the produce, usually $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gross produce.¹

The stipulated jama of the zamindars was decided upon not by a proper measurement of land nor by an assessment of the produce thereof, but by a sort of summary assessment known as nasag.² The zamindars in Bengal whether peshkashi or mal-wajibi, paid a fixed sum,³ which, however, was subject to arbitrary increase by the sovereign. The original revenue settlement framed on the basis of Todar Mal's Jama-tumari-Kamil⁴ was revised in the subsequent period taking into consideration the promotion of agriculture and the extension of the zamindaris. Though Murshid Quli is said to have his rent-roll prepared after the measurement of land,⁵ it is doubtful whether all parts of Bengal were covered.⁶

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1. W.H. Moreland, The Agrarian System.....135; I. Habib, The Agrarian System.....190-195.
 2. H.S. Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 122; I. Habib, The Agrarian System.....218.
 3. H.S. Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 141; Chahar Gulshan, J.N. Sarkar (tr.), The India of Aurangzeb, liv; A. Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....80-81.
 4. B.M. Add. MSS. 6586, 53a; B.M. Add. MSS. 29, 086, 1a, 4b.
 5. F. Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 44.
 6. A. Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....83.

Since it appeared impossible to make detailed assessment of land or its produce, it became customary to fix a lump-sum amount for the whole zamindari on the basis of a rough estimate of yields.¹

The revenue demand on the mal-wajibi zamindars was fixed on the cultivable lands. The zamindars were obliged to reclaim the waste lands and forests and were empowered to dispose of them.² The Mughal rulers by way of encouragement exempted such land from revenue payment till it reached a certain stage of development.³ The zamindars, perhaps unwilling to share with the government the augmented income from their estates, were not keen in large-scale reclamation of lands laying waste. The wastes, however, were extensively used as charity and religious endowments. In the absence of a vigorous administration waste lands when brought under the plough were concealed as far as possible from the notice of the government.⁴ The

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1. P.C.C.R.M., May 23, 1771, V, 187; Hastings' Minute, B.R.C., Nov. 12, 1776, R49/65; B.H. Baden-Powell, "Origin of Zamindari Estates in Bengal", Q.J.E., 1896, XI, 59.
 2. Deed of the purchase of the Calcutta zamindari, B.M. Add. MSS. 24,039, No. 39; See also F. Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 69,
 3. Reza Khan's Note quoted in N.K. Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 7-8;
The holder of the purchased waste land in Conkhole paid only two annas per bigha (P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 17, 1770, II, 91).
 4. A. Higginson to C.C.R.M., Oct. 8, and Nov. 24, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., I, II, 98, 15-16.

reclaimed land often passed by the name of Khamar, the¹
 produce of which was shared by the tillers and the zamindars.
 The Khamar land formed a permanent source of private income
 to the zamindars. The Dinajpur zamindari derived from its
Khamar lands an estimated income of Rs.30,000.² According
 to Vansittart, the Dinajpur Raja's profits from this source
 "are smaller than what most of the Zemindars enjoy."³ Hence
 it may be discerned that the real value of the big zamindaris⁴
 was usually much higher than that of their rentals.

The subahdars were aware of this fact and probably
 this actuated them to levy occasional abwabs or cesses on
 the zamindars. One of such abwabs, nazrana mukarrari was,
 in the words of Grant, "fixed pecuniary acknowledgements paid
 by the zemindars as farmers-general of the king's revenue
 virtually for improper remissions, indulgences, favour and
 protection; forbearance of hustabood investigations or
 privilege of being freed from the immediate superintendence
 of aumils; but ostensibly and formally, to defray the charge

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1. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....155; J.Shore's Minute, Sept.18,1789, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 479.
 2. G.Vansittart to C.C.R.M. Oct.16,1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 144.
 3. Ibid.
 4. B.M.Add.MSS.6586, 22b; Petition of Raja Asad-al-Zaman, P.C.C.R.M. Dec.12, 1771, VIII,34; Rani Janaki's Petition, B.R.C. Aug. 3, 1773, R49/41.

of nuzzers sent to court at the eyeedein or two principal yearly Mussulman festivals, and other great ceremonial days....¹ All the subahdars from Murshid Quli to Mir Qasim imposed abwabs in addition to the revenues fixed in 1722.² The policy of levying subahdari abwabs was a break with the tradition. Initially it was introduced to secure a moderate enhancement, but in subsequent years it was carried too far. By the time of Mir Qasim in some zamindaris the amount of the subahdari abwabs far exceeded that of the original revenue assessment. For example, the Rajnagar zamindari with an asal jama of Rs.32,900 paid Rs.51,761 as abwab.³ Again, owing to the imposition of the subahdari abwabs on the Chandradwip zamindari, the original rental of Rs.19,374 was raised to Rs.65,973.⁴ The expense of wars against the Marathas, the heavy debts of the Nawab to the Company and the costs of Nawab Mir Qasim's conflict with the English - all contributed to the gradual increase of revenue demands since Alivardi Khan. During the Nawabi of Mir Qasim the revenue

1. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 209.

2. Ibid., 208-239; A. Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....85.

3. P.C.C.D., Oct. 8, 1772, R70/15, 314.

4. Ibid.

from the total abwab almost equalled the total assessment of the Khalsa and jagir lands of his time.¹ Mir Qasim's policy of raising the income of the government by frequent posting of amils and sazawals left the zamindars with little profit and thereby deprived them of some of their customary privileges.² Because of the exorbitant demand for revenues, the zamindars, the underfarmers and the raiylats resorted to fraud and concealment. The number of zamindars defaulting or incurring balance grew more than ever.³ Mir Qasim's demand was nowhere met in full. For instance, the Dinajpur zamindari was assessed in Mir Qasim's settlement at Rs.18,00000 in round figure.⁴ In spite of rack-renting the raiylats, the collection did not exceed 7 or 8 lakhs.⁵ Again, in Rangpur the amil engaged for an amount of Rs.11,29,324 could realize Rs.6,68,692 at the end of the contract.⁶ Moreover, the extortion of the amils led to the rebellion of raiylats in

1. See Appendix A.

2. J.Shore's Minute June 18,1789, paras 33-37,45,66, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 9,12,17.

3. Reza Khan's Note, May 25, 1775, C.P.C. IV, 1662.

4. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 249.

5. R.Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Sept. 25, 1769, R/A,9.

6. J.Shore's Minute June 18, 1789, para 62, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 16.

Rangpur¹ and desertion by others in Dinajpur.² Thus it is evident that the revenue demand on the zamindars was occasionally raised either to get a share of the superfluous income of the zamindars or to meet emergencies such as the payment of chauth to the Marathas³, the building of a capital⁴ and like.

The sair, the next important source of revenue mainly consisted of tolls and excise collected on river traffic and markets, and of fees paid by the various service classes. It is simply impossible to ascertain the exact number of the sair taxes levied in Bengal. In the second year of Aurangzeb's reign as many as 80 imposts were declared abolished throughout the Empire.⁵ The long lists of sair collections in Nadia⁶ and Hugli⁷ illustrate the wide range of its sources. The rahdari or inland duty collected on the highways, frontiers and ferries, and pandery, a ground

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1. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 62, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 16.
 2. R.Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C.Sept. 25, 1769, R/A, 9.
 3. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 218-220.
 4. Ibid., 221.
 5. Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab, II, H.M.Elliot & J.Dowson (tr.), The History of India, VII, 246-247.
 6. F.Redfearn to B.R.March 8, 1791, B.R.J.P. Jan.30, 1793, R127/88.
 7. B.M.Add.MSS.29,088, 133.

or house tax paid by the tradesmen, shopkeepers and retail merchants contributed most to the sair collections. The rahdari and pandery tolls commonly denominated ghat or chauki and hat duties were imposed on all articles of life at their transit through the zamindaris, and for the enjoyment of their sale facilities at the market places.¹

Apart from the government custom posts, hats, bazars and ganjes, the zamindars maintained or erected some private ones often deliberately to augment the income of the zamindaris.² The rival zamindars, sometimes setting up parallel marketing places near by attempted to divert the merchants and customers to their own.³ The staff appointed levied taxes at the marketing places, supervised the affairs of the markets, and also checked weights and measures and the quality of articles sold.⁴

The zamindars had to pay revenue to the government for the privilege of holding ghats and hats in their zamindaris

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1. P.C.C.K. Aug. 3, 1772, I-III (in one), 93; C.C.C. to B.R. May 20, 1782, B.R.C. May 31, 1782, R50/40; A.M. Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 249.
 2. P.C.C.R.M. July 18, 1771, VI, 7.
 3. H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M. Jan. 17, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. Feb. 4, 1771, III, 103; G.V.P., Dep. b.69, 121.
 4. Shamser Ghazir Punthi, D.C.Sen, Vanga Sahitya Parichaya II, 1853; K.Sinha, Rajmala, 125; J.Z. Holwell to Fort William Council, Dec. 15, 1752, J.Z. Holwell & Friends, India Tracts, 154.

but were exempted from the revenue for the lands on which the custom posts and markets were erected.¹ The zamindars sometimes instead of managing the chaukies themselves, farmed them out to chaukidars or ghatwals.

The supervisory power of the zamindars over fairs, yatras and pilgrims at the shrines was a profitable source of income to them.² To cite an example. Many devotees flocked from the different parts of the country to the ancient temple at Deoghar situated within the bounds of the Birbhum Raja, to worship and offer gifts.³ Of these gifts the zamindar took the elephants, camels, horses, palanquins, gold mohurs and pearls. Out of the less valuable articles such as silver, cloths, beads etc., $\frac{1}{3}$ went to the principal Brahmin for defraying the charges of religious expenses of the temple, and $\frac{2}{3}$ belonged to the zamindar.⁴ During the early years of the Company administration, the Raja of Birbhum continued to enjoy the profits from the temple on payment of an amount of Rs.2062 along with the fixed jama of the parganah of Deoghar and Serhaut.⁵

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1. H.Cottrell to B.R. Jan.17,1771, P.C.C.R.M. Feb.4,1771,III, 103; S.Bird to B.R. Aug.30,1792, B.R.M.P., Nov.21,1792,R89/39.
 2. Khafi Khan, Muntakhabsul-Lubab II, H.M.Elliot & J.Dowson (tr.), The History of India, VII,246; J.A.Vas, B.D.G.Rangpur, 94.
 3. Extract of the Proceedings of the Council at Burdwan, B.R.C. Oct. 3, 1774, R49/47.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

Because of the paucity of information it is difficult to ascertain the rate of sair duties. The custom duties on merchandise was levied at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on the Muslims and 5% on the non-Muslims.¹ In addition to general rates, there existed some local tolls and cesses.² The zamindars and others concerned, grossly abusing their powers, enhanced many old taxes and levied new ones.³ Consequently the rates of sair collections varied widely in the different zamindaris.⁴

It appears from the contemporary records that the Mughal rulers were alive to the problem of illegal impositions of tolls. Imperial edicts were issued from time to time to prohibit the illegal cesses.⁵ An edict of Aurangzeb forbade all these cesses at a considerable loss to the government treasury.⁶ But the ban embodied in the edicts of the Emperors was often ignored especially by the zamindars of the distant provinces. In Bengal the collection

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1. A.Galloway, Observations on the Law and Constitution and Present Government of India, 118, R.Becher to S.C.Aug.26, 1769, S.C.C., Sept. 25, 1769, R/A,9.
 2. W.H.Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 283.
 3. Ibid.; Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, 1773, Reports, House of Commons IV, 96.
 4. Extract from B.R.C. April 2,1774 and Summary concerning Govt. Custom.....1781-1784, H.M.S., 216,50-52,82.
 5. W.H.Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 284.
 6. Saqi Mustad Khan, Masir-i-Alamgiri, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), 16; Khafi Khan, Muntakhab-ul-Lubab,II,H.M.Elliot & J.Dowson, The History of India VII, 247.

of the illegalized tolls continued unabated and the amount of some even enhanced.¹ By the middle of the eighteenth century the matter became so worse that "between the time of leaving the factory or port and reaching their destination, goods and merchandise pay double their cost price in toll".² The Nawabs of Bengal tried to curb these evils. Tolls on some items were prohibited³ and the zamindars were immediately allowed an equivalent deduction from their annual revenue.⁴

The bazi-jama, another source of revenue constituted of some articles of 'casual and eccentric nature'.⁵ Their uncertain character rendered them indeterminable. Fines, forfeitures and marriage fees were the principal sources of the bazi-jama. The fines imposed at the bazi-jama courts formed a considerable part of this source of revenue.⁶ The tax on marriage fees paid to the Brahmins and Maulavies were termed as haldari or marocha⁷ which also

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1. Khafi Khan, Muntakhabul-Lubab II, H.M.Elliot & J.Dowson (tr.), The History of India VII, 248; W.H.Moreland, From Akbar to Aurangzeb, 283-285.
 2. Khafi Khan, Muntakhabul-Lubab II, H.M.Elliot & J.Dowson (tr.), The History of India VII, 248; See also C.C.R.P. May 14, 1772, R67/54.
 3. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 81; B.P.C. Dec.20, 1760, RI/32.
 4. B.P.C. Dec. 20, 1760, RI/32.
 5. B.M.Add. MSS.29, 086, 1a.
 6. Vide infra, 263.
 7. C.Bentley to C.C. Aug. 10, 1772, B.D.R., Chittagong I, Part II, 138; C.W.B.Rous to Hastings, Aug.10, 1772, L.C.B.S.R. 47.

included the imposts levied on the subjects on the occasion of the zamindars' own marriage or some members of their family.¹ An interesting source of the bazi-jama was the seizure of the property of the subjects dying heirless.² Taxes for selling spirituous liquors, grazing cattle on plains or commons, cutting woods or straw also came under this head.

At the beginning of each financial year two band-o-bast or settlements, one between the government and the zamindars - called the sadar-band-o-bast, and the other between the zamindars and the rai-yats known as the mufassal-band-o-bast were made³. The sadar-band-o-bast was concluded at the punya⁴ ceremony held at the Khalsa at Murshidabad⁵. On that occasion the revenue accounts of the past year were settled and new agreements between the government and the

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1. Dinajpur Raja's petition, P.C.C.R.M. Sept. 23, 1771, VII (A), 79; C. Stewart to B.R. Jan. 24, 1773, B.R.C. Feb. 9, 1773, R49/38, 1161.
 2. Dastur-al-Amal-i-Alamgiri, 23b; Fathiya-i-Ibriya, 131b, quoted in I. Habib, The Agrarian System.....246; J. Shakespear to C.C.R.M. Dec. 5, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 10, 1770, II, 38.
 3. Francis MSS. Eur. E. 28, 170; B.M. Add. MSS. 29, 086, 4b.
 4. In most parts of Bengal, the punya was held in April corresponding to Baisak, the first month of the Bengal year.
 5. Yusuf Ali, Ahwal-i-Mahabat-Jang, J. N. Sarkar, Bengal Nawabs, 154; A. Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....90.

zamindars were reached at.¹ The zamindars then proceeded to make mufassal- band-o-bast with the talukdars, kutkinadars, and with the raiyats where rents were collected directly from them.² This was done at the lesser punyas held in "all the Districts, by a progression from the villages and subdivisions to the principal cutcherries".³ The rents for the cultivated lands were realized in kists or instalments at the time of harvest, for the inhabited lands and sair sources rents were collected every month.⁴

While the revenue demand on the zamindars was fixed by the rent-roll, it was open to the zamindars to assess the rent of the individual peasants. The meagre information available renders it difficult to state precisely the rate of rent collected from the peasants. So great were the differences in rates that it varied not only in different parts of the country but also varied within the sarkars, parganahs and even within a village. The differential in the productivity of land, the labour charge relating to a particular crop, the irrigation facilities and the local social

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1. The punya was also an occasion for bestowing honours and khilats on zamindars and paying nazrana to the Nawab and dignitaries at the Court by the zamindars.
 2. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,086, 4b.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, June 22,1770, L.C.B.S.R. 24.
 4. Aurangzeb's farmans, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), "The Revenue Regulations of Aurangzeb", J.A.S.B. 1906,II, 228; Reza Khan's Note, Feb.1775, Francis MSS.Eur.E.28, 347.

and agrarian customs contributed to this diversity.¹ The asal or original rent appears to have been fixed at $\frac{1}{3}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ ² on the assessment of the actual produce of the individual peasants.³ Since Aurangzeb the imperial farmans enumerated a rate of reduced demand which was not to exceed beyond half of the produce.⁴ The additional levies which could cause hardship to the peasants and ruination of agriculture were forbidden.⁵ The imperial order also emphasized the assistance in the form of utensils, seeds, tools and taqavi (or loan) which were to be given to the needy rai-yats.⁶

In practice, however, in the intervening period between the settlements of Todar Mal and Murshid Quli Khan, abwabs and mathauts were imposed both publicly and privately at the local levels, and thereby the rents of the peasants enhanced.⁷ The standard rate of settlement computed by Karim

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1. N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....45-46.
 2. Gholam Hosain Khan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....126-127; J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, paras 145, 388, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 34, 84.
 3. Risala-i-Zirat, 12b quoted in I.Habib, The Agrarian System...178; Reza Khan's Note, Feb.1775, Francis MSS.Eur.E.28,346.
 4. Aurangzeb's farmans, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), "The Revenue Regulations of Aurangzeb", J.A.S.B., 1906, II, 228, 233; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....46.
 5. Sanads to Raja Ramkanta, and the East India Company, quoted in W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, xlvii; H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....147.
 6. Aurangzeb's farman, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), "The Revenue Regulations of Aurangzeb", J.A.S.B. 1906, II, 224-225; Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....164.
 7. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, paras 392, 528, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 85, 113.

as $\frac{1}{3}$ during Murshid Quli's tenure¹ was augmented in the subsequent period. The rate of /10/- annas per bigha or kani during Murshid Quli appears to have been raised to Rs.2/- if not higher during the years 1755-1761.² The data from the early British period also suggest that the rent of a bigha of land was not less than Rs.2/- exclusive of abwabs and mathauts which were separately charged by name.³

The nature of the agreement reached between the rai-yats and the zamindars were of two types - customary and contractual. So far as the first was concerned, the rent was 'regulated by the known rates called Nirk'. The nirk was a rate per bigha fixed taking into consideration the produce, type of article and custom and practices of a particular locality.⁴ The rai-yats, tilling land for generations in their own village, better known as Khudkasht rai-yats paid their rents fixed by nirk. They were customarily neither

1. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....85-88.

2. B.M.Add.MSS.19504, 44,

The manuscript contains two pattas granted to one Khudkasht and one paikasht rai-yats in 1162 B.S. (1755-1756), an 1167 B.S. (1760-1761) respectively stating rents payable by them at the rate of Rs.2/- both for cultivable and inhabited land. In the second patta there was furthermore the stipulation for payment of local abwabs.

3. Hastings' Minute, B.R.C. Nov. 12, 1776, R49/65; J.Shore's Minute, June 17, 1789, para. 393, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 85, (See appendix B).

4. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....155; J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, paras 391-392, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 84-85.

granted the patta (deed of lease) nor they themselves were keen to get one. The Khudkasht raiyats were reluctant to come to a formal agreement with the zamindars because that would place them 'at the mercy of the zemindars, who might in future grant them the lands to whom they pleased'.¹ It was the paikasht or non-resident raiyats with whom a contract was executed. They received pattas from the zamindars for a specific sum for a given tract of land whether cultivated or not.²

In Bengal proper, unlike Bihar and Orissa³ crop-sharing between the zamindar and the raiyats was not in common practice.⁴

"In Bengal, instead of a division of the crop, or of the estimated value of it, in the current coin, the whole amount payable by the individual cultivator, was consolidated into one sum called the assul or original rent."⁵

And the rent was paid in cash.

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1. S.Bird to B.R., Jan.14, 1788, B.R.P., May 6, 1788, R70/41.
 2. Ibid., J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 224, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 54.
 3. In Bihar and Orissa the general custom had been to divide the crop either directly between the government and the peasants or between the zamindars and the peasants. (J.Shore's Minute, Sept. 18, 1789, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 479.).
 4. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 122.
 5. Fifth Report from the Select Committee..... W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, 28.

The zamindars in their turn remitted the stipulated revenue in cash.¹ Since there was no government treasury in the subordinate administrative circles, the collection from the parganahs were sent to the sadar cutcherry.² After deducting the customary allowances, the zamindars used to despatch the revenue in carts to the treasury at the capital of the subah. Thence the imperial share was conveyed to Delhi in cart-loads with armed escorts.³ When the succession⁴ disputes following Aurangzeb's death undermined the security, this traditional method of despatch was abandoned.⁵ During the latter part of Nawab Murshid Quli's tenure, the payment of revenue through shroffs or bankers was introduced. The zamindars and amils negotiated the gross revenue with the bankers, who paid the amount in siccas to the treasury charging a certain rate of exchange from the zamindars.⁶ At the beginning of each financial year, the zamindars and amils

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1. There were few exceptions. For instance, the zamindars of Rangamati used to supply elephants in lieu of paying money.
 2. R.Becher to J.Rider, Dec.20, 1769, S.C.C. Jan.28, 1770, R/A, 10.
 3. N.Manucci, Storia Do Mogor, W.Irvine (tr.), II, 117; F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 64.
 4. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan....44-47.
 5. J.H.Little, "The House of Jagat Seth", B.P.P., 1920, 121.
 6. Reza Khan's proposal, B.P.C. March 28, 1769, RI/44; J.Grose to R.Becher, Nov.10, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 6, 1770, II, 29; S.Middleton to B.R. Oct. 10, 1774, B.R.C. Oct. 18, 1774, R49/47.

closed the previous year's accounts and contracted for the ensuing year. Jagat Seth, the chief banker of the city stood as security for any balance outstanding to the account of a zamindar or amil.¹

The payment through the bankers ensured a safe despatch of the public revenues to Murshidabad and minimized the risk of defaulting. The zamindars had to pay their dues in monthly instalments whereas they could collect rents from the peasants at the time of harvesting. Under the banking system, the shroffs issued drafts in favour of individual zamindars for the payment of their monthly kists and realized the money from them at the time of harvest.² The practice proved even more useful to the zamindars in the subsequent period when the subahdari abwabs multiplied and punctual compliance of the revenue demands of the Company became difficult.

In the long run, however, the payment of revenues by bills proved detrimental to the zamindars as well as to the government. The zamindars, in arrears to the bankers throughout the year, had to concede to their unfavourable terms.³

1. Yusuf Ali, Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 154-155; W.Bolts, Considerations....156-158.

2. R.Becher to S.C. May 24, 1769, L.C.B. I, XII; E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur, I, 17.

3. J.Duncan to G.G. Sept. 12, 1788, B.R.C. Oct. 3, 1788, R51/25.

Moreover, the shroffs profitted from the unscientific character of the silver currency. In the absence of a standardized coin they invented a nominal coin called the 'current' rupee as the standard rupee for valuation. Jagat Seth introduced the custom of "Batta, or agio"¹ upon the rupee called Siccas, which is a real coinage of standard silver according to the established laws of the late empire."²

The sicca rupees recoined triennially were not sufficiently available.³ The raiyats had to bear the burden of an additional batta when they paid their rents in worn out rupees.⁴

The East India Company emerging as the supreme political power in the subah, replaced the House of Jagat Seth, as the creditor to the Nawab, while the servants of the Company and their gumashtas began to play the role of shroffs to the zamindars, farmers and raiyats.⁵ The remittance of

1. A discount for coining currency.

2. W.Bolts, Considerations.....157.

3. Enjoying the monopoly of coining money at Murshidabad Mint on behalf of the government, the House of Jagat Seth might have created artificial shortage of coins.

4. A.Dow, The History of Hindustan I, cxxxiv; W.Bolts, Considerations.....157-158.

5. S.C.C. Oct. 5, R/A,6; C.Purling to C.C.R.M. May 6, 1772, P.C.C.R.M. May 11, 1772, XI, 25-26; A.M.Khan The Transition in Bengal, 23, 176.

the revenue through bills of the house of Jagat Seth was discouraged and the cash payment was introduced.¹

With the reintroduction of cash payment at a time when the coins were scarce² and the demand for punctilious remittance of the revenues was pressing, the zamindars had to rely more and more on the private merchants and the servants of the Company for loan. This new class of money-lenders became so powerful that when a zamindar failed to pay debts, their sepoy or gumashtas seized the collections of the estate and sometimes even the person of the debtor.³ The interference of these creditors on real or fictitious grounds compounded by the evasive nature of some zamindars, precipitated a crisis in the revenue collection. On Reza Khan's representation⁴ the Select Committee prohibited the Company's men "from lending money to the Zemindars or other servants of the Government on the security of lands by lease or mortgage and also from exerting any degree of influence in the appointment to the public offices, or otherwise inter-

1. Reza Khan's Proposal, B.P.C., March 28, 1769, RI/44.

2. Ibid.

3. C.P.C. I, 1712.

4. R.Khan to S.C. Oct. 4, 1765, S.C.C. Oct. 5, 1765, R/A,6.

fering directly or indirectly with the business of the Government on pain of suspension".¹ Also on the recommendation of Reza Khan the practice of payment of the revenues through the bank was revived.² But the unstable coinage and exorbitant rates of interest continued to bedevil the revenue collection.³

To facilitate the collection and superintendence of the zamindari affairs the extensive estates were divided in turn into a number of parganahs, tarafs or dihs. Each taraf comprised a number of villages.⁴ In each of these divisions a cutcherry transacted the zamindari business.⁵ Headed by a naib, a parganah cutcherry was manned by a host of employees, the number depending on the importance and size of the parganah.⁶ The karamchari and the patwari were the two zamindari officials who managed the revenue affairs of a

1. S.C.C. Oct. 5, 1765, R/A, 6.

2. J.Grose to R.Becher Nov. 10, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 6, 1770, II, 29; S.Middleton to G.G. Oct. 10, 1774, B.R.C. Oct. 18, 1774, R49/47.

3. J.Reed to C.C.R.M. Dec. 17, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 20, 1770, II, 106-107; C.Purling to C.C.R.M. May 6, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. May 11, 1772, XI, 25-26.

4. Francis MSS.Eur.E.28, 171; B.M.Add. MSS. 29,086.

5. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,086, 3.

6. See appendix, C.

village. The karamchari was in charge of the collection and general management;¹ the patwari kept a detailed record of land and the receipts of the collections.² Another zamindari officer of importance was the halsanah who measured and marked out the land held by each raiya, distributed land to the new tenant, and collected crops where rent was paid in kind.³ These officers at the village level were assisted by the mandal⁴ or headman. In the different wards of a village there were one or two mandals⁵. At the beginning of the year when the amin assessed the dues from the village, the mandal used to apportion the rents among the individual peasants.⁶ A mandal's "duty and situation lead him to act as a mediator between the ryots and the petty collectors of the revenue, to assist them in selling their crops, and in raising money to pay their rents."⁷

To inspect the activities of the patwari, karamchari and the halsana, and to receive collections a gumashta was sent from the sadar or central cutcherry.⁸ The shikdar or

1. Francis MSS.Eur.E.28, 171.

2. Hastings' Minute, B.R.C. Nov.12, 1776, R49/65.

3. B.M.Add.MSS,29,086, 3.

4. He was also known as mugaddam or mukhya.

5. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....160; J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 242, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 56.

6. W.H.Moreland, The Agrarian System.....135.

7. B.M.Add.MSS.29,086, 3.

8. Ibid.

ihitimamdar was another officer sent from the sadar to temporarily superintend the collection and management of the revenues in the villages, tarafs or a parganah.¹ The gumashta was to transmit their accounts and rents to the shikdar, who remitted the same to the sadar cutcherry.²

At the top of the revenue establishment of a zamindari was the sadar cutcherry or principal office near the headquarters of the estate.³ The principal officer of the sadar cutcherry was the diwan who was responsible for the superintendence of the entire zamindari administration. The sadar cutcherry had also munshis, amin-daftar, shumar-daftar, bakhshi-daftar, wakils, mirdahas and daftar-bunds to run it.⁴ The bakhshi occupied an important position and was responsible for making payments for the whole establishment. Another officer of consequence was the wakil who represented the zamindar at the court, adalats and other places of importance. The big zamindars often posted more than one wakil at the court.⁵

1. B.M.Add.MSS.29,086, 3a; B.P.C. June 15, 1761, RI/33.

2. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,086, 3a.

3. Ibid.; B.R.C. Oct. 9, 1775, R49/58.

4. C.C.R.M. to Hastings, June 23, 1774, B.R.C. June 28, 1774 R49/46; Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....161.

5. J.Fergusson to G.Vansittart, July 4, 1767, B.D.R., Midnapur I, 162; C.P.C. IV, 2038.

The cadre of officers discussed so far was required to run the revenue administration of a moderate or a big zamindari. From Collector Armstrong's account of the Nadia zamindari¹ one can glean the main fact about the establishments required for the public and domestic affairs of a principal zamindar. The management of the zamindari affairs was achieved through two sets of staff viz., the huzuri or officers and domestics of the rajbari (palace), and mufassal or the officers in charge of the collection of rents and management of other zamindari affairs in the parganahs and villages.²

The huzuri or sadar administration encompassed nine major departments:

- (i) The malkhana where all affairs relating to revenue were transacted, expenses disbursed and records kept.
- (ii) The nikasi daftar was responsible for adjusting and checking the accounts.
- (iii) The dewry daftar was the department for the receipt of rents of the birt lands kept apart to meet the expenses of the dewry or female members of the family.

1. W.Armstrong to B.R. April 29, 1817, B.R.C. June 27, 1817, R57/11.

2. See also C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug. 1, 1767, para. 15, B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41.

- (iv) The behailah or pay office disbursed the khuraki (diet money) of the staff, who were entitled to that allowance in addition to their wages in the form of assignments of land.
- (v) The daftar called sohabut dealt with the salaries of the head Brahmins who were attached immediately to the raja's person.
- (vi) The toshakhana (wardrobe) was the depository for the apparels of the raja and his family.
- (vii) The niamat barkhana (purveyor's office) supplied the articles of daily consumption for the raja and his family, and also for the religious ceremonies performed at the rajbari.
- (viii) The silakhana (armoury) served as the dispository for money and other valuables and the arms.
- (ix) The daftar mahabaundan supplied the articles required for the fixed poojās and festivities.

The mufassal affairs were managed through two sets of staff - one, in charge of the parganahs and passed by the name of mukarrari and the other, known as mufassali, entrusted with the collection and superintendence of the several villages.¹

The petty zamindaris, however, neither needed nor could afford such elaborate organizations. These could be managed from the sadar by the zamindars themselves.

1. W. Armstrong to B.R. April 29, 1817, B.R.C. June 27, 1817, R57/11.

The above discussion affirms that the managerial task of the big and moderate zamindaris was achieved through traditional zamindari establishment headed by the diwan and the bakhshi. The maharajas or rajas used to attend the durbars or the sadar cutcherries for some fixed hours of the day. They occasionally toured over the different parts of their zamindaris. A great zamindar's routine visit with a large entourage was associated with pomp.¹

The long chain of administrative arrangements of a zamindari had inherent drawbacks. The zamindari amla at the lower levels concealing the correct information regarding land and in league with other staff could defraud the zamindar.² In 1788, Collector Hatch reported from Dinajpur:³

"The original Jumma or Rentroll has decreased from several causes, the chief of which is the manoeuvre that has been in practice for many years, by the Mundulls Poramanicks and principal inhabitants of the villages who under plea of real, or fictitious desertions of the riants, have got into their possession considerable tracts of ground at an under rated assessment upon Moocta Potta, and the original established rate or nirk, has become almost obsolete".

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1. E.G.Glazier, Further Notes on the Rangpur Records II, Appendix 22; G.Joseph, "Notes on the Right Bank of the Hugly", C.R., 1845, IV, 489.
 2. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 243, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 56.
 3. G.Hatch to B.R., Jan. 15, 1788, B.R.P., April 11, 1788, R70/40.

The naibs, gumashtas being men of 'no substance, reputation and honesty',¹ profited from their underhand deals with the rai-yats. Again, when a zamindar on becoming defaulter through the machination of the amla sold parts of the zamindari to pay the stipulated revenue, the influential amla purchased the land cheaply at the auction either openly or clandestinely in the name of his relations. The power wielded by an influential amla is illustrated in a letter of Taj-i-Khudadat, zamindar of Shahbazpur:²

"Kishn Rām, the writer's nāib, has, with the most fraudulent intentions, bestowed large parcels of land in this parganah on his relations and adherents, and does not listen to his inhibitions. Besides, he has sold four houses in Jahangirnagar and possessed himself of the money. He has also driven the ryots from their homes, borrowed large sums on bonds forged in the writer's name and accepted the 'uhdahdārī³ of the parganah Idylepur which is situated in another zamindari, without his consent or knowledge. These are the writer's reasons for displacing this Kishn Rām in favour of Ram Sundar. But Kishn Rām by associating the mutasaddīs with him, opposes the admission of the other. Accordingly the Nawab Muhammad Rizā Khān has issued a parvānah to Mahā Singh, and it is requested that the Governor will also direct Mr. Sykes to send a parvānah..... for establishing Rām Sundar in his offices,..... exacting the amount due from Kishn Rām, and for providing in every other respect for Rām Sundar's safety so as to prevent the writer's suffering any losses or being exposed to any interruptions in his management of the parganah Idylepur."

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1. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, June 22, 1770, L.C.B.S.R. 24.
 2. April 1, 1768, C.P.C. II, 895.
 3. Wadadari, from wadadar, an officer responsible for the collection of the government dues from a zamindari.

In the event of death or the minority of the zamindar, the diwan or the gumashtas usually took advantage of the situation. There are instances where the amla in collusion with the wife or other ambitious members of the family of the deceased zamindar embezzled money, alienated lands and dragged the zamindari into ruin.¹

In the face of such chances of erosion of the zamindari power, the indifference and ignorance of some zamindars hastened the ruin of their estates. Some zamindars left the intricate fiscal business of their zamindaris to the diwans, naibs and gumashtas or some enterprising relations, themselves indulging in pleasures.² Many a zamindars in their advanced age lost totally interest in mundane affairs and became religious recluses. This disenchantment to worldly affairs led many zamindars to default and decline.³

The head of an extensive zamindari had to delegate some of his powers at the intermediate levels for the speedy execution of business. On the other hand, moderate or petty

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1. R.Wilmot to R.Becher, Oct.22,1770, P.C.C.R.M., Oct.29,1770, I,131-132; S.Charters to B.R.Oct. 9, 1773, B.R.C. Oct.19, 1773, R49/41.
 2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir II, 394.
 3. A.B.M.Mahmood, The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari, 27; A.Mukherji, Naldanga and Naldanga Raj Family, 70-72.

zamindars could attend to their own business¹ leaving little chance of intermediate profits. Having closer relations with the tenants, these zamindars were expected to be less extorting on them than the big zamindars and their rapacious amla.²

To lessen the burden of the management of extensive and scattered holdings and as an expedient measure for the punctual realization of rents, the greater zamindars contracted parts of their zamindaris to inferior farmers called kutkinadars or talukdars.³ Subinfeudation of lands by the creation of undertenure holders though not widely practised was not absent in Bengal of pre-Permanent Settlement period. In some parts of Bengal, larger portion of zamindari lands were leased to the talukdars. This accounts for the larger amount of talukdari-jama than the nij-jama of some zamindars

1. Hastings' Minute, April 22, 1775, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, ccxix; F.Buchanan, A Geographical, Statistical & Historical Description of the District of Dinajpur, 252.
2. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para. 178, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 42.
3. B.M. MSS. 29,086, 3a; G.Hatch to B.R. Jan. 15, 1788, B.R.P. April 11, 1788, R70/40.

in the district of Dacca.¹

It appears that the zamindars abused their right of underfarming to the subtenure holders causing financial loss to the government. Many denominated parts of their vast zamindaris as bazi-taluk and leased them to dependants or favourites at underrates. Moreover, the rents of those taluks were excluded from further augmentation.² There are instances where taluks, sequestered for private enjoyment of the zamindars, were rented at reduced rate, while the zamindar through some private arrangements shared the remainder of the usual rent.³ In the Rajshahi zamindari, Supervisor Rous recorded a number of such taluks, which were sources of considerable profit not only to Rani Bhawani but also to her diwan, Dayaram.⁴ The amount of loss incurred by the government from such underrated holdings was enormous.

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Zamindari	own land	talukdar's jama	total jama	number of taluks
<u>Parganah</u> Jalalpur	11,000	76,001	87,001	2,128
<u>Parganah</u> Chandradwip	17,000	72,725	89,725	400
<u>Parganah</u> Bikrampur	2,010	25,642	27,652	268
<u>Parganah</u> Rajnagar	92,555	2,01,118	2,93,673	400
<u>Tappa</u> Mysurdee	4,000	14,004	18,004	561
<u>Parganah</u> Essakabad	1,700	2,000	3,700	200
<u>Tappa</u> Hyderabad	1,235	750	1,985	200

W.Douglas to C.Stewart, May 25,1790, B.R.C., June 11,1790, R52/13.

2. P.C.C.R.M., April 30, 1771, V,118.

3. G.Robertson to J.Grose, June 19,1770, B.D.R.Rangpur I, 6.

4. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., June 4, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. June 10, 1771, V, 254.

According to Rous' valuation those lands were assessed at half of their real rents.¹

The creation of taluks had evil effects on the agrarian society. The raiylats living within the jurisdiction of the same zamindar were often denied of uniform rights and privileges.

"The tenants of a talook are possessed of so many indulgencies, and taxed with such evident partiality and tenderness in proportion to the rest, that the talooks generally swarm with inhabitants where other parts are deserted.....".²

The zamindars as well as the kutkinadars or talukdars, however, benefitted in more than one way from the subinfeudation. The big zamindars, granting lands on condition of cash payments or military services, created a group of loyal subordinates. The talukdars and the kutkinadars on the other hand enjoyed certain privileges denied to ordinary raiylats of the zamindari. Nevertheless, when the relation between the two became strained, new cesses were levied on the talukdars or all privileges revoked. Such incidents multiplied when the demands on the zamindars were arbitrarily enhanced during the latter period.³

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1. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., June 4, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., June 10, 1771, V, 254.
 2. Instructions to the Supervisors, S.C.C., Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9.
 3. P.C.C.R.M., March 14, 1771, IV, 99; T.Pattle to B.R. Dec.2, 1772, B.R.C. Feb. 5, 1773, R49/38.

The local improvement works vital to agriculture, devolved on the zamindars. To repair the roads and embankments or erect a new one or to dig canals and nalas to safeguard the lands and crops from inundation or draught remained obligatory to the zamindars of the period. In the riverine parts of Bengal, the zamindars had to take regular steps to protect their crop fields from being overflowed during the rainy season.¹ Apart from these responsibilities, the zamindars had to render assistance to similar kind of work sponsored by the government.²

By way of remuneration the zamindars were 'eased in their rents'.³ They used to get either an annual allowance under the denomination of poolbandy or pushtabandy or an amount deducted from their yearly remittances. They were allowed abatement from the customary dues in the event of inundation or encroachment by the rivers.⁴ For a long time the Raja of Burdwan was allowed a deduction of Rs.60,000

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1. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, March 4, 1770, L.C.B.S.R. 9.
 2. H.Verelst to J.Graham, Nov.8, 1766, B.D.R., Midnapur II, 28-29; P.C.C.R.M., April 11, 1771, V, 49.
 3. R.Becher to S.C., March 28, 1770, S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10, 167.
 4. J.Grose to R.Becher, Dec.30, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Jan.10, 1771, III, 31; B.R.C. May 14, 1773, R49/39; B.R.C. July 8, 1773, R49/40.

for the maintenance of embankments.¹ The annual poolbandy charge of the Nadia zamindari approximated to Rs.10,000.²

With the growing weakness of the government, the zamindars began to neglect this important duty concerning agriculture.³ Many misappropriated the allowances made for those developmental works and levied abwabs on the raiylats for construction or repair works. In Burdwan such capitation tax went by the name of mathaut.⁴ Instances of employing the raiylats for begar or unpaid labour are on record.⁵ In 1773 Wynne wrote⁶ from Jessore:

"The Zemindar and Farmers of this District having an allowance of 4000 Rupees on account of Poolbundee, or the keeping in repair the banks of the rivers and nullahs.....I may venture to affirm they have not disbursed 1500 Rupees on this necessary, nay indispensable business, nor have they extended any part of the allowance of 4000 Rupees on the small part they have done; for they have either paid the expense, by an assessment on the reilats, or they have obliged them to furnish workmen and materials at their own charge."

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1. K.A.L.Hill, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Burdwan I, 28.
 2. B.R.C. May 24, 1774, R49/46.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., May 5, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., May 11, 1771, V, 159.
 4. C.C.R.P., May 12, 1783, R68/22; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 14,
 5. C.C.R.P., May 12, 1783, R68/22.
 6. W.Wynne to B.R., May 13, 1773, B.R.C. May 25, 1773, R49/39.

The rights and perquisites of the zamindars for their services to the state were not uniform in all parts of the country. The zamindars as the state functionaries were entitled to a commission, the rate in Bengal being a minimum of 5% of the collections,¹ and usually paid in tax-free land denominated as nankar.² They furthermore enjoyed the right to a share of the collections from the zamindaris held on hereditary right.³ This share called malikana or hagg of the zamindars was known in Bengal better as rasum or perquisites. The percentage of the proceeds varied widely.⁴ The rate of perquisites of the English zamindars of Calcutta was 10%.⁵ From a resolution of the Board of Revenue in connection with the perquisites of Rani Janaki of Mysadal, it appears that the zamindars during the eighteenth century were enjoying rasum at the rate of 10% of the gross collection.⁶

In most parts of Northern India during vigorous days of the Mughal administration, the customary zamindari dues

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1. B.M.Add.MSS. 19,504, 100a.
 2. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....173-174; Fourth Report from the Committee of Secrecy, Reports, House of Commons IV, 95.
 3. Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....151-153; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....33-35.
 4. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....146-151; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 14.
 5. M.Huq, The East India Company's Land Policy & Commerce in Bengal, 27.
 6. B.R.C., Aug. 3, 1773, R49/41.

namely the nankar and rasum were compounded to $\frac{1}{10}$ of the total collection and passed by the name of malikana-share.¹ But during the eighteenth century, the zamindars taking advantage of the political turmoil of the country began to claim 10% of their collections simply as haqq-i-zamindari.² There is no reason that it was otherwise in Bengal.

As to the remuneration of the zamindari staff, some of them were paid in cash and others in rent-free land, generally known as chakaram zamin. For the maintenance of the staff, the zamindars used to get an allowance under the general head of collection charge, computed on a certain percentage of the gross revenue of their respective estates.³ The rates of the sadar and mufassal charges, as the collection charge was commonly termed, varied from place to place.⁴

During the Mughal rule the pluralistic administration was a salient feature of the revenue management.

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1. B.R.Grover, "Nature of Dehat-i-Taaluqa (zamindari Villages)...", I.E.S.H.R., 1965, II, 260;
In Bihar too, the malikana was fixed at 10% and payable in cash or land.
 2. B.R.Grover, "Nature of Dehat-i-Taaluqa (zamindari Villages).....", I.E.S.H.R., 1965, II, 260.
 3. Chittagong Council to Fort William Council, Aug.10,1772, B.R.D. Chittagong I, Part II, 137; C.C.R. to B.R., July 10,1777, B.R.C. Aug.15, 1777, R50/2.
 4. B.R.C. Jan.8, 1773, R49/38; W.Wynne to B.R., May 13,1773, B.R.C. May 25, 1773, R49/39; E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur I, 34,96-97 (See appendix D).

The zamindars as the agents of the state realized the rents and taxes from the subjects. A hierarchy of revenue officers from the diwan-i-subah at the capital down to the patwari at the village level, had their own share of responsibilities in the collection and disbursement of revenues.¹ Besides, the faujdars or the military governors were obliged to ensure the full realization and punctual remittance of the revenues.²

The qanungo daftar acted as a check on the abuse of power by the zamindars. The daftar kept detailed records of villages, lands, revenue assessment, sale deeds and the varying local customs and practices.³ The qanungos in conjunction with the zamindari amins settled the yearly assessment of the respective zamindaris.⁴ The qanungo daftar deterred to a large extent the concealment or illegal alienation of the zamindari land and overtaxation on the rai-yats.⁵ Attached to the sadar cutcherry of the big zamindars there existed one qanungo cutcherry.⁶ Again, for

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1. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir, II, 394; A.Dow, The History of Hindustan I, xcii; P.Saran, The Provincial Government...281-284.
 2. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 42; B.M.Add.MSS.19, 505, 7a; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....208.
 3. B.M.Add.MSS.29, 086 4b-5a; W.Lushington to C.C.R.M., March 9, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., July 2, V, 338.
 4. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....289-290.
 5. B.M.Add.MSS.29, 086 5a; Petition of the Qanungos, B.R.C., May 25, 1774, R49/49.
 6. J.Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 30.

the collection and supervision of the revenues there was the amil or aml-guzar.¹ The chief amils at the sarkars were assisted at the parganah and village levels by amils, shikdars, amins, bitikchis, munsifs, thanadars, patwaris and others, and some semi-officials such as chaudhuris and mandals.² At the end of the collections, the amils had to deposit the details of collections, arrears, abatements and expenses of their respective areas to the qanungos who would check them with accounts submitted by the zamindars and others.³ In the moderate or big zamindaris, the amils were not usually engaged. But in the event of default they were deputed to investigate and if necessary to take up the revenue management temporarily.⁴ The importance of the amils in the zamindaris was in ascendancy from the time of Murshid Quli. In their drive to determine the real valuation of the zamindaris, augment the income from them and speed up remittances, Murshid Quli⁵ and Mir Qasim commissioned the amils.⁶

1. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 46.

2. IBid, 46-52; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....76-77.

3. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....290.

4. Reza Khan's account, Feb.1775, Francis MSS.Eur.E.28,345.

5. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 56; A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan....88-89.

6. R.Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Sept. 25, 1769, R/A, 9; J.Shore's Minute June 18, 1789, paras 62,66, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 16-17.

Another officer of importance was the sazawal, appointed to realize revenue from the defaulting zamindars or rai-yats.¹ Besides, there were the wakai-nigar and sawanih-nigar, appointed to give intelligence to the crown of all the happenings within their jurisdictions.² There were also muhtasibs to check weights and measures in the hats and bazars.³ In 1771, Cottrell reported from Dinajpur that the qanungos, wakai-nigars, sawanih-nigars and muhtasibs who still esteemed as 'the servants of the Crown', were 'placed as checks upon the Zemindars'.⁴

In the zenith of the imperial rule, such set-up with local scrutiny and checks perhaps produced the desired effect. "In the Imperial officers of the revenue, the poor had friends, and the zemindar spies upon his conduct."⁵ The cases of default or contumacy among the mal-wajibi zamindars if not among others declined. The disobeying zamindars were usually confined, subjected to corporal punishment, or

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1. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir I, 325; K.P. Bandopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa, 442.
 2. W. Lushington to C.C.R.M. March 9, 1771 P.C.C.R.M., July 2, 1771, V, 339; C.W.B. Rous to C.C.R.M., April 8, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. July 2, 1771, V, 340.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Cottrell to C.C.R.M., Feb. 19, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., July 2, 1771, V, 337;
The offices of the wakai-nigar and sawanih-nigar were abolished in July 1771 (P.C.C.R.M., July 2, 1771, V. 343-344).
 5. A. Dow, The History of Hindostan I, xcii.

dismissed. The effectiveness of the government pressure on the zamindars, especially on the major ones depended largely on the willingness and vigour of the government itself. Probably the remoteness of the outlying provinces blunted the imperial control over those territories more so over the considerable zamindars. On the other hand, during the successors of Nawab Alivardi Khan the provincial administration lacked vitality. Neither Mir Jafar nor his son Miran did "bestow one single thought on the necessity of settling the country, regulating the finances, quieting the clamours of the army, or easing the husbandmen."¹ Mir Qasim's praiseworthy venture to regulate the finances, restore vigour in judiciary and redress grievances of the 'poor, defenceless landholders',² was negated by his over-emphasis on the enhanced remittance from the zamindars and others.

The revenue literature of the early British period recorded the decline of the authority and importance of the faujdars and qanungos in the zamindaris. With the growth of the extensive territorial zamindaris in the interior of the subah, the little authority faujdars had in revenue affairs remained operative in some frontier Districts only.

1. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir, II, 271.

2. Ibid., 432-433.

To quote the naib subah:¹

"The Zemindars in the Circars of Cochbehar and Chucklaw of Rajemehal, and the District of Purnea, where it has long been usual for Phousdars to be stationed, contrary to the practice of the zemindars of Bhettoreah, Nuddea, Bishenpore, Beerbhoom, and Isoufpore, cannot of themselves without the permission of the Phousdar undertake any measure. The whole transactions and affairs of these Districts are therefore adjusted and settled at the Phousdarry Cutcherry with the advice and approbation of the agents of the Canoongoes."

As to the role of the ganungos in the major zamindaris, Reza Khan recorded:²

"As Rajeshahy, Bhettoreah, Dinajepore, Nuddeah, Isooppore, Beshenpore, and Bheerbhoom, were extensive and important zemindarries, the papers of the Tucseem (or original Revenue) depended on the Suddur /sadar/, and it is not usual for the canongoe gomastahs to attend the zemindars and furnish them with papers, there are however some of their mahorers /muharrihs/ stationed in their Districts to collect the tucseemy /taqsimi/ and other accounts".

The arbitrary demands of the later Nawabs on the zamindars minimized the importance of the ganungo-daftar to a great extent. Mir Qasim totally disregarded the ganungos' information and depended solely on the amils.³

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1. Reza Khan's Report, July 2, 1771, B.R.C. July 5, 1774, R49/49; See also W.Lushington to C.C.R.M. March 9, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., July 2, 1772, V, 339.
 2. Reza Khan's Report, July 2, 1771, B.R.C., July 5, 1774, R49/49.
 3. T.Kelsall to C.C.R.M., Feb.11, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., July 2, 1771, V, 335-336; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History....II, 42-43.

With the growing weakness of the imperial rule and the political instability in the subah, corruption pervaded the administration. The zamindars could easily win over the imperial staff for the farming of lands at underrates, concealment of cultivable lands, and granting of lands for hats, ganjes, and questionable charity.¹ It will not be preposterous to suggest that many qanungos, naib-qanungos and chaudhuris in the process of transformation into zamindars abandoned their original integrity and official responsibility.²

The gradual process of the withering of the government's hold on the zamindars, especially on the major ones and the elevation of some to the position of chaklahdars placed the raiylats more and more at the mercy of the zamindar class. The terms of the patta were not always respected by the zamindars.³ The imposition of the subahdari-abwabs on the zamindars opened the door for the multiplication of the zamindari cesses on the raiylats. The subahdari-abwabs from

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1. B.M.Add.MSS.29,086, 5b ; C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, June 22, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 23.
 2. R.B.Ramsbotham, Studies in the Land Revenue History of Bengal, 137; B.B.Misra, The Central Administration of the East India Company, 164.
 3. G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher, Dec.3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec.13, 1770, II, 66; Royroyan's answer, J.H.Harington, Extract from Harington's Analysis.....156.

Murshid Quli to Alivardi Khan, according to the estimate of Shore amounted "to about 33 per cent. upon the tumar or standard assessment in 1658; and those of the zemindars, upon the ryots, probably at the same period could not be less than 50 per cent; for exclusive of what they were obliged to pay to the nazims, a fund was required for their subsistence and emoluments, which they of course exacted."¹ Some of the cesses adversely affected the promotion of agriculture. To cite an example, in Birbhum, rather a dry District, the raiylats had to pay a tax for digging tank to irrigate their lands.² If the zamindars had to pay for the construction of the palace of the Nawabs or for feeding the elephants of the Nawabs and diwans, it is no wonder that the raiylats paid for the celebration of the marriage or birth of the members of the zamindar's family or for the construction of new buildings³ and the pooja expenses of the rajas.⁴ In 1771 Rani Bhawani wrote⁵:

"Formerly I had a considerable income from my country arising from mangun, serad khercha, seta, pooja &c^a collected upon several occasions with the consent of the ryotts."

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1. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 41, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 11.
 2. B.R.P., March 25,1790, R71/23; B.Chowdhury, "Some Aspects of Peasant-Economy of Bengal.....", B.P.P.,1957, 139.
 3. S.C.C.May 9,1770, R/A,10; J.Shakespear to C.C.R.M. Dec.5, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec.10,1770,II,38; H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M., March 8,1771, P.C.C.R.M., March 14,1771, IV, 97.
 4. J.Shakespear to C.C.R.M. Nov.22,1770, P.C.C.R.M., Nov.28, 1770,I,251-252 (See appendix E).
 5. P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 23, 1771, VIII, 78.

As the financial exactions increased, the more adventurous rai-yats, mostly of the borderlands used to escape to the neighbouring countries.¹

Though it is evident that the rai-yats did not always fare well, the exertion of the zamindars' arbitrary impositions had a natural limit. There were more lands than tillers in those days. The peasants who moved to the neighbouring zamindaris were welcomed often with favourable terms.² A prosperous zamindari "meant more money and comfort for him [the zamindar]; in addition it secured for him the goodwill and loyal services of his tenants."³ A less dutiful or an oppressive zamindar ran the risk of losing these.

When the East India Company assumed the Diwani, the revenue administration in Bengal was afflicted with many abuses. The incompetence of the Nawabs and insatiable greed of their officers and zamindars were mainly responsible for

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1. G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher, S.C.C. Oct.12, 1769, R/A, 9; S.C.C. Dec.9, 1769, R/A, 9.
 2. Hastings' Minute, B.R.C., Nov. 12, 1776, R49/65; T.D. Campbell to F.Law, Nov.20, 1777, H.M.S. 206, 308.
 3. N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....35.

these evils. But the Company found the execution of the Diwani business without direct participation in revenue collection expedient.¹ Reza Khan and Shitab Roy acted on behalf of the Company as the naib diwans of Bengal and Bihar respectively.

From the beginning the attention of the Company was directed towards the enhancement of the revenues. To achieve this goal they set out for the correct assessment of lands. In some cases the farming of land on purely temporary basis to the highest bidders and the posting of amils and sazawals in the zamindaris on a regular basis were resorted to by the Company. Such measures affected the existing position of the zamindars who as hereditary revenue farmers had controlled for long the economy of the greater part of rural Bengal.

The ceded districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong provided the first ground for experiments in the Company's revenue measures. In Burdwan, Raja Trailokya Chandra though allowed to continue in his office was divested of some of his former powers and privileges. Sumner, despatched by the Company to recover the arrears from the raja extracted from him the promise of the payment of debts.² He replaced

1. Letter to Court, Sept. 30, 1765, E/4/27; Letter from Court, May 17, 1766, para. 14, E/4/618.

2. Letter to Court, Nov. 12, 1761 para. 72, E/4/25.

some of the old underfarmers by new Calcutta farmers,¹ fixed the yearly revenue at Rs.30,00000, and set apart an amount for the expense of the Company troops.² The raja, displeased at these joined the conspiracy of the Birbhum Raja against Mir Qasim and the Company. But in the armed clash that followed, Raja Trailokya Chandra's troops were routed by the Company troops.³ The appointment of Johnstone as the Resident of Burdwan (1762), augured a new phase in the revenue administration of the Burdwan zamindari. The public auction of land to the highest bidders was introduced.⁴ The raja was allowed to hold the land directly managed by him and his relations.⁵ But the rest of the zamindari was let out to outsiders for a term of three years. The Company allowed the raja to retain the nominal authority over his zamindari.⁶ The measure, however, proved disastrous. The Court of Directors and Verelst, Supervisor of Burdwan disapproved of the Company's direct involvement in the management of the zamindari⁷. Verelst

1. B.P.C. March 29, 1762 and April 15, 1762, RI/34.

2. Letter to Court, Nov.12, 1761, para.72, E/4/25.

3. Letter to Court, Jan.16,1761, para 103, E/4/25.

4. B.P.C., April 15,1762, RI/34; H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....70.

5. M.Huq, The East India Company's Land Policy and Commerce in Bengal, 57.

6. B.P.C. April 15, 1762, RI/34.

7. Letter from Court, May 17,1766, E/4/618; H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....70-71.

abandoned the practice of public auction and leased land preferably to the old farmers for a 3-year period. The collection though moderate at the outset, began to rise steadily.¹ The income from the zamindari was further augmented by the reduction of the chakaran and charity lands.²

In the district of Midnapur, the turbulent nature of the zamindars made the proper assessment of the revenues difficult. In order to evaluate the zamindari resources, it was planned to remove the zamindars and let the lands in public auction or collect revenue directly from the raiyas as in the 24-Parganahs.³ Since underfarming system operative in Burdwan and other districts was not prevalent in Midnapur, the scheme could not be effected. The numerousness of the petty zamindars which characterized the district, posed another problem to the implementation of the scheme.⁴ The removal of the zamindars would, according to the custom of the zamindari institution, necessitate the granting of maintenance allowance to them and this could cost the Company a

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1. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....71-72.
 2. B.P.C. April 15, 1762, RI/34, 388; C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug.1, 1767, B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41.
 3. H.Vansittart and Council Nov.6, 1764 quoted in W.K.Firminger, (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, cxxvi.
 4. J.Graham to S.C. Dec. 24, 1765, S.C.C. Dec. 27, 1765, R/A, 6.

considerable amount of money.¹ Moreover, the Court of Directors favoured the farming of lands to 'substantial men'.² So the plan for the removal of the zamindars from revenue management was shelved and the attention of the Company was focussed on the subdual of the zamindars and the augmentation of income from the district. The accounts of the zamindars were brought under regular scrutiny of the Resident who made routine circuits.³ The rent-roll of the zamindars was increased by the resumption of the chakaran and bazi zamin.⁴ Attempts were made to bring the vast quantities of arable waste land under cultivation.⁵ To encourage the zamindars the rate of interest of money advanced for poolbany expenses was reduced from 24% to 12%.⁶

In Chittagong too, it was found convenient to retain the zamindars in their office. In 1767 a new rent-roll was prepared on the basis of the survey of lands in 1764.⁷

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1. H.Watts, Oct.1765, quoted in W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, cxxvi.
 2. Letter from Court Dec. 24, 1765, E/4/618.
 3. H.Verelst to J.Graham, March 17,1766 and April 10, 1766, B.D.R., Midnapur II, 48-49, 52.
 4. B.D.R., Midnapur II, 8; M.Huq, The East India Company's Land Policy and Commerce in Bengal, 74.
 5. Letter from Court, Dec.24,1765, E/4/618; H.Verelst to J.Graham, April 23, 1766, B.D.R., Midnapur II, 56.
 6. C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug.1, 1767, B.P.C., Sept.28, 1767, RI/41.
 7. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 72.

The Company appointed tahsildars to collect revenue directly from the zamindars. Whenever a zamindar was found behind with the payment, a sazawal was sent to realize the amount.¹ The recurrence of balance without a justifiable cause led to the confinement of the zamindar.² These stringent measures effected the full and punctilious remittance of the revenue which doubled within a few years.³

So far as the Diwani districts were concerned, Reza Khan prepared a new rent-roll based on the conjectural valuation of land. The rate of the band-o-bast was less than that of Qasim Ali and Mir Jafar's settlements.⁴ At the beginning of each financial year, the zamindars renewed their bando-bast on the basis of new valuation of their zamindaris.⁵ Though the existing system of revenue collection was retained in principle, some new steps were introduced. The amils, wadahdars and sazawals were sent more frequently than before to realize the revenue punctually and fully.⁶ In many

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1. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 74-75.
 2. Ibid., 78.
 3. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....74 f.n.
 4. Reza Khan's Note, March 25, 1775, C.P.C.IV, 1662; Appendix to the Fifth Report.....Nos.5-7, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 125-126.
 5. C.C.R.M. to C.C.R., May 23, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. V, 187.
 6. R.Becher to S.C. May 24, 1769, L.C.B. I, xi-xii; P.C.C.K., July 28, 1772, I-III (in one), 88.

zamindaris, amils were appointed to superintend the collections jointly with the zamindars and to see the local collections brought in full to the sadar cutcherry and from there despatched to the Khalsa.¹ The amils sent for speeding up the collections often took over from the zamindars the entire charge of the revenue management, thus subverting their authority². In order to ensure punctual remittance, the Company when farming out land demanded even from the hereditary zamindars securities to be furnished by men of substance.³

To reform the revenue administration Verelst's government introduced some changes in 1767. The high rates of assessment were cut and the faulty longstanding practice of bringing balances from year to year in the rent-roll was abandoned. It was decided to keep the balance of the previous years apart from the current year's jama and to conclude a separate agreement for the realization of the arrears. The measure was expected to shield the landholders from the

1. Reza Khan's Statement, P.C.C.R.M., Oct. 29, 1770, I, 139.

2. C.P.C. II, 172, 186; R. Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Sept. 25, 1769, R/A, 9. A.B.M. Mahmood, The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari, 50.

3. R. Becher to S.C., May 24, 1769, L.C.B. I, xiv; C.W.B. Rous to C.C.R.M. May 16, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., May 20, 1771, V, 181.

harassment for the recovery of outstanding debts.¹ The collection charge was reduced and the allowance to the zamindars was 'settled in such a manner to leave them not the least plea for extortion or oppression'.² It was strictly enjoined upon the zamindars to promote agriculture and protect the interest of the rai-yats. With a view to recovering the vast quantities of land alienated by force or fraud or through carelessness of the government, the resumption of the rent-free land of various denominations was ordered for.³ Some of these measures went a long way to infringe upon the economic advantages of the zamindars.

In May 1769 the tenure of revenue farming was raised from one to three years. At the beginning of the triennial settlement, the Nadia zamindari was leased to some Calcutta merchants superseding the age-old hereditary right of the raja who was in heavy arrears.⁴ The zamindari farmed at Rs.9,58,000 with an annual rise of Rs.50,000 for each of the subsequent years, could not be held for long by the

1.H.Verelst and F.Sykes to S.C., June 28, 1767, S.C.C. July 6, 1767, R/A, 7; Letter to Court, Sept. 25, 1767, para. 16, E/4/28.

2.H.Verelst and F.Sykes to S.C., June 28, 1767, S.C.C., July 6, 1767, R/A, 7.

3.Letter to Court, Sept. 25, 1767, para. 22, E/4/28.

4.R.Becher to J.Rider, Dec. 20, 1769, S.C.C., Jan. 28, 1770 and R.Becher to S.C. March 30, 1770, S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10.

farmers.¹ It "was soon found that the Farmers required being invested with powers that would have deprived the Raja of his just rights and they acted oppressively in the Districts and did not pay the revenues according to their agreement. The Raja at the same time jealous of their authority and earnest to be again reinstated offered to comply with the terms agreed on by the farmers."² Consequently Raja of Nadia was reinstated.³ The triennial settlement was also introduced in other districts such as Rajshahi, Purnea and Birbhum.⁴

But the existing system of revenue management through the native personnel without proper checks at the local levels by the Company officers, complicated the state of revenue administration. To cope with the stupendous task one Resident at the darbar was not enough. Hence, English Supervisors were appointed in the different districts of Bengal.⁵ The Supervisors were required to report on the produce and capacity of land, the amount and mode of the

1. R.Becher to J.Rider, Dec.20, 1769, S.C.C. Jan. 28, 1770, R/A, 10.

2. R.Becher to S.C., March 30, 1770, S.C.C. April 28, 1770, R/A, 10.

3. Ibid.

4. R.Becher to S.C. June 2, 1770, S.C.C. June 9, 1770, R/A, 10.

5. S.C.C., Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9.

collection of revenue, and prepare a new rent-roll.¹ The Supervisors though empowered to exercise a controlling authority over the zamindars were urged not to interfere directly in the actual work of revenue collection.² The Supervisors were "to give the strictest attention to the ease and comfort of the inhabitants, to prevent oppressions under every denomination, to give due encouragement to the ryott and prevent any thing more being exacted from ryotts either by Zemindar or Talookdar, Aumil or any one employed in the collection of the revenues, than what is justly due".³

The resentment of the zamindars over the posting of the Supervisors with controlling authority over them, became manifest in no time. Many of Zamindars refused to contract for the revenue in the forthcoming settlement (1770-1771) unless full authority was restored to them.⁴ In their counter-proposal they claimed for "full authority in revenue matters and in all other matters appertaining thereto."⁵

1. S.C.C., Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9.

2. S.C.C., Dec. 15, 1769, R/A, 9.

3. R.Becher to S.C. March 30, 1770, S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10, 186.

4. R.Becher to S.C. June 2, 1770, S.C.C. June 9, 1770, R/A, 10; J.Reed to C.C.R.M., Dec. 17, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 20, 1770, II, 106.

5. C.P.C.III, 252; See also arzi of the zamindar of Edrakpur, S.C.C., June 21, 1770, R/A, 10.

The zamindars furthermore demanded a written assurance from the Resident and the naib-diwan for non-interference in their affairs by the Supervisors or others of the Company.¹ Reza Khan and Becher supported the contention of the zamindars that the interference of the Supervisors retarded the progress of collection.² After much deliberation the Select Committee agreed to take away from the Supervisors the controlling authority over revenue management. As a result in the band-o-bast for the year 1770-1771 many districts³ were farmed out 'on condition that the Zemindars, Amils &c. retain their usual authority in the collections and that the Supervisors be restrained from interfering'.⁴ The remaining districts⁵ were 'put under the management of the Supervisors'.⁶ But shortly afterwards the Council at Fort William reversed the decision of the Select Committee on the argument that justice was so inseparably linked with the revenue administration that mere authority over the one would defeat the very purpose of

1. C.P.C. III, 251.

2. R.Becher to S.C., June 2, 1770, S.C.C., June 9, 1770, R/A, 10.

3. The districts were: Baharbund, Bishnupur, Chunakhali, Chundlehy, Conkjole, Edrakpur, Fucker Kundy (or Rangpur), Futteh Singh, Jahangirpur, Lashkarpur, Muhammad Shahy, Nadia, Pachet, Rajshahi, Rokunpur, Selbersa and Yusoufpur.

4. R.Becher to S.C. June 18, 1770, S.C.C. June 21, 1770, R/A, 10.

5. Birbhum, Dacca, Dinajpur, Jallahmutha, Muhammad Aminpur, Mysadal, Purnea Rawshanabad (or Tippera), and Sylhet.

6. R.Becher to S.C. June 18, 1770, S.C.C. June 21, 1770, R/A, 10.

appointing the Supervisors, and therefore the controlling power of the Supervisors should be restored to¹.

The zamindars were reluctant to part with the power enjoyed so long. They contrived to impede the progress of new measures. Undaunted by their failure to annul the controlling power of the Supervisors, the zamindars put all possible obstacles to the survey and proper assessment of their zamindaris. They not only ignored the instruction to render all kind of assistance to the party of Rennell, the Surveyor General,² but on the contrary took up arms against him to stop his work.³ Again, the amil and the diwan of Govingunge⁴ dismissed the mandals, took their papers and 'either secreted or destroyed' them, in order to conceal the real value of the zamindari and frustrate the attempt of the Supervisor to form a complete and correct hast-o-bud.⁵

In spite of all opposition and protestations of the zamindars and the farmers, the Supervisors went ahead with

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1. Fort William Council to C.C.R.M. Sept. 11, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Sept. 27, 1770, I, 3.
 2. C.P.C.II, 95, 183.
 3. J.Rennell to C.C.R.M., Dec. 9, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 20, 1770, II, 98-99; A.K.Jameson, "James Rennell", B.P.P., 1924, XXVII, 4.
 4. Situated in the District of Rangpur.
 5. G.Robertson to J.Grose, June 19, 1770, L.C.B. I, 27-28; W.Lushington to C.C.R.M., May 27, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. May 30, 1771, V, 232-233.

their programme. No indulgence was allowed to incur balance by the zamindars and others.¹ To recover balances prompt action was taken - either a part of the zamindari was sold or the allowance of the zamindar was deducted.² The zamindari accounts were subjected to strictest scrutiny to stop embezzlement and other malpractices.³ By way of bringing pressure on the zamindars, khilats were withheld from the rajas⁴ who 'have this year fallen considerably in arrears of their revenue'.⁵ In most cases of irregularities the investigation of the Supervisors resulted in an enhancement of revenues. From Hugli Lushington reported the increase of possibly 20% and in some cases even double or treble of the existing amount.⁶

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1. R.Becher to S.C., Aug.26, 1769, S.C.C., Sept. 25, 1769, R/A,9; P.C.C.R.M., May 20, 1771, V, 181-182.
 2. R.Becher to J.Rider, Dec. 22, 1769, S.C.C., Jan.28, 1770, R/A,10; C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., April 19, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., April 30, 1771, V, 113.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., April 19, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., April 30, 1771, V, 113-114; P.C.C.R.M., May 30, 1771, V, 229.
 4. The zamindars of Birbhum, Chanchra, Dinajpur, Lashkarpur, Nadia, Naldanga and Rajshahi.
 5. P.C.C.R.M., May 30, 1771, V, 229.
 6. W.Lushington to C.C.R.M., May 27, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., May 30, 1771, V, 232-233; See also P.C.C.R.M., July 1, 1771, V, 325-326;

An account of progressive increase of rent-roll of the Birbhum zamindari:

Revenue up till 1757	Rs.3,75,000
Added levies since then	Rs. 20,000
Revenue settled for 1769-1770	Rs.7,25,000
" " " 1770-1771	Rs.7,68,400
" " " 1771-1772	Rs.8,11,879

Arzi of Raja Asad-al-Zaman Khan, P.C.C.R.M., Dec.12, 1771. VIII, 34; H.Verelst and R.Becher to S.C., June 30, 1769, L.C.B. I, xxii.

We turn now to the condition of the raiylats.

Being deprived of many of the intermediate channels of profits, the impoverished zamindars began to extort the raiylats.

To quote Rous:¹

"I am firmly of opinion that the multiplication of mathotes, which has taken place in this District since the Companies accession to the Dewanny has been attended with the most pernicious consequences to agriculture and the country in general: and that the continuance of such a system must inevitably have ended in it's destruction." 2

During the famine of 1769-1770, some zamindars failed to advance tagavi to the distressed raiylats.³ The custom of najai received a new lease of life in the wake of the famine. It became a common practice to levy najai and other cesses to make up the jama of the zamindars.⁴

The chronic malpractices in the revenue administration and the dislocation of the entire economic life of the raiylats by the famine of 1769-1770 spurred the Court of Directors to introduce elaborate and effective changes in

1. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., June 4, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., June 10, 1771, V, 255.
2. In March Rous reported from Rajshahi that "the same land, which formerly paid 3 annas to the Government P Bega now actually pays no less than five & a half." (C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, March 4, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 8).
3. J.Rider to R.Becher, April 18, 1770, L.C.B. I, 110; Arzi of Raja Boidyanath of Dinajpur, P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 4, 1771, III, 104.
4. W.Harwood to S.C., March 28, 1770, S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 54-55.

the administration. Their decision 'to stand forth as Duan, by the agency of the Company's servants' and assume 'the entire care and management of the Revenues'¹ was put into action in April 1772 under the Governorship of Hastings.

To sum up, both in the ceded and Diwani districts the standard rate of asal jama underwent substantial changes. Though the goal of the Company to assess zamindari resources thoroughly could not be achieved, a new rent-roll was formed on the basis of auction rates, local investigations and resumption of the rent-free lands. The collection charges were reduced by dismissing the superfluous zamindari staff. The cases of recurring balance, a regular feature of the past few years remarkably dwindled.² Even during the year of the devastating famine, the revenue settlement was based on the hast-o-bud of 1766-1767³ and the balance incurred in 1770-1771 was insignificant compared to the pre-Diwani period.⁴ By the year 1771, a number of zamindars were replaced by men of 'credit and substance' who had offered higher rates and better

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1. Letter from Court, Aug. 28, 1771, para. 21, E/4/621.
 2. R.Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Sept. 25, 1769, R/A, 9.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., Oct. 10, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Oct. 24, 1771, VII, 98.
 4. R.Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, S.C.C. Sept. 25, 1769, R/A, 9; C.C.R.P., April 10, 1772, R67/5A (See appendix F).

securities.¹ Wherever it was considered expedient, the Company farmed out parts of the zamindaris to the outsiders. In 1771, the Rajshahi zamindari was advertised for a higher offer and reliable securities.² However, the zamindar of Rajshahi in order to save her prestige bought the lease at a higher rate.³

These examples affirm that the Company even before their assumption of the full Diwani responsibility began to intervene in many aspects of the zamindari administration with or without the approval of the Court of Directors. The posting of the Supervisors affected the autonomous position of the zamindars. The Regulation of May 14, 1772, spelled out further curtailment of the former rights and privileges of the zamindars. A perusal of the clauses of the Regulation reveal the dimension of the changes and the extent of the grip of the Company over the Zamindars. The tenure of revenue farming was fixed at 5 years and the value of the farm was limited to maximum of one lakh of rupees.⁴ A Committee of

1. P.C.C.R.M., July 1 and 2, 1771, V, 325-326, 345-346.

2. C.C.R.M. to C.W.B.Rous, May 11, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. May 11, 1771, V, 160; C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., May 26, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., May 30, 1771, V, 238.

3. A.B.M.Mahmood, The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari, 82.

4. C.C.R.P., May 14, 1772, R67/54.

Circuit enjoined to tour through the districts and conclude band-o-bast at the sadar-cutcherry of each district. The Supervisors, henceforth denominated as Collectors, in collaboration with the diwan, nominated by the Board of Revenue were authorized to control the revenue affairs.¹ They were, however, forbidden to send sepoy, peons or others within the jurisdiction of the farmers unless such circumstances as deemed indispensable and in which the authority of the farmer seemed inadequate. The farmers were prohibited to realize more from the raiyas than that specified at the patta. The imposition of abwabs were declared illegal. A muharrir was posted in every farm to keep an account of the rents received by the farmer and submit the same to the sadar-cutcherry of the district.² The instalments of the revenue were fixed at the time of harvest so that the farmers need not to borrow money from the shroffs to remit their jama in time. All zamindari chaukies were abolished.³ The Collectors were told to 'prepare an exact and explicit Rent Roll of each farm arranged in pargunnahs' and keep 'a separate account tracing the jama of each farm to the highest value it has ever stood at' and enumerate the causes of its decrease.⁴

1. C.C.R.P., May 14, 1772, R67/54.

2. Ibid.

3. A Board of Customs was constituted to control the whole affairs of the customs through 5 Custom houses established at Calcutta, Dacca, Hugli, Murshidabad and Patna. The rowana or passport issued by the Collector of customs from any of the custom houses would be deemed valid throughout the Province.

4. C.C.R.P., May 14, 1772, R67/54.

CHAPTER IV

THE ZAMINDARS' MILITARY POWER AND OBLIGATIONS

The military power enjoyed by the zamindars has relevance to the situation in the subah of Bengal where it was exercised as an adjunct of the revenue, police and judicial administration of the landed aristocracy.

During the Mughal rule the zamindars in general and the principal zamindars in particular were required to render military service to the state. The faujdars or military governors stationed at the faujdari circles with a limited number of troops under their command were in the immediate charge of the defence of the subah.¹ And the zamindars were obliged to furnish military assistance to the faujdars in the event of serious rebellions or external invasions.²

The role of the zamindars in the military affairs can be well understood in the wider context of the Mughal military organization. The Mughal rulers did not maintain

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1. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 40; M.I.Borah (tr.), Baharistan I, 139; Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 175-176.
 2. S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....21; J.Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788 & June 18, 1789, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 81, 745; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....35.

a large standing army. Instead, the bulk of the armed contingents consisted of indirect recruits - soldiers drafted from the service of the territorial chiefs or clan or caste leaders.¹ The imperialistic policy of the Mughals was to utilize systematically the military strength of the local princelings whom they reduced to the position of zamindars but did not divest all of their former power and influence. The policy underlined was to enter into a direct relationship with them as a step towards resolving the contradiction of the inherent conflicts between the imperial aspiration and the interest of the local chiefs.²

In pursuance of this policy, the zamindars were often enrolled into the imperial service as mansabdars. They were remunerated in grants of jagirs proportionate to the status of their mansabs (or ranks). They simultaneously enjoyed the earnings from their territorial possessions.³ For example, the Almgirnamah refers to one Munwar, a zamindar of Chittagong who was given the mansabdari of 15,00 sawars (horsemen).⁴ A number of zamindars in Chittagong bearing

1. W. Irvine, The Army of the Indian Moguls, 3.

2. S.N. Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E. Frykenberg (ed.) Land Control & Social Structure....., 17, 21.

3. Ibid, 19-20.

4. Munshi Muhammad Qazim, Alamgirnamah, 956; See also M. Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, 79.

the title of Hazari (literally thousand) suggests that they too were enrolled as mansabdars.¹ The celebrated poet Bharatachandra ascribed the rank of mansabdar to his patron, Maharaja Krishnachandra of Nadia.² The Rajas of Burdwan also held mansabs. In 1172 A.H. (1758-1759 A.D.), Emperor Shah Alam honoured Maharaja Trailokya Chandra Ray with the command of panj hajari (five thousand) cavalry.³

In this context it is worthwhile to examine the watan-jagir system - another device to create a group of loyal chiefs. According to Athar Ali,⁴ the territorial chiefs or zamindars received, consequent to their admission into the imperial service, their territories (watans) back as jagirs. The emoluments of the mansabs assigned to them were adjusted with the jama of their territories termed as watan-jagirs. The tenor of Athar Ali on watan-jagir system finds its corroboration in the works of Habib⁵ and Hasan.⁶ "Of great importance was the Mughal attempt,"

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1. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 310.
 2. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandr'er Granthavali, 7.
 3. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1872, LIV, 174; B.D.G., Burdwan, 31.
 4. M.Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb, 79.
 5. I.Habib, The Agrarian System183.
 6. S.N.Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control & Social Structure....., 21-22.

remarked Hasan¹,

"to treat the hereditary dominions of the autonomous chiefs as watan jagirs. This meant that theoretically the chiefs were supposed to have the status of jagirdars, and thus were subject to the imperial revenue regulations, but exercised jagirdari rights in hereditary succession over their territories, which were consequently immune from transfer."

In the course of their study none of the above-mentioned historians, however, has cast light on the territorial chiefs of Bengal. The available sources at hand suggest the system was put into practice in the subah of Bengal too. The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi,² written in the seventeenth century recorded that a number of the defeated 'Barabhuiyas' were enrolled into the imperial service and were given their estates as jagirs. When the defeated Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore was brought before Subahdar Islam Khan, he it was said,

"for the sake of drawing the attention of other Zamīndārs and also in consideration of the high position held by the aforesaid Raja among the Zamīndārs of Bengal, bestowed honours upon him beyond measure, and consoled and encouraged him. On the first day he was presented with a horse, a grand robe of honour and a bejewelled sword-belt, and thus he was converted into a loyal officer." 3

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1. S.N. Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control & Social Structure..... 21.
 2. M.I. Borah (tr.), I & II.
 3. M.I. Borah (tr.), Baharistan I, 27.

Again, "Islam Khan assigned as much of the territories of Ram Chandra¹ to him as was necessary for the maintenance of his fleet; the rest was given to the Karoris and Jagirdars."² In the like manner the estates of Chandra-kona, Barda and Jhakra in the western parts of Bengal were restored to their former zamindars as jagirs.³ The conclusion that emerges from these examples, with unmistakable clarity, is that many territorial chiefs in Bengal who survived the Mughal conquest had a new lease of life as watan-jagirdars.

The advantage of sharing the financial burden of military establishments required for an extensive Empire might well have been inducive to the delegation of some military responsibilities to the zamindars. The traditional localized economy of the country was controlled and exploited by the House of Timur to their own advantage. The fusion of some elements of jagirdari system in the zamindari rights and obligations, provided the Mughals with the opportunity of making full use of the rural economy.

It is inevitable that the peculiar geographical and climatic conditions in Bengal played an important role

1. The zamindar of Bakarganj (vide infra 162 f.n. 5).

2. M. I. Borah (tr.), Baharistan, I, 432.

3. Ibid., 139.

in the growing reliance of the Mughals on the military assistance of the zamindars. The country is flat and riverine, the torrential rains making most part of the terrain marshy in the monsoon. Interweaving rivers, canals and numerous thick forests made military transport and communication difficult.¹ Moreover, the Mughals were not proficient in naval warfare which was needed most to fight against the rebellious chiefs of the riverine country, and the Magh and Feringi pirates who infested the subah.² Once the Mughal forces had penetrated into the southern and eastern frontiers of Bengal, they found themselves in a country where their cavalry and artillery were almost useless, except in the dry season. Consequently the alien Mughal conquerors had to depend in a large measure on the local forces of infantry and war-boats (nawara).

The Baharistan-i-Ghaybi dwelling on the wars of the Mughals against Kuch Bihar, Kuch Hajo, Assam and parts of Bengal in the early seventeenth century narrates how the Mughal generals utilized the zamindars in the imperial warfare.³

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1. J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 245; R.Inden, "The Hindu Chieftom in Middle Bengali Literature," E.C.Dimock (ed.), Bengal History and Literature, 20.
 2. S.Manrique, Travels..... Luard and Hosten (tr.), II, 278; J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 245-246.
 3. M.I.Borah (tr.), Baharistan I, 101, 105, 107, 141, 319; Baharistan II, 444.

Again, at the time of the Mughal campaigns against Chittagong the zamindars rendered considerable help. Munwar Khan, the zamindar of Bagadia¹ who was in charge of a nawara (fleet), assisted the imperial force in their expeditions against Assam² and Chittagong.³

The need for military assistance by the zamindars did not diminish when the first phase of the Mughal conquest was over. The subsequent task of consolidation of the Mughal authority over the new acquisitions, and the defence of the frontiers, especially of the southern coasts of Bengal, from the inroads of the Maghs and Feringis, undoubtedly presented overwhelming problems to the Mughals. Hence the imperial authority had to depend time and again on the zamindars' loyal services. Such necessity even led to the creation of some border zamindaris. Serajuddin has recorded the origin and development of a number of such zamindari estates at the last phase of the Mughal conquest of Chittagong. The ancestors of the three prominent zamindars of Chittagong, Niamat Khan, Tej Singh and Mangat Ram Hazari enrolled as revenue farmers in 1774, were officers

1. In the District of Dacca.

2. S.N.Bhattacharyya, Mughal North Eastern Frontier Policy, 142.

3. J.N.Sarkar, "The Conquest of Chittagong - 1666 A.D." J.A.S.B. 1907, N.S. III, 406-407.

of the imperial troops which invaded Chittagong in 1665-1666.¹ With the withdrawal of the imperial troops at the end of the operations, those officers were granted landed estates with the responsibility of protection of the southern frontiers of the newly acquired district of Chittagong from the onslaught of the Arakanese and other hill tribes.² The zamindari of parganah Dandra³ had its origin in the assignment of land for defending the frontier.⁴ Again, the zamindari of parganah Jagdia had its nucleus in a grant of land during the reign of Aurangzeb to one Bura Khan, for the protection of the border lands.⁵ Instead of stationing a vast number of soldiers to defend the frontiers, the Mughal rulers found it expedient to allow some of their loyal commanders to settle and enjoy their former jagirs on zamindari tenure and guard the imperial domain.

As the Mughal Empire fragmented and the Mughal armies ceased to be available for service in Bengal, the necessity for more co-operation from the zamindars was felt.

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1. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 309-311.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Situated in the District of Noakhali.
 4. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 353; E.B.A.D.G., Noakhali, 103.
 5. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 353; E.B.A.D.G., Noakhali, 104.

for the suppression of the internal rebellion, and more so for the defence of the provincial frontiers against the Maghs of Arakan, the Koch and Ahom powers from the north, and then the Marathas from Up country or Orissa. During the campaign against Raja Sitaram Ray, zamindar of Mahmudabad, Murshid Quli Khan sent orders to all the neighbouring zamindars to assist the government troops.¹ At the critical hours of Nawab Alivardi's fight against Rustam Jang (Murshid Quli II),² the zamindar of Burdwan sent an auxiliary force under the command of his diwan to assist the Nawab.³ During the recurrent Maratha raids, the zamindars rendered valuable services to the Nawab. They quickly responded to the demand for men, money and even personal services.⁴ Raja Ramkanta of Rajshahi is reported to have led a secret expedition against the Marathas.⁵ The casual financial aids given by Raja Ramkanta, and the zamindars of Dinajpur and Nadia, to some extent relieved the Nawab of his financial burdens.⁶

1. Abdus Salam (tr.), Riad, 266.

2. Son-in-law of Nawab Shujauddin.

3. Yusouf Ali, Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 98.

4. Ibid., 143; B.P.C., April 24, 1742, RI/15; B.P.C., Aug. 16, 1743, RI/16; B.P.C., Nov. 15, 1745, RI/17.

5. B.P.C. May 3, 1742, RI/15.

6. C.Stewart, History of Bengal....., 491; J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal II, 449.

Apart from rendering direct military assistance to the government in the course of any expedition, all the zamindars were obliged to provide the government troops with victuals and other daily necessities. The zamindars had to ensure that the troops were supplied with food articles at reasonable market prices.¹ Besides, they were to cut off supplies to the enemies of the government.²

These facts establish that the zamindars had a significant role to play in the military history of the subah.

These aside, the physical symbols of the semi-independent political status of the prime zamindars were reflected in the armed forces they possessed. The claim of the rajas to the rulership of their territories demanded the fusion of some characteristics of the feudal lords with those of the collectors of the imperial revenues. In those days, the task of the rent collection and the safe despatch of the revenues, and keeping the rai-yats under complete control necessitated the assistance of the armed retainers.

The zamindars had to supply a fixed quota of troops and war-boats in conformity with their status and

1. B.P.C. May 3, 1742, RI/15; J.Long, Selections.....785;
C.P.C. IV, 1330, 1331.

2. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 14.

the strategic position of their estates. Available evidence is insufficient to allow an exhaustive assessment of the numerical strength of the armed forces of the individual zamindars. According to the Ain¹, the zamindars in the subah of Bengal had to maintain "23,330 cavalry, 801,150 infantry, 1,170 elephants, 4,260 guns, and 4,400 boats". The Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh written in 1695² records that the subah was expected to furnish 4,200 guns and 4,400 boats along with the stipulated amount of revenue.³ The omission of the cavalry and infantry contingents in the Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh is perhaps indicative of the changed political situation in the subah. Since the period of conquest was over, the imperial need for the constant supply of troops diminished to a certain extent, and hence the omission. However, the zamindars continued to maintain the cavalry and infantry alongside the artillery and the flotilla to serve their own and that of the Nawabs' interest.

According to the Jama-tunari-tashkhis of Nawab Shujauddin, 8112 troops under the denomination of Amla-i-ahsham⁴

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1. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), II, 129.
 2. The probable date is between 1695 and 1699 A.D.
 3. Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), The India of Aurangzib, 46.
 4. "The collective officers of the irregular militia under the native government". In the eighteenth century Mughal India the term ahsham gained currency to denote the military assistance supplied by the petty zamindars either in person or in the form of supply of militia. (H.H.Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms.....13; F.Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian English Dictionary, 21).

and a naval establishment of 768 armed boats called Amla-i-nawara were maintained for the defence of the east and southern border lands of Bengal.¹ The zamindars of 'the low countries of Dacca and forts on the sea coast', Islamabad (Chittagong), Rangamati and Sylhet had to contribute their quota of the troops including the artillery and cavalry.² Similarly, the zamindars especially of the southern and eastern parts of the subah, had to supply armed boats.³ For enjoying the hissazat⁴ lands only, the Raja of Chandradwip⁵ was to supply forty-two cosas (a kind of boats) each manned by thirty-two boatmen.⁶ The zamindars of Chandradwip definitely supplied some more boats as a considerable amount of nawara lands were enjoyed by them.⁷ The zamindars of Sarail⁸ were required to provide forty war-boats to the fleet of the Nawab.⁹

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1. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 203.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid; S.A.B. II, 262.
 4. Literally means personal share.
 5. Chandradwip or Bakla was one of the parganahs of sarkar Bakla. It later on formed the major part of the District of Bakarganj. The zamindars of Chandradwip derived their origin to pre-Muslim period and ranked as one of the 'Barabhuiyas'.
 6. W. Douglas to B.R. April 6, 1790, B.R.P., April 29, 1790, R71/24; Massie to B.R. Nov. 5, 1798 quoted in T. Raychaudhuri, "Some old Documents in Barisal, East Bengal", I.H.Q., 1948, XXIV, 261.
 7. Vide infra, 168 f.n.4.
 8. Now included in the District of Comilla.
 9. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 351; E.B.D.G., Tippera, 114.

Since the defence of the western frontiers of Bengal devolved very much on the zamindars of Birbhum, Burdwan, Midnapur and Pachet, they had to maintain considerable armed forces including a large number of cavalry. Nara Sinha Basu, the author of the Bengali epic Dharmamangala who worked as the wakil of the Raja of Birbhum, stated that the raja always kept a reserve of 2,000 cavalry of superior category and 1,200 shield bearing soldiers (dhalis).¹ The Rajas of Birbhum had a large number of artillery and infantry as well.² The figures mentioned by Nara Sinha Basu may not be an exaggeration as Raja Asad-al-Zaman of Birbhum brought in the field 20,000 infantry and about 5,000 horsemen at the time of his fight against Nawab Mir Qasim.³ The Raja of Bishnupur maintained 4,576 armed retainers stationed under the ghatwals to protect the hilly passes from outside aggression.⁴ In addition to a number of cavalry, infantry and artillery, the Raja of Burdwan had an establishment of nagdi troops to guard their fortified palaces. Till the year 1766, 296 cavalry and 1191 infantry were on duty.⁵ The zamindars

1. D.C.Sen, Banga Sahitya Parichaya I, 456.

2. Ibid.

3. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Sier II, 395.

4. B.M.Add. MSS. 29,088, 16.

5. B.P.C., Sep. 28, 1767, RI/41, 757.

of Midnapur being of predatory character, maintained a considerable number of cavalry in addition to infantry. In 1761, Johnstone recorded the military strength of a defiant zamindar of Midnapur thus,

"The enemy's horse that can't be less than 6000 and about 1000 or 1500 buxerries possessing the whole country round and visiting us daily. Sewbut, Rajaram, Cosalsing, Jugul and several other Jemidars these chiefs with a large body of horse lye within a coss;"¹

Again, in 1767 a letter from Manbhum read that "none of those Zemindars by our best intelligence have less than 2,000 people in their pergunas whose trade is war."² The armed strength of the 'Jungle-mahal' zamindars lay in their tenants whom they chiefly employed in their outrages against their neighbours.³

Elsewhere in the subah, the big zamindars kept a number of troops commensurate with their status and requirements. In 1770, the Dinajpur zamindari had in its roll 343 cavalry, 1015 bargundazes and peons.⁴

Apart from the maintenance of regular armed forces,

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1. J. Johnstone to S.C. Feb. 3, 1761, S.C.C. Feb. 9, 1761, R/A, 3.
 2. B.D.R., Midnapur, I, 109.
 3. E.Baber to B.R. Feb. 6, 1773, B.D.R., Midnapur, IV, 107.
 4. H.Cottrell to R.Becher, Dec. 22, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 142.

the zamindars in order to meet an emergency, would recruit irregular contingents from the villagers or gunwars. All the able-bodied persons were compelled to take up arms if summoned by the zamindars.¹ For instance, in the encounter between the party of Rennell and the diwan of the Raja of Baharbund, who refused to supply men and provisions to Rennell 150 barqundazes and 300 villagers participated.² The support of the villagers was of immense value to the zamindars in any armed enterprise. A letter from Fergusson reflects the position of the Raja of Ghatseela in this perspective:

"I had intelligence that the former Zemindar had gone to some distance and found the country people disposed to remain quiet under any Zemindar that should be appointed. I on that account avoided proceeding to any other part of the purgana in a hostile manner, being well assured that the Zemindar is so far deserted by his subjects as that he cannot pretend to act in an offensive manner."³

The lesser zamindars on the other hand might have depended mainly on the irregular contingents of infantrymen.⁴

No organization can sustain without proper financial support. Hence, for the maintenance of the troops and

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1. J.Long, Selection.....504, 507; W.H.Moreland, India at the Death of Akbar, 74; I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....166.
 2. J.Rennell's letter quoted in A.K.Jameson, "James Rennell", B.P.P., 1924, XXVII,5; See also Madhava Dvija, Chandi Manglar Gita, 87.
 3. J.Fergusson to G.Vansittart, March 28,1767, B.D.R. Midnapur I, 127.
 4. J.Rennell to R.Becher, Dec. 9, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 20, 1770, II, 98; P.C.C.R.M. Oct. 28, 1771, VI, 112.

the upkeep of the nawara funds were to be made available to the respective zamindars. The procedure followed by the Mughal government was to grant conditional jagir lands as well as ordinary rent free chakaran (service) lands for rendering personal military services by the zamindars, and supplying troops or war-boats to the government. In the subah of Bengal certain lands were usually earmarked as jagirs for military service. In the zamindaris with such jagir lands, revenues were collected under two heads-- Khalsa and jagir. The Khalsa jama was remitted to the treasury while the jagir jama was spent for the maintenance of the troops and the nawara. By the Jama-tumari-tashkhis, two parganahs with a rental of Rs.49,750 were assigned as jagirs to the zamindars of Tippera, Muchwah¹ and Telliaghurry.² One hundred and thirty-eight large and smaller parganahs valued at Rs.3,59,180 were kept apart for the maintenance of the military establishment called Amla-i-ahsham.³ Of the total expenses of the Amla-i-nawara, Rs.7,78,954 was procured from the income of 55 parganahs.

1. Situated to the east of the river Meghna.

2. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 202; J. Browne to G.G. in Council, Jan. 12, 1776, B.R.C. Jan. 20, 1776, R49/60.

3. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 203.

included "chiefly in the Chuckleh Jehangeernagur, and composing a greater part of the richest, most productive lands of that great province..... yielding at least four-fifths of the whole assigned rental....."¹

The information regarding the jagir lands enjoyed by the zamindars show that the Rajas of Birbhum, Bishnupur, and the territories at the foot of the hills from Rajmahal to the Jungle Terry possessed lands under the denomination of ghatwali. The ghatwals enjoying such lands were petty chiefs enrolled into the service of those zamindars with the specific purpose of guarding the hill passes from external aggression.² Instead of rendering personal service like the police ghatwals,³ they were at liberty to employ as many soldiers as they required to discharge their duties.⁴ They were remunerated from the conditional jagirs enjoyed by the respective zamindars. In Bishnupur 78 villages worth rental of Rs.9,000, and 70,000 bighas of lands were granted by way of remuneration to the ghatwals.⁵ The top-khana lands in Burbhum, Bishnupur, Dacca

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1. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 203.
 2. J.Browne to G.G. in Council, Jan.12,1776, B.R.C. Jan.20,1776, R49/60; D.Scott to B.R. April 16,1814, B.R.P., April 22,1814, R77/33; W.W.Hunter, The Annals....., 323.
 3. Vide infra, 205.
 4. D.Scott to B.R. April 16, 1814, B.R.P., April 22,1814,R77/33; F.W.Robertson, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura, 43; B.H.Baden-Powell, A Short Account of the Land Revenue....., 119.
 5. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,088, 16.

and Mymensingh suggest that the zamindars possessed this type of service lands for maintaining artillery establishment.¹

The Dinajpur zamindari with an area of 4,119 sq.miles had 41188 bighas of chakaran lands appropriated to the horsemen, bargundazes and peons.² The Amini Commission recorded for the Nadia zamindari 20547 bighas of lands for horsemen, 5744 bighas for paiks, 4164 for mridahas, and another 328 for artificers.³

For supporting the fleet, boatmen and artificers, the zamindars would get jagirs termed as nawara lands⁴. The District of Bakarganj bounded by the Bay of Bengal and traversed by numerous rivers was vulnerable to piracy of the Maghs and the Feringis. Hence some zamindars of that region apart from possessing considerable amount of nawara lands, enjoyed a special type of nawara jagirs called hissazat. Such jagirs were granted to the zamindars for their personal participation in the campaigns against the pirates.⁵

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1. Dacca Council to Fort William Council, Jan.16,1774. Enclosure, D.F.R. VI; A.Hesilrige to C.Keating, Aug.29,1789, W.B.D.R. Burdwan, 40; S.A.B. IV, 264; J.M.Ghosh, "Historical Records in the Mymensingh Collectorate", B.P.P. 1923,80.
 2. H.Cottrell to R.Becher, Dec.22, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 142.
 3. B.M.Add.MSS.29,087, 93.
 4. P.C.C.D. Oct. 8, 1772, R70/15, 314-341; W.Douglas to B.R. April 6, 1790, B.R.P., April 29, 1790, R71/24.
 5. Massie to B.R. Nov.5, 1798 quoted in T.Raychaudhuri, "Some old Documents in Barisal-East Bengal", I.O.H. 1948, XXIV, 261; B.D.G.Bakarganj, 20-21; S.A.B. V, 224.

A close examination of the nature of these jagir lands confirms that some zamindaris were created and maintained solely to serve the military need of the Mughals. Again, the under-valuation of the jama of some zamindaris can be attributed to the strategic importance of those estates. The asal jama of 1728 shows that some zamindaris of the niabat of Dacca had remarkably larger amount of jagir jama than the khalsa. Again, some were excluded from the Khalsa jama, enjoying only jagir lands - presumably for defending the frontiers of the country.¹ The small hilly jungle estate at the foot of the Ponduah mountains can be identified with such zamindaris. The zamindar of the estate had to supply some artificers and barqundazes only.² The strategic importance of the Birbhum zamindari with an area of 3,858 sq.miles stretching along the western frontier of Bengal was recognized by the Mughals. About two-thirds of the estate was excluded from the revenue assessment and allotted "for the maintenance of some thousands of burkendauzes, matchlock men, or native Hindostany militia, appointed to guard the frontiers towards the barbarous unsubdued rajaship of South Bihar,..... while the remaining portion of territory was alone productive to

1. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 352-354; H.Beveridge, The District of Bakarganj, 82.

2. R.Lindsay to Dacca Council of Revenue, Nov.24, 1777, B.D.R. Sylhet, I, 22.

the state of yearly revenue, rated in the ausil jumma toomary, khalsa and jageer Rupees 3,77,645;.....The consequent loss of revenue, however, was less felt, than the political disadvantage of dismemberment of a territory which commanded all the leading passes direct from bordering foreign independent countries,....."¹ Afterwards when the Raja of Birbhum began to show his treacherous conduct during the Maratha raids, the special privilege enjoyed by him for the revenue assessment was revoked and the jama was raised. Finally Nawab Mir Qasim brought the whole zamindari under proper revenue assessment.²

The troops maintained by the zamindars were sometimes remunerated in cash. The Raja of Dinajpur would draw an annual ready money allowance of Rs.20,000 for the maintenance of 77 sawars (horsemen) and 464 barqundazes.³ The naqdi troops of Burdwan were paid in cash as the very name suggests.⁴ The troops would get diet money while on duty. The zamindars' spending on diet money were deducted

1. J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 224-225.

2. B.M.Add.MSS.6586, 140b; J.Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report..II, 225.

3. H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M. Dec. 22,1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 31, 1770, II, 143.

4. B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 757.

from the revenue of their estates.¹

It is to be noted that the troops holding rent-free lands in lieu of wages were often subjected to the payment of quit-rents.² Such quit-rents were termed as panchak in some places.³ A letter from the Raja of Bishnupur to the judge of Bankura in 1845 stated that there were some service lands appropriated to the wages of the armed forces of the estate on which panchaks were imposed.⁴ Senapati-mahal (lands held by the commanding officer of the armed forces), bakhshi-mahal (lands held by the paymaster of the army), top-Khana-mahal (lands held by the gunners), charidari-mahal (lands held by the macebearers), and mahal-bera-mahal (lands enjoyed by the guards of the Bishnupur fort) were under the purview of the panchak-mahals of Bishnupur.⁵

From the information at hand it is gathered that the army of the big zamindars was organized into four traditional sections, namely, the elephants, cavalry, chariots

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1. S.C.C. Oct. 28, 1766, R/A, 7; G.Vansittart to C.Russell, June 21, 1767, B.D.R. Midnapur I, 156.
 2. F.W.Robertson, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Bankura, 43; B.D.G. Midnapur, 14.
 3. P.C.C.D. Nov. 18, 1772, R70/15, 420; S.A.B. IV, 85, 254, 263-264.
 4. S.A.B. IV, 264.
 5. Ibid.

and infantry - collectively called chaturanga (four arms).¹ In the event of a campaign, the cavalry marched at the forefront followed by the elephants.² It is, however, likely that the elephants sometimes marched ahead of the troops.³ Apart from carrying the army chiefs and often the rajas, the trained elephants were actively used in warfare in large numbers.⁴ The war-chariots drawn by horses, would also carry generals and sometimes the raja himself.⁵ The infantry which constituted the bulk of the army, included in its train the paiks, bargundazes, archers, wrestlers, shieldbearers, (dhalis), clubmen and spearmen.

In addition to the four traditional divisions, the armed forces of the zamindars had in their roll the artillery - a later introduction to the Indian army. To this list should be added the fleet - an important military establishment in Bengal. The zamindar of the riverine parts of Bengal needed a fleet of war boats to defend their territories, to patrol the rivers and convey the troops and war

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1. J.A.Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, II, 670; T.C.Das Gupta, Aspects of Bengali Society....., 76.
 2. T.C.Das Gupta, Aspects of Bengali Society....., 76.
 3. "Chaudhuri's Larai", D.C.Sen (comp. & ed.), Eastern Bengal Ballads, III, part I, 304.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Mukunda Rama Chakravarti, Kavikankana Chandi, 94; J.A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, II, 673.

provisions.

As a part of military strategy, forts were built by the zamindars. The military strength of the major zamindars was demonstrated by their strongholds with encircling ditches, earthen ramparts, cannons or dense growth of jungles. The zamindaris in the western parts of Bengal abounded in forts. The bellicose nature of the people, the constant state of warfare among the chiefs themselves, and the exposure of the region to the recurring raids of the Marathas undoubtedly account for the existence of a large number of forts there. In the twenty mahals of Midnapur alone there were fifteen fortresses.¹ The Burdwan estate, one of the apex zamindaris, had not less than eight fortresses - most of these built at strategic points.² Though the zamindars of other parts of Bengal did not possess as many forts as did their western brethren, their residences were always well protected by ditches and walls.³ The recurrent Maratha raids prompted the affluent zamindars to construct a number of

1. R.M.Chakravarti Bahadur, "Notes on the Geography of Orissa", J.A.S.B. 1916, N.S. XII, 47-55.

2. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandr'er Granthavali, 191; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R. 18, 175; B.D.G. Burdwan, 31, 191, 204.

3. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Jan. 6, 1770, L.C.B.S.R. 3; R. M.Martin, The History of Antiquities, Topography and Statisticts of Eastern India II, 624; E.V.Westmacott, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Dinajpur Raj", C.R. 1872, LV, 215.

well-fortified abodes. The fortifications made by Raja Rameswar Ray of Bansberia to protect his family and the subjects from the onslaught of the Marathas are worth mentioning.¹

"The fort was garrisoned by a goodly number of soldiers, who were armed with swords, shields, paiks, muskets, bows and arrows, and was mounted with several pieces of artillery. The sides of the moat were raised to a great height, and brambles and prickly shrubs were planted on them so as to impede the progress of the turbulent raiders".²

The available information is in tune with the views of Habib³ that

"not only was it normal for zamindars to raise gil'achas, but the authorities too regarded it as a perfectly legitimate proceeding. The country must have been dotted with innumerable such fortresses. They became abnoxious in the eyes of the authorities only when the zamindars used them not for maintaining their rights over the peasants, but for defying the administration."⁴

The zamindars were empowered to keep armed establishments and construct forts with a view to defending their territories, protecting the rai'yats, agriculture, trade

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1. W.K.Firminger, "A Note on Bansberia", B.P.P. 1908, 75.
 2. S.C.Dey, The Bansberia Raj, 22.
 3. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....165.
 4. The enormity of the castles in the country had attracted the attention of traveller Thevenot (S.N.Sen (ed.), Indian Travels, III, 96).

and commerce but certainly not to defy the authority of the government, nor to assist the enemies of the state. Though the zamindars' active participation was sought in the military affairs, the Mughal rulers had always been cautious of the zamindars' potential ability to wage war against their own authority. This is why the Mughals maintained a constant watch on the overgrowing power of the zamindars and tried to keep them well within control.¹

Though duty-bound, the zamindars did not always meet the demand for military assistance. Many changed their loyalties as the tide of war flowed and ebbed.² The confirmation of the persistently unreliable character of the zamindars comes from the authors of the Maasir-ul-Umara:³

".....it is the way with most of the zamindars of India, to abandon the path of straightforwardness, and to watch every side and join whoever is the stronger and is being victorious....."

Nevertheless, the military strength of the zamindars was harnessed into imperial cause as long as the supervisory control over them remained overwhelming. But the erosion of the Mughal authority with the resultant chaos

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1. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 176-177.
 2. M.I. Borah (tr.), Baharistan I, 105-107, 139; Baharistan II, 665; Yusuf Ali, Ahwal-i-Mahabat Jang, J.N. Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 92.
 3. Shah Nawaz Khan and Abdul Haqq, Maasir-ul-Umara, H. Beveridge and B. Prasad (tr.), I, 392.

considerably weakened the Nawab's hold on the zamindars. Furthermore the recurrent Maratha raids underlined the vulnerability of the Nawab's government to external aggression. It dawned on the zamindars that they were left to depend very much on their own. At one stage of the Maratha terror, the zamindars of Western Bengal became so shaken that they sent their wakils with money to the agents of the Marathas to appease them.¹ The subsequent clash of economic and political interests between the East India Company and the Nawabs compounded the relations between the Nawab and the zamindars. And it is no wonder that some of the chief zamindars even participated in intrigues and the struggle for power precipitating the battle of Plassey and the beginning of the British rule. The timely intelligence supplied by the zamindars kept the English informed of the Nawab's movements.² In his bargain with Nawab Sirajud Dawlah, Watts was advised by some zamindars to meet the Nawab personally in order to resolve the differences between them.³

The correspondence between Clive and the zamindars of Birbhum, Burdwan, Dinajpur and Nadia made immediately before and after the Plassey are clear proofs of the zamindars'

1. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B. 196.

2. W.Tooke's Account, Orme MSS. O.V.19.

3. Ibid: B.M.Add.MSS. 29,209, 4.

readiness to transfer their loyalty from the Nawab's government to that of the English. In a letter presumably predating the Plassey, Raja Trailokya Chandra wrote:¹

"By the rapaciousness of the government nothing is left me. These three years I have no power left me in my country, and my own servants refused to obey me. But by the blessing of God by your coming the country shall flourish, and all men have their hearts at ease. I hope in God your power will be as great as I could wish it, that you may be good to every one. On this depends my own welfare. Manickchund is become the Governor of the country. Omichund is sent to act for him here. The power is vested in him. Them and their ancestors have been servants to me and my ancestors for many many years. It has pleased God that I should fall under the power of such a man..... If you punish him I may remain secure in my own place. I never spared any pains for the Company's good, but my inclination to serve them is checked by the want of power".

About the same time Raja Asad-al-Zaman wrote to Clive:²

"I should act sincerely and heartily with you God and his Prophet know the sincerity with which I have several times wrote on this subject to the Government. That I might know your intentions and that if you would supply me and protect me I would join you,..... By the blessing of God I will soon arrive with you with my army and will certainly join you."

In view of such evidence the popular impression that Raja Krishnachandra of Nadia played an active and important role in the downfall of Sirajud Dawlah is not a

1. Rec., June 27, 1757, H.M.S. 193, 170-171.

2. Rec., June 26, 1757, H.M.S. 193, 168-169.

mere speculation. According to the author of "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Nadia Raj",¹ the disgruntled Rajas of Nadia, Burdwan, Bishnupur, Dinajpur, Birbhum and Midnapur went to Murshidabad and appealed to Maharaja Mahendra, the diwan-i-subahsabah to redress their grievances. Having failed to persuade the Nawab to meet their demands the diwan, along with Jagat Seth and others hatched a plot to overthrow the regime. On the advice of Jagat Seth, Maharaja Krishnachandra, 'a man of uncommon sagacity and powerful influence', was invited to counsel them. In accordance with the decision reached at the meeting, Maharaja Krishnachandra met Drake at Calcutta and assured him of their enthusiastic support for the dethronement of the Nawab.² Maharaja Krishnachandra's letter³ greeting the English on their victory over Sirajud Dawlah also hints at his involvement in the conspiracy.

But the interest of the zamindars was not in complete harmony with that of the Company. Partnership was concluded with the Nawab or the English only when it suited the zamindars. In the same letter in which Raja

1. C.R., 1872 LV, 107-110.

2. See also, Imperial Gazetteer of India, Bengal II, 424; S.C.Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihasa II, 402.

3. Rec., March 7, 1758, H.M.S. 193, 309.

Asad-al-Zaman pledged his allegiance to the English, he wrote:¹

"But it is necessary I should tell you I am a zemindar, and should the Nawab satisfy you, my friendship with you might be fatal. Satisfy that you will in that case take care of my interest. Write me about this."

The battle of Plassey did not bring about an immediate change in the political and economic structure of the country. Till the transfer of the Diwani right to the Company, the fate of the zamindars remained bound with that of the Nawabs inasmuch as the Company followed for some time an avowed policy of non-interference. Actuated by a desire for expanding their influence and protecting their territorial interests in this fluid situation of the country, the zamindars of Bihar and West Bengal veered to Prince Ali Gauhar (Shah Alam II) whose military exploits in Bengal and Bihar were welcomed by them. Raja Asad-al-Zaman, his kinsman Kangar Khan, Raja of Narhat Samai² and a host of others either lent their full support or were willing to come to terms with the prince³. The disaffection of the zamindars at such an unsettled state of the country caused disquiet to the Nawab and the English. In 1760, Vansittart

1. Rec., June 26, 1757, H.M.S. 193, 196.

2. Situated in Bihar.

3. Gholam Ali Khan, Shah Alamnamah I, 115, 145; B.M. Add. MSS. 29,209, I, 87a-87b; Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir II, 332.

documented the critical situation of the country in the following words:

".....two armies were in the field and waiting only the fair weather to advance, the Shahzada towards Patna, and the Beerboom Rajah towards Murshidabad the capital. The Rajahs of Bissenpoor, Ramgur, and the other countries bordering upon the mountains were ready to shake off their dependence, & had already afforded considerable supplies to the Beerboom Rajah....." ¹

The Rajah of Birbhum did not make any pretence to show his infidelity to the Nawab against whom he had grievances. ²

The cession of the three districts of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur to the East India Company in 1760 added to the disaffection of the zamindars against the Nawab and the Company. They looked upon it as a curtailment of their former power and influence. ³ The zamindars of those places tried desperately to maintain their position and this often called forth armed clashes. The Midnapur District Records ⁴ relate numerous incidents of armed resistance the Company encountered when it tried to humble the

1. B.P.C., Nov. 1760, RI/32, 632-633.

2. Asad-al-Zaman to S.C., Sept, 1760, S.C.Hill, An Abstract of the Early Records of the Foreign Department I, 67.

3. The zamindars might have also been apprehensive of losing their zamindaris since some zamindars in the ceded district of 24-Parganahs were dispossessed by the Company.

4. B.D.R. Midnapur, I and II.

zamindars. The Burdwan zamindar's unwillingness to submit to the full control of the Company found its expression in his collaboration with Prince Ali Gauhar, the Marathas and also with the faquirs. In November 1760, Nawab Mir Qasim wrote:¹

"I hear from Burdwan that the zemindar intends to fight, and that he has collected together 10 or 15 thousand peons and robbers and takes them into pay and joined the Beerbhoom Raja".

About the same time the Burdwan Raja fought against the English in conjunction with the faquirs.² Raja Trailokya Chandra having entered into a conspiracy with Raja Asad-al-Zaman to crush the power of the Nawab and the English, lent assistance to the Marathas.³ Offering a sharp contrast to the situation in the early years of the Maratha depredation when most of the zamindars stood solidly behind the Nawab in his fight against the national menace, the zamindars now were in league with the Maratha adversaries with the prospect of getting rid of the Nawab and the English. In 1761 Johnstone reported⁴ that many zamindars of Midnapur had gone over to the side of the Marathas. A very few,

1. J. Long, Selections.....507.

2. Capt. A.White to S.C., Dec. 29,1760, S.C.C., Jan.5, 1761, R/A, 3.

3. J.Long Selections..... 507, 512, 513.

4. J.Johnstone to S.C., Feb. 8, 1761, S.C.C. Feb.10, 1761, R/A, 3.

like Raja Parikhkhait Pala of Narayangarh¹ remained loyal to the Nawab during this time.² Hence, the Company found it expedient to create a loyal zamindar by restoring the dismissed Raja of Pachet on condition of paying the Company one lakh of rupees for the maintenance of the extra troops needed to meet the emergent situation.³ Mir Qasim, however, did not brook the audacity of the Rajas of Birbhum, Burdwan and Narhat Samai. They were attacked and subdued in 1763.⁴

Since the battle of Plassey, the defence of the subah was gradually transferred to the Company. By the article 5 of the treaty concluded between Mir Qasim and the East India Company in September 1760,⁵ the revenue management of the districts of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur was handed over to the Company for maintaining troops for the defence of the subah. A separate sanad⁶ issued to give effect to the treaty read:

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1. Situated in the District of Midnapur.
 2. H.V.Bayley, History of Midnapur, 15.
 3. S.C.C. Oct. 8, 1761, J.Long, Selections.....569.
 4. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir II, 395-396; A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 47.
 5. B.P.C. Nov. 10, 1760, BRI /32, 644-645.
 6. B.P.C. Nov. 17, 1760 BRI / 32, 686.

The Zemidarree of the Rajah Tillucchund, in the Districts of the subah of Bengal; be it known, that whereas divers wicked people have traiterously stretched forth their hands to plunder the subjects, and waste the Royal Dominions, for this reason the said pergana, &c., is granted to the English Company in part disbursement of their expences, & the monthly maintenance of five hundred European horse, two thousand Eur. foot, & eight thousand Sepoys, which are to be entertained for the protection of the Royal Dominions."

The agreement of September 30, 1765 concluded between Nawab Najmud Dawlah and the Company vested on the English the responsibility of the protection of the subah. The treaty was followed by the reduction of the Nawab's troops to insignificance. The motive of consolidation of the Company's power is reflected from Governor Spencer's letter to the Court:¹

"To prevent Revolutions or changes in future, we thought it safest for your affairs to let the Defence of the Provinces lay on us, and us only, or in fact that there should be no Military Force but yours. This will put it out of the power of any one ever in future to disturb your affairs by commotions or otherwise and also give you a sufficient fund for such Military Force."

To implement this objective, the 'useless military rabble' of the Nawab as well as the forces under the command of the faujdars and the rajas were disbanded.²

1. Letter to Court, March 14, 1765, para 10, E/4/26.

2. Letter to Court, Dec. 5, 1766, para 18 E/4/27; H.Verelst & F.Sykes to S.C., June 28, 1767, S.C.C. July 6, 1767, R/A, 7.

The available information unearthed so far, however, does not suggest that all the troops or the naval establishments of the zamindars were disbanded at once. The Company embarked on a programme of raising military and police forces exclusively belonging to it. But the process was carried out in phases. The brunt of the Company's policy of reducing the troops was first felt by the zamindars of the ceded districts. The Burdwan zamindar's monthly expenditure of Rs.22,000 as the pay of the nagdi troops was cut down to Rs.15,000.¹ In 1766 Verelst proposed to the Council of Revenue at Burdwan to disband the nagdi troops of the raja entirely.² He, however, suggested to sanction allowances to the jamadars who were either distant relations of the raja or old servants of the family, and to provide the raja with a number of the Company's sepoy for the protection of his person and palaces.³ The subsequent correspondence reveals that the Council decided for further reduction of the nagdis instead of disbanding them altogether. The nagdi troops numbering 839 were retained with a monthly cost of Rs.8,660.⁴ The military

1. S.C.C., Oct. 28, 1766, R/A, 7.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 757 (See appendix G).

strength of the zamindars of Chittagong was also reduced to a considerable degree.¹ Zamindar Tej Singh was in command of 4,000 barqundazes, which in 1761 was cut down to 112 men.² In 1772, Collector Bentley dismissed them altogether.³

The ceded district of Midnapur, however, portrays a different picture in this regard. Because of the fact that all the zamindars of Midnapur could not be brought under complete control of the Company during the period under review, the military potential of the zamindars could not be crushed. The militant nature of the people and the recurring raids of the 'Chuars' and other hill tribes made the task of subjugation very difficult. A letter from Vansittart suggests that the local thanadars and zamindars were entrusted with the responsibility of protection of some subdued areas of Midnapur.⁴ The Company's troops stationed there were reduced as a measure of economy.⁵ Again, in 1770, Peiaree wrote⁶ that the Ghatseela zamindar was to

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1. J. Grant Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 238.
 2. W.B. Sumner to C.R., Oct. 14, 1779, B.R.C., May 9, 1780, R50/24.
 3. Ibid.
 4. G. Vansittart to Lt. Nun, March 31, 1770, B.D.R., Midnapur, II, 182.
 5. Ibid.
 6. J. Peiaree to Lt. Goodyar, April 23, 1770, B.D.R., Midnapur, IV, 3.

supply paiks to assist the English in their operations. Rani Siromony of Midnapur zamindari,¹ and some other zamindars also assisted the English with troops; some even rendered personal service.²

The reduction of the zamindari troops and the flotilla in other parts of the subah commenced in the wake of the grant of the Diwani power to the Company. The number of bargundazes of the zamindars of Purnea,³ and the Raja of Nadia was considerably curtailed by the year 1770.⁴ In December 1770, Cottrell, Supervisor of Dinajpur proposed the reduction of the Dinajpur Raja's troops to less than a half with an annual cost of Rs.10,000, and the rental of 62,673 bighas of lands in lieu of cash salary.⁵ The top-khana lands of the Birbhum zamindari were resumed in the year 1789.⁶

The naval establishments of the zamindars were, however, considerably curtailed. Between the years 1767-1772

1. G.Vansittart to C.Russell, June 21, 1767 and C.Russell to G.Vansittart July 3, 1767, B.D.R., Midnapur I, 156,160.

2. J.Fergusson to J.Graham, March 17,1767, B.D.R., Midnapur I, 119.

3. G.G.Ducarel to C.C.R.M., Dec. 3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 13, 1770, II, 64, 70.

4. C.C.R.M. to J.Rider, Feb. 14, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. III, 178.

5. H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M., Dec. 22, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 31, 1770, II, 143;

The proposal was carried into action is evident from the correspondence of Cottrell on Feb. 8,1772 (P.C.C.R.M. IX, 169)

6. A.Hasilrige to C.Keating, Aug.29,1789, W.B.D.R., Burdwan, 40.

the greater part of the nawara lands were resumed. The band-o-bast of the Dacca province for the year 1771 (1178 B.S.) records the resumption of the nawara establishment worth Rs.25,000 in round figures.¹ It is interesting to note that the nawara land-holding continued for a long time in the Chandradwip zamindari. In 1790, Collector Douglas recommended "an increase of sicca Rs.15,000, be laid on this mahal², on the plea that the zemindar enjoys a net profit equal to that sum from the hissajat lands".³

The reduction of the troops and the war-boats led to the resumption of the personal jagirs and chakaran lands in respective zamindaris. This, however, did not necessarily cause the shrinkage of the territories of the zamindars. The zamindars possessing such lands continued to enjoy them on payment of a fixed revenue. But the actual loss of the zamindars has to be searched somewhere else. The reduction or complete disbanding of the troops of the zamindars struck at their paramount control over a section of the

1. P.C.C.D., Oct. 8, 1772, R70/15, 314-341.

2. Chandradwip.

3. W.Douglas to B.R., April 6, 1790, B.R.P. April 29, 1790, R71/24;

It was only in July 1901 that the hissazat lands possessed by Raja Durga Narain of Chandradwip, were resumed (Massie to B.R. Nov. 5, 1789 quoted in T.Raychaudhuri, "Some old Documents in Barisal, East Bengal", I.H.Q., 1948, XXIV, 261; H.Beveridge, The District of Bakarganj, 88-89).

prajas who were under their direct command in the past. The principal zamindars were suddenly saddled with a problem of unemployment of at least a section of their armed retainers. The security of their estates was threatened since a number of them took to robbery and theft.¹ The following passage from the Seir² reflects the overall economic effect on the society as a sequel to the disbanding of the troops:

"..... On the other hand, out of that vast multitude of people, called musqueteers, whose numbers were heretofore counted by ten thousands in these provinces, only a small number of them have obtained a livelihood by inlisting as Talingas in the English service; and yet it was these two provinces that fed and paid regularly forty or fifty thousand horse, which were either in the Viceroy's service immediately or mediately, in that of his sons or relations and officers, or in that of the principal zemindars of the province. Thousands and thousands of merchants followed that numerous cavalry, and according to their respective means and callings, found a certain income in their connections with them, and in their turn afforded a livelihood to multitudes of others. Now matters go otherwise. Service for troopers and cavalry, there is none at all; and of the various branches of trade, heretofore open to all, none is left free."

1. Hastings' Minute, B.R.C., April 19, 1774, R49/54.

2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 203.

CHAPTER V

THE ZAMINDARS' POLICE FUNCTIONS

Under the Mughals the criminal and police administration in the subah of Bengal had been placed in charge of faujdars or military governors, stationed at the headquarters of faujdari divisions¹. He was provided with both infantry and cavalry forces and charged with the task of suppressing rebellions and rendering assistance to the revenue collecting agencies.² Even in the eighteenth century Bengal these imperial officials were powerful figures—the Seir describes how they "marched in state, with standard displayed, and Kettledrums beating", themselves commanding hundreds of troops, while "the Mansobdars or Military dignitaries with their paymasters and troops, were all dependent on the Fodjdar, who gave orders about arraying and marching their corps, chastising malefactors, or coercing turbulent people".³ Both the Ain and the Seir suggest that the

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1. The faujdari circles of Bengal were: Islamabad (Chittagong), Sylhet, Rangpur, Rangamati, Castle of Jalalgarh (in Purnea), Akbanagar (Rajmahal), Rajshahi, Burdwan, Midnapur and Hugli.
 2. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 40, 42; B.M.Add.MSS.1779, 217a-218a; Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 176, 178-179.
 3. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 176.

faujdars above all were expected to keep the zamindars¹ in order.

In the towns the faujdar had under him kotwals or town prefects whose duties the Ain vividly portrays:²

"Through his watchfulness and night patrolling the citizens should enjoy the repose of security, and the evil-disposed lie in the slough of non-existence. He should keep a register of houses, and frequented roads, and engage the citizens in a pledge of reciprocal assistance, and bind them to a common participation of weal and woe."

The kotwal had also many other municipal duties, such as organizing markets, preventing misuse of drugs and like.³

The picture these documents present is that of officials being appointed from outside to maintain law and order in the districts by their own force. But in practice the faujdars and kotwals, had to act through local sources of power and influence as well. In the towns the kotwal used the leading men of the muhallas in organizing mutual responsibility while he engaged men of the sweeper community as his spies.⁴ In the countryside the faujdar sought to prevent the zamindars getting too powerful but also made use

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1. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 42; Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 176-177. The author of the Seir, from personal and family experience, could report the active survival of the faujdari institution even under the Nawabs, as late as the death of Alivardi Khan in 1756.
 2. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 43-44.
 3. B.M.Add.MSS. 1779 224a; M.F.Lokhandwala (tr.), Mirat, 144-145.
 4. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II, 44-45.

of their authority in the maintenance of law and order.

The idea of making the zamindars fill the role of police administrators was not an innovation of the Mughals. Before the Mughal rule the village headman as the chief of the village community used to organize the police force within the precinct of his village. This responsibility of the village headman gradually passed to the zamindars.¹ With elements of both fiscal and political power at their disposal, the zamindars exercised enormous local influence which made them most suitable guardians of law and order in their locality.² The sanads bestowing zamindari rights made specific mention of the police duties to be discharged. The sanad³ given to Raja Ramkanta, zamindar of Rajshahi in 1735-1736 stated that

"he observe a commendable conduct towards the class of ryots and common people at large; and employ himself diligently in expelling and punishing the refractory; and exert his utmost endeavours that no trace of thieves, robbers, and disorderly persons, may remain within his boundaries;..... that he take special care of the high-roads, so that travellers and passengers may pass and repass in perfect confidence; and, if at any time the property of any person shall be stolen or plundered, that he produce the thieves and robbers together with the property;

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1. I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....132-134; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....66; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1872, LIV, 177.
 2. In Bombay towards the end of the seventeenth century, all landholders excepting the Brahmins and Banians were bound to join the militia which also performed 'civil police duties' (S.M.Edwardes, The Bombay City Police, 2).
 3. From J.Shore's Minute, April, 1788 quoted in W.K.Firminger (ed.) The Fifth ReportI, Xlvii.

and, delivering the latter to the owner, consign the former to punishment: that in case he do not produce them, he himself become responsible for the property; that he exert his vigilance that no one be guilty of drunkenness or irregularities of behaviour within the boundaries of his zemindary;....."

The sanad¹ granted to the English East India Company as zamindar of Calcutta in 1757 also enjoined similar duties:

"they suffer no robbers nor house-breakers to remain within their districts, and take such care of the King's highways, that the travellers and passengers may pass and repass without the least molestation: that (which God forbid) if the effects of any person be plundered or stolen, they discover and produce the plunderers and thieves, together with the goods, and deliver the goods to the owners, and the criminals to condign punishment; or else, that they themselves be responsible for the said goods, that they take special care, that no one be guilty of any crimes or drunkenness within the limits of their Zemindarry;"

....." 2

Speaking of the 'Alivardian traditions in Bengal', Reza Khan recorded that the zamindars "maintained a proper police and were accountable for every branch of it".³ That even the smaller zamindars had to perform police duties is clearly evident from this remark.⁴

1. Quoted in H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress....147

2. See also E.B.A.D.G., Bogra, 112-113.

3. Reza Khan's Note, Feb., 1775, Francis MSS.Eur.E.28,345.

4. The sanad granted to Prankissen Singh, Chaudhuri and zamindar of parganah Hoghla in chaklah Jessore (B.M. Add.MSS.19505, 10a), and the parwana issued by Reza Khan to the zamindars and chaudhuries of Malda (P.C.C.R.M. March 7, 1771, IV,61) are examples corroborating the fact.

But in evaluating the police systems in the rural areas during the period under review, two factors must be borne in mind. First, a police system in the modern sense of the term did not fully grow up in rural Bengal. The force for the maintenance of law and order was inadequate and ill-equipped. Some of the revenue staff of the zamindars were simultaneously entrusted with police duties. For this amalgamation of responsibilities it is difficult to delineate the fiscal and police staff of the zamindars. The big zamindaris of Burdwan, Birbhum, Rajshahi, Nadia, Dinajpur and the like, had organizations primarily concerned with the task of maintaining law and order, while in the smaller zamindaris some other duties also devolved on such bodies as a matter of economic and administrative expediency.

Secondly, the system of enforcing law and order lacked uniformity all over the country. The physiography of the country, the unsettled political condition in some parts of Bengal, the measure of independence enjoyed by some zamindars, contributed towards this diversity. For example, the predatory chiefs of the Western frontiers of Bengal depended very much on their armed retainers for aggression and defence.¹ Their military and police

1. D.J. McNeil, Report on the Village Watch of the Lower Provinces of Bengal, 63; N. Majumdar, Justice and Police in Bengal, 51-52.

functions to a certain extent merged into one. The district of Birbhum had the characteristics of a fort. What was required for defence and internal peace was to guard the different river ghats and hill passes against the intrusion of robbers and bad elements.¹ There the thanas or police stations resembled military bases and the thanadars with their subordinates performed police as well as revenue duties.² The district of Burdwan, on the other hand, not so much exposed to the danger of invasion, had a definite police organization as supplementary to the military and fiscal administrations. The faujdars' police jurisdiction was very nominal³ and even nil in some areas of Western Bengal. It appears that the faujdar's authority was hardly extended to the zamindari of Burdwan where the raja had remained responsible directly to the Nawab for both revenue and criminal jurisdictions since 1725 (1137 A.H.).⁴ Only the cases of robberies were referred to the faujdar of Catwa for

1. C. Keating to Cornwallis, Oct. 16, 1789, W.B.D.R., Birbhum, 18.

2. W.W. Hunter, The Annals....., 326-327.

3. B.R.C., Feb. 28, 1776, R49/60.

4. Burdwan Diwan's representation, April 28, 1775, B.R.C. May 29, 1775, R 49/53; Raja's representation, Feb. 9, 1776, B.R.C., R49/60; See also Hastings' Minute, B.S.C. Dec. 7, 1775, R/A, 32.

further investigation.¹ In some parts of the country like Rajshahi, Nadia, Jessore, Murshidabad, Dacca and Faridpur, where the authority of the government was firmly anchored, police organizations developed on a moderate scale.

Besides, in the actual framework of the system there were diversities, though trivial in some instances. In some Districts the greater part of the village police consisted of the village watchmen while in others, the existence of such personnel in the police set-up cannot be traced.² Though in most Districts the police staff were remunerated in grants of rent-free lands, the custom of levying taxes on the rai-yats for defraying police expenses was also prevalent.³

When we take into consideration the actual management of a zamindari, it becomes clear that the zamindars had to perform a host of administrative duties which had an intimate relation to the enforcement of law and order. The zamindars had to secure the punctual collection

1. Burdwan Diwan's representation, April 28, 1775, B.R.C. May 29, 1775, R49/53;

With the establishment of the Company's rule, this power of the faujdar ceased to exist.

2. D.J. McNeil, Report on the village Watch....., 64, 116, 123-124; E.B.D.G., Tippera, 74.

3. J. Harris to C.C.R.M., Aug. 5, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Aug. 12, 1771, VI, 79; P.C.C.R.M., March 23, 1772, X, 86, F. Refearn to B.R., Feb. 5, 1793, B.R.J.C., April 12, 1793, R127/88.

of the state's share of the produce from the rai-yats, and its safe despatch to the government treasury. Equally important was the duty to ensure the safe conduct of trade and commerce within the bounds of their territories. To ensure the safety of the lives and property of the people residing in an estate was an implied obligation of the zamindari tenure. A zamindari could scarcely thrive while resting on a base of insecurity and discontentment. Hence the zamindars shaped the police administration in accordance with the conditions of their own territories and their positions.

The grouping of police establishments in the zamindaris into the following categories is a rough guide to an understanding of their functions:

- 1) the regular police forces which included thanadar, chaukidar, ghatwal, paik and barbundaz;
- 2) the spies and dak servants e.g., Kasid, harkarah, halalkhor, tappi, digwar, dakooah, shahrahi chaukidar and rahbar;
- 3) the revenue-cum-police staff comprising village headman, village watchman, gram-saranjami-paik and simanadar;
- 4) the personal guards of the zamindar e.g., paik, barbundaz, guard and peon.

Each of these categories would be examined in turn, starting with that which formed the police forces proper.

The Regular Police

The regular police forces in the big zamindaris were organized and controlled within a system of thanas or police stations which had their origin as fortified military garrisons.¹ From the very full records of Gujarat, Saran has shown that in the heyday of Mughal rule the countryside was controlled by an elaborate system of such thanas.² Thus, in the Haveli parganah of Ahmedabad, comprising 193 villages, there were twelve thanas, all subordinate to the faujdar of the parganah.³ The same basic structure of faujdar districts and subordinate thanas seems to have existed also in Bengal.⁴ In Murshid Quli Khan's time, indeed, the system seems to have been strengthened by the creation of new thanas - three for example on the Burdwan road.⁵ Where a number of thanas were situated in a single zamindari,

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1. Azad-al-Husaini, Naubahar-i-Murshid Quli Khani, J.N.Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 4; T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 12; S.M.Edwardes, The Bombay City Police, 1.
 2. P.Saran, The Provincial Government....., 230-231.
 3. Ibid., 231.
 4. J.N.Sarkar, "The Conquest of Chatgaon, 1666 A.D.", J.A.S.B. 1907, N.S. III, 416.
 5. F.Gladwin (tr.) T.B. 108.

they seem often to have been placed for administrative convenience within the jurisdiction of the zamindar. However the zamindar, in all circumstances, was bound to assist the thanadars of those thanas lying within his estate. Reza Khan set this out in clear terms when explaining the Mughal system:

"In former times the Faujdārs had no great number of men with them but there was a standing order that the 'amalas of the zamīndārs should accompany them when they go out to round up a gang of robbers and that they should help them in tracking out the plundered articles." 1

The effectiveness of the system depended upon the strength of the centre. It may be conjectured that in the great days of Mughal rule the faujdar retained supreme authority even over those thanas nominally placed under the zamindars' control.² In Nawabi Bengal, however, and more especially after the battle of Plassey, when central authority was eclipsed, thanas gradually fell into full subjection to their respective zamindars. Reza Khan in his same letter of December 11, 1776,³ recorded, "Now the Faujdārs receive no support whatsoever from the zamīndārs or the ta'luqdars...."

1. C.P.C. V, 422.

2. Hastings' Minute, B.S.C., Dec. 7, 1775, R/A, 32; T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 14-15; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration....., 67.

3. C.P.C. V, 422.

The number of thanas varied from estate to estate, though every thana always covered a number of villages. Thus in 1784, in the Burdwan zamindari, over four thousand square miles in total area, and consisting of some thirty three parganahs there were a hundred thanas from one to twelve per parganah.¹ In the rather smaller Birbhum estate in 1778 there were 323 thanadars,² manning an unknown, though probably lesser number of police posts. On the other hand, in the wild, little cultivated Western Jungles of Midnapur, five hundred square miles in extent and divided into seventeen parganahs, there were only two thanas.³ The reason for such an insignificant number of police stations was the fact that this was still a tribal area paying occasional tribute rather than revenues, and virtually outside the Nawab's administration.⁴ The evidence from Burdwan and Birbhum suggests that the normal Bengal thana, like that of Gujrat, was from only four to ten

1. W.Pye to B.R., April 5, 1784, B.R.C. July 8, 1784, R50/52, (see Appendix H).

2. B.M. Add. MSS. 29,088, 8.

3. E.Baber to Hastings, Feb. 6, 1773, B.D.R., Midnapur, IV, 106.

4. E.Baber to Hastings, Feb. 6, 1773, B.D.R., Midnapur, IV, 106-107.

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miles across.

Each thana with a number of paiks or armed constables and bargundazes was under the charge of a thanadar, who sometimes was also assisted by a naib, a bakhshi and a muharrir, together with peons or orderlies.² The thanadar was responsible for theft or robbery and apprehension of criminals. Besides guarding the public revenues, the thanadar ensured the safety of merchants, travellers and pilgrims.³ "They are in short", Russell observed,⁴ "the safeguard of the province & without them the riott has no idea of safety of his person or security of his property."

1. Dacca and Chittagong Districts, with their multitudes of small zamindaris, can never have operated in the way Burdwan or Birbhum, Nadia or Rajshahi did. This is a point well brought out by Shee, the Collector of Dacca in 1785. Praising the success in general of the Mughal system of attaching responsibility for the police to landed property, he pointed out its unpracticability in Dacca: "The number of zemindars in the Division of Dacca subject to the jurisdiction of the Capital adawluts falls, I believe, little short of four hundred and the country during several months of each year is so totally overflown that all communication between the villages except by water is cut off..... During these months therefore the zemindars or Landholders are changed into Sumunderdars or Proprietors of sea or water and duties that Government may expect of them in their former character in the latter they cannot possibly fulfill."- (G.Shee to B.R., Sept.17, 1785, B.R.C., Sept.30, 1785, R50/61).
2. Letter from Collector of Hugli quoted in S.A.B.III, 320.
3. B.M.Add.MSS.1779, 231; T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 12, 14.
4. C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug. 1, 1767, B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41.

It is difficult to gather systematic and full information about the total number of the thanadari staff. But some idea can be gathered from a few examples. In 1767 there were 3,693 men in the thanas of Burdwan,¹ some 2,514 in Hijli² at much the same time. In 1770, in Birbhum there were 2,492 men for the protection of the towns, and another 204, accountable for robberies.³ In the same year, the thanas of Dinajpur were manned by 6,743 daks and paiks.⁴ In Midnapur 2,062 paiks were reported in 1793.⁵ Similar numbers were doubtless maintained in most districts.

Like other zamindari staff, the thanadari forces were paid in the main by allotments of chakaran or service lands, though they might also receive diet money, as they seem to have done in Burdwan.⁶ These lands were allotted

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1. B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 756; In 1790, the Burdwan Collector gave the total number of police officers as 3,079, composed of 38 thanadars, 9 deputies, 470 peons, 284 paiks appointed at the sadar chaukies with the thanadars, 446 chaukidars who have charge of a certain number of villages, 758 peons and 1074 paiks stationed with the chaukidars (L.Mercer to B.R., Dec.6, 1790, B.R.J.C. March 18, 1791, RI27/72).
 2. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,088, 129.
 3. A.Higginson to C.C.R.M., Oct.10,1770, M.F.R., Oct.23,1770,I.
 4. H.Cottrell to R.Becher,Dec.22,1770, P.C.C.R.M.,Dec.31,1770,II.
 5. G.Dowdeswell to B.R., March 2,1793,B.R.J.C.,April 12, 1793, RI27/88.
 6. C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug. 1, 1767, B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 728.

free of rent and the zamindars received a corresponding deduction from the revenue demand. The figures available from the various zamindaris show very great disparities in the area and value of lands allotted to the thanadari staff, which work out, if figures are correct at thirty-six bighas in Birbhum, twenty-six in Midnapur and little more than half a bigha per man in Hijli. It is scarcely possible, therefore, to arrive at any meaningful average for Bengal, while even within the single zamindari of Midnapur the paikan land grants varied from six to forty bighas per man. Some idea of the very considerable outlay upon police establishments can be gathered, however, from such scattered figures as have survived:

In the Burdwan zamindari the area of chakaran lands for the thana and chauki establishments was given in 1784 as 46,488 bighas,¹ in 1790 as 43,472 bighas, thought by the Collector to yield produce worth about one rupee a bigha,² and in 1793 as 42,506 bighas with a jama of Rs.61,188.³ In Midnapur in that same year 1793 the jagir lands for police duties were recorded as 54,866 bighas - with a jama at the parganah rate amounting to Rs.57,495.⁴ In Burbhum in 1770

1. Vide supra, 190, f.n.1.

2. L.Mercer to B.R., Dec. 6, 1790, B.R.J.C. March 18, 1791, R127/72.

3. A.Brook to R.R., Feb. 22, 1793, B.R.J.C. March 1, 1793, R127/87.

4. G.Dowdeswell to B.R., March 2, 1793, B.R.J.C., April 12, 1793, R127/88 (See Appendix I).

the figure was 28,158 bighas with a rental of Rs.23008,¹ and in 1778 the thanadari land was recorded as 11,840 bighas.² In Hijli the figure was 1,623 bighas³ - which seems strangely low. Ducarel, the able Supervisor of Purnea in 1770 gave no area of chakaran lands, but he estimated that the charges for police "at our coming to the Dewannee was near 2 lack and a half of Rupees"⁴ He added that the amount had since then been cut to Rs.40,000 the barest minimum.⁵ The 1793 figures, produced in response to an enquiry from the Governor General and Council, of police charges of Rs.17,000 in Nadia,⁶ of Rs.16,000 in Rajshahi,⁷ and of Rs.1,432, the jama of the chakaran lands in Tamluk⁸ ought doubtless to be taken as the bare minimum to which the Company had over the years reduced them. If the Purnea figures may be taken as a guide, those for Nadia, Rajshahi, and Tamluk ought to be multiplied sixfold in order to re-create the pre-British situation.

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1. A.Higginson to C.C.R.M., Oct. 10, 1770, M.F.R. Oct. 23,1770,I, (see Appendix J).
 2. B.M.Add. MSS. 29,088, 8.
 3. B.M.Add.MSS. 29088, 129.
 4. G.G.Ducarel to C.C.R.M. Dec.3,1770, P.C.C.R.M.,Dec.13,1770, II, 70.
 5. Ibid.
 6. B.R.J.C., Feb. 5, 1793, R127/88.
 7. I.H.Harington to B.R., April 19, 1793, B.R.J.C. April 26, 1793, R127/89; Another Rs.20,926 was spent for revenue police
 8. W.Dent to B.R. March 4,1793, B.R.J.C. April 5,1793,R127/77.

The Thana was the largest police unit, and under these came the smaller posts known as chaukies or pharies.¹ These posts were in the charge of the chaukidars who commanded a number of paiks and peons. For example in Burdwan under the jurisdiction of the 100 thanas there were 422 chaukies, manned by 446 chaukidars, 1074 paiks and 758 peons.² To be watchful over the movement of the bad elements, to guard the highways and riverways, to receive reports of crimes from the subordinates and transmit the same to the nearby thana were the schedule of the chaukies. It was also the duty of the chaukidars to interrogate and register strangers entering their towns or villages.³ The chaukies used likewise to notify the public of the recovery of lost property. Speaking very highly of the police administration of the Bishnupur estate, Holwell recorded:⁴

"If anything is lost in this district, for instance a bag of money or other valuable; the person who finds it, hangs it upon the next tree, and gives notice to the nearest Chowkey or place of guard, the officer of which orders immediate publication of the same by beat of tomtom, or drum."

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1. H.M.S. 775, 42-43; L. Mercer to B.R. Dec. 6, 1790, B.R.J.C. March 18, 1791, R127/72; D.J. McNeile, Report on the Village Watch9.
 2. B.R.C. July 8, 1784, R50/52; L. Mercer to B.R. Dec. 6, 1790, B.R.J.C., March 18, 1791, R127/72.
 3. Luard and Hosten (tr.), Travels.....II, 109-110; S.A. Khan; (ed.), John Marshall in India, 66-68. From the correspondence of Raja Ramnath of Dinajpur, and Raja Asad-al-Zaman of Birbhum concerning the movement of the French and the steps taken by those rajas, it transpires that strangers and unauthorized persons could not easily enter the territories of the zamindars (Raja Ramnath to Clive, Dec. 11, 1757, and March 11, 1758; Raja Asad-al-Zaman to Clive, Dec. 12, 1757 and Oct. 28, 1757, H.M.S. 193).
 4. J.Z. Holwell, Interesting Historical Events I, 199.

The chaukies sometimes were used as rest houses and the chaukidars were held responsible for the lives and property of those halting there. Thus when Naib Monahar Das passing a night at Roghunathpur chauki in Pachet lost the money he had put in the custody of the chaukidar, the zamindar acknowledging ultimate responsibility at once, sent his gumashta to investigate into the matter.¹

In the wilder border country and the hills, the police chaukies had more of the nature of military frontier posts and the 'commandants of the picquets' posted therein were known as ghatwals, guardians of the ghats or passes.² Elsewhere in Bengal the term ghatwal had, however, a rather different connotation, that of custom house guards and officers stationed at custom chaukies and landing ghats on the hill passes and on the banks of the rivers.³ Their task was to render personal service of watch and ward of the ghats, check the goods passing and repassing and realize the customary tolls.⁴

1. P.C.C.R.M., March 16, 1771, IV, 112.

2. J.Browne to B.R. Aug. 20, 1775, B.R.C., Feb. 20, 1776, R49/60; D.Scott to B.R. April 16, 1814, B.R.C., April 22, 1814, R77/33; B.H.Baden-Powell, A Short Account of the Land Revenue.....119; D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch.....108-110.

3. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch110; B.D.G., Burdwan, 157.

4. W.Billers to B.R. Dec. 4, 1762, B.D.R., Chittagong I, 50; J.Harris to C.C.R.M., Nov. 14, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. VII, 165; P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 17, 1771 VIII, 52.

The Spies and the Runners

The zamindari police also included a secret service elements, which supplemented the routine work of ordinary policemen. Kasids and harkarahs were often employed in disguise for detecting crimes of a complicated nature.¹ They may be regarded as the forerunners of the goyendas of the British period. Another body of men who were often used as spies and informers were the sweepers or halalkhors.² The role of the secret agents in the detection of serious crimes receives colourful confirmation from contemporary Bengali literature. Bharatachandra's³ and Ramprasad's⁴ graphic accounts of the measures adopted to apprehend the secret lover of the daughter of the Raja of Burdwan, mirror the effective espionage practised in those days. The raja took the kotwal to task for neglecting his duties and asked him to detect and apprehend the stranger who had enamoured the princes of him. Accordingly all the police staff were

1. Haji Mustafa (tr.) Seir III, 173, 175; H.Yule (ed.), The Diary of William Hedges, II, lxix; C.P.C. II, 12 B-C, 16A, 130A.

2. N.Manucci, Storia....., W.Irvine (tr.), II, 421; S.A.Khan (ed.), John Marshall in India, 126.

3. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandr'er Granthavali, 94-97.

4. Ramprasad Sena, Vidya-Sundara, 78-115.

alerted and numerous harkaraks were despatched in every direction. Seven hundred female spies under the guidance of their ring-leader began to explore every house in disguise. The zeal of their activity compelled many innocent people to leave their place in consternation. Even the travellers, pilgrims were thrown into prison on the barest suspicion. Spies disguised as boatmen, tax-collectors, mendicants and ascetics collected information from different quarters. Jaynarayan,¹ also writing in the mid-eighteenth century, depicted an almost identical picture of spies being profusely used to trace a necklace stolen from the palace of the raja.

No doubt such poetical works enshrine exaggerations. But truth is clouded in the dramatic stories which the poets weave around the facts and experience of life. Moreover, when all the contemporary works harp upon the same theme one cannot discard them altogether as mere fancy.² It seems still less safe to do so when the historian of Murshid Quli Khan, Azad-al-Husaini described just such measures being successfully adopted by the Nawab's forces.³

1. Jaynarayan Sena, Hari-lila, 81-95.

2. D.C.Sen, Glimpses of Bengal Life, 37.

3. Azad-al-Husaini, Naubahar-i-Murshid Quli Khani, J.N. Sarkar (tr.), Bengal Nawabs, 9.

The zamindars were also obliged to ensure the safe conduct of the dak (post). Any interception of the letters and hindrance in their despatch had to be accounted for by the zamindar in whose territory such incidents should occur.¹ The kasids and harkarahs used as spies were of course most frequently employed on more humdrum tasks as runners and messengers of the zamindars. They usually covered twenty-five to thirty miles in a day,² though capable of more than that if the need arose² - De La Touche recorded them as taking four days to carry mail from Rangpur to the Nawab's capital at Murshidabad.³ The express runners were called tappies⁴. There were also special arrangements for the imperial mail service. According to the Mirat-i-Ahmadi when an imperial postal runner set out he had with him a permit, duly sealed and signed by the darogha-i-dak-chauki. This required zamindars and thanadars to secure his safety and to furnish him with guides.⁵ The system can be seen operating in Bengal in McNeils account of the digwars or

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1. T.H.D.La Touche (ed.), The Journal of Major J.Rennell, 413.
 2. Ferishta stated that the footman used to cover fifty kos within twenty-four hours and some special messengers would run more than that (M.K.Ferishta, History of the Mohomedan Power in India, J.Briggs (tr.), II, 281).
 3. T.H.D.La Touche (ed.), The Journal of Major J.Rennell, 131.
 4. H.H.Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 510.
 5. M.F.Lokhandwala (tr.), Mirat, Supplement, 150-151, See also Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 173.

road guards,¹ and in the records quoted by Hunter of the shahrahi chaukidars, the protectors of the King's highways, a group of irregular police who guarded the mails on their passage through the zamindaris.² That the dakooahs acted as runners is self-evident from their very name.³ They might well have performed some revenue and police duties as was found in Chachar⁴ and some parts of Bengal proper.⁵ There was another set of messengers, the rahbars who often acted as guides to the traders and travellers.⁶

The Revenue Police

Equally important, the men or organization required for the collection of zamindari revenues was always available as a police force in the zamindars' hands. It might have been noted, during the discussion of the police and their chakaran lands, that apart from the faujdari police there were also mal or revenue police - in Rajshahi some Rs.16,000 was spent on the former but Rs.20,926 on the

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1. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch....135; S.A.B. III, 74.
 2. S.A.B. XIV, 207; The records suggest that the shahrahi chaukidars might also have served as guards to ordinary travellers.
 3. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch9, 135.
 4. Ibid., 135.
 5. W.B.D.R., Burdwan, 40.
 6. H.H.Wilson, A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, 432; C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug. 1, 1767, B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41.

latter.¹ The police and others with analogous functions, who were directly associated with revenue collection rather than with public order were almost certainly the most important element in the zamindari establishments. After all the zamindars owed their official position to the fact that they were better able to compel revenue payments by the raiyats than the central government. The very power which might make the zamindar a danger to the state was also the guarantee that he would be an efficient revenue collector.

A similarly divided or equivocal position was enjoyed by the village headman, known in Bengal as mandal or mukhya. An indigenous institution, the village headmanship had commanded much respect and authority in the village community of pre-Mughal days. Under the Mughals, the mandal became to all intents and purposes a zamindari official, appointed and dismissed by the zamindar, enjoying a reduced power and influence.² However, the mandal remained responsible for the peace and order of the village.³ The watchman used to bring crimes to his notice. When the matter was

1. Vide supra, 203, f.n. 7.

2. I. Habib, The Agrarian System.....134; B.B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, 308; "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Burdwan Raj", C.R., 1872, LIV, 177

3. J. Grose to C.C.R.M. Oct 31, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Nov. 15, 1770, I, 194-195; P. Saran, The Provincial Government243; I. Habib, The Agrarian System132.

grave the mandal directed the watchman to report it to the naib of the zamindar.¹

The mandal was not solely a zamindari official, he also used to represent his village in matters of both general and individual interests. He was sometimes granted lands at a favourable quit rent by the zamindar. However, his popular origin was reflected in the usually more significant contributions which he used to receive from the village community at the various religious and domestic functions of the year.²

Another official of rather similar origin was the village watchman. From time immemorial and all over India the village watchman had been found performing the duty of watch and ward within the village boundaries. He was an employee of the village community, paid by it and responsible to it.³ The village watchman had to assist in apprehending thieves and in finding lost or stolen property. He had to keep suspects under surveillance and keep abreast of the movement and activities of the people of the village. He also

1. E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur I, 34-35.

2. S.A.B. IV, 241-242; B.D.G., Birbhum, 39-40.

3. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch.....5; J.Matthai, The Village Government in British India, 132, 143; J.C.Currøy, The Indian Police, 19.

acted as a referee in boundary disputes of their respective villages.¹ In discharging all these duties he was guided by the village headman.

Under the Mughals, and even more under the Nawabs, the village watchmen assumed the character of servants of the zamindars rather than of the village community.² In the process their original duty of watch and ward over the area under their charge tended gradually to be degraded to a secondary function. Their police character gave way to that of fiscal functionary, more and more absorbed in controlling the refractory rai-yats and in supervising agricultural operations.³

The village watchmen had different designations in the various parts of the province. In Bihar⁴ and some areas of Bengal proper⁵ they were called pausbans, and in Burdwan and Hugli the Amini Commission recorded them as paiks.⁶ Elsewhere they are found under the title of ashtapaharis or athgariyas, the very name showing that 'their duty was to

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1. P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....244.
 2. J.Matthai, The Village Government.....143; B.B.Misra, The Central Administration of the East India Company, 304-305.
 3. P.Saran, The Provincial Government....244; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration....66.
 4. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch.....8.
 5. Dinajpur Factory to the Collector, Dec.28,1787, B.D.R., Dinajpur I, 85; F.D.Ascoli, Early Revenue History of Bengal & the Fifth Report, 185-186.
 6. B.M.Add. MSS. 29,088, 129.

remain on guard during the eight watch' - which constitute twenty-four hours.¹ They were often engaged for guarding the cutcheries of the zamindars,² or employed as attendants to the gumashtas and other collecting staff.³ The denomination kotwal or kotwal mehafiz were used in Birbhum and Murshidabad Districts, often of watchmen who acted as messengers and summoners for the gumashtas and as escorts of the revenues from the villages to the zamindar's cutcherry.⁴ The appellation chaukidar for the village watchman probably passed into the common vocabulary after the establishment of the British rule in Bengal.

Another group of village officials of considerable importance were the gram-saranjami⁵-paiks and peons. Their main functions were to assist the zamindars in the collection of their revenues and to guard the crops on the fields. They

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1. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch8.
 2. T.H.Earnest to B.R. Sept. 29, 1795, W.B.D.R., Birbhum, 113; D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch8.
 3. S.A.B. IV, 368.
 4. Letter of the Joint Magistrate of Murshidabad, Dec. 1865 quoted in D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch8; Rai Bijay Bihari Mukherji Bahadur, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Murshidabad, 155.
 5. In Persian saranjami denotes means of support. Gram-saranjami was a kind of grant made to any civil servant to enable him to maintain his dignity.

were also responsible for the apprehension of thieves and robbers and the preservation of peace and order in the public places like bazars, hats and fair-grounds.¹ The utility of these peons and paiks has been recorded by Russell in 1767:²

"This class remains entire as it did. I could not venture on reducing any part without the whole country being up in arms, & the farmers being furnished with pleas for deficiencies in their rents or backwardness in paying them. The large number of servants in this class evince in a great degree the necessity of the institution & it is therefore almost unnecessary to expatiate on the nature of their services however to give you a clear idea of it I will endeavour at an explanation. The servants then are nothing else but Qutwals & pykes dispersed in every village in the Province of which there are above 8,500 - besides detached parts that are reckoned inferior ones. These people are night watches & are responsible for all thefts in the village where they are stationed. They look after the crop upon the ground as well as after it is cut & laid up, until divided between the farmer & riotts they it is that summon the riotts to pay their rents to the farmers gomastahs, they enforce the payment by their authority & they escort the treasure to the Head Cutcherry."

The peons and paiks were paid in two ways - by the grant of service land or an allowance by the zamindar, and by a gratuity under the denomination of dwar mushahara.³ The allowance was paid by the people for the protection afforded to them by the gram-saranjami-paiks.⁴ There were on

1. W.A.Brooke to B.R.Feb. 22, 1793, B.R.J.C., March 1, 1793, R127/87; S.A.B. IV, 84.
2. C.Russell to H.Verelst, Aug. 1, 1767, B.P.C. Sept.28,1767, RI/41.
3. Door tax, monthly or periodically paid.
4. W.A.Brooke to B.R. Feb. 22, 1793, B.R.J.C., March 1, 1793, R127/87.

average less than three paiks in each village in Burdwan, enjoying 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ bighas of rent-free lands. The total amount of lands appropriated to these paiks was estimated at 1,54,521 bighas in 1767.¹ In 1770, in Birbhum 4700^{men}/under the denomination of gram kotwali held 43619 bighas of lands worth rental of Rs.25338.² In 1775 the Rokunpur zamindari had in its enrolment 1771 gram-saranjami-paiks.³

The simanadars - a class of police paiks, entrusted with the watch and ward of the boundaries of the villages also deserve attention. As a village staff his duty originally might have been to escort the travellers from one border to the other.⁴ Under the zamindari control, the simanadars also kept up the boundaries (simanas) of the villages and reported the cases of boundary disputes.⁵ The Amini Commission recorded some 123 bighas of lands were enjoyed by the simanadars in the Rajshahi zamindari.⁶

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1. C.Russell to B.R. Aug. 1, 1767, B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41.
 2. A.Higginson to C.C.R.M., Oct. 10, 1770, M.F.R., Oct. 23, 1770, I.
 3. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,087, 274.
 4. 'Simhavansavali' quoted in N.N.Vasu, Vanger Jatiya Itihasa, Uttararadhiya Kayastha Kanda, I, 16; D.J. McNeile, Report on the Village Watch....8-9; S.A.B. XIV, 207.
 5. S.A.B. III & IV, 74, 84, 368; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....244.
 6. B.M.Add. MSS. 29,087, 232.

The Personal Guards

In addition to all these thanadari police and revenue-cum-police staff, a major zamindar had an entourage of bargundaz, paik, peon and guard to watch over his person and private property. Guards were placed at the palaces of the rajas.¹ Besides, all the strategic points, passes, and the gates of the capital towns of the zamindars which in some cases resembled forts, ~~were~~ required constant vigilance. Paiks and bargundazes were to attend the zamindar and the members of his family in their social visits, and pilgrimages.² The Raja of Nadia had a retinue of paiks who, as can be speculated from the account of the chakaran lands they enjoyed, were considerable in number.³ The khas-bardars, pradas and the armed guards cost the Raja of Birbhum an amount of Rs.4,800.⁴

If the police organization of the Burdwan zamindari is taken as a representative of all the big estates, the bakhshi stood at the top of the police department. The Provincial Council of Revenue at Burdwan in 1775 recorded the

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1. B.M.Add.MSS.29,088, 16; B.R.C. July 8, 1784, R50/52; D.C.Sen, Eastern Bengal Ballads III, part I, 239.
 2. Parwana issued by Nawab Shujauddin Khan (1730), quoted in R.D.Mukhopadhyaya, Burdwan Rajvamsacharita, 32-33.
 3. B.M.Add. MSS. 29,087, 93-94.
 4. J.Sumner to B.R. Jan. 9, 1772, B.R.C. June 4, 1773, R49/40.

old administrative pattern thus:

"Formerly the zemindar was himself answerable for every robbery or theft committed within the verge of his zemindarry. Immediately under him was a Buxey who from his engagements was obliged to produce either the goods or the thieves within a certain time, or make good the loss to the sufferer upon its being properly proved & valued. Under this Buxey there were in every District Phouzgars, Tannadars, &c, chakeran servants who were in the like manner amenable to him & by this all travellers were furnished with safe convays through suspected places, merchants were protected in carrying on their inland trade, and the peace of the country and the property of the inhabitants were thoroughly secured." 1

The Raja of Burdwan used to enjoy an annual perquisite of Rs.5,000 under the head of bakhshi-daftar.² In the Birbhum zamindari a similar organization was placed under the supervision of tanekolars who managed the entire police set-up of the estate.³ Normally all crimes committed in the zamindaris were first reported to the agents of the respective zamindars.⁴ When the zamindar paid no heed to the complaints, or failed to take any action, the aggrieved party would go to the thanadar or faujdar, and even to the Nawab to lodge complaints.

1. Burdwan Council to B.R. June 14, 1775, B.R.C. July 7, 1775, R49/54.

2. T. Brooke to B.R. Oct. 12, 1788, B.R.C. Dec. 22, 1788, R51/29.

3. T.H. Earnest to B.R. Sept. 29, 1795, W.B.D.R., Birdhum, 113.

4. Orme MSS. O.V.12, 168.

Under a strong government the zamindari police agencies and the faujdars' troops worked together to maintain law and order. Stringent measures were taken by the government to enforce the regulations of criminal justice. In the event of robbery they were required to retrieve. To quote Salim Allah:¹

"In every place where a robbery was committed, Jaffer Khan obliged the foudar and zemindar to find out the thief, and to recover the stolen goods. The goods, or their equivalent, were given to the person who had been robbed; and the thief was impaled alive."

There is a considerable range of evidence corroborating the picture drawn by Salim Allah, and the Burdwan Council.²

When Thomas Cooke, a member of the Dacca Factory, was plundered of effects and injured by the bandits a few miles away from Dacca, the zamindar within whose territory the crime was committed, was compelled by the Nawab to make good the loss.³ On another occasion a zamindar is found compensating the loss of Rs.1000 incurred by Niaz Beg, a commandant of Sepoys.⁴ Muhammad Ali, the zamindar of Nurullahpur was even dismissed on the ground of the murder of an European in his zamindari.⁵ If the zamindars neglected

1. T.B. F.Gladwin (tr.), 107-108.

2. Burdwan Council to B.R., June 14, 1775, B.R.C., July 7, 1775, R49/54.

3. B.P.C. Aug. 28 & Oct. 2, 1727, RI/6.

4. C.P.C. II, 1065.

5. H.Verelst & R.Becher to S.C., June 30, 1769, L.C.B. I, xvi.

the complaints of the victims the Nawabs used to take action.¹ But the decline of the Nawab's authority after the Plassey impaired the efficiency of the police administration in subsequent years. The balance of power between the faujdari and the zamindar which might have been maintained so long, came to naught with the gradual decay of the faujdari institution.² Having not the least apprehension of interference from the centre, the zamindars began to neglect their police duties. During the second half of the eighteenth century the whole of Bengal was infested with the Mag^hs, professional robbers, river thugs,³ sannyasies and faquirs.⁴ The zamindari police failed to provide safety to the traders, travellers and runners; they did not come to the relief of the raiyats either. Some zamindars might even have made full use of their paiks and bargundazes as an instrument of oppression without interference by the Nawab's forces. As the Seir recorded:⁵

".....the very spies and emissaries of a Zemindar, having wriggled themselves into the service of Government, commit upon the inhabitants a variety

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1. Luckypur Factory to Fort William Council, July 1, 1762, B.D.R. Chittagong I, 41; J.Long, Selections.....767, 770; C.P.C. I, 2011, 2464, 2478.
 2. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 193; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....68.
 3. Major Sleeman, Report on the Depredations committed by the Thug Gangs of Upper and Central India, xvii.
 4. J.Long, Selections.....276, 376, 632, 655, 663; J.Harris to C.C.R.M., Aug. 5, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. Aug. 12, 1771, VI, 79.
 5. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 175.

of oppressions and exactions, and always with the utmost safety; nor is there found a single man to ask them what they are doing; so far from there being any one to inflict a condign chastisement upon them."

The disintegration of the police system was characterized by the concealment of crimes and collusion with the robbers by the petty zamindars if not by the big ones. Grose, the Supervisor of Rangpur categorically pronounced that the dacoits "followed the pernicious trade of dacoiting for many years, to which they have been encouraged by the Rajahs, Zemindars and others,....."¹

In such a setting the East India Company ascended to the Diwani power, which placed the fiscal and civil administration of the subah into the hands of the Company. The Nawab as Nazim remained responsible as usual for criminal justice. And the zamindars continued to discharge the police duties within their jurisdictions.² The instability dominating the administration of the subah in the wake of the Plassey by no means ended with the Company's assumption of Diwani power. The clash of interests among Clive, Sykes, the Resident at the Durbar, Reza Khan, the Naib Diwan, and the Nawabs³ precluded any concerted action to infuse vigour,

1. J.Grose to C.C.R.M. July 8, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Jan. 18, 1771, III, 63.

2. Reza Khan's Note, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 30, 1771, VIII, 102-103.

3. A.M.Khan, The Transition in Bengal, 103-116; R.Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, 32.

so badly needed in the administrative machinery.

The appointments of the amils for collection of revenues contrary to the interest of the zamindars, the temporary farming of the zamindari lands to outsiders affected the police system of the zamindars. The hereditary landholders with full authority over their estates had found it advantageous to their interests in safeguarding their people. But that spirit began to wane with the introduction of new revenue measures of the Company government.¹ The condition worsened by the policy of exemption of police duties of the new farmers, so long discharged by the zamindars. These farmers were not required to keep police forces, since the expense would ultimately fall on the Company. These innovations in the revenue and criminal administration had intrinsic defects. Hastings in his observation pointed out the demerits of these changes:

"The Farming system - useful as this is to the general welfare of the state, and of the people, it is one of the principal sources of the disorderly state of the Mofussil, by the removal of that claim which the public by immemorial usage before possessed to the restitution of all damages and losses sustained by robbers, on the Zemindars of the country. These having no longer the same authority cannot be held accountable as they formerly were for the effects of it, although the right of Government has never been

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1. F. Sykes to S.C. Feb. 10, 1768, S.C.C. Feb. 10, 1768, R/A, 8; R. Becher to S.C. June 2, 1770, S.C.C. June 9, 1770 R/A, 10; Arzi of Rani Bhawani, P.C.C.R.M. Nov. 25, 1771, VII, 205; G. Shee to B.R. Sept. 17, 1785, B.R.C. Sept. 30, 1785, R50/61.

formally renounced. The farmers who stand in their places ought indeed to be made answerable for the disorders proceeding from their neglect, but whatever they were compelled to pay on this account would be brought into their balances at the end of the year, and would thus fall ultimately upon the Government itself." 1

Where the zamindars retained their farming rights, there were partial or full resumption of chakaran lands which supported the police establishment, or the discontinuation of allowances.² In some zamindaris the number of the police staff was reduced as a measure of economy.³ It is not difficult to gauge the outcome of these changes. "The general protection has by the resumption", observed the Burdwan Council,⁴ "of a large quantity of chakeran land to Government's revenue ceased within these few years, which has in some measure contributed to the great decay in the inland trade of the country, and this evil will probably continue to increase so long as the police remains on its present establishment....." . At least these might have offered to some zamindars an excuse for neglecting their usual police duties.

1. B.R.C. April 19, 1774, R49/45, 1210.

2. J. Graham to H. Verelst, Sept. 30, 1766, S.C.C. Oct. 14, 1766, R/A, 7; P.C.C.R.M., March 23, 1772, X, 86; Hastings' Minute, B.R.C., April 19, 1774, R49/45.

3. B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 756; A. Higginson to C.C.R.M., Oct. 10, 1770, M.F.R. Oct. 23, 1770, I; W. Marriot to C.C.R.M., March 1, 1772, P.C.C.R.M., March 5, 1772, X, 7-8.

4. Burdwan Council to B.R. June 14, 1775, B.R.C. July 7, 1775 R49/54.

On the heels of this the post of the fauidar was abolished in many districts.¹ The vacuum thus created in the police machinery was not filled in immediately. The sepoys placed with the Supervisors were very insufficient in number and it became an onerous task to cope with the increasing lawlessness in the districts under their charge.² The troops of the Company and the private merchants exploited the situation. Complaints of breach of peace by the sepoys and peons,³ harassment of the innocent rai-yats on false charges of dacoity,⁴ began to reach the Supervisors from every corner of the country. The chaotic condition emboldened some to such an extent that they transgressed the legal norms of the country⁵ without any apprehension of punishment. After the famine of 1769-1770 which rendered many people paupers, hundreds of vagabonds daily swelled the number of the various raiding gangs.⁶ The fleeing

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1. P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 10, 1770, II, 35, 58 (the districts were Dinajpur, Jessore, Purnea, Rajmahal and Rangpur).
 2. J.Grose to C.C.R.M., Feb. 21, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. Feb. 28, 1771, IV, 38; C.C.R.M. to J.Grose, P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 28, 1771, IV, 39; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....116.
 3. J.Pearce to Lt. Goodyar, April 23, 1770, B.D.R., Midnapur IV, 3; J.Lawrell to C.Purling, July 12, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Aug. 8, 1771, VI, 68-69; C.P.C. II, 1111.
 4. P.C.C.R.M., Nov. 19, 1770, I, 207; C.C.R.M. to T.Henchmen, May 8, 1773, P.C.C.R.M. XII, 164.
 5. P.C.C.R.M., VII (A), 135-138; Press List of Ancient Documents, Series II, vol. II, 25 quoted in B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....116.
 6. S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10; C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., April 15, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., April, 19, 1771, 63; A.K.M.Mohsin, A Study of Murshidabad District, 314.

raiyas, the disbanded forces of the rajas and the Nawab, also took recourse to robbery and plunder.¹ Under the garb of religious mendicants, numerous sannyasies and faqirs armed with rockets, matchlocks and even swivels moved throughout the country in search of booty.² They began to fleece the people by levying forced contributions. Even the cutcherries of the zamindars were not immune from plunder.³

The zamindars' role during this period was lamentable. Impoverished of men and money especially after the famine⁴ they had perhaps little means at their disposal to stop the growing number of crimes committed with impunity. Against such odds many zamindars felt helpless and some even sought the protection of the English.⁵ In Rangpur at the request of the zamindars and the farmers, some sepoy's had to be placed for the protection of the people as well as of the thanas.⁶ Other zamindars took full advantage of the vicissitudes of the period and profited from it. Not only

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1. J. Long, Selections.....468; Hastings' Minute, B.R.C., April 19, 1774, R49/54; A.B.M. Mahmood, The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari, 305.
 2. C.W.B. Rous to C.C.R.M., Jan. 25, 1772, P.C.C.R.M. Jan. 30, 1772, IX, 102-103; Resident at Murshidabad to Hastings, Nov. 30, 1773 P.C.C.R.M. XII, 198.
 3. C.W.B. Rous to C.C.R.M., Jan. 25, 1772, P.C.C.R.M., Jan. 30, 1772, IX, 103; J. Grose to S. Middleton, P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 21, 1771, IV, 38; P.C.C.R.M., Jan. 27, 1772, IX, 80.
 4. S.C.C. April 28, 1770, R/A, 10; Progs. G.G. in Council, vol. 29A, J. Browne's letter vol. 30, quoted in N.K. Sinha, The Economic History.....II, 63; W.W. Hunter, The Annals....., 56-58.
 5. G.G. Ducarel to S. Middleton, March 29, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., April 4, 1771, V, 21.
 6. P.C.C.R.M., March 23, 1772, X, 85.

some recently dispossessed zamindars plundered the cutcherries of the new ones,¹ but some existing zamindars also openly became involved in marauding activities. Despite the vigilance of the Supervisors some zamindars in Rangpur committed thefts and even murders.² The robber bands and many zamindars of the period were bound together in organized crimes. The zamindars not only harboured the dacoits,³ sannyasis and faquirs⁴ but also frustrated the attempts of the Supervisors to seize them by giving intelligence to culprits.⁵

The Regulations of 1772⁶ did not bring any substantial change in the responsibility of the zamindars towards the maintenance of peace and order. With the re-introduction of the faujdari institution in 1774,⁷ attempts were made to put in order the paralysing state of the police administration. By the Police Regulations of December 7, 1792,⁸ the zamindars were exempted from the police duties once for all.

1. B.R.C. April 5, 1774, R49/54.

2. J.Grose to C.C.R.M., April 20, 1770, B.D.R., Rangpur I, 5; See also P.C.C.R.M. Sept. 30, 1771, VII(A), 95-96; P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 9, 1771, VIII, 24-25; P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 3, 1772, IX, 124.

3. J.Grose to R.Becher, Aug. 20, 1770, L.C.B. II, 4-5; J.Grose to C.C.R.M., Oct. 31, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Nov. 15, 1770, I, 194-195.

4. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M., Jan. 28, 1772, P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 3, 1772, IX, 114.

5. R.Wilmot to R.Becher, Aug. 29, 1770, L.C.B. II, 7; P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 8, 1772, IX, 160.

6. C.C.R.P. May 14, 1772, R67/54.

7. Hastings' Minute, April 19, 1774, B.R.C. R49/45.

8. H.M.S., 380.

Measured by its achievements, the police system run by the zamindars stands condemned or discredited at least in the later days. In addition to its interactions with the various political forces at work, the system suffered from its inherent weaknesses.

One insuperable obstacle in the way of success of the police activities of the zamindars was the physical features of the country. Bengal proper is intersected in every direction by rivers, rivulets, jhils and halas. During the rainy season the country looks like a vast sheet of water. This rendered all communications impossible excepting the one by water. The numerous rivulets and nalas reached the very doorsteps of most houses in the southern and eastern parts of Bengal. The river dacoits exploited this situation to their own advantage.¹ After committing the dacoities in the darkness of night, the robbers melted away before the law arrived from the nearest police station. Armed with fire arms and other lethal weapons, the robbers infested the river ways of Bengal and harassed the inhabitants of the villages as well as the merchants and travellers. The dingy,² profusely used by them facilitated their remarkably speedy movements³. However vigilant the police staff might

1. Dacca Council to B.R., April 22, 1774, B.R.C. May 17, 1774 R49/46; G.Shee to B.R. Sept. 17, 1785, B.R.C. Sept.30,1785, R50/61.

2. A kind of light vessel.

3. G.Shee to B.R.Sept. 17, B.R.C., Sept.30,1785, R50/61.

have been, it was virtually impossible to check such crimes or to apprehend the criminals under such circumstances.

The impregnable forest tracts of the country stood in the way of efficient working of the police. A considerable part of Bengal was filled with waste lands and dense jungles. From their safe abodes in the jungles, the robber bands directed their operations and returned there with the booty, leaving little trace of detection.¹ It was not a very easy task to track those criminals down without evicting them from their bases. The police chaukies could rarely be posted at those lonely forests. Thus it may be divined that a vast tract of the country remained unprotected giving scope to the banditti to grow in strength. The zamindars refused to share with the government the responsibility of guarding those vulnerable parts of their territories. The circumstances which led to the murder of D.Holland, an English gentleman in Jessore would throw some light on the actual state of affairs. The murder was committed in the territory of Raja Srikanta of Chanchra.² While called upon to answer for it, the raja's diwan put forward the following argument:

1. J.Grose to B.R. Oct. 9, 1770, M.F.R. I, 197; E.Baber to Hastings, Feb.6, 1773, B.D.R., Midnapur, IV, 106-107; W.A.Brooke to B.R., March 1, 1793, B.R.J.C., Feb.22, 1793, R127/87; B.Chattopdhyaya, Ananda-matha, 15,37.

2. P.C.C.R.M., Sept. 25, 1771, VII(A), 84.

"The gentleman stopped his boat in the river Bolberreah, and anchored at one side in a country covered with jungles & marshes, - he was there attacked and murdered by some robbers from another province - The place was quite a desert, desolate & uninhabited, far from any town, and 3 days journey from the cutcherry of Isoofpore - There was no chowkey or guard stationed there. - In high roads and cultivated places there are guards stationed - but in jungles and deserts it is impracticable especially in the place where the gentleman landed, which it is absolutely impossible to guard and protect." 1

In this particular case luckily the criminals were arrested but the zamindar categorically expressed his helplessness to provide any protection under such circumstances. 2

The authority of the zamindar was confined within the bounds of his own territory and it was an outstanding impediment to effective police activities. If the culprits escaped any neighbouring zamindari after committing the crime, the zamindar in whose territory the offence was perpetrated became powerless to take any action. And it was the usual practice with the dacoits to avoid committing dacoity within the bounds of their home territory. 3 Many complaints of robbery and violence committed by the people of the

1. Reza Khan's Note, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 30, 1771, VIII, 102.

2. Ibid., 102-103.

3. Ibid., 102; G. Shee to B.R. Sept. 17, 1785, B.R.C. Sept. 30, 1785, R50/61.

neighbouring zamindaris are on record.¹ Dissonance and acrimony very often existing between the neighbouring zamindars, made the apprehension of criminals a difficult task. However meticulous a zamindar might have been in fulfilling his police obligations, the negligence of the same duty by his neighbours annulled the effect. A characteristic example is the incident of the plunder of some money in the territory of the Raja of Banaras.² The lost amount could not be fully recovered from the Banaras estate inasmuch as some miscreants from the neighbouring territories were also involved in the robbery. The neighbouring zamindars were therefore urged by the government to guard the roads properly so that protection could be afforded to the people.³ Such limitation on the authority of the zamindars might have provided them with an excuse to shirk their police responsibility.⁴

The situation was compounded by the fragmentation of the zamindari estates in some places,⁵ and the spreading

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1. C.C.R.M. to W.Harwood, March 7, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. IV, 67; P.C.C.R.M., Jan. 23, 1772, IX, 73; P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 3, 1772, IX, 124; P.C.C.R.M., May 4, 1772, X, 270-271; P.C.C.R.M. June 3, 1772, XI, 123.
 2. C.P.C. II, 1487.
 3. Ibid.
 4. J.Browne to B.R., Jan. 12, 1776, B.R.C., Feb. 20, 1776, R49/60.
 5. G.Shee to B.R. Sept. 17, 1785, B.R.C., Sept. 30, 1785, R50/61; Francis MSS. Eur. F. 8., 195a; R.Lindsay to B.R. Nov. 24, 1787, B.D.R., Sylhet II, 200.

of one zamindari over several distant parganahs in others.¹ In many instances a single zamindari was divided among the successors. This hampered the efficiency in the management of the zamindaris in more than one way. The rivalry and strained relations which often persisted among the shareholders of an estate, the lack of co-operation or the conflicting jurisdictions of their territories, made policing definitely a difficult task. It may be discerned from a single instance. When the revenue despatch was on its way to the sadar cutcherry from the nine-anna division of the Ghoraghat zamindari, a robbery was committed.² The blame was laid on the people of the seven-anna division in spite of the fact that the place of occurrence was a town to the east of Ghoraghat in which both the zamindaris had a share. The absence of any well defined boundary separating the two zamindaris made it difficult to determine the part of the culprits belonged to.³ In the Districts of Dacca and Sylhet, the number of big zamindaris were very few. "In Sylhet", as McNeile said,⁴ "as a rule, many villages are not included in one estate, but many estates are comprised in one village."

1. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 305-306.

2. H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M., Sept.6,1771, P.C.C.R.M. Sept.16, 1771, VII(A), 51.

3. H.Cottrell to C.C.R.M. Sept.6, 1771, P.C.C.R.M. Sept. 16, 1771, VII(A), 51.

4. D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch.....131.

Instead, therefore of a number of chokidars nominated and maintained by one landholder, we find one chokidar maintained by several landholders." As many as nine shareholders of Muhammad Aminpur zamindari were responsible for the maintenance of police establishment of the thana of Catwa.¹ In such circumstances divided authority impaired the efficiency of the police administration of the zamindars.

The regulation that the zamindars were to recompensate the loss sustained by a robbery or a theft could not be given effect to unless the authority of the government on the zamindars was overwhelming. The dependence of the raiyas on their patrons 'for justice and protection'² and the enormous local influence the zamindars exercised, undoubtedly induced the zamindars to act at discretion. The zamindars' machinations left many complaints unattended. Specially the petty zamindars concealed many cases of crimes to evade the responsibility of compensation. The raiyas apprehensive of subsequent harassment by their landlords, hardly dared to bring to the notice of the faujdar or thanadar of any crime committed on them. In order to escape molestation by the robbers and to avoid the responsibility of crimes committed within their jurisdictions, the lesser zamindars

1. F.Redfearn to B.R. Feb.5, 1793, B.R.J.C. April 12, 1793, R127/88; For this purpose each shareholder of the zamindari used to get deductions from their asal-iama, (see Appendix K).

2. B.S.C. Oct. 18, 1775, R/A, 31, 688.

found themselves being obliged to pay a kind of fee to the gangsters. Some zamindars bought immunity by sheltering the gangsters, who limited their operations outside the territories of their patrons.¹ While the zamindars found it expedient not to apprehend the robbers and thieves, the raiyas in despair had to pay extortion money to the robbers to secure their safety.²

The dependence of the thanadars on the zamindars' assistance considerably weakened the hold of the faujdars on the rural areas. With a strong government at the centre, the zamindars might have acted in co-operation with the thanadars for proper discharge of their police duties. But during the subsequent period, the thanadars came under the spell of the zamindars. In some zamindaris if not all, the nomination and dismissal of the thanadars were vested in the zamindars.³ This definitely placed the thanadars at the mercy of the zamindars. It requires little imagination that the thanadars placed in the sphere of influence of an 'inert or corrupt' zamindar would not discharge their duties honestly and efficiently.

1. B.M.Add.MSS.29,079, 26b; B.Chattopadhyaya, Bhabani Pathak, 114-115.

2. B.M.Add.MSS. 29,079, 26b.

3. M.Leslie to B.R.Nov.13, 1785, B.R.C., Feb.1, 1786, R50/63; T.Brooke to B.R.Oct. 12, 1788, B.R.C. Dec. 22, 1788, R51/29.

For the appointments of the thanadars the efficiency and character of the incumbents were not always taken into consideration. The amount of salami or nazr weighed much in the nomination of the thanadars.¹ On the one hand the thanadars had to pay a considerable amount as salami to the zamindar, on the other hand after their appointments many were to pay quit-rents for the enjoyment of their service lands.² When the thanadari post thus became a purchasable commodity, proper service could hardly be expected from them. In such circumstances the thanadars' league with the dacoits could not be surprizing. The connivance of the local thanadars, and the lack of co-operation among the neighbouring thanadars denigrated the forces of law and order.³ The thanadari establishment thus falling 'very short of answering the end proposed'⁴ became a tool of oppression.

Inadequate and irregular remuneration to the paiks and watchmen undoubtedly induced them to malpractices for monetary gains. As Becher has pointed out:⁵

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1. T.Brooke to B.R. Oct. 12, 1788, B.R.C. Dec.22, 1788, R51/29; L.Mercer to B.R.Nov.23,1790, B.R.J.C., March 18,1791, R127/77.
 2. M.Leslie to B.R.Nov.13,1785, B.R.C.Feb.1,1786, R50/63.
 3. E.Strachey to Bayley, June 13 & Aug.10, 1808 quoted in W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 686-689; L.Mercer to C.Keating, April 7, 1790, W.B.D.R., Birbhum, 82.
 4. S.C.C. Aug.16, 1769, R/A, 9; W.W.Hunter, The Annals.....327.
 5. R.Becher to S.C. May 2, 1770, L.C.B. I, 126.

"The custom of collecting the revenues by pykes, whose subsistence solely depended on what they can extort from the weak and helpless is undoubtedly injurious to the ryots and contrary to that mild and equitable system of Government which it is now our aim to establish,....."

The watchmen were sometimes paid by grants of rent-free land but often they had to maintain themselves by levying a door tax from the villagers. Whatever might have been the mode of remuneration, their wages were insignificant. In some places the watchman would get four to twelve annas a year from each house they guarded.¹ It is unseemly to expect an efficient and honest discharge of duties from these ill-paid staff. To further their interests, the brigands bought them without difficulty.²

Moreover, most of the low-ranking police force was manned by recruits from the robber castes like, 'Dosad', 'Huree', 'Bagdi', 'Dom' and 'Kurraria',³ from whom display of high moral sense could not be expected.⁴ The watchmen belonging to such predatory castes very frequently played the role of

1. H.M.S. 775, 43; S.A.B.VII, 232.

2. R.H.Hollingbury, The Zamindari Settlement of Bengal, I 263; S.A.B. IV, 242; J.W.Kaye, The Administration of the East India Company, 394.

3. H.M.S. 755, 48; Evidence of a dacoit approver quoted in J.W. Kaye, The Administration of the East India Company, 394; D.J.McNeile, Report on the Village Watch.....115.

4. These watchmen had a close approximation with Parish Constables of England (W.L.M.Lee, A History of Police in England, 183-184.)

'either the actual perpetrators or the aiders and abettors' of thieves and robbers in total breach of their entrusted duties.

The pusillanimity and the indifference of the general people made it rather difficult to bring the criminals to justice even if they were arrested by the police.¹ Under the Muhammedan law no offender could be punished for capital offences without sufficient proof.² But adequate proof might not be forthcoming. Dacoities were usually committed in the darkness of night or in disguise. This posed a problem to the task of identification. Even those who could testify would not volunteer for it in apprehension of retaliation.

To all these indifferences and pusillanimity of the people must be added the greed of the village staff and the police officials who shared in the division of spoils. It was a common phenomenon that with the knowledge of the village headman, watchmen and even the zamindar, a dacoit or a thief could stay in a village without the slightest chance of detection.³ These chances of escape were such as to render impunity much more probable than punishment. They operated as a powerful incentive to the commission of crime.

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1. Hastings' Minute, B.R.C. April, 19, 1774, R49/45; H.M.S., 775, 48-49; Major Sleeman, Report on the Depredations Committed by the Thug Gangs.....IX.
 2. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Aug.25, 1770, L.C.B. II,11; Hastings' Minute, B.R.C. April 19, 1774, R49/45.
 3. R.Wilmot to R.Becher, Aug.29, 1770, L.C.B. II,7; J.Grose to C.C.R.M. Oct. 31, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Nov.15, 1770, I, 194-195; B.R.C. to G.G. June 26, 1775, B.R.C. July 7, 1775, R49/54.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROLE OF THE ZAMINDARS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Controversy rages over the role of the zamindar as the judge-magistrate of his territory. The issues at stake here revolve around the question of the exact nature of the legal sanction attached to their judicial power, the extent of this power and the universality of this privilege given to the zamindars as a class. The paucity of materials regarding the judicial administration of the pre-British Bengal¹ makes it difficult to gather much systematic knowledge about its working. However when we piece the fragmentary information together, a fairly clear picture emerges. It may be stated that it will not be appropriate to project to the zamindar of the period under review, the image of the judge-magistrate of the modern age.

A study of the outline of the Mughal judicial administration and an analysis of the socio-political trends in the eighteenth century Bengal will help in clearing the mists veiling the role of the zamindar as the judge-magistrate of his territory.

1. A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan70.

The Mughal Emperors regarded themselves as the fountainhead of justice for the whole Empire. They heard complaints even from the humblest people and tried cases personally in the open courts.¹ Thus the Emperor was not only the final court of appeal² but also a court of first instance.³ The Emperor's duty of administering justice to his people at large was carried out by the gazi-ul-quzat (supreme gazi), who delegated his power to the gazis at the provincial headquarters.⁴ A general superintendence over the administration of civil and criminal justice, and the effective prosecution of law rested with the subahdar as the Nazim, and the diwan-i-subah as the head of the provincial exchequer. The actual act of justice at the provincial capital was, however, carried on by the qazis and the darogha-i-adalat-al-alia (the deputy^{of the} Nazim in the supreme criminal court), and darogha-i-adalat-diwani (the deputy of the diwan in the civil court).⁵ In the sarkars

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1. A.Constable (tr.) Travels.....263; W.Irvine (tr.), Storia.....II, 461; J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration,106.
 2. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II,42; S.N.Sen(ed.), Indian Travels of Careri, III, 240.
 3. W.Irvine (tr.), Storia.....II, 461; J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration, 107.
 4. J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration, 110.
 5. C.P.C. IV, 1662; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....54.

into which the subah was divided, the faujdars, kotwals, muhtasibs, amils and ganungos combined the executive and judicial duties in their offices. Likewise, in the parganahs, the shikdars, amils and amins were in charge of the revenue and judicial administration.¹ Every town and most of the villages with Muslim population, had a gazi.² But majority of the rural people would put their complaints before quasi-judicial village institutions such as the panchayats (local juries) or an arbitration (salis),³ or would resolve their disputes by resorting to force.⁴ The rich and enterprising would go to the distant capital to lay complaints at the nizamat or diwani-adalats.⁵

Because of the existing social and religious character of the people of the country, a centralized judicial structure could not develop under the Mughal rule. The scope of Islamic laws was limited in India, inasmuch as the vast

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1. P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....352-357; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....55-57; N.A.Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration.....84.
 2. J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration, 110-111; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....356.
 3. H.Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, 122-123; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....365.
 4. J.N.Sarkar, Mughal Administration, 110-111.
 5. Ibid.

majority of the people were non-Muslims. In pursuance of the avowed policy of toleration, the customary laws and usage were allowed to prevail. Moreover, the nature of the Indian society, as characterized by 'the paternal and tribal character or the biradari (brotherhood) system', left very little scope for litigation in the civil suits.¹ The settlement of disputes by arbitration was an age-old practice in India.² On rare occasions people would go to courts for the settlement of disputes of the rural areas. To quote Cohn,³

"courts were and are used as an arena in the competition for social status, and for political and economic dominance in the village. Cases are brought to court to harass one's opponents, as a punishment, as a form of land speculation and profit making, to satisfy insulted pride, and to maintain local political dominance over one's followers."

The reaction of the native people to the Mughal judicial system may be gauged vis-a-vis their response to the British system at the beginning. Many of them had aversion for travelling to distant places and attending the lengthy

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1. I.Hasan, The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire, 339-340; P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....364-365.
 2. H.Maine, Village Communities.....123.
 3. B.S.Cohn, "Anthropological Notes on Disputes and Law in India", American Anthropologist, 1965, 105.

proceedings of the Courts.¹ The Mughal kotwals, daroghas, gazis, and muftis had been as foreign to them as the English judges appeared to be in later times. This indifference of the village people to regular government Courts was perceived by Duncan among the people of Banaras as late as 1788.² Such forces at work were not conducive to the establishment of an elaborate judiciary, and the Mughal government left the old judicial framework free to operate at large.

Let us examine the judicial powers of the zamindars against such a background. As executive heads of their respective estates, the principal zamindars definitely had shares in the judicial affairs.³ Imperial ordinances also had explicit sanctions for the exercise of judicial power by the zamindars. A letter in the possession of the Susung Raj family recorded that the complaint of a Muslim subject made to Aurangzeb was referred to the local Hindu zamindar for doing justice on the spot.⁴ When the East India Company

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1. B.R.C. Feb. 15, 1775, R49/50; According to Reza Khan, "The people have lived easy and satisfied under their own laws,- and are alarmed and disheartened at the idea of innovation". (Francis MSS. Eur.E.28, 350).
 2. J.Duncan to G.G.-in-Council, Sept.12, 1788, B.R.C. Oct. 1788, R51/25 quoted in K.P.Mishra, The Administration and Economy of the Banaras region, 127.
 3. W.Irvine (tr.), Storia.....III, 48.
 4. T.Raychaudhuri, Bengal and Akbar and Jahangir, 22-23.

was granted the zamindari of the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur in 1698, it found the zamindars discharging judicial functions within their localities.

Holwell is correct when he said,

"The zemindar acts in a double capacity, distinct and independent of each other, (with very few exceptions) the one as superintendant and collector of your revenues, the other, as judge of the Court of Cutcherry, a tribunal constituted for ^{the} hearing, trying, and determining all matters and things, both civil and criminal, wherein the natives only, subjects of the Mugul, are concerned." 1

Stavorinus endorsed the view when he observed in every town or village a zamindar

"who rules over the place, and part of the circumjacent country, and settles all differences which arise between the inhabitants." 2

The administrative enquiries of the East India Company in the seventies of the eighteenth century unearthed cogent evidence of the judicial power of the zamindars. The report of the Committee of Circuit at Kasimbazar on August 15, 1772³ enumerated as many as eight cadre of judicial offices at Murshidabad,⁴ The capital of the subah. In its

1. J.Z.Holwell & Friends, India Tracts, 120; See also W.Bolts, Considerations.....I, 80-82.

2. J.S.Stavorinus, Voyages to the East Indies, I, 459.

3. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 118-122.

4. The judicial offices were: the Nazim, the diwan, the darogha-i-adalat-al-alia, the darogha-i-adalat-diwani, the faujdar, the gazi, the muhtasib and the mufti.

review of the judicial system, the Committee found:

"Another great and capital defect in these Courts is the want of a substitute, or subordinate jurisdiction for the distribution of justice in such parts of the province as lie out of their reach, which in effect confines their operations to a circle extending but a very small aistance /distance/ beyond the bounds of the city of Murshidabad.....

This defect is not however left absolutely without a remedy, the Zemindars, Farmers,..... & other officers of the revenue assuming that power for which no provision is made by the laws of the lands, but which in whatever manner it is exercised, is prefarable to a total anarchy." 1

The Seventh Report from the Committee of Secrecy,² however, contends that the zamindars possessed judicial power of both civil and criminal denominations to all intents and purposes. To quote the Seventh Report,

"The Criminal Court, in every District, was generally known by the name of the Phousdary: The Zemindar, or Rajah of the District, was the Judge in this court: His jurisdiction extends to all criminal cases.....

The Court of Civil jurisdiction, in every District, was generally known by the name of the Adawlat: the Zemindar, or Rajah of the Province, was the Judge also in this Court: Its jurisdiction extended to all causes between party and party.....

..... all causes respecting the revenue, or the rents of the lands, were under the cognizance of a peculiar Court in every District; It appears, that formerly the Zemindar or Rajah held the authority of this judicature also; but Mr. Sykes informed your Committee, that, for some years before the acquisition of the Dewannee, this jurisdiction of

1. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 120.

2. The Seventh Report..... May 6, 1773, Reports, House of Commons, IV, 324.

the Zemindar had gone into disuse, and had since been exercised by the Naib Duan, appointed in every District by the principal Duan at Moorshidabad; that this officer decided in all causes of Revenue; but that appeal lay from his decisions to the principal Duan." 1

This view of the Committee of Secrecy emanated from the concept that judicial powers of the zamindars had their legal basis in the fundamental rights under which the zamindars acquired the control of the land.

Now two observations are pertinent. In the first place, the findings of the Committee of Circuit underlines the then judiciary of the subah and not the one functioning during the vigorous rule of the Mughals. The second concerns with the Report of the Committee of Secrecy. Its contention that the zamindars were the sole judge-magistrate of their locality does not attempt to imply that all zamindars throughout the Mughal period exercised such an extensive judicial authority.

The three Councillors - Francis, Clavering and Monson upheld the findings of the Committee of Secrecy. They maintained that in accordance with the Constitution of Bengal, the zamindars presided over the criminal courts within their jurisdictions and pronounced and executed sentences on all offences less than capital.² But Hastings

1. The Seventh Report....., Reports, House of Commons IV, 324.

2. B.S.C. Oct. 18, 1775, R/A, 31.

questioned the findings of the Seventh Report on the nature of the judicial authority of the zamindars. In his rebuttal Hastings remarked "with confidence that by the constitution of Bengal the zemindar neither presided in the criminal court of his district, nor pronounced nor executed sentence on all offences whatever except the non-payment of the rents."¹

But the views of the Committee of Secrecy and Hastings though contradictory are not irreconcilable. By the term 'ancient constitution of Bengal',² the Committee of Secrecy meant the government in Bengal during the early days of the Nizamat rule. On the other hand, Hastings disputed the contention of the Committee of Secrecy envisaging the position of the zamindars in a setting of strong centralized Mughal rule. He perhaps overlooked the fact that the tight grip of the Mughals of the earlier period, was definitely slackened by the time Murshid Quli Khan had established his de facto independent rule in Bengal. The judicial machinery, along with other branches of the imperial administration, had shown a tendency to decentralize. The jurisdiction of the regular courts gradually shrank and was confined within

1. B.S.C. Oct. 18, 1775, R/A, 31.

2. The Seventh Report.....Reports, House of Commons, IV, 324.

the bounds of the provincial capital and important towns. In the light of these circumstances, there is no real reason to conclude that the judicial power of the zamindars, especially that of the major ones, remained limited only to the dispensation of petty cases. The extent of autonomy enjoyed by such zamindars, the existence of jails, dungeons and gibbets at their capital towns,¹ and the presence of the gazis and pandits at their courts² suggest to the contrary.³

With regard to the legal sanction behind the exercise of judicial powers by the zamindars Hastings raised the question that if judicial power was inherent in the landed tenure of the zamindars, the procurement of a special sanad from the Nazim would have been unnecessary for the Raja of Burdwan in order to exercise his judicial authority.⁴ We are quite in the dark about the exact wordings of the sanad because of its non-availability, nor did Hastings quote them. The representation of the raja and the diwan of Burdwan reveal that the authority of the faujdar ceased to operate in

1. J. Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore, 31; K.C. Mitra, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Rajas of Rajshahi", C.R. 1873, LVI, 19.

2. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandriner Granthavali, 147.

3. W.H. Moreland, The Agrarian System.....158; B.B. Misra, The Central Administration.....224.

4. Hastings' Minute, B.S.C. Dec. 7, 1775, R/A, 32.

Burdwan from the year 1725, and the raja was authorized to assume the responsibilities of the faujdar in matters of revenue and criminal administration on the payment of some money.¹ It will be, however, erroneous to infer from this that only thenceforward the administration of civil and criminal justice was transferred to the raja. The faujdar had little judicial responsibility.² As the head of the military and police administration, he had to send the apprehended criminals to the kotwal or gazi or to the faujdari-adalat for trial. In exercising his general supervisory power, the faujdar might settle some petty cases of quarrels, insults and abuses, but the task of investigating the serious cases of crimes and pronouncing judgements rested on the regular faujdari courts.³ Hastings himself admitted that the faujdar and faujdari-adalat were 'totally distinct and independent'.⁴

If the withdrawal of the faujdar's control reflected the granting of judicial power to the zamindar,

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1. B.R.C. May 29, 1775, R49/53; B.R.C. Feb. 9, 1776, R49/60.
 2. H.S.Jarrett (tr.), Ain II 40-41; B.M.Add.MSS.19505, 7a; C.P.C. II, 613.
 3. P.C.C.K. Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 119; B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration.....55.
 4. Hastings' Minute, B.S.C., Dec. 7, 1775, R/A, 32.

the Burdwan estate was not the only one enjoying this privilege.¹ From the report of the naib diwan² we come to learn that the nominal faujdari jurisdiction over the Baikunthapur zamindari was subsequently withdrawn for the sake of economy. In return for an annual payment of Rs.10,000 to the government, the faujdar's authority was revoked.³ The zamindars of Rangamati though paying revenue to the Mughals were neither under the full control of the faujdar nor of the Nazim.⁴

Advocating the retention of the existing judicial structure in the countryside of Burdwan, Verelst said,

"as it is an established custom in all parts of the country for the Zemindar or head farmer of the lands to administer justice in the several districts in all cases that are not of very great importance, he left the same to them." 5

By "all parts of the country", Verelst did not certainly mean the District of Burdwan, since he has used the term "in all parts of the province" to refer to Burdwan in the same piece of information.⁶

1. Hastings' Minute, B.S.C., Dec. 7, 1775, R/A, 32.

2. P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 17, 1770, II, 84.

3. Ibid.

4. P.C.C.R.M. January 20, 1772, IX, 52.

5. B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 722.

6. Ibid.

The zamindars' essential duty of collection of rents from the subordinate tenure holders and rai-yats required some additional authority to deal with the defaulting rai-yats and the disputes relating to property. The judicial power of the revenue farmers to punish the tenants for non-payment of rents or for civil and criminal offences was not wholly a usurpation of power by the zamindars; it was granted partly by practical necessity and expediency. The usual zamindari sanad issued to a substantial zamindar always stipulated to "employ himself diligently in expelling and punishing the refractory".¹ And such principle enshrined in the sanad perhaps did not necessitate the procurement of a special sanad for exercising judicial power. "Zemindars, it is true", Francis remarked with precision,

"were officers and Magistrates, obliged by their sunnuds to the performance of certain civil duties, which relieved the Prince in the administration of his internal Government. But it was the possession of landed property which naturally imposed those duties on the zemindars, and ipso facto made them the Magistrates of the country. There could not be a wiser policy, either for the Prince to whom the men of property were made responsible, or for the people, who had justice brought home to them, and administered by men, who had a stake in the country and a permanent interest in its property....." 2

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1. Sanad to Raja Ramkanta, from J.Shore's Minute, April 1788 quoted in W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I,xlvii.
 2. P.Francis to C.W.B.Rous June 22, 1776, S.Weitzman, Warren Hastings and Philip Francis, App., 305.

The assumption of judicial power by the zamindars was ingrained in the territorial interests of the zamindars as well. Their role as judge-magistrates of their locality must have acted as a symbol of status, and inspired admiration of their tenants. The numerous zamindari staff - revenue, revenue-cum-police, military, and household employees including the large number of slaves constituted a significant portion of the population in a large estate. To commit them to the judicial authority outside the purview of the respective zamindar could upset or undermine his authority over his subordinates. In fact, the exercise of judicial power over his subordinates undoubtedly had a salutary effect on the maintenance of discipline within the estate. Hence the trial of cases relating to their own staff became the prerogative of the zamindars. For example, Gokul, the majumdar (treasurer) of Raja Trailokya Chandra of Burdwan, was found guilty of sequestering huge sums from the revenues and was dismissed from his post.¹ Since Gokul refused to settle his accounts and reimburse the misappropriated amount, he was imprisoned and treated with severity.² The importance of adjudicating cases of theft, adultery and other social misdemeanours by the local officers did not escape the notice

1. Raja's Representation, Jan. 19, 1764, J.Long, Selections....
.....711.

2. Ibid.

of the Supervisors. Higginson wrote from Birbhum in 1772:¹

"With respect to the Bazee Jumma or petty trial for thefts, adultery and other vices, they were formerly adjusted in the several Districts by the officers of the country Government, the fines for which served not only for the support of their power but kept the common people in awe of these officers and tended to the quiet of the inhabitants, whereas they will now be under no other check than the fear of corporal punishment, which is not at present authorized in the Mofussil and will be attended with considerable trouble and inconvenience to be executed at the Sudder cutcherry."

The monetary gain might also have steered the zamindars to assert themselves as the judge-magistrates of their locality. The reports of the Supervisors and the Councils all over the country testify that the mode of compromise of almost all civil and criminal cases of fines was a feature of the judicial administration of that period. The fines imposed in the criminal courts of the zamindar was regarded to be a 'perquisite of the zamindar himself by virtue of his tenure of the lands'.² A portion of what was recovered in settling a civil suit belonged to the zamindar. This customary perquisite was called chauth, being the fourth part of everything recovered.³ In such circumstances it is

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1. A.Higginson to C.C.R.M., May 6, 1772, P.C.C.R.M. May 11, 1772, XI, 24.
 2. G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher Dec. 3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec. 13, 1770, II, 66-67; The Seventh Report..... Reports, House of Commons, IV, 324; H.M.S. 352, 9.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to C.C.R.M. April 16, 1772, P.C.C.R.M. April 23, 1772, X, 228-229; H.M.S. 352, 23, 41; P.C.C.K. Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 121.

easy to comprehend the financial loss of the zamindar if cases were placed before the gazi or the thanadar. Besides, the zamindars were obliged to repair the losses suffered by theft or robbery within their jurisdictions.¹ To let the complaints of robbery and theft pass to the thanadar meant to shoulder the responsibility of repairing the loss by the respective zamindar. On the face of it, the zamindars found it expedient to entertain the complaints at their cutcheries and delay their dispensation or hush them up.

Such financial interests perhaps prompted the zamindars to prevent the government appointed gazis from assuming their official position or discharging their duties without hindrance. The complaints of the gazis and naib gazis² demonstrate that even in religious matters of the Muslims in which the cognizance of the gazis was absolute, the zamindars encroached upon them. Though it was a fact that the gazis were exacting as much as they could from their clients,³ the zamindars' assertion as the judge-magistrates of their locality had something to do with such conflicts. The naib qazi of Khalifabad⁴ alleged that the officers of the zamindaris of the

1. Vide Supra, 191-192.

2. P.C.C.R.M. January 20, 1772, IX, 61; P.C.C.R.M. Feb. 1772 IX, 224; C.P.C. II, 312.

3. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Jan. 21, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 3-4; P.C.C.R.M. Feb. 24, 1772, IX, 224.

4. Situated in the District of Jessore.

12-anna parganah of Jessore, and those of the parganahs dependent upon Kishennagar greatly impeded the resolution of all religious cases, and the collection of the established rasum or dues of the qazis.¹ Such activities of the zamindars continued as late as the year 1792.²

The zamindars' judicial authority may be studied from another angle. Of the fifteen larger zamindars during the time of Nawab Shujaud-din (1727-1739), only one was Muslim.³ The total number of Muslim zamindars throughout the period under review, was less than that of their Hindu counterpart. The majority of the peasantry on the other hand were Muslims.⁴ Under the Mughal judicial system, qazis were appointed in the villages with Muslim population. It was probably intended that the petty problems of the Hindus of the rural area should be resolved by the village institutions. Since Quranic laws which served as guidance to the Mughal judges were not specific and illuminative in suits involving non-Muslims, the customs and usages of the country had to be

1. P.C.C.R.M., Jan. 20, 1772, IX, 61.

2. W.B.D.R., Burdwan, 214.

3. J. Grant, Historical and Comparative Analysis, W.K. Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 194-198.

4. E.B.A.D.G. Bogra, 124; A.F.S. Ahmed, Social Ideas and Social Changes in Bengal, 19.

taken into account in deciding such cases.¹ But,

"the rules derived from these sources were in general very loose and uncertain; and the necessary consequences of so imperfect a system of law, rendered the exercise of criminal and civil judicature in Bengal, in a great measure discretionary".²

Moreover, under the Mughal judicial system there was no hard and fast rule which bound the Hindus to repair always to the regular courts. The magistrate was not authorized to interfere if the Hindus could resolve their cases without appearing before the court.³ During the Mughal rule justice was, in reality, made available to all sections of the people

"by two distinct types of tribunals: the one under the Qazis administering the law of the Quran, and the other under the officers of Government exercising discretionary authority in matters not covered by the canon law."⁴

Against such a background it is tempting to ascribe to the zamindars the authority of judge-magistrate over the Hindu subjects if not over the Muslims of their jurisdictions. This proposition seems most reasonable and natural for the eighteenth century Bengal when the centralized power of the larger

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1. The Seventh Report..... Reports, House of Commons, IV, 324; Reza Khan's Note, Feb. 1775, Francis MSS. Eur. E.28,350; R.Orme, Historical Fragments of the Mughal Empire, 451.
 2. The Seventh Report :.....Reports, House of Commons, IV, 324; See also I.Hasan, The Central Structure..... 309.
 3. P.C.C.R.M., May 4, 1772, X, 267-268; C.Hamilton, The Hedaya, I, XIV.
 4. B.B.Misra, The Judicial Administration51.

zamindars had undoubtedly appropriated much of the power and influence of the village institutions of the pre-Mughal days.

The official correspondence of the early British period also lend support to this view. Two letters from Rous vividly glimpse into two sets of judicature then functioning simultaneously in the territories of the Rajshahi Raja. The Muslim raiyas were tried by the qazis, who were exercising extensive judicial powers and exacting illegal taxes and fines from the raiyas.¹ In the other set of judicature, there was no 'Institution of Brahmins for administering Justice among the Hindus'.² Their disputes were decided at the zamindari cutcheries.³

On the strength of such information one could be inclined to infer that the Muslim prajas under the Hindu zamindars would go to the qazi if he was near at hand. There was an apprehension that the Hindu zamindar or his amla might not always be impartial.⁴ Moreover, the Muslim prajas could

1.C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Jan.21,1770, L.C.B.S.R., 3-5.

The records of the Decennial Settlement demonstrate that the authority of the qazi was in force in some zamindaris of Rangpur District till 1790. The Muslim subjects and clients were charged with a fee called gaziana (B.D.R., Rangpur I, 32).

2.P.C.C.R.M. April 23, 1772, X, 229.

3.Ibid.

4.B.D.G., Rajshahi, 125.

get from the gazi the solution of all their socio-religious problems. This could not be expected from the zamindari naib or diwan of the different creed.¹

The larger zamindars' participation in the administration of civil and criminal justice did not obliterate the share of judicial authority of the petty zamindars. The chaudhuris or parganah headmen who were simultaneously small zamindars in most cases,² exercised some powers in the ordinary details of justice within their precincts. Complaints about debts, thefts, petty quarrels were lodged to them.³ In dealing with such cases they had the authority to impose jarymana (paltry fines).⁴ From the sanad of Emperor Shah Alam II confirming Kissensingh to the office of chaudhuri of parganah Hoghla,⁵ it transpires that the smaller zamindars too were expected to discharge some magisterial duties such as punishing the evil-doers.⁶ Kissensingh

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1. The zamindari staff such as naibs, diwans, gumashtas etc. were mostly Hindus not only in the Hindu zamindaris but also in the Muslim zamindaris.
 2. N.K.Sinha, The Economic HistoryII, 32; I.Habib, The Agrarian System.....29, 174; B.R.Grover, "Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", I.E.S.H.R., 1963, I, 14.
 3. G.V.P., Dep. b.69, 120-121; W.H.Moreland, "The Pargana Headman (Chaudhury) in the Mughal Empire", J.R.A.S., 1938, 518.
 4. G.V.P., Dep.b.69,121; N.K.Sinha, The Economic History.....II,15
 5. In sarkar Khalifatabad.
 6. B.M.Add. MSS.19505, 10a.

was a zamindar is established by authentic references.¹ Even if the contention that all chaudhuris were zamindars is disputed, the fact remains that a great many of them were zamindars and they exercised judicial powers in dealing with petty cases in the capacity of chaudhuris if not as petty zamindars. The talukdars who, as subordinate tenure-holders came under the domain of the zamindars' judicial authority, were also found to exercise judicial power relating to property disputes, and even criminal suits.² Limited as their influence and means were, the smaller zamindars' jurisdictions might have been confined to the adjudication of petty cases and to the infliction of fines or corporal punishments. Having no penal establishments, they would refer to the nearby thanadar or the qazi, the serious cases meriting confinement or capital punishments.³

1. J. Grant, An Enquiry into the Nature of Zemindary Tenures...81-91.

2. R. Becher to J. Grose, May 25, 1770, L.C.B. I, 128.

3. N. A. Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration 24.

From the accounts of the Mirat-i-Ahmadi it appears that in the subah of Gujrat during the eighteenth century, the lesser zamindars occupying a parganah or so were under the direct administrative control of the Nazim through the faujdar, qazi, wakai-nigar and desai (M. F. Lokhandwala (tr.) Mirat, Supplement, 200-201, 210-211, 214, 233).

The faujdar, kotwal, thanadar, qazi, mufti, amil, shikdar, qanungo all participated directly or indirectly in the criminal and civil justice. The number of cases referred to the thanadar, kotwal or qazi was definitely proportionately higher in the heyday of the Mughal rule. Despite the crisis in the Mughal administration the 'rule of justice' in Bengal was not destroyed altogether. The Nawabs took up the mantle of the Mughal rulers and upheld the vigour of the Mughal despotism.¹ The subsequent weakness of the Nawabs, however, upset the balance of power in the subah. Corruption corroded the administrative machinery so much so that "at last the office of Cazy or Judge, and then of Sadr or of Great Almoner,² with many other Magistratures, came to be put up publicly to sale; so that the people skilled in law, and in matters of distributive justice, entirely disappeared from the land; nor was anything else thought of, but how to bring money to hand by any means whatever."³ The qazis after receiving their fees did not hesitate "to turn right into wrong, and injustice into justice."⁴ The office of the

1. R.Guha, A Rule of Property for Bengal, 31.

2. A chief judge. He had the special duty of investigating the cases of all those who applied for grants of charity lands.

3. Haji Mustafa (tr.), Seir III, 160.

4. Ibid., 166; See also A.Karim, Murshid Quli Khan.....71.

naib-qazi was also of little benefit to the people. The Committee of Circuit recorded in 1772:¹

"The Cazzee has also his substitutes in the Districts, but their legal powers are too limited to be of general use, and the power which they assume being warranted by no lawful commission; but depending on their own pleasure, or the ability of the people to contest them, is also an appression."

The decline of the imperial authority encouraged everyone having some authority at hands to usurp the judicial power. In 1699 an attempt of the faujdar of Hugli, to post one qazi for administering justice among the native population of the Calcutta zamindari was thwarted by the servants of the Company. They managed to bribe Subahdar Azim-ush-shan to abandon the measure.² Since then no further endeavour was made in this direction by the Nawabs of Bengal. There are instances that even the gumashtas of the Company sent out for buying and selling goods, acted as judges. A letter from Surgeant Brego to the Governor read:³

"Before justice was given in the public cutcherree, but now every gomastah is become a judge, and every one's house a cutcherree, they even pass sentences on the Zemindars themselves, and draw money from them by pretended injuries....."

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1. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 121.
 2. R.Orme, A History of the Military Transactions....II, Book VI, 17-18; See also Letter to Court, Jan.8, 1702, quoted in C.R.Wilson, Old Fort William in Bengal I, 49-50.
 3. Quoted in H.Vansittart, A Narrative of the Transactions... II, 114.

The French¹ and Dutch² Companies too were found exercising judicial powers. Such infringements of judicial authority by the European Companys' gumashtas, sepoys, harkarahs and also by the private merchants compounded the chaotic situation and subjected the common people, peasants and traders to unchecked oppression.³ The perverse condition led the subjects more and more to turn for justice to the hereditary zamindars, who had some vested interests in their rai-yats.

Thus backed by the custom and usage of the country, demanded by necessity, the de facto position of the zamindars as judge-magistrates of their locality took the colour of de jure position by the year 1765. This gradual transformation made it difficult for many to distinguish between the de facto and de jure positions.

The absence of uniformity characterized the judicial structure of the interior of the subah of Bengal. The types of local courts functioning in the Burdwan zamindari were not analogous to those of the Jungleterry district. The state of judicature in the island of Sandwip offered a contrast to that of the rest of Bengal.

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1. Secret letter to Court, Nov.10,1773, French Records, RI/I, IV, 5-6.
 2. Clive to A.Bisdam, Oct.29,1757, Dutch Records, VIII.
 3. Representation of the Nawab, S.C.C. Jan.2,1764, R/A,5; S.C.C. April 30 & May 3, 1764, R/A,5; S.C.C. Aug.16, 1769, R/A, 9.

In the prime zamindari estate of Burdwan an elaborate judiciary could be traced in the ~~sixties~~ of the eighteenth century. As many as eight courts were functioning there:¹

- (1) The sadar-cutcherry received land-rents and revenues, adjusted all accounts relating to them, confirmed all sales and purchases of land and property under its jurisdiction and settled all disputes between the zamindar and the tenant.
- (2) The amin-daftar acted as a sort of lower court under the sadar-cutcherry. It entertained complaints concerning revenue matters and the conduct of the revenue collectors, and transmitted those to the sadar-cutcherry for decisions.
- (3) the faujdari court was concerned with the criminal matters including capital offences.
- (4) The bazi-jama-daftar used to take cognizance of adulteries, abortions and the like offences affecting the peace and happiness of private families. This court had a variety of administrative functions.
- (5) The burrah-adalat was in charge of dispensing civil suits involving an amount above Rs.50.

1. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....App. 219-220;
 Verelst mentioned another court functioning in Burdwan, i.e., the bakhshi-daftar which, properly speaking, was more concerned with the general supervision of police administration and enforcement of law and order.

(6) The chootah-adalat used to dispose of suits for debts not exceeding Rs.50.

(7) The bazi-zamin-daftar was in charge of taking cognizance of all differences relating to charity lands and other public supports.

(8) The kharij-daftar exercised an arbitration jurisdiction of compelling a landholder to compromise with the debtor in case the latter failed to clear his dues.

Such elaborate judiciary which sufficed the cause of civil and criminal administration of the rural areas, probably was not typical of all zamindaris. However, it can safely be presumed that in each of the major estates there was a regular hierarchy of courts comparable to a 'court of first instance, a Judge and the High Court'.¹ Petty disputes regarding property and other civil and criminal causes used to be settled at the village level by the mandal, panchayat or the salis. The mandals or paramaniks

"are the principal men in any locality who are looked up to by the inferior ryots to advise in and settle matters of local interest, from killing a thief who has been caught in the act, to the adjustment of every trivial caste question." 2

The suits which could not be resolved easily came before the

1. B.D.G., Rajshahi, 125; W.H.Nelson, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Rajshahi, 28.

2. E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur, I, 34; See also, B.M.Add.MSS. 29,086, 3a.

zamindari cutcherry at the parganah.¹ The naib stationed at the cutcherry disposed of petty revenue, civil and criminal suits. To settle the petty land disputes locally, amins with contingents were sent.² The complicated cases were referred to the diwan of the central cutcherry at the zamindari headquarters.³ The diwan dispensed with land disputes examining the relevant sanads and other documents. His findings and judgement bore his signature.⁴ In the Nadia zamindari, the serious criminal cases were decided by the faujdar of the raja with the right of appeal to the latter.⁵ The pandits and the gazis appointed at the courts of the rajas, advised in matters of the Hindu, and Muslim religious precepts.⁶

Besides such working of the judiciary, the existence of an inferior court of criminal justice i.e., bazi-jama, can be traced in some estates as was found in Burdwan. Theft, murder, adultery and other crimes more

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1. P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....239; N.K.Sinha (ed.), The History of Bengal, 84-85; Arcydae, "The Bengal Zemindar and Ryot", The Bengal Magazine, 1873, II, 3.
 2. E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur I, 97.
 3. The Calcutta Monthly Register, Jan.1791 quoted in "The Chronicle of Krishnaghur", C.R. 1855, XXV, 114.
 4. Judgement Report, K.Raya, Kshitiasavamsavalicharita, 225-227.
 5. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal-The Nadia Raj", C.R. 1872, LV, 111.
 6. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandrur Granthavali, 147.

immediately concerning the peace and happiness of the people came before the cognizance of such court.¹ Ducarel wrote from Purnea:²

"There were a particular set of people whose profession was the discovery of witchcraft (this was called the Gunni Mehal). These accusations in other countries are wholly confined to the old and impotent; here they fell generally on the rich and substantial. There were also others, particularly women, who lived by the discovery of fornication and adultery, and the slightest evidence was sufficient to warrant a fine to the extent of the circumstances of the accused."

Fines, forfeitures earned through such a court formed a part of the annual jama of the respective zamindars.³

The administration of justice through judicial hierarchy ~~was~~ not always practised. The zamindari bichar was very often a speedy and summary one. To quote Mitra,⁴

"Regulations and Acts, Penal Codes and Procedures there were none, and if they had existed, they would have been ignored and over-ridden. What was wanted and what was administered was sharp and summary justice."

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1. G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher, Dec.3,1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec.13, 1770, II, 67.
 2. Ibid.
 3. S.C.C.Oct. 28,1766, R/A, 7,224, 230,246; C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, April 16, 1772, P.C.C.R.M., April 23, 1772, X, 229; P.C.C.K. Aug.15, 1772, I-III (in one), 121.
 4. K.C.Mitra, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Rajas of Rajshahi", C.R., 1873, LVI, 19.

The raja exercised his power in an arbitrary manner as and when he preferred it. There are instances of detention for an indefinite period without trial. The Hari-lila¹ speaks of the summary justice at the raja's court. When the thief who had stolen the necklace of the rani was brought before the court, he was at once sentenced to life imprisonment. The judicial procedure prevailing in the Jungleterry district was a curious one.

"Their (zamindars') proceedings in the trials of robbers and murderers have been exactly the same as those of Europe in their state of barbarism. The accused were confronted by their accusers, and in case of persisting in denying the crime and the accusers in urging it upon them, they then were put to the trial of fire, and if they escaped unhurt were adjudged guiltless. This mode of administering justice was practiced by every Zemindar over his own subjects or vassals, and in case of anyone committing a capital offence within the boundary of another Zemindar, he was seized and sent prisoner to his own zemindar, with the circumstances of accusation and proof upon which he was condemned or acquitted. Their punishments were expeditious and severe, both murder and robbery being punished by death as soon as proved." 2

The aggrieved party had the right to appeal against the verdict of the zamindari courts to the Nawab in the cases of criminal suits, and to the diwan-i-subah

1. Ramprasad Sena, 97-98.

2. J.Browne to G.G. in Council, Jan. 12, 1776, B.R.C. Feb. 20, 1776, R49/60.

in revenue and civil matters.¹ However, this privilege was rarely availed of by the prajas for the fear of subsequent zamindari retaliation.² The zamindars sometimes executed death penalty disregarding the law that no death sentence could be carried out without the prior approval of the Nawab.³ In the Jungleterry district, zamindars had always considered themselves 'as supreme judges over the lives and property of their vassals in all circumstances' and tried and passed sentences without reference to any superior authority.⁴

The lack of uniformity was a distinctive feature of the judicial practice of zamindari courts in Bengal. Two factors, nevertheless, remained in common. First, none of the zamindari courts maintained registers of judicial proceedings.⁵ The absence of registers in the courts precluded to a great extent the prospects of further appeal to the higher courts. Secondly, arbitration instead of litigation was encouraged in these courts.⁶

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1. P.Saran, The Provincial Government362-363.
 2. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Nadia Raj", C.R., 1872, LV,111; K.Raya, Kshitiasavamsavalicharita, 25.
 3. W.Irvine (tr.), Storia.....II, 420; The Seventh Report... Reports House of Commons, IV, 324; A.B.Keith, A Constitutional History of India, 62.
 4. J.Browne to G.G.in Council, Jan.12,1767, B.R.C.Feb.20, 1776, R49/60.
 5. S.C.C. Aug.16,1769, R/A,9; The Seventh Report... Reports, House of Commons IV, 324.
 6. P.Saran, The Provincial Government.....364-365; A.B.Keith, A Constitutional History of India, 62.

The laws were simple and straightforward. There were no complex paths and by-paths of procedure whereby criminals with the aid of the disreputable bondmen and the shady lawyers could escape justice.

The judicial authority of the zamindars included the settlement of caste disputes. Niceties of the Hindu caste regulations gave rise to many complications. The people of one caste, by transgressing the avocations of the lower caste, or by establishing matrimonial or sexual relations with them violated the norms of the Hindu society, and would lose caste. The caste could be restored to either "by general suffrage of his own tribe, the sanction of the Brahmins (who are the head tribe) and the superadded concurrence of the supreme civil power".¹ The Hindu legal tradition urges the enforcement of the caste order as an important duty of the Hindu Kings. But during the Muslim rule, the Hindus were left to themselves to settle their caste questions.² However, in the eighteenth century, the Nawabs in Bengal are found to have interfered in the matters of re-admission to caste.³ The Nawab was the highest court

1. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....142.

2. L.S.S.O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs, 57, 59.

3. S.C.C.Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9; S.C.Bose, The Hindus as They are, 167.

of appeal in the subah in caste disputes.¹ Such prerogative of the Nawab was inherited by the East India Company. A regular court, called the caste court (Jatimala-Cutcherry) was in operation under the presidentship of a native Hindu, appointed by the Governor.²

The territorial chiefs are found to have actively enforced the privileges and disabilities of various caste groups within their jurisdictions. The zamindars of high caste and longstanding reputation were the most desired arbiters of caste questions.³ Such zamindars were regarded as leaders not only of their own caste but also of other castes within their territorial bounds.⁴ But the semi-independent Sadgop Rajas of Midnapur and the 'Jungle-mahal' though low in the caste-ladder must have assumed the responsibility of deciding caste disputes of their people under the dictates of exigencies. It is because large number of the inhabitants of their estates were the Sadgops, who

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1. L.S.S.O'Malley, Census of India, 1911, V, part I, 453; S.C.Bose, Hindus as they are, 167.
 2. W.Bolts, Considerations83; H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress27-29.
 3. L.S.S.O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs, 72; A.B.M.Mahmood The Land Revenue History of the Rajshahi Zamindari, 299.
 4. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandrers Granthavali, 12; R.Inden, "The Hindu Chieftdom in Middle Bengali Literature", E.C.Dimock (ed.), Bengal Literature & History, 29.

were also the most dominant group of those areas.¹ Usually, there were caste councils called panchayats to deal with the caste disputes.² When the panchayat failed to give satisfaction to the aggrieved party, an appeal would be lodged to the zamindar, who with his council had the prerogative over the caste matters.³ Assisted by the pandits, the rajas settled caste disputes. Though the opinion of the pandits carried weight in caste questions,⁴ the rajas often exercised their discretionary power. The Raja of Chandradwip as the head of the Kayastha samaja exerted tremendous influence on the society and granted high status to a family of his own caste superceding social obligations.⁵ Maharaja Krishnachandra of Nadia was a recognized arbiter of caste questions. During his time it was not easy in his zamindari to have the caste restored.⁶

In view of the extensive power exercised by the chief zamindars during the period under study, it can be

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1. H.Sanyal, "Caste Mobility in Bengal", J.S.A.S., 1971, XXX, 322-325; B.D.G. Midnapur, 57,60.
 2. Vacaspati, "Kulasarvarvvasva" quoted in N.N.Basu, Vanger Jatiya Itihasa, Dakshina Radhiya Kayastha Kanda, I, 115; N.K.Sinha (ed.), The History of Bengal, 85.
 3. L.S.S.O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs, 72; R.Inden, "The Hindu Chieftdom in Middle Bengali Literature", E.C.Dimock (ed.), Bengal Literature & History, 31.
 4. The Seventh ReportReports, House of Commons IV, 324; S.C.Bose, The Hindus as they are, 184.
 5. B.D.G. Bakarganj, 35; R.Inden, "The Hindu Chieftdom in Middle Bengali Literature", E.C.Dimock (ed.), Bengal Literature & History, 30.
 6. S.C.Bose, The Hindus as they are, 167.

surmised that unscrupulous zamindars might have transgressed in the affairs of the caste infringing upon the authority of the local caste councils. For instance, the paramanik had to obtain permission from the respective zamindar and pay salami to him for superintending the caste affairs of his people.¹ In addition to the inherent feudal pretensions 'to coerce their tenants and keep them under their thumb' they would interfere in caste questions to pocket the fines.² Abuses in the question of caste restriction did not escape the attention of the English government of early days. The instruction to the Supervisors in 1769³ read:

"The peculiar punishment of forfeiting castes to which the Hindoos are liable is often inflicted from private pique and personal resentment amongst themselves, and requires to be restrained to those occasions only where there may be a regular process and clear proofs of the offence, before the Brahmins who were their natural judges."

Sometimes people holding official position deliberately attempted to defame the caste of the ordinary people with

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1. F.Redfearn to B.R. Jan. 30, 1793, B.R.J.C., April 12, 1793, R127/88.
 2. L.S.S.O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs, 72; "Because of the integrated nature of the economic system", remarked Retzlaff, "and the virtual monopoly over the land held by them, the Rajpûts were able to effectively control the lower caste groups and enforce their decisions upon them. This could be done either by threatening to invoke certain economic sanction, as well as the less subtle but equally effective threat of physical force". - R.H.Retzlaff, Village Government in India, 22-23.
 3. S.C.C. Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9.

the anticipation of pecuniary gain.¹ In the Bishnupur estate, caste cases were settled by the raja's son, Neemy Singh.² In order to prevent the thanadars and others from abusing their power to degrade the caste of the poor inhabitants, Neemy Singh posted a gumashta with each thanadar.³ If one lost his caste by the machination of others, he was restored to his caste after substantiating his allegation. For such adjudication the appellant had to pay three rupees and eight annas and obtain a sanad. But if the allegation proved to be baseless, the complainant had to pay one rupee.⁴

The zamindars' judicial functions did not end in deciding revenue, civil and criminal suits within their estates. They had always to lend effectual assistance in the administration of justice. The zamindars appointed wakils to the faujdari and diwani-adalats at the capital to represent their respective estates and to assist in the execution of laws. The wakils were also stationed at the thanas and at the gazi's courts⁵ to look after the cases in which the zamindars were involved. In some estates the

1. A.Hesilrige to C.Keating, July 29, 1789, W.B.D.R., Burdwan, 38.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. E.Strachey to W.B.Bayley, Aug.10,1808, W.K.Firminger (ed.) The Fifth Report.....II,693; S.P.Sangar, Crime & Punishment in Mughal India, 23.

zamindari staff included a faujdari-gumashta whose prime duty was to procure evidence on behalf of the zamindar involved in such cases.¹ When any suit was filed at the faujdari-adalat by a plaintiff, the copy of the petition was sent through a harkarah to the mandal to be delivered to the defendant. It was the responsibility of the mandal to deliver the summons to the defendant and stand as security for presenting the accused to the court on the day of hearing the case.² If the defendant belonged to a distant place, the task of presenting the accused devolved on the wakil of the respective zamindar stationed at the court.³

Punishments in the zamindaris were meted out in the form of fines, corporal punishment or imprisonment. In revenue cases concerning default in payment of the rents or non-fulfilment of other obligations, the usual penalty was the enhancement of rents.⁴ For civil causes the imposition of fines was widely practised. For minor offences, the zamindars often imposed heavy fines on their subjects.⁵ Corporal

1. S.A.B., IV, 240-241.

2. Ibid., 241; K.P.Bandopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa, 475.

3. K.P.Bandopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa, 475.

4. K.N.R., "The Khudkasht Ryot of Bengal", C.R., 1883, LXXVII, 13.

5. G.Vansittart, Nov. 17, 1768, B.D.R., Midnapur II, 126; C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Jan. 21, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 3-5.

punishment was also prescribed in the civil and revenue suits.¹ Thrashing, starving, and whipping were the usual modes of corporal punishments.² The offenders of highway robbery, theft, were awarded mostly with heavy corporal punishments. Mutilation of the limbs were frequently prescribed.³ Both in civil and criminal cases, the guilty could be committed to prison. Perpetrators of highway robbery and dacoity with murder were sentenced to imprisonment for life, if not to death.⁴ The remnants of jails and gibbets in the palaces of the rajas testify to the rigour with which the judicial power of the zamindars was discharged. Each palace of the major zamindars invariably contained an andhari kotha (darkroom) if not an actual jail.⁵ For capital offences there was the provision for death penalty.

The exercise of judicial power by the zamindars was productive of both good and bad consequences for the people. It undoubtedly made justice easily accessible,

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1. W.Bolts, Considerations150; K.P.Bandopadhyaya, Banglar Itihasa, 530.
 2. W.Irvine (tr.), Storia,.....II, 450-451; Luard and Hosten (tr.), Travels.....II,113; J.Long, Selections.....413,463.
 3. Luard and Hosten (tr.), Travels,.....II,113; The Seventh Report..... Reports, House of Commons, IV, 327.
 4. Bharatachandra Raya, Bharatachandr'er Granthavali, 68.
 5. J.Westland, A Report on the District of Jessore,39; T.Raychaudhuri, "Permanent Settlement in Operation:Bakarganj District", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....173.

speedy and often cheap, when to go to distant Nawabi or Company courts to file their petty cases would have involved a troublesome absence from the regular work of cultivation or of their handicraft.¹ The system also suited the needs of simple communities who traditionally put their complaints before their village organizations. And where the tenants were under a benevolent zamindar, the merits of zamindari bichar were considerable, as is evident from a letter from Douglas, Collector of Dacca:²

"The Zemindars also had the privilege of administering justice in their respective jurisdictions, acting something like Justices of the Peace in our own country, settling trifling disputes and rendering easy and speedy redress to the injured party, which would have been rendered very difficult indeed if a poor man had had to travel to the Huzzoor³ and prefer his complaint through a regiment of corrupt Mutasuddies, every one of whom must have been bribed before he could obtain what a respectable Zemindar could have granted him on the spot in a day's attendance."

But the custom of vesting both executive and judicial functions in one person had its demerits too. When the interests of the zamindars or their amla were involved, zamindars were naturally prone to tilt the balance of justice in favour of themselves or their agents. A

1. H. Verelst's Observation, B.P.C. Sept. 28, 1767, R. 1/41; B.D.G., Rajshahi, 125.

2. W. Douglas to B.R., May 25, 1790, B.R.C. June 11, 1790, R52/13.

3. The court of the sovereign.

strong government could deter the abuse of power by the zamindars. The Tawarikh-i-Bangala¹ describes the condition of justice during the time of Murshid Quli Khan in the following words:

"No zemindar or aumil could, with impunity, oppress any one. Their vakeels were continually in search of complaints, and whenever they met with any person who had reason to be dissatisfied, they used every endeavour to pacify him: but if it happened that a well-founded complaint reached the ears of Jaffer Khan, the offender was sure to suffer severely."

Again, during Alivardi Khan's strong rule, as Reza Khan testified, "complaints were readily heard and justice administered" by the zamindars.² But the erosion of the imperial authority and the weakness and indifference of the Nawabs subsequent to the death of Alivardi Khan left the rai-yats more and more at the mercy of their overlords, the zamindars. The recognized seigniorial rights of the zamindar class tended to produce evil effects when the supervisory control over that class became merely nominal. "It will however be obvious", the Committee of Circuit remarked,³

"that the Judicial Authority lodged in the hands of men who gain their livelihood by the profits on the collections of the revenue, must unavoidably be converted to sources, of private emolu-

1. F.Gladwin (tr.), T.B., 115-116.

2. Reza Khan's Note, Feb. 1775, Francis MSS.Eur.E.28,345.

3. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 120-121.

ments and in effect the greatest oppressions of the inhabitants owe their origin to this necessary evil." 1

To appeal against zamindari justice and, still more to rise in protest against injustice was rare among the Bengali peasants, known for their ignorance, passivity, improverishment and political inertness.² Not to speak of the raiyats, talukdars, tarafdars or tappadars claiming a subordinate interest in the land might have been hesitant to lodge complaints against their powerful zamindar for fear of reprisals.³ Moreover, a venture of the aggrieved party to lay complaints to the faujdari or diwani-adalat at the capital, or directly to the Nawab or the Emperor was always fraught with danger and difficulties: there were the expenses of a distant journey and the incidental expenses of lengthy court procedures; fear of the highway robbery; the chance of detection and seizure by the spies of the zamindars in the case of an intended appeal to the Nawab, or by the agents of the Nawab in the event of an appeal to the Emperor. If perchance the party hazarded all these, there were wakils and

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1. That the undue pursuit of profit in the zamindars might well have been induced by the demands of the Company, which upset the customary balance, was ignored by the Committee - and little consolation to the oppressed.
 2. Francis MSS.Eur.F.8, 193; Arcydae, "The Peasantry of Bengal", The Bengal Magazine, I, 351.
 3. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, June 22, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 24.

faujdari gumashtas stationed at the thanas and adalats and at the Nawab's court to represent the cases of their respective zamindars, to influence the course of justice and perhaps after all to get the case sent back to the original local authorities for retrial.¹ Only a person sure of government protection and favour would have dared to lay his complaints before the Nawab or the diwan-i-subah². These drawbacks were compounded by the fact that both the qazis and zamindars during this period used their authority as a source of private profit, rather than as an instrument of relief against oppression and injustice.³ The "degree of the penalty to be inflicted, which was to be levied not according to the nature of the crime, but of the circumstances of the accused."⁴ By the year 1772, most of the modes of punishment had been replaced by arbitrary fines. Very often theft and murder were "compounded for four or five Rupees, whilst fornication & witchcraft were punished with four or five thousand".⁵

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1. A.Constable (tr.), Travels.....235-236; S.C.C.July 8, 1769, R/A, 9; J.Duncan to G.G. in Council, Sept.12, 1788, B.R.C. Oct. 3, 1788, R51/25.
 2. M.F.Lokhandwala (tr.), Mirat, 189; N.K.Sinha (ed.), The History of Bengal, 85.
 3. See T.Pattel to B.R.June 23,1773, B.R.C.July 9, 1773, R49/40, for an illustration of the abuse of zamindar's power & influence to hush up a capital offence committed by the zamindar himself.
 4. G.G.Ducarel to C.C.R.M. Dec.3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M. Dec.13, 1770, II, 67.
 5. Ibid.; See also C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, April 16,1772, P.C.C.R.M., April 23, 1772, X, 229.

The rate of fines had almost doubled. Rous categorically mentioned that the venality and oppressions in the judicial system had increased in the last few years.¹

Since the Diwani right included the civil justice, the Company in 1765 assumed that responsibility too. But in practice, the native officers were left in charge of the civil justice. The supervisory power relating to civil justice was entrusted to Reza Khan as the Naib Diwan of the Company, and to the Resident at the Durbar at Murshidabad. The criminal justice which was beyond the orbit of the Diwani administration remained as before in the hands of the Nawab Nazim of the subah. In reality, however, there remained very little to distinguish between the Diwani and the Nizamat administration. In January 1767, Clive wrote:²

"The first point in Politics, which I offer to your consideration, is the Form of Government. We are sensible that since the acquisition of the Dewannee, the power formerly belonging to the Subah of these Provinces is totally in fact vested in the East India Company; nothing remains, to him, but the name & shadow of authority."

The Court of Directors' assertions that the office of Dewan should be exercised only in the superintendence of the

1. C.W.B. Rous to R. Becher, Jan. 21, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 3-5.

2. S.C.C. Jan. 16, 1767, R/A, 7, 307.

collection and disposal of the revenues, and that the "administration of justice, the appointment to offices, zemindaries, in short, whatever comes under the denomination of civil administration, we understand, is to remain in the hands of the Nabob or his ministers",¹ did not dissuade the Company from direct or indirect involvement in the administration of civil and criminal justice.

Before long it was felt that the judicial matters needed some changes in order to safeguard the financial interests of the Company. The appointment of Supervisors in the Diwani Districts was the first step to that direction. The Supervisors were categorically instructed to stamp out corruptions among the judges and to infuse vigour into the existing system of justice.² The next step taken was the abolition of the post of Resident at the Nawab's court and the institution of two Controlling Councils of Revenue at

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1. Letter from Court, May 17, 1766, para. 14, E/4/618.
 2. "Your conduct", to quote the Instruction to the Supervisors, "in all capital offences should be to enforce justice where the law demands it checking every composition by fine or mulct, & where any disputes arise in matters of property, you should recommend the method of arbitration to any other, & inculcate strongly in the minds of the people that we are not desirous to augment our revenue by such impositions, but to acquire their confidence by the equity and impartiality of our proceedings, & by our tenderness for their happiness. The arbitrators should be men chosen by themselves, & of known integrity, & whose circumstances may suppose them exempt from venality, & promise best to ensure their rectitude.....". (S.C.C. Aug. 16, 1769, R/A, 9, 382).

Murshidabad and Patna in July, 1770. Theoretically, the position of Reza Khan remained the same but the Controlling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad began to exercise the power of interposition in all matters of importance including the criminal causes.¹

In the judicial aspects of Diwani administration of Bengal, the Supervisors' authority soon began to be felt. In the district of Nadia, the Supervisor Rider tried to secure justice in a criminal suit involving the death of a muharrir. The charge was that the muharrir had not deposited in the same day the sum of seven rupees, his collection of the day. On hearing this Mirza Muhammad Ali, the naib-sazawal (deputy collector) of Nadia, and his naib, Mir Qasim flogged the muharrir so severely that he died a few days later.² On the complaint of the deceased muharrir's young wife and blind father, the Supervisor, in conjunction with Raja Krishnachandra and his son, held an enquiry. Mir Qasim admitted his guilt, Mirza Mushammad Ali pleaded innocence.³ Mir Qasim was remanded in custody. Surprisingly enough the raja secretly manoeuvred to get the offender's acquittal, attributing the

1. P.C.C.R.M., Oct. 22, 1770, I, 78-79; J.Reed to R.Becher, Dec. 17, 1770, B.S.C., Jan.17, 1771, R/A,18.

2. J.Rider to R.Becher, Sept.14, 1770, L.C.B. . II, 1-2.

3. Ibid; J.Rider to R.Becher, Sept. 23,1770, P.C.C.R.M. Oct.4, 1770, I, 24-25.

death of the muharrir to natural causes.¹ However, the Murshidabad Council referred the case back to Rider for further investigation. Subsequently Rider was advised to send Mir Qasim to Murshidabad for trial as the perpetrator of a capital offence. No further information is available about the case. But it is striking that within a month Mirza Muhammad Ali was dismissed,² and Raja Krishnachandra and his son were removed from the management of the zamindari for some time.³ The absence of evidence makes it difficult to draw a direct connection between this case and the removal of the naib-sazawal and the zamindar, but it is tempting to surmise that the intervention of the Company officials in the incident precipitated their dismissal. In the district of Rajshahi, the qazis in deciding all criminal offences imposed arbitrary fines. Steps were taken to eradicate this abuse. The qazis were required to act as judges, and let the Supervisor know the fixed amount of cesses and fines charged by them.⁴ To regulate judicial administration in the

1. Raja's Representation, L.C.B. II, 16.

2. P.C.C.R.M., Oct. 22, 1770, I, 89-90.

3. P.C.C.R.M., Nov. 28, 1770, I, 246-248.

4. C.W.B.Rous to R.Becher, Jan. 20, and March 26, 1770, L.C.B.S.R., 3-4, 12.

District by introducing a measure of checks and balance between the powers of the gazi and the zamindar, the Supervisor of Rajshahi issued an instruction to the gazis. To quote some of the articles:¹

"In affairs relative to the casts and religious tenets of the Hindoos you must not interfere. But, if you see any injustice committed by the Bramins, or the Zemindar's officers over the Hindoos, you will give me information of the circumstances.

"In variances relative to the recovery of debts and mercantile transactions you will take your measures with the concurrence of the zemindar's deputy in the Pergunnah: and when there is a difference of opinion, the matter must be decided by arbitration, or be referred to me, or to the officers of Adaulet.....

"The rate of your fees is to be stuck up on the wall of the cutcherry in the persian and Bengal languages, authenticated by your seal and the attestation of the Zemindar's head officer in the Pergunnah."

Article 13 more unexpectedly and interestingly read:

"If you hear of any English gomastahs who take upon them to send Peons and detain prisoners &c. or Talookdars or Daroghas of gunges who exercise an authority in criminal or civil matters beyond their own precincts, you will exert yourself in conjunction with the Zemindar's deputy, to put a check upon their proceedings....." 2

In Purnea, another district included within the Diwani lands, Ducarel tried to rectify the shortcomings of the prevailing judicial system by making justice easily available and less

1. Instruction to the gazis, Jan. 4, 1771, P.C.C.R.M., Feb. 7, 1771, III, 142-143.

2. Ibid......

burdensome to the people.¹ From his appointment in Purnea two courts were held every week in the presence of the faujdar attended by other local officials. The proceedings of the courts were mostly sent to the sadar-adalat.² The Supervisor himself often attended the courts and in some cases succeeded in modifying the sentences passed by the Naib Nazim.³

In the ceded districts, however, the administration of justice was more regulated. Since the cession of Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong to the Company, the Residents at Burdwan and Midnapur, and the Chief at Chittagong had exercised some authority in the administration of justice.⁴ In Chittagong, the civil and criminal courts were placed under the supervision of the Company and each of these met thrice a week.⁵ It was desired that the expenses of these courts should be borne by the zamindars "as they tend immediately to the benefits of the inhabitants themselves."⁶

1. G.G.Ducarel to R.Becher, Dec.3, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 13, 1770, II, 67.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth Report.....I, XXIV-XXV; A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 36.

5. A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 36.

6. H.Verelst and Council to C.N.L. June 5, 1761, P.C.N.L., June 24, 1761 quoted in A.M.Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of Chittagong, 36.

In order to minimize corruptions in the country courts, regular recording of the court proceedings in all cases excepting the most trivial ones, was instituted.¹ Again, for the execution of the sentences in serious cases the written approval of the Chief or the Resident on behalf of the Company, and the Nawab was required.² In Midnapur and Jellasore where the zamindars used to impose heavy fines for trifling offences,³ a regulation was promulgated to the effect that the fine should be fixed taking into account the quantity of land held. Furthermore, the zamindars were forbidden to levy no larger fines than those fixed; to do otherwise needed the permission of the Resident.⁴

Thus upto the year 1772, both in the Diwani and ceded districts, the Company government sought to eradicate corruptions in the judicature without disturbing the existing set-up.⁵ In deciding cases, arbitration in preference to summary justice, was strongly recommended.⁶ It was attempted

1. H.Verelst, A View of the Rise and Progress.....220.

2. Ibid.

3. G.Vansittart to R.Becher, Nov.17, 1768, B.D.R.,MidnapurII,126.

4. G.Vansittart to R.Becher, Dec.3,1768, B.D.R.,Midnapur II,129.

5. Fort William Council to C.C.R.M., Oct.11,1770, P.C.C.R.M. Oct.22,1770, I, 78; The Seventh Report..... Reports, House of Commons, IV, 327.

6. Chittagong Council to Fort William Council, Aug.10,1772, B.D.R., Chittagong I, part II, 139; P.C.C.R.M., May 11, 1772, XI, 24-25.

to do away with the arbitrary monetary demands on the plaintiffs and defendants.

These changes began to circumscribe the almost unlimited judicial authority of the great zamindars in the rural judicature. Since 1760s their role as judge-magistrates of their locality was subjected to scrutiny and restraint. Furthermore the lease of the zamindari lands to the temporary farmers upset the zamindars' traditional jurisdiction of criminal justice. Nevertheless some hereditary zamindars, despite their removal from the management of the revenues of part or whole of their estates, continued to exercise judicial power.¹ Since the judicial responsibility involved some financial liabilities, the new farmers were not entrusted with it. It was apprehended that the judicial responsibility with its financial implications might worsen the existing state of frequent default by the farmers. The principal objective perhaps was to replace the judicial power of the zamindars exercised so long, by the establishment of elaborate centralized judicature. The first judicial programme of the Company introduced in 1772,² left to the zamindars little to dispense justice. In each districts two

1. R.Becher to J.Cartier, March 30, 1770, S.C.C., April 28, 1770, R/A, 10.

2. P.C.C.K. Aug. 15, 1772, I-III (in one), 112-118.

courts - one diwani-adalat for the cognizance of all civil causes¹ and the other, fauidari-adalat for the trial of crimes and misdemeanours, were established, and these courts were to be presided over by the English Collector of the district. Apart from these, two courts of the same nature to be presided over by the members of the Council in rotation were set up at Calcutta. The sadar-diwani and the sadar-mizamat-adalats were the highest appellate courts which dealt with civil and criminal cases respectively. The sadar-diwani-adalat was presided over by the President with two members of the Council and attended by the diwan of the khalsa, the sadar-qanungo and other officers of the cutcherry. The sadar-nizamat-adalat, however, remained mainly an indigenous institution presided by the darogha-i-adalat (chief judge) and assisted by the qazi-ul-quzat, the chief mufti and three maulvies, well-versed in the Quranic laws. The final decision on the capital offences rested with the Nazim.

In such a setting the role of the zamindars was limited only in deciding the suits relating to property not exceeding Rs.10.² The district courts began to assume the judicial responsibilities of the zamindars. To make justice

1. The civil causes included all disputes of property, inheritance, debt, contracts, partnership, rent, marriage and caste.

2. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, I-III (in one), 114.

readily available to the people, the Collectors were enjoined upon to receive petitions from the aggrieved party at any time.¹ Despite these innovations much of the age-old practice of rural Bengal survived. The judicial power of the zamindars was so much interwoven with the zamindari administration that even the regulations of the Permanent Settlement could not cut it out at one stroke.² On the whole it is certain that the system of discharging justice by the zamindars in their respective locality suited the age in which it functioned and even more the society for which it was maintained.

1. P.C.C.K., Aug. 15, I-III (in one), 113.

2. This has been made clear by Raychaudhuri when he said, "Cornwallis had disbanded the zamindar's police force, but they effectively retained some of their judicial functions outside the system of organized British law. They also retained the de facto power of punishing their tenants through fines and corporal punishments, and little could be done to check this extralegal authority, not only because of the tenant's weak position, but also because of his basic acceptance of the situation." (T. Raychaudhuri, "Permanent Settlement in Operation : Bakarganj District", R.E.Frykenberg (ed.), Land Control and Social Structure.....172).

CONCLUSION

The institution of zamindari during the period under review brings into perspective a wide range of administrative problems and dilemmas that beset the Mughals and the East India Company. As a functional base of the government, it eased administrative burden of the Mughals and to a lesser degree that of the Company. The zamindars through their privileged hereditary position and the performance of a host of government functions maintained their power and dealt with the needs and interests of the community around them. In spite of the co-operation and assistance of the zamindar class to the cause of the government, the implied clash of interest between them and the state remained unresolved.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, a period of instability in the Mughal Empire, the zamindari institution was marked by certain developments which weakened the authority of Delhi over the subah of Bengal to the point of virtual independence for the regional power. The impact of the march of events was overwhelming. The succession wars for the viceregal throne, the wranglings of parties at the court of the Nawab coupled with the entry of the Company in the political arena of Bengal opened a new chapter in its history. The growing dependence of Nawabs on the zamindar class reinforced the political

strength of the landed aristocracy. The big zamindars entered the main stream of politics, aligning themselves with the contenders for the subahdari and in league with the bankers and the East India Company. This combination contributed for a brief period to the making and unmaking of the Nawabs. Thus the role of the zamindars had a profound impact on the surrounding area of political and financial turmoils.

The zamindars in pre-British Bengal came to occupy the position well filling 'the vacuum created by the decay of Mughal power in an outlying part of the Empire'. Apart from the border zamindars who were always in a special class, many intermediary zamindars in the interior of the subah had grown very powerful and occupied a significant place in the socio-political situation of the country. They developed a system of zamindari management of their own, and built up their courts and style of private life vying with each other in pomp and show. The whole community was his domain. He exercised authority over his subjects intervening in their affairs in many situations and on a number of justifications ~~some~~ some lawful and some best described as accepted practice but contrary to tradition. The chapter-headings epitomize the impressive array of powers enjoyed by the zamindars which they could exercise without hindrance and in many instances without subsequent check for abuse. In the unsettled political atmosphere of the subah, with the

government inaction buttressed by the inefficiency and corruption of the officers, the powers of the zamindars continued to grow unabated till the transfer of the Diwani to the Company.

The term zamindar in its contemporary sense included people with different kinds of land holdings and rights ranging from the autonomous or semi-independent chieftains who remained almost outside the pale of imperial administration to the peasant-proprietors whose resources were too insignificant to excite envy. The reason is to be found in the Mughal policies, the historical roles and relations of the zamindars vis-a-vis the society and the administration. The House of Timur harnessed the old machinery of local administration into the imperial service. The independent or semi-independent chieftains, humbled or befriended, became peshkash paying subordinate allies with their administrative autonomy virtually unimpaired. The rest were mostly mal-wajib paying zamindars who collected revenue for the imperial treasury. In return for their services they enjoyed various types of perquisites, depending upon their status, resources and other factors. They were liable to be removed at the Emperor's will but usually if they failed to pay up the stipulated sums. The border zamindars were generally recalcitrant. In spite of several expeditions against them they could not be forced to conform to the land revenue regulations of the interior. The Mughal

rulers had to be content with their nominal submission and irregular payments. Even the Company's government had difficulty in wresting control of the frontier Districts from these zamindars.

The period of unrest and transition witnessed some mobility within the landed class owing to the influx of new comers from different professions, the rise of some zamindari families through imperial or viceregal patronage, office, marriage, piecemeal purchase and inheritance, and the decline of others through the fragmentation of the zamindaris amongst successors. The establishment of a de facto independent rule in Bengal and the vigorous steps of Murshid Quli Khan had consequences on the zamindar class. During Murshid Quli's tenure more lands were available for farming owing to the conversion of many jagir lands into khalsa. This afforded the scope for the creation of some new zamindars as well as the territorial expansion of the existing ones. The elevation of the big zamindars to the posts of chaklahdars was another measure of Murshid Quli Khan which undermined the authority and status of the smaller zamindars and brought forth some changes within the landed class. During the subsequent contest for the subahdari, the big zamindars widened their power and influence. The ascendancy of the zamindars' power and influence came to a halt when the East India Company took up the administrative rein of the subah.

The management of the revenues which ranked first in the zamindari administration, remained traditional with some modifications. Informality and flexibility were the characteristic features of the revenue administration under the Mughals. The revenue payable by the zamindars was fixed on the basis of custom rather than on regular or real assessment of land or produce. The practice of carrying the balance from year to year, and the method of paying revenue through the bills of the bankers, introduced in the 1720s, eased the process of collection and payment of the revenues, but it had also accentuated an inherently weak administrative situation. The indulgences relating to the reclamation of wastes and the deductions on the grounds of natural calamities, agricultural development works and social services were allowed as incentives to better management of the zamindari affairs. In a big zamindari, the zamindar was assisted by several categories of officials at the sadar cuthcherry. At the parganah or village levels, the cutcheries were manned by minor functionaries. Control over the local offices was maintained through tours undertaken by the zamindar or his diwan. The efficiency of the zamindari administration depended on the ability and the dynamism of the zamindar. The government's hold over the zamindars varied from zamindari to zamindari. The major zamindars possessing immense political power circumscribed the government control in revenue management. With the enfeeblement of government checks through the ganungos, amils and amins,

many abuses crept into the revenue management of the zamindars. In contravention to the government regulations, the zamindars often overburdened the raiyats with abwabs, mathauts and the like cesses. The zamindari imposts on the peasants, artisans and merchants multiplied after the rise of the regional power. The zamindars unable to withstand pressure from the Nawabs passed on the burden of revenue demands on the raiyats. The cases of physical torture and forced labour increased probably as desperate means of exactions. However, the continuation of the zamindari in the same family for generations had naturally fostered closer ties between the hereditary zamindars and their prajas who lived in the same village and ploughed the same field for years. And this perhaps accounts for the absence of reports of the peasant uprising during the period prior to Nawab Mir Qasim. Following the transfer of the Diwani to the Company the revenue administration was marked by the Company's growing involvement and greater checks on the zamindari revenue management.

For the defence of Bengal, a remote subah intersected by numerous rivers and canals, the Mughals depended considerably on the local zamindars. The zamindars were pledged to come to the aid of the imperial army under the circumstances of war and rebellion, extend co-operation at all times and furnish the quota of military supplies apportioned by the government. These responsibilities, in con-

junction with the organizational need for defence and preservation of internal order led to the creation of military establishments of the zamindars. The zamindars were granted lands or deductions from revenue for their military services. They maintained regular armed retainers and when required drafted their tenants. The military potential of some border zamindars rested not solely on their extensive fortifications and inaccessible terrains but on the energetic support of their armed followers as well. The military might of the powerful zamindars was sometimes exercised for territorial expansion and for the settlement of disputes. The government viewed these affairs with sullen indifference. Because of the decline of the Mughal authority and of the mounting predatory raids of the Marathas, the subahdars relied heavily on the zamindars for military help and support. The zamindars arrogating the authority of the state through their association with administrative functions and through the weakness of the government were welded into an effective political force. The antagonism between the interests of the government and the zamindars came to surface in the form of rebellion and bloody encounters.

The police and judicial authority of the zamindars was a corollary of their administrative tasks. This transferred authority on the one hand gave the zamindar the responsibility of resolving the problems of law and order in his

realm and on the other hand the legitimate gratification of his pride and authority. A zamindar was expected to apprehend, prosecute and even punish criminals. Repairing the loss of property through theft and robbery in his territory was also within the ambit of his police activities. The combination of powers to define criminal conduct, to arrest, to summarily punish and to retrieve reposed in the zamindar some discretionary powers. His prerogative and discretionary powers increased during the declining days of the imperial and subahdari authority. Taking advantage of the bureaucratic inertia the police activities of many zamindars took a different cast. The resources of the zamindari police establishment, initially set up for the enforcement of law and order were diverted into questionable channels. Some zamindars even had links with the organized criminals and shared the division of the spoils. The assumption of the Diwani by the Company did not improve the situation immediately. The condition festered to the extent that the merchants and servants of the Company instead of combating the malpractices, began to indulge in illegal activities.

A zamindar dominated the rural society and could redress the grievances of his people and right the injustices by compensation. He could enforce law and order by imposing sanctions which ranged from ostracism to violence. In matters of offences not too serious for official cognizance

of the faujdar or qazi, the zamindar or his people acted. It is, however, not difficult to find fault with the judicial administration of the zamindars. The zamindar combined the posts of a prosecutor, juror and the judge. The financial considerations of the litigation and the fear of reprisals precluded the possibility of appeals by the raiyats, and virtually forced them to comply with the zamindars' verdicts. Nevertheless, the dispensation of justice was cheap and readily available. Despite its shortcomings, it fitted the exigencies of the rural society. When the British took up the judicial administration, rapid change was a dominant consequence. But the great structure of judicial power and privilege built up by the zamindars survived for a long time.

With the passing of time there developed a uniform pattern in the land control system of the Mughal subah of Bengal. Taking advantage of their privileged position and political power the big zamindars began to further their economic interests. Their need for money in order to maintain their followers, dependants and attendants as well as for the harems, drinks, jewels and other luxuries had grown too numerous. The traditional role of the zamindars especially of the intermediary ones received a setback after the battle of Plassey. The period between 1757 to 1772 presented manifold problems to the zamindars. The scramble for political power in the subah caused financial stringency.

to the already strained economy of the country. The Nawabs ceded part of the province to the Company in order to liquidate their debts. This measure posed a threat to the position of the zamindars in the ceded districts. The series of experiments in the Company's revenue administration not only brought economic pressure on the zamindars but also foreshadowed the reduction of their powers and privileges enjoyed so long. Some disgruntled zamindars resorted to arms to resist the authority of their new master. The transfer of the Diwani to the Company in 1765 spelled the decline of the influence of the traditional zamindars. The zamindars had now to deal with some new people whose ideas and attitudes were quite foreign to them. Naib Diwan Reza Khan championed the cause of the zamindars and sought to preserve the existing revenue set-up. His viewpoint though supported by Becher, the Resident, was rejected by the Select Committee and the Council of Revenue at Fort William. Reza Khan realizing the futility of his struggle for the preservation of the indigenous revenue system 'abandoned the field' at the end of 1770. The move finally placed the zamindars under the firm grip of the Company administration. The Company's concept and definition of the zamindari tenure lay at the root of the many steps taken by them. The traditional operational pattern based on local administration was discarded in favour of a centralized bureaucracy. The status of a

zamindar moved away from a chief to that of a revenue contractor. The infringement of some privileges enjoyed so long by the zamindars, actuated them to resort to fraudulent means. As the Company seemed determined to increase the financial resources from the Diwani possession so were the zamindars to retain their powers and privileges, built up through legal and illegal means. The Company's attempts to cut down the management expenses of the zamindaris and bring more land under assessment for revenue payment were strongly resented and opposed by the zamindars. The sale of the zamindari lands to pay up the balances, the temporary removal of the defaulting zamindars from revenue management undermined the power of the zamindars. The fixation of the emoluments of the zamindars, the reduction of the zamindari staff, and the resumption of the chakaran lands, and bazi-zamin not only cut across the interests of the big zamindars but also made the redundant staff and their dependants impoverished. These measures had a far-reaching effect on the socio-economic condition of the country at large.

In the absence of specialized departments to look after the social services, developmental works or education throughout the vast compass of the country, the Mughal rulers relied on the initiative of the zamindars to carry the benefits of the Mughal rule to the rural areas. By granting rent-free

lands or deductions from the jama,¹ they provoked the zamindars to take up the task of public services in earnest.

The Mughal Emperors' anxiety for providing ease to the travellers² found an echo among the zamindars.³ Some, to match the imperial expectation and some, to satisfy their religious sentiments or craving for perpetuation of their names built roads, bridges and serais and liberally maintained them. Pressed by the demands of the government and stressed further by the needs of the raiylats, the zamindars participated in some agricultural development works. These responsibilities in conjunction with the individual philanthropic zeal of some zamindars account for the excavation of tanks, water reservoirs and canals and the construction of embankments. The keen interest shown by the zamindars led to the advancement of education.

Pathsalas, tols and other educational institutions founded by the zamindars of Nadia, Rajshani, Birbhum and Rawshanabad became famous centres of both religious and secular studies.⁴

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1. W.Lushington to R.Becher, Nov.19, 1770, P.C.R.M., Dec.6, 1770, II, 21; P.C.R.M. Feb.3, 1772, IX, 126-127; B.M. Add.MSS. 29086, 2b; P.C.C.D. Oct.10, 1772, R70/15, 355.
 2. Abul Fazl, Akbarnamah, H.Beveridge (tr.), III, 1236.
 3. W.Irvine (tr.), Storia.....I, 116; K.C.Mitra, "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Rajas of Rajshahi", C.R. 1873, LVI, 11; Naib Diwan's Note, P.C.C.R.M., April 11, 1771, V, 54.
 4. The Calcutta Monthly Register, Jan.1791 quoted in "The Chronicle of Krishnaghur", C.R. 1855, XXV, 114-115; Shamsur Ghazir Punthi, D.C.Sen, Vanga Sahitya Parichaya, Part II, 1854; Abdus Salam(tr.), Riad-al-Salatin, 257.

The zamindars' munificent patronage of literature enriched the culture of Bengal. Though zamindars did not always fulfil their obligations regarding their social duties and sometimes misappropriated the money they received for the welfare of the subjects,¹ the personal charities of some zamindars deserve credit.

The landed aristocracy of the pre-British period included few absentee zamindars. Those who retained their official position as ganungos or chaudhuris were zamindars of the same locality. The glamour of the urban life was yet to entice the zamindars of Bengal. The social life and public activities of the zamindars were usually confined within the bounds of their 'little kingdoms'. Their mode of life was somewhat tempered by their exposure to the grandeur of the imperial and the Nawab's court. The great zamindars' durbars were modelled after that of the Nawab's and the imperial dress, food, art and architecture were emulated.² This paved the way for a synthesis between the imperial and the indigenous cultures.³

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1. P.C.C.D., Nov.27, 1772, R70/15, 279; W.Wynne to B.R. May 13, 1773, B.R.C. May 25, 1773, R 49/39; R.B.Ramsbotham, Studies in the Land Revenue History of Bengal, 120.
 2. D.C.Sen, Glimpses of Bengal Life, 39-40, 45-46.
 3. S.N.Hasan, "The Zamindars under the Mughals", R.E. Frykenberg(Ed.), The Land Control and Social Structure..... 17.

The luxurious style of living and the pomp and grandeur of the considerable zamindars boosted and indigenous crafts and small-scale industries. In order to cater for the needs of the landed aristocracy and high-ranking government officers, handicraft industries produced fine quality cotton textiles, exquisite silks, jewellery and decorative swords and weapons. The fame of the cotton and silk cloths of Santipur and Burran within the Nadia zamindari owed as much to the skilled weavers as to the patronage of the Rajas of Nadia.¹ The demand for the fine Santipuri cloths was not confined to Bengal only. Huge quantities of muslins, mulmuls and cossaes from Santipur were exported to the markets of Europe.² The manufacture of sannoos, mulmuls, and tanjeebs of Ghoraghat, Santose and Buddal within the Dinajpur zamindari also earned reputation.³ Under the patronage of the Rajshahi zamindars, the textile industry flourished within their extensive zamindari.⁴ According to Grant, the Rajshahi

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1. K.Raya, Kshitisavamsavalicharita, 35; S.C.Mitra, Jessore-Khulnar Itihasa II, 402.
 2. Imperial Gazetteers of India, Bengal, II, 428; J.Z. Holwell, Interesting Historical Events, Part I, 202.
 3. J.Z.Holwell, Interesting Historical Events, Part I, 194.
 4. Ibid, 192-193; K.K.Datta, Alivardi and His Times, 226.

zamindari produced "within the limits of its jurisdiction, at least four fifths of all the silk, raw or manufactured, used in, or exported from the effeminated luxurious empire of Hindostan....."¹ The zamindars' taste for luxurious articles kept some small-scale industries not only alive but prosperous. The brass wares of Navadwip, Meherpur, the clay models of Krishnanagar earned fame under the encouragement of the zamindars of Nadia. Thus the "native princes and chiefs of a various description, the retainers of numerous dependants, afforded a constant employment to a vast number of indigenous manufacturers, who supplied their masters with gold and silver stuffs, curiously flowered, plain muslins, a diversity of beautiful silks, and other articles of Asiatic luxury; the use of which, wealth, and a propensity to a voluptuous life, naturally excited".²

Again, the extravagance of the zamindars in socio-religious occasions and festivities helped in no less degree the circulation of wealth in the society. The private life of a traditional zamindar was nothing short of 'a court of ceremony'. Since the magnificence of such ceremonies was an index of a zamindar's superior position,

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1. J. Grant, Analysis of the Finances of Bengal, W.K. Firminger (Ed.), The Fifth Report.....II, 194.
 2. G. Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, I, 4-5; see also T. Raychaudhuri, Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir, 201-202.

he spent lavishly on marriage, annaprashan,¹ funeral rites² and other occasions sometimes running himself into irretrievable debt.³ That the very prestige of the zamindars hinged on their lavish spending in socio-religious festivities can be gleaned from the following correspondence of Raja Boidyanath of Dinajpur:⁴

"As I consider the discharge of my debts to Government as prior to even to the provision of my food and raiments, I readily submitted to this. But since the "Pooja Dessehra" is very near at hand and this festival supersedes amongst those of my cast, all religious & worldly affairs God forbid that the means should fail me of adhering to the customs which have been kept up of old seeing the same would reflect greatly on me in the opinions of men in general. I therefore hope that you will grant me some allowance to support the charge of the Poojah and that I may in a becoming manner be thereby enabled to keep up my reputation."

At a time when the Raja of Dinajpur was passing through difficulties with huge debt to the government, he prayed for allowance for celebrating the pooja in a befitting manner. The Raja of Jessore petitioning for an advance of a part of his allowance to defray the expenses of the "Durga

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1. "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal - The Nadia Raj", C.R. 1872, LV, 95-96.
 2. A.Higginson to C.C.R.M., Dec. 12, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Dec. 17, 1770, II, 88.
 3. J.H.Grose, Voyages to the East Indies I, 234; J.Forbes, Oriental Memoirs I, 56.
 4. B.R.C., Sept.17, 1773, R49/41, 3088-3089.

Pooja', expressed the same anxiety for the preservation of his family dignity.¹

The construction of buildings, forts, temples and mosques by the zamindars provided livelihood to numerous masons. The zamindars of the period had on record the credit of building a number of towns. The prominent zamindars vied with each other in making their headquarters magnificent. The Shivnivasa of Raja Krishnachandra and the Rajnagar of Raja Rajballabh not only demonstrated the architectural skill of the craftsmen and the taste of their patrons but also their economic resources, which they could afford to spend on such ventures.² The spending on luxury articles, social and religious ceremonies and buildings had an encouraging effect on the economic life of the society. The "private wealth was usually expended on the spot where it had been acquired; and though severity and oppression might have been exercised in the accumulation, yet, by its quick circulation, through the many channels of luxury, the country at large was improved and embellished, without any decrease of the general currency."³

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1. S.Charter to B.R.C., Sept.13, 1773, B.R.C. Sept.17, 1773, R49/41, 3087.
 2. D.C.Sen, History of Bengali Language and Literature, 679-680.
 3. G.Forster, A Journey from Bengal to England, I, 6.

The preceding discussion proves beyond doubt that the life and activities of a considerable zamindar had a tremendous impact on the various aspects of rural community. The abrogation of much of the administrative authority of the zamindars and the drastic curtailment of their economic privileges had repercussions on the society at large and specially on their dependants and beneficiaries. The disbanding of the zamindari troops and the reduction of the zamindari staff threw many people out of employment. The political and economic measures also heralded the ruination of the indigenous arts and crafts. A new dimension was added to the problem of law and order when many, bereft of their livelihood resorted to robbery.

The zamindars were a composite of good and evil, a blend of ennobling excellences and degrading imperfections. When held by tradition and disciplined by the imperial or viceregal authority they displayed decency and consideration. In the unsettled political climate of the subah the government was saddled with mounting problems, the administrative machinery was wrapped in inefficiency and corruption and the zamindars were pressed with heavier demands on their resources, and tempted by the desire for widening their power and territories. Thus were born greed and rapacity, and the bonds of loyalty and goodwill severed.

Appendix - A

Progressive account of the Revenue Settlement of Bengal
from 1582 to 1763¹ :

Todar Mal's Settlement (1582)

<u>Khalsa</u> Lands	Rs. 63,44,260
<u>Jagir</u> Lands	43,48,892
	<hr/>
Total assignment	1,06,93,152

Shah Shuja's Settlement (1658)

<u>Asal</u> or original <u>Khalsa</u> Lands	63,44,260
<u>Izafa</u> or increase on the <u>asal</u>	9,87,162
Increase of <u>Khalsa</u> land by transfer and conquest	14,35,593
<u>Jagir</u> Lands	43,48,892
	<hr/>
Total assessment	1,31,15,907

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1. Appendix to the Fifth ReportW.K.Firminger (ed.),
The Fifth ReportII, 120-121

Murshid Quli's Settlement (1722)

Khalsa Lands according to Shah Shuja's

Settlement	87,67,015
Increase on above	11,72,279
<u>Jagir</u> Lands converted into <u>Khalsa</u>	10,21,415
<u>Jagir</u> Lands	33,27,477
Total assessment	1,42,88,186
Add <u>abwabs</u>	2,58,857
Total assessment including <u>abwabs</u>	1,45,47,043

Shuja Khan's Settlement (1728)

<u>Khalsa</u> Lands	1,09,18,084
<u>Jagir</u> Lands	33,27,477
Total assessment	1,42,45,561
Add <u>abwabs</u>	19,14,095
Total assessment including <u>abwabs</u>	1,61,59,656

Qasim Ali's Settlement (1763)

<u>Jama</u> of <u>Khalsa</u> and <u>Jagir</u> Lands as above	1,42,45,561
Deduction on various grounds	4,13,191
	1,38,32,370
Add <u>abwab</u> of Alivardi Khan	22,25,554
" " " Qasim Ali	74,81,340
	2,35,39,264
Total assessment including Murshid Quli and Shuja Khan's <u>abwabs</u>	2,56,24,223

Appendix - B

Kharcha hisab of a raiyat¹

Land (of various produce)	Money (original or <u>asal</u> rate of land)
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Bs- ks- chs

Rs. as. gs.

7 -12 - 7

14 0 8

Abwab cessesChauth at 3/16 p.R

2 -10 - 0

Poolbandy, a half M^o demandor $\frac{1}{2}$ - 4 of the jama

9 - 7 - 2

Nazrana one M^o or $\frac{1}{2}$

1 - 2 -15

Mangna d^o d^o

1 - 2 -15

Faujdari $\frac{3}{4}$ of one M^o amount

14 -15 - 0

or 1/16

Company's nazrana one month

0 - 1 - 7

and a quarter

Batta, one anna p.R

0 - 0 -14

8 - 12 - 2 - 2

Total

22 - 12 -10 - 2

Khilat at 1 anna and half p.

each rupee of the above sum

2 - 2 - 1 - 2

Total jama

24 - 14 -12 - 0

1. J.Shore's Minute, June 18, 1789, para 393, W.K.Firminger (ed.), The Fifth ReportII, 85

Kharcha account of Hari Das raiyat in the Parganah Gropalpoor : 1

Account of Rent	Amount of receipts from the <u>punya</u> to the end of the year		
	<u>Siccas, Sonauts, Arcots</u>		
	15	2	3
			20- 0- 0
Last year's rent			
	Bs.ks.gs.cs. Rs.as.Rs.as.		
<u>Shallee</u> land 1 harvest	5	-	1- 4 = 6 -4 - <u>Batta</u>
<u>Shoona</u> " 2	5	-	1- 0 = 5 -0 - <u>Multanee</u>
Double crop do	3	-	1- 8 = 4 -8 - 1 <u>Gundal Re</u> - - 0-15
<u>Cupass</u> (cotton)	2	-	1- 0 = 2 -0 - <u>Sonaut</u> - - 2- -
<u>Bast</u> (land on which the house is built)	2	-	2- 1 = 0 -3-4 <u>Arcot</u> - - 3-15
	15	- 2 -	17-15-4
			19-9-10
<u>Kharij</u>			
<u>Shoona</u> land, added	5	-	1- 0 5 -0-0
	10	- 2 -	12-15-4

1. Hastings' Minute, Nov. 12, 1776, Enclosure, B.R.C., Nov. 12, 1776, R49/65.

Karar Kami

Decrease on the amount of
his agreement on account of
the Shallee land 4 as p bigha

1 - 4 -

11 - 11 - 4

Beshi

Increase from change in the crop
1 bigha formerly cupass now
cultivated in two harvests

8 -

12 - 13 - 4

Abwabs

Sukdunee 3 months

3 - 0 - 15

15 - 4 -

Chauth at 3 annas p rupee

2 - 13 - 15

Mangna 1 month

1 - 4 - 6

Nazrana $\frac{1}{2}$ month

10 - 3

20 - 0 - 4

Foolee batta

1 - 4 - 4

21 - 4 - 4

Receipts

19 - 9 - 10

1 - 10 - 14

Appendix - C

List of the Sadar officers of different parganahs of the
Rajshahi zamindari : ¹

Parganah Rajshahi

<u>Diwan</u>	1
<u>Munshis</u>	6 <u>munshis</u>
<u>Amin daftar</u>	15 <u>amins</u>
<u>Shumar daftar</u>	7
<u>Bakhshigiri daftar</u>	1 <u>Bakhshi</u>
	1 <u>Peshkar</u>
	5 <u>Muharrirs</u>
<u>Wakil's office</u>	6 <u>Wakils</u>
<u>Mridahas &c.</u>	2 <u>Mridahas</u>
	23 <u>peons</u>
<u>Daftar-bund</u>	4

Parganah Nuldi

<u>Naib</u>	1
<u>Peshkar</u>	1
<u>Wakil</u>	1
<u>Amin Sarrishta</u>	1 <u>amin</u>
	10 <u>muharrirs</u>

1. C.C.R.M. to B.R., June 23, 1774, B.R.C. June 28, 1774,
R49/46.

Jama Kharcha Sarrishta1 Sarrishtadar6 muharrirsBakhshigiri sarrishta1 bakhshi2 muharrirsNikasi Sarrishta1 nikas-navis1 muharrirTaujih sarrishta

1

Munshis

3

Potdar (Potadar)

1

Parganah PukhuriaNaib

1

1 peshkar1 tahsildarAmin daftar1 amin4 muharrirsShumar navis daftar1 shumar-navis4 muharrirsMuharrirs of the muzkuri daftar

2

Taujih-navis

1

Munshi

1

Bakhshi

1

Wakil

1

Potdar

1

<u>Daftar-bund</u>	1
<u>Mridaha</u>	1
<u>Parganah Nelanda</u>	
<u>Naib</u>	1
<u>Amin daftar</u>	1 <u>amin</u>
	4 <u>muharrirs</u>
<u>Shumar daftar</u>	1 <u>shumar-navis</u>
	3 <u>muharrirs</u>
<u>Taujih-navis</u>	1
<u>Mridaha</u>	1
<u>Parganah Bansdole</u>	
<u>Naib</u>	1
<u>Amin daftar</u>	1 <u>amin</u>
	5 <u>muharrirs</u>
<u>Shumar-navis daftar</u>	1 <u>shumar-navis</u>
	2 <u>muharrirs</u>
<u>Potdar</u>	1
<u>Daftar-bund</u>	1

Appendix - D

Average charges attending the collection of revenues in the District of Rangpur ¹

<u>Sadar charges</u>	P.C. on the <u>sadar jama</u>
	Rs. as. gs. cs.
Interest on money borrowed by zamindars to anticipate <u>mufassal</u> collections	2 - 4 - 12 - 0
Allowances to <u>gumashtas</u> , <u>naibs</u> , <u>muharrirs</u> and other <u>sadar officers</u>	5 - 4 - 1 - 0
<u>Mufassal</u> peons placed over the zamindars and their officers to enforce payment and obedience to the orders of Govt.	
<u>Cutcherry</u> expenses including building, paper, ink, pen, mat, oil etc.	0 - 15 - 12 - 0
<u>Mufassal charge</u>	
Allowances to <u>patwaries</u>	2 - 6 - 2 - 2
Allowances to <u>busseyniah</u> (village headman)	2 - 4 - 19 - 0

1. E.G.Glazier, A Report on the District of Rangpur, I, 96-97.

	Rs.	as.	gs.	cs.
Allowances to <u>halmangees</u>	1	-14	- 5	- 0
Allowances to <u>sardars</u> who acted as attendants to <u>patwaries</u>	0	- 5	-12	- 0
<u>Paiks</u>	0	-15	-15	- 0
<u>Arindaes</u> (messengers)	0	- 7	-17	- 0
<u>Tokedars</u> , officers stationed by zamindars in <u> khas lands</u>	0	-15	-15	- 0
<u>Amins</u>	0	- 5	-19	- 0
<u>Mufassal</u> peons	0	- 8	- 5	- 0
Ink, paper, pen, oil etc.	0	- 3	-12	- 0
<hr/>				
Total <u>mufassal</u> charges	Rs.10- 8-2-0			
Total average	Rs.19-11-0-0			

Appendix - E

Particulars of some imposts on the raiyats levied by the zamindar of Yusoufpur ¹

Head of taxes		Amount
Collected from the <u>raiya</u> ts under the head of Sumpoo Takoor birt		934- 0- 5-0
"	" " " " Caseram Suddeburth or for the purpose of charity	6,844- 7- 3-1
"	" " " " nitty pooja or daily devotion	808- 7-18-0
Collected from Bhirly (<u>Birt</u> ?) ground at Radhangar		111-11-10-1
"	" " " " Cobdah Purrah	63-12- 0-0
"	" " " " Obeah Nagar	470- 3-13-3
"	" " " " Dooreahbad	131- 7-18-0
Collected from the <u>raiya</u> ts under the head of <u>durb</u> ar expenses		6,338- 1- 0-0
"	" " " " Maul Counseljey House	10,481-14- 0-3
Collected from the Bhirly (<u>Birt</u> ?) grounds at Lackervalley under the denomination of Jaggernaut		2,326-13-11-0
Profit by <u>batta</u> receiving 3 annas and 14 <u>gandas</u> on every rupee according to the system practised in the collections		6,491- 1- 1-0
Total		Rs. 35,002- 0- 1-0

1. J. Shakespear to C.C.R.M., Nov. 22, 1770, P.C.C.R.M., Nov. 28, 1770, I, 252

Account of the collections of Pachet, Tippers and Bishnupur (1759-1768) 1

Pachet

Different years	Amount of the Band-o-bast	Collected	Balance
B.S. 1166 A.D. 1759	21,526-12- 0-0		21,526-12- 0-0
" 1167 " 1760	21,526-12- 0-0		21,526-12- 0-0
" 1168 " 1761	23,544-14-10-0		23,544-14-10-0
" 1169 " 1762	23,544-14-10-0	5,742-7 -4-0	17,802- 7- 6-0
" 1170 " 1763	21,526-12- 0-0		21,526-12- 0-0
" 1171 " 1764	21,526-12- 0-0		21,526-12- 0-0
" 1172 " 1765	21,526-12- 0-0		21,526-12- 0-0
" 1173 " 1766	30,000- 0- 0-0	7,000-0 -0-0	23,000- 0- 0-0
" 1174 " 1767	50,000- 0- 0-0	50,000-0 -0-0	
" 1175 " 1768	70,000- 0- 0-0	70,000-0 -0-0	
	3,04,723- 0- 0-0	1,32,742-7 -4-0	1,72,981- 1-10-0

1. R. Becher to S.C. Aug. 26, 1769, B.S.C. Sept. 25, 1769 R/A, 9.

Tippera

Different years	Amount of the Band-o-bast	Collected	Balance
B.S.1166 A.D.1759	1,28,000- 0- 0-0	22,034-13-15-0	1,05,965- 2- 5-0
" 1167 "	1,28,000- 0- 0-0	1,375- 0- 0-0	1,56,625- 0- 0-0
" 1168 "	2,20,656- 5-16-3	37,474- 1-11-3	1,83,182- 5- 5-0
" 1169 "	2,20,656- 5-16-3	24,541-14- 0-0	1,96,114- 7-16-0
" 1170 "	2,20,656- 5-16-0		2,20,656- 5-16-0
" 1171 "	2,20,656- 5-16-3	32,001- 0- 0-0	1,98,655- 5-16-0
" 1172 "	93,000- 0- 0-0	34,945-12-18-0	58,054- 3- 2-0
Being the period in which this province came into the pos- session of the company			
B.S.1173 A.D.1766	2,08,656- 5-16-3	104- 5-10-0	2,08,552- 6- 3-0
" 1174 "	1,33,000- 0- 0-0	1,55,492-11- 0-0	27,507- 5- 0-0
" 1175 "	1,33,000- 0- 0-0	1,18,748- 4- 0-0	14,251-12- 0-0
Total	17,06,281-13- 3-3	3,76,717-14-14-3	13,29,563-14- 9-0

Bishnupur

Different years	Amount of the Band-o-bast	Collected	Balance
B.S.1166 A.D.1759	1,24,384-14- 3-0		1,24,384-14- 3-0
" 1167 "	1,24,384-14- 3-0	2,146- 4-10-0	1,22,238- 9-13-0
" 1168 "	1,24,384-14- 3-0	9,531-11-10-0	1,14,853- 2-13-0
" 1169 "	1,36,045-14- 3-0	27,871- 8- 9-0	1,08,174- 5-14-0
" 1170 "	1,24,384-14- 3-0	14,847- 1-15-0	1,09,537-12- 8-0
" 1171 "	1,24,384-14- 3-0	35,288- 1-10-0	89,096-12-13-0
" 1172 "	1,36,045-14- 3-0	80,954- 5-15-0	55,091- 8- 8-0
" 1173 "	1,92,501- 0-11-0	1,92,501- 0-11-0	
" 1174 "	2,50,501- 0-11-0	2,50,501- 0-11-0	
" 1175 "	2,50,501- 0-11-0	2,50,501 -0-11-0	
Total	15,87,519- 4-14-0	8,64,142- 3- 2-0	7,23,377- 1-12-0

Abstract of the Settlement, Collections and Balances of Dacca (1765-1770) ¹

Different years	Amount Settled	Amount Collected	Balance in arrears
B.S.1172 A.D.1765	21,61,583- 0-12-0	20,93,277- 8- 5-1	68,305- 8- 6-3
" 1173 "	1766 20,92,285- 0-12-0	20,92,285- 0-12-0	
" 1174 "	1767 25,81,438-13-13-1	25,81,438-13-13-1	
" 1175 "	1768 25,81,438-13-13-1	25,81,438-13-13-1	
" 1176 "	1769 26,74,476-12- 8-1	26,74,476-12- 8-1	
" 1177 "	1770 27,43,232-14- 7-1	27,43,232-14- 7-1	
	148,34,455- 7- 6-0	147,66,149-14-19-1	68,305- 8- 6-3

1. C.O.R.P., April 10, 1772, R 67/54.

Appendix - G

Nagdi troops of the Raja of Burdwan dismissed in 1767 ¹

Places stationed	Horse	Foot	Total	Pay per month
				Rs.as.ps.
At the <u>raja's</u> house	31		31	750-0-0
At Mobatugar	13	49	62	619-0-0
At Amboa with the <u>raja's</u> mother	7		7	160-0-0
At Amboa with Raja Chitra Sing's second wife	4		4	90-0-0
At Seinparree	10	50	60	481-12-0
At Chunderconna	28	112	140	1528-0-0
At Bellabghur	32	192	224	1692-4-0
At Aroragur	9	43	52	404-0-0
At Raujegur	10	16	26	373-0-0
At Seirgur	1	6	7	49-0-0
At Jamgong	1	17	18	99-0-0
At Arsah	1	16	17	95-0-0
	147	501	648	6,341-0-0

1. B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 757.

Nagdi troops of the Raja of Burdwan proposed to be retained ¹

Places stationed	Horse	Foot	Total	Pay per month
				Rs.as.ps.
At the <u>raja's</u> house	119	428	547	6,077-4-0
At Amboa with the <u>raja's</u> mother	20	152	172	1,410-8-0
At Amboa with Raja Chitra Sing's second wife	10	31	41	436-4-0
<u>Saggur depessah</u> (paiks?), deputy <u>muharrirs</u> , peons etc.		79	79	736-0-0
	149	690	839	8,660-0-0

1. B.P.C., Sept. 28, 1767, RI/41, 757

Appendix - H

List of thanadars, chaukies and chakaran lands in
Chaklah Burdwan ¹

Names of Parganahs	No. of thanahs	No. of chaukies	Quantity of chakaran lands		
			Bs.	-	ks.
Burdwan	5	19	2004	-	7
Shabad	1	5	488	-	0
Cundpore	4	16	1388	-	9
Somershy	7	11	1834	-	17
Bogah	1	1	250	-	0
Silimpore	1	4	320	-	12
Byrah	3	12	1119	-	0
Jahanabad	10	35	4107	-	0
Chitwa	2	14	1082	-	8
Barda	5	17	1917	-	7
Mandalghat	2	11	1312	-	10
Bhursut	2	8	896	-	0
Balleah	6	21	2781	-	10
Balghara	1	2	386	-	0
Havillee	2		392	-	6
Singore	1	5	346	-	10
Chawmah	1	4	324	-	0
Purwah	2	14	686	-	0

1. W.Pye to B.R., April 5, 1784, B.R.C. July 8, 1784,
R50/52, 750-751.

<u>Names of Parganahs</u>	<u>No. of thanas</u>	<u>No. of chaukies</u>	<u>Quantity of chakaran lands</u>		
Rimhatty	2	9	729	-	10
Arsah	1	5	434	-	0
Amboa	3	23	1593	-	0
Nullee	2	13	608	-	11
Jahangirbad	1	17	926	-	11
Patuli		6	92	-	14
Dunya	4	5	1803	-	9
Enderannee	2	3	717	-	0
Asmuth Shay	1	3	444	-	0
Moosupershahy	2	14	1897	-	0
Chumpurnagurree	1	22	1088	-	16
Mancharshahy	2	3	809	-	0
Goopboomme	1	2	276	-	0
Deb Salla	1	19	808	-	4
Shur Gur	1	6	955	-	0
Chandrakona	12	12	5344	-	14
Bramin Boomee	7	26	3493	-	4
Shehan Chauki	1	35	2830	-	5
<hr/>					
	100	422	46,488	-	4

Appendix I

Statement of the jagir land in Midnapur province proposed to be resumed ¹

<u>Parganahs</u>	<u>No. of jagirdars</u>	<u>Quantity of land</u>	<u>Jama as per parganah rate or raiyat jama</u>	<u>Deduct mufassal charges of collection</u>	<u>Remains</u>	<u>Deduct peshkash present included in assessment</u>	<u>Remaining jama resumed</u>	<u>Deduct mughalra 10 p.c. thereupon</u>	<u>Remains net jama</u>
Ammersey	47	1210-0-0	2117-8-0	190-11-0	1926-13-0	214-8-0	712-5-0	171-3-14	1541-1-6
Subbung	18	252-10-0	505-0-0	45-8-4	459-7-16		459-7-16	45-15-4	413-8-12
Thana Narain Gur	136	2024-16-6	1515-10-0	136-8-8	1379-1-12	279-0-0	1100-1-12	110-0-3	990-1-9
Kedarcoond	56	793-19-0	793-15-4	71-7-7	722-7-17	455-6-0	267-1-17	26-11-7	240-6-10
Khurugpur	63	1000-14-0	1000-11-4	90-2-0	910-9-4	336-6-15	514-2-9	57-6-13	516-11-16
Thapa Balrampur	50	872-14-0	872-11-4	77-13-18	794-13-6	540-4-15	254-8-11	25-7-3	229-1-8
Midnapur	1520	47129-13-0	47129-10-8	5653-0-0	41476-10-8	23562-12-15	17913-13-13	1791-6-3	16122-7-10
Cassijora	170	15826-6-0	3559-10-0	320-10-16	3238-15-4	805-3-0	2433-12-4	243-6-4	2190-6-0
Total	2060	54866-12-6	57494-12-0	6565-13-3	50906-14-7	26193-9-5	24715-5-2	2471-8-11	22243-12-11

1. G.Dowdeswell to B.R., March 2, 1793, B.R.J.C., April 12, 1793, R127/88, 637

Appendix - J

People employed for police duties in Birbhum 1

	Men	Land	Rent
1) For the protection of the towns <u>gramnagarbary doley</u>	2492	21773- 7- 6	18232-13-2
2) Chaukies placed formerly by the <u>rajas</u> <u>ghatchauki</u>	837	11908-19-10	10612- 8-9
3) The <u>chaukies</u> about Birbhum <u>kotwali</u>	1272	14635-13-10	23180-11-6
4) People employed for the collection etc., <u>gram kotwali</u>	4700	43619- 3-19	25338- 5-4
5) People accountable for robberies etc. (not included in the above groups) <u>thanadaris</u>	204	6385-10- 0	4775- 8-0
	9505	98322-14- 5	82139-14-9

1. A.Higginson to C.C.&M. Oct. 10, 1770, M.F.R. Oct. 23, 1770, I, 171.

Appendix - K

Account of the deductions allowed to the zamindars of Muhammad Aminpur under the head of thana Gatwa ¹

Name of the zamindar						Rs. a. g. c.
1. Nandkumar Roy zamindar of the 9 <u>anna</u> division of Muhammad Aminpur						941 1 18
2. Anundchand Roy	"	"	"	"	"	1055 1 0
3. Collyprasad Roy	"	"	"	"	"	647 6 18
4. Sumboochand and Bayrab Chand zamindars of the 6 <u>anna</u> share of the 7 <u>anna</u> division of Muhammad Aminpur						256 15 17 3
5. Hariprasad Roy zamindar of the 3 <u>anna</u> share of Muhammad Aminpur						8 13 5 2
6. Ramnarain Roy	"	"	"	"	"	7 5 14 3
7. Ramkessul Roy	"	"	"	"	"	7 5 14 3
8. Durga Das Roy	"	"	"	"	"	5 14 3 3
9. Anundchand Roy of Deogong						398 13 2
						3328 13 14 2

1. F.Redfearn to B.R. Feb. 5, 1793, B.R.J.C., April 12, 1793, R127/88, 628.

GLOSSARY

- Abwab : Miscellaneous cess, impost levied in addition to the regular assessments.
- Adalat : Court of justice.
- Amil : Collector of revenue appointed on behalf of the government, the chief revenue officer of a sarkar.
- Amin : A surveyor, an officer sent by the government to collect revenue due from a zamindari or to investigate and report the state of revenue.
- Amla : Here the term has been used to signify zamindari officials or agents.
- Amla-i-nawara: The collective officers of the fleet of boats; also the assignment of revenue or land for the maintenance of the flotilla.
- Anna : One sixteenth of a rupee. It also denotes the division of village lands - a portion expressed in annas or sixteenths.
- Annaprashan : A ceremony to mark the first rice-eating of the child.
- Arzi : A petition, memorial.
- Asal jama : The original revenue or rent charged upon a zamindari or parganah or village exclusive of abwabs or cesses; the amount taken as the basis of a revenue settlement.
- Aurung : A place where an article of trade was manufactured for wholesale disposal or export. During Company's trade it also signified a factory of piece-goods.
- Bakhshi : A paymaster; he also acted as the captain of the forces.

Band-o-bast :	Literally tying and binding, usually it signified the yearly settlement of revenue to be remitted to the government.
Barqundaz :	A matchlockman, guard or watchman belonging to India and armed with shield and sword.
Batta :	A discount on uncurrent or imperfect weight coins.
Bazar :	A market place.
Bazi-taluk :	Taluks created to serve miscellaneous purposes.
Bazi-zamin :	Miscellaneous lands, rent-free lands of various denominations.
Beshi :	Increase, surplus.
Bichar :	Justice, trial.
Bigha :	A standard of measurement of land, 20 kathas make one bigha, about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an English acre.
Birt :	Grant or endowment for religious or charitable purposes.
Bitikchi :	A scribe, a person attached to the amil as a writer and accountant.
Chakaran :	Here signifies grant of lands in lieu of wages to the service holders of various denominations.
Chaklah :	A large administrative division of the country comprising a number of parganahs.
Chaklahdar :	A superintend of the finances of a chaklah.
Chaturanga :	Four members or divisions. All four components of an army.
Chaudhuri :	Literally a holder of four, perhaps share of profit. A revenue officer, the head of a parganah.

Chauth :	Literally an amount of one-fourth, particularly one-fourth of the actual government collections demanded by the Marathas.
Cossaes :	Plain muslin, usually of fine quality.
Cutcherry :	An office for transacting business, also a court.
Daftar or daftar khana :	A record or register, an office where public records are kept.
Daftarbund :	Record or office-keeper.
Darogha :	A superintend, a chief officer of a department under the Mughals.
Darogha-i-adalat :	A judge or deputy presiding over a court in the absence of the superior officer.
Desai :	The chief revenue officer of a district, a hereditary headman.
Dih :	A village.
Diwan or Diwan-i-subah :	The chief of the revenue department in a Mughal province; also the principal officer of a zamindar.
Diwani adalat :	The civil court of the diwan-i-subah.
Durbar :	A royal court, a court, a levee.
Faquir :	A Muslim religious mendicant, also a poor man.
Farman :	An imperial order, a patent.
Faujdari adalat :	The subordinate or district criminal court.
Ganda :	A money of account, equivalent in reckoning to 4 cawras (cowrie shells).
Ganj :	A mart where grain and other necessities of life are sold, usually wholesale.

Ghat :	A landing place on the bank of a river where tolls are collected; a mountain pass is sometimes denominated as ghat.
Goyenda :	A detective.
Gram :	A village.
Gumashta :	An agent, a steward.
Haqq:	Just, prescriptive right or claim.
Halalkhor :	Literally a man who lives on what is well-earned, generally a man of the sweeper community acting as spy to the police.
Hast-o-bud :	A comparative amount prepared on the basis of the past and present produce of a zamindari or any fiscal division; an evaluation of assessts on the examination of the standing crops.
Hat :	A mart held on a fixed day or days of a week.
Hissazat :	It was applied to signify grant of land to an individual either as a personal favour or on condition of personal service to the state.
Huzuri :	Relating to the chief authority. Under the Mughals the term was sometimes used to denote land, the revenue of which was paid direct to the diwan-i-subah.
Ihtimamdar :	The holder of a trust, the a person collecting the revenue from a certain district on behalf of the government; also a deputy or an agent of the zamindar.
Ijara :	A lease or farm of land held at a definite revenue or rent whether from the government or from the farmers of the public revenues.
Ijaradar :	A holder of a lease.
Izafa :	Increase or augmentation.

Jagir :	A tenure in which the collection of the revenues and administrative power of a given tract of the country were given to a servant of the state mostly in return for furnishing troops or some other services to the Mughal government.
Jagirdar :	The holder of a jagir.
Jama :	Amount, aggregate, total amount of revenue or rent fixed upon a zamindar or a raiyat.
Jama-tumar :	The amount of revenue according to the rent-roll.
Jamadar :	An officer of ^{the} army, police or customs, subordinate to the darogha.
Jarimana :	Fine, penalty.
Jatimala-cutcherry :	The court for dealing with caste disputes.
Jhil :	A marsh or a shallow lake.
Kami :	Littleness, loss.
Kani :	A standard of land measurement, 6,400 sq. yards.
Karar :	Fixedness, stability.
Karcha :	Expense, disbursement.
Karcha-hisab :	An annual account of a village showing the amount of the rent payable by each raiyat, the amount paid and the balance.
Katha :	A measure of land, usually a square of 4 cubits; 16 gandas make one katha.
Khalsa :	The exchequer, the office of the Mughal government where the revenue business was transacted.
Khamar :	A threshing floor. Generally applied to lands the produce of which was divided between the farmer and the peasants; also lands which was originally waste but subsequently brought under cultivation by the zamindar and let out at a grain rent.

Kharij :	Excluded or separated from.
Khas :	Collection of revenue or management of a zamindari by the officers of the government without any intermediate revenue farmer.
Khas-bardar :	An attendant carrying the arms of his lord.
Khilat :	A dress of honour presented by the ruling authority. It might also include arms, a horse or an elephant.
Khot :	A hereditary or appointed farmer of revenue.
Khudkasht :	Sowing or cultivating one's own land, a resident cultivator.
Kifayat :	Surplus, profit or increase.
Kos :	A measure of distance in India; one kos is equivalent to about 2 miles.
Kotwali :	The office of a kotwal or anything relating to it; a variety of town duties.
Madad-maash :	Grant of means of substance to learned or religious Muslims or for the maintenance of an institution.
Mahal :	A revenue division of a parganah or a zamindari.
Mal :	Property of any description.
Malkhana :	A treasury, a store-house.
Mal-wajib :	Fixed or proper revenue to be paid to the government.
Mulmuls :	A kind of fine muslin.
Mangna :	Impost levied on the tenants by the government officers or zamindars to defray some public or private expenses.

Mansab :	A military title or rank conferred on the officers of the Mughals. It was regulated by the supposed number of horse the holder of the rank could bring into the field.
Mansabdar :	A noble holding a mansab.
Mathaut :	Capitation-tax, cess levied on the raiyats.
Maulavi :	A learned Muslim, a judge.
Mohur :	A seal, a gold coin.
Mridaha :	A head peon; in some parts of Bengal the mridahas also formed part of the militia of the zamindars.
Muchulka :	Bond, a written obligation.
Mufassal :	Separate, distinct, a separate or subordinate district; the rural localities as distinct from the sadar or principal town or station.
Mufti :	A Muslim law-officer.
Muhalla :	A division of a town, a ward.
Muharrir :	A writer of accounts, a clerk.
Muhtasib :	A superintend of markets; an officer for taking cognizance of improper behaviour of the people.
Mukarrari :	Relating to fixed revenue or rent, a tenure held at a fixed or permanent revenue or rent.
Munshi :	A writer, a secretary.
Munsif :	A judge.
Mushahara :	Monthly pay, pension granted to the zamindars.
Naib :	A deputy.

Najai :	Literally deficiency in produce, here a tax on the peasants to cover the loss in rents caused by the desertion of others.
Nala :	A water course, a ravine.
Nawara-mahal :	The establishment of public boats under the Mughals; also the assignment of revenue or land for the upkeep of the flotilla.
Nazrana :	A present from an inferior, fees for an office.
Nazrana mukarrari :	A permanent present. In the eighteenth century Bengal it signified a permanent tax imposed by Nawab Shuja Khan.
Niabat :	Deputyship, the office of the deputy governor under the Mughals.
Nij-jama :	The amount of revenue to be paid for the land cultivated or managed by the zamindar himself.
Nikasi daftar :	Office for keeping the accounts of the revenue assessed on a zamindari.
Paikasht :	A non-resident or temporary cultivator.
Panchak :	A tax of a fifth levied by the zamindars.
Panchayat :	An Indian court of arbitration of 5 or more members chosen by the parties themselves for settling some petty disputes.
Pandit :	One learned in Sanskrit lore.
Paramanik :	Principal person of a particular caste.
Parganah :	A district, a tract of country comprising a number of villages.
Parwana :	An order from a person in authority to a subordinate.
Pathsala :	A small school in a village.

Peshkash :	Tribute, fine or present to the Mughal government by the zamindars or others especially on first receiving an appointment.
Piada :	A peon, a police or militia serving on foot.
Poolbandy :	Keeping the bridges in repair, a tax imposed for this purpose.
Potdar :	A money-changer, a weigher or assayer of coins.
Praja :	Subjects, tenants.
Pushtabandy :	Repairing embankments, also a cess levied on the revenue payers for the expense of the upkeep of the embankments.
Qanungo :	An expounder of the laws or an interpreter of the customs of the country, a registrar of lands.
Qazi :	A muslim judge.
Rai :	A title denoting a prince, also a title conferred upon the Hindu civil officer of high rank by the Mughal Emperors.
Raiyat :	In its wider sense a raiyat signified a subject - either a tiller of the soil or labour, artisan, mechanic, merchant and some others. Usually it denoted a cultivator or a farmer.
Raiyatwari :	A system under which the revenue settlement was made by the government directly with the individual peasants for a given period of time.
Raja :	A king, a prince, a title bestowed by the Muslim rulers on the Hindus of rank; also a title assumed by the zamindars.
Rajbari :	The abode of the raja.
Rani :	The wife of a raja.
Sadar :	Chief, supreme, the principal office, the chief seat of a government.

Sadar cutcherry :	The principal revenue office of a district or a zamindari.
Salami :	A fee paid to a superior as a mark of respect.
Salis :	An arbitration.
Samaja :	A community.
Sannoos :	Plain cotton piece-goods of ordinary quality.
Sannyasi :	A Hindu religious mendicant.
Sarkar :	An extensive division of a province under the Mughal government.
Sawanih-nigar :	A news writer, an intelligencer.
Sazawal :	A land steward, an officer deputed by the government occasionally to enforce the due payment of the revenue.
Shikdar :	An officer appointed to collect revenue from a small division.
Sicca :	A silver currency issued by the Mughal Emperors and adopted by the East India Company.
Subah :	A province, the largest administrative division of the Mughal Empire.
Subahdar :	Viceroy, governor of a subah.
Tahsildar :	A collector of revenue.
Taluk :	A dependency, a division of a revenue unit; a landholding usually intermediate between a zamindar and the raiyats.
Talukdar :	The holder of a taluk.
Tanjeebs :	A variety of fine muslins.
Tappa :	A small division of the country, a sub-division of a parganah.

Taqavi :	Advance made to the peasants at the time of sowing on condition of repaying the amount at harvest time.
Taqsim :	Apportionment of the assessed revenue upon the several sub-divisions of a zamindari.
Taraf :	Literally side, part, here signifies a division of a parganah. It also denotes the land or estate belonging to an individual and often named after him.
Tarafdar :	A revenue officer in charge of a taraf.
Taujih-navis :	An accountant keeping detailed records of dues, payments and balances of monthly instalments of the raiyats.
Tol :	A school run by a pandit, especially for imparting Sanskrit learning.
Top-khana :	An arsenal, a factory for cannons.
Thug :	A cheat, a class of robbers and assassins found in India.
Varna :	A tribe, a caste, a class. A division of the Hindu community.
Wakai-nigar :	A recorder of events.
Wakil :	An agent, a person invested with the authority to act for the person he represented.
Watan :	Homeland, one's hereditary territorial possession.
Wazir :	Revenue and finance minister of the Mughal government.
Yatra :	A sort of dramatic performance.

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