

Further north, in the Doāb districts, the location of the Aryan villages has been a good deal interfered with by the invasion of Jat and Gujar tribes.¹

To conclude with some of the Rohilkhand districts, Shāhjahānpur² affords a typical instance. The Thākur clans are strong, especially in *Pargana* Jalālābād. Here no less than fifty-four clans are found; the Report specifies seventeen of the principal, of which I will only mention the *Qauhān*, with 8,555 members, *Çandelā* about 6,000, and the smaller bodies, e.g. the *Tumār*, numbering only 728. But none date back beyond the fourteenth century; and there was a settlement of the *Katheriyā* tribe as late as the sixteenth.³ It is also remarked that though, until comparatively recently, the Thākurs were the principal land-owners, 'they were the dominant class, but never formed the bulk of the population.'

I shall conclude these observations with an extract regarding the Bareli district, bordering on Oudh, as it contains a quotation which suitably summarises what I have been attempting to explain.⁴ In this district Mr. Moens gives an account of each of the Rājput tribes, beginning with the *Rāhtor*, who came to the northern *parganas*, as clearers of the jungle, some ten generations back. All of them are, in fact, comparatively late historic arrivals. 'Thus,' he says, 'all the chief tribes in every part of the district of Bareli concur in stating that on their arrival they found no Rājput tribes. The previous occupants are always

¹ There is a good account of the matter, which is too long to quote, in *Cadell's S. R.*, Muzaffarnagar District (Ganges Canal Tract), p. 24.

² *S. R. Shāhjahānpur* (1874), § 45, p. 24. There are also some good remarks about the effect of marriage alliances in bringing about a dispersion of small groups of different clans, because all were exogamous, and husbands of another clan must be sought for all the daughters.

³ The *Katheriyā* were a powerful clan, who first established themselves in the twelfth century in this part of the country, so that it was called '*Kather*.' There is a full account of their traditions in *S. R. Bareli* (1874), p. 23 ff. In the thirteenth century we find them in conflict with the Moslems; but they were not thoroughly defeated till the reign of Akbar. The most probable account seems to be that they were a mixed race, possibly connected with the original Aryan rulers of the Solar line in Oudh.

⁴ *S. R. Bareli* (1874), pp. 20, 21.



either *Ahīr*, *Bhāūhār*, or *Bhīl*, or else the land is unoccupied jungle. . . .¹ He concludes by quoting Mr. (now Sir C. A.) Elliott's *Chronicles of Unāo*, an Oudh district, in a passage which he says is 'exactly supported by the state of things in Bareīl':

'When the Aryan² race invaded the Gangetic Valley and the Solar chiefs settled in Ayodhyā, the natural resource for the aborigines would be to fly to the hills and find refuge in the impenetrable fastnesses girded about with the deadly Tarāī, the malarious country at the foot of the hills. . . . It has been before remarked that the mythic legends leave no impression of a large subject population existing in Oudh, but rather of a vast solitude inhabited by a scanty race employed in pasturing cattle. The scene before us at the fall of the historic curtain is an uninhabited forest country and a large colony of *Sūrajbañsī* occupying Ayodhyā as their capital. When the curtain rises again, we find Ayodhyā destroyed, the *Sūrajbañsī* utterly vanished and a great extent of country ruled over by aborigines called *Çeru* in the far East, *Bhar* in the Centre, and *Rāj-Pasī* in the West. This great revolution seems to be satisfactorily explained by the conjecture that the *Bhar*, *Çeru*, &c., were the aborigines whom the Aryans had driven to the hills, and who, swarming down from thence, overwhelmed the Aryan civilisation not only in Sahētā and the other Northern towns, but in Ayodhyā itself, drove the *Sūrajbañsī* under Kanak Sen to emigrate to distant Gujarāt,³ and spread over the country between the Himalaya and that spur of the Vindhyan range that passes through the south of Mirzapur.'

The view explained in this extract seems to me to be very true in general; but I venture to think that, though there were great tracts of forests uncleared, and though the original population may have been found in detached kingdoms or scattered groups, the total amount of it was much less scanty than is supposed.⁴

¹ This tradition is curious, because each one of the tribes named is possibly a mixed race (more or less) of early Aryan connection, as we have seen.

² *Chronicles of Unāo*, p. 27.

³ In Upper Western India. Here (tradition says) they founded a city and kingdom at Dwārka, and possibly originated the *Katheriyā* clan who afterwards settled in Bareīl (p. 126, *ante*).

⁴ See *ante*, p. 84 ff.



But more especially there is no necessity, but rather the contrary, for assuming quite so much 'flight to the hills'; for the Solar princes and their army could only have taken the rule, and established a military supremacy. Why should the inhabitants have fled at all? The conquerors would have hardly been anxious to drive out the inhabitants, at the risk of causing a famine; they would rather have been under the necessity of conciliating them, at least so far as to leave them in a position to cultivate and raise crops, without which the Aryan armies and the Court could not have been supported for long. The *return* of the aborigines is spoken of as 'in swarms'; had they fled to the hills as a very scanty and defeated body, which is the hypothesis, it is hardly likely that they would have thriven there so as to multiply exceedingly before their return, and thus acquire a force against the Aryans which originally they did not possess. I believe, as a matter of fact, that the traditional evidence we have points far more to the Aryan clans coming as a distinctly limited and ruling class, and that they subdued and came to terms with the 'aborigines,' who were already settled in the more open parts of the country, but left them very much as they were, while for a time cultivation extended and families of mixed blood multiplied so long as the Aryans maintained their supremacy. Such of the 'aborigines' as fled at all were either the immediate followers of chiefs defeated in battle, or particular clans who preferred a jungle life of independence to submitting to the Aryan dominion; the traditional evidence does not, however, suggest any extensive fighting with the aborigines at all. When, therefore, the Aryan rulers in their scattered forts and urban centres of rule were in turn destroyed by their own internecine contests, rather than by any revolt of the 'natives,' there was no need of any extensive movement to re-establish the *Bharj*, *Seori*, *Pasi*, and other tribes, in independent possession of the soil. These, however, were unable long to maintain a government, and therefore fell before the Rājput chiefs on their return, and, I suspect, not unfrequently gladly accepted their renewed rule and protection.

From what has already been said of the PANJĀB, we are prepared to find hardly any definite traces of an *ancient* Aryan



domination.¹ No doubt some of the older races may be derived from a mixed Aryan stock, and this may be true in spite of the present profession of Islam and the consequent tendency to assert descent from Muhammadan ancestors. So, too, the line between Rājput and Jat is here exceptionally difficult to draw; but still there are admittedly Rājput communities; I hardly, however, know of one in the plains that does not itself assert a comparatively late location. Around Delhi, for instance, the Rājputs are connected with the *Tūmār* (or *Tuñwār*) and *Çauhān*; both of whom are 'Agnikulā' clans, and confessedly long subsequent to the original invasion. The *Bhattī* (this is the Panjāb form of the name, which is *Bhāti* in Rājputāna) now trace their settlement to a body which emigrated to Pindi-Bhattiān (Gujrānwālā district) from an earlier home in Bhattiāna or Bhātner. Near the Salt Range, *Janjhūā* settlements are found—possibly the relics of a local dominion; but the tradition they themselves have is that they are of *Bahtor* origin, coming originally from Rājputāna. In the Western plains, the *Siāl* are a late arrival; they claim to be *Prūwār* Rājputs who moved westwards to the Jhang district, and formerly to Siālkot, which derives its name from them, during the first half of the eighteenth century. Almost the only traditionally ancient Aryan relics are to be found in the Kangrā Hills, and possibly in the Salt Range tract of the North Panjāb.

¹ There are in the Kangrā Hills some families of *Katoch* chiefs who are really ancient, and assert that they are older than either the Solar or Lunar princes. It is quite possible that they may be vestiges of the earlier Aryan movements. In the North-western Panjāb, the *Çib-Rājputs*, who still retain a number of villages (Gujrāt district) claim a similar antiquity, and are believed to be a branch of the *Katoch*. See as to the Puranic tradition p. 97, *ante*.

CHAPTER IV

CUSTOMS REGARDING LAND-HOLDING OBSERVED AMONG THE NON-ARYAN RACES

SECTION I.—THE TIBETO-BURMAN GROUP

IN this group we naturally include the population of Burma, and in that province we are at no loss to trace characteristic customs. But in India the tribes referable to the same group seem to have been confined to the province of Assam, and to the north-eastern part of Bengal; and the customs affecting land which can be more or less distinctively ascribed to them are but few. While the Tibetan element is thus limited in the plains, it has extended more widely in the hill and sub-montane country. It has certainly formed the basis of the agricultural population, all along the outer Himalayan districts, from Darjeeling as far as Kashmir. How far these are immigrant people coming from the north-east end of the range, and slowly advancing westward, and how far they have filtered, so to speak, directly through the hills from the Tibet plateau, it is impossible to say. Travellers will remember that beyond the Hills of Chambā and the Upper Sutlej Valley, and beyond the British districts of Kāngrā and Kulū, they come to Ladākh, Spiti, and other districts with a distinctly Tibetan population; and it is quite likely that Tibetan chiefs and Tibetan tribes may have formerly extended their rule through the hill districts, apart from any north-eastern immigration. Certain it is that the Khasā or Khasiyā people found all along the range are of Tibetan origin,¹ and that other mixed races, improved by a strain of Aryan blood,

¹ See pp. 89, 87, *ante*. The central districts about Kumāon were formerly called 'Khasdes' from this feature.



have much the same origin. Probably other races than Aryan may have made conquests in these hills. Nevertheless, we have some traditions and customs which seem to be indigenous and belong, at least, to non-Aryan tribes. In the first place, there is a tradition (both in Kumāon and Kāngrā) that the Hindu Rājās were preceded by petty local chiefs (evidently Tibetan) who had no centralized government, and so fell an easy prey to the Rājput chieftains.¹

Speaking first of the hill districts, the absence of village-communities and the artificial formation of estates and villages, have already been alluded to; but the fact, justly as I think it may be ascribed to the physical conditions of settlement, is not entirely independent of other causes. It is a matter of racial custom that joint holding is not recognised. In Kumāon, as in Kāngrā, all the family holdings are separate and independent. A few holdings may be grouped together, but that is not the same thing as a 'village community.'² The case is just the same with the Simla Hill States (under their Hindu chiefs), where no artificial village groups have been formed. 'There are

¹ See the *Kumāon Collected Reports*, p. 164, and cf. Lyall's *Kāngrā S. R.* § 79, pp. 106, 107. I have already noticed the Katoch chiefs, who may really be relics of some previous early Aryan settlement. The same is true of the Katorā chiefs in Kumāon. In this latter case there is a definite tradition that the early conquerors were again defeated by local princes; but finally the local rule was destroyed by the Rājput princes of the Chand line, whose success is held to date from about the twelfth century. In general the Rājput chiefs date from the time when the Moslem invasions disturbed the Hindu kingdoms of the plains. Throughout these hills, it is quite possible that there may have been an early and local domination by Aryan chiefs, who after a time disappeared, and who were only at the date of the Moslem conquest replaced by more completely Hindu successors of the same race.

² For the Kumāon tenures see *Collected Reports*, pp. 129, 130, 132, 283, 329. See also Lyall's *Kāngrā S. R.* p. 62, which also contains some interesting tables showing how far the foreign element is represented among the land-holding classes. Thus we find Brahmans represent 18 per cent. of the land-holders; pure Rājputs only 6 per cent.; Rājputs of the second grade (*i.e.* partly mixed), 15 per cent.; the more completely mixed races—superior Čūdras, Thakar, Rāthi, and Kanet—37 per cent.; inferior Čūdra, 19 per cent.; tribes outside caste altogether, 2 per cent. All who have become Hindus adopt the joint succession, so that each farm will often be shared between relatives (average two shares to a holding).

no village communities,' writes Colonel Wace; 'each squatter held direct of the State. . . . To this day a land-holder (*zamīndār*—the term is used only in the literal sense) will speak of holding his *pattā*, i.e. grant or lease from the Rājā. The holdings are aggregated in circuits called *bhoj* mainly for revenue and administrative purposes.'¹

In the inner ranges of the Kāngrā district we have, however, an interesting survival which has apparently come down unchanged, in that remote locality, from old times. In certain *Kothis* (old administrative divisions) of Bangāhal, the dwellings are in clusters on the hill-side wherever there is space enough, and shelter, and a supply of water. The cultivation is provided for by taking up such patches or larger areas in the vicinity as can be terraced or made into fields. Each such area is called *sīr*, and every household has a holding called its *vand*; this implies a right to an equal portion in every *sīr* attached to the group. But these several plots are not, therefore, divided into as many fields as there are households. To ensure equality, each *vand* is held to consist of 'several small plots situated in every corner of the *sīr*.' When any patch of cultivation is destroyed by a landslide or other mountain accident, the custom is to redivide by lot what remains.² These *vand* were not ancestral shares of a family, for the households in the hamlet were independent, and not even of the same stock. Possibly, however, in ancient times they may have had something of the character of clan or tribal allotments. On the death of the holder, the *vand* was not divided among his sons: the youngest son stayed at home to succeed his father; the eldest and other sons went to the chief's army or to service, or started new households and obtained their *vand* elsewhere. In the Kulū subdivision a very similar custom is still noticeable. I must add also Sir J. B. Lyall's own comment on this custom.³

'Such a tenure,' he says, 'I believe to have prevailed from very ancient times in the countries far back in the Himalayas which border Tibet, or have at one time or another been included in that

¹ Wace's *Simla S. R.* 1883, § 8.

² Lyall's *Kāngrā S. R.* p. 35. The lots are cast (*phoglu*) with dried goats'-droppings duly marked.

³ *Ibid.* p. 120 ff.



empire. Every family or householder had its holding or share of one ; but such holding is not in the shape of an ancestral or customary¹ share of the fields round the hamlet, but rather in the shape of an arbitrary allotment from the arable land of the whole country. . . . All the arable lands seem to have been divided into lots, each lot being of presumably equal value, and calculated to be sufficient to provide subsistence for one household.²

After mentioning that in the course of time lots became unequal, and new plots were added on from the reclaimed waste, and by sales, &c., the author continues :

‘The original of it seems to be that each head of a household was entitled in return for rent, tax, or service due from him to the State or Commonwealth [might we not say as a member of the tribe or clan—in the stage probably then prevalent?] to a lot or share of arable land sufficient to support one household. No man wanted more land than this, as, shut in by these high mountains, land was a means of subsistence, not a source of wealth. The lot being calculated to support only one family was not meant to be divided, and, with the house to which it was originally attached, was handed down unchanged from generation to generation. If a holder had several sons, those who wished to marry and live apart would have to look out for separate lots, and the paternal house and land would pass to one son only.’²

When the earliest Rājās established their rule in Kulū, they superimposed on this system one that recalls the arrange-

¹ In making this reference to ‘ancestral’ and ‘customary’ shares, the author is thinking of the principles which are found to govern the sharing in the joint-villages of the plains. It will be noticed that he refers to Kulū as probably at one time belonging to Tibet, just as some of the inner districts do to this day. This would of course give a more directly Tibetan origin to custom than the mere fact of the ethnic connection of the Khasiyā and other hill people with the Tibetan ethnic stock, which is what I have chiefly relied on.

² A very similar custom prevailed in Kulū. In this valley, as elsewhere, the right in the soil having been assumed by the Rājās, the private right or idea of hereditary ownership is now centred in the family house ; and the Kulū saying is ‘*zamīn Rāi kī, ghar bāi kī*’ (‘The land is the Rājā’s, the house is the father’s’) (*S. R.* p. 120). The adoption of the Persian word *zamīn* in this proverb shows that it only dates back to times when the Moslem languages had to a certain extent influenced the speech of India and penetrated to the hills.



ments we shall describe in Assam. The system was known as *jeolā-bandī*, and consisted in dividing the agricultural population into classes—one that was liable to military service and the other to menial service. The holder of land in the former class was allowed a portion of his land free of taxes (*barto-jeolā*) in return for his service; while for the rest he paid revenue (*hāñsili-jeolā*). The menial holdings were known as *çati*, and paid no revenue, except the labour or services required.

At present we have no other information about Himalayan tenures. Naipāl would be doubtless an interesting sphere of inquiry, but it is not a very accessible one; and I have found no specific information about the small portion of British territory around Darjeeling.

Leaving the Himalayan districts, we next turn to ASSAM, where we find some races of Tibeto-Burman stock almost unchanged, especially in the hill country; while the valley population, originally of the same ethnical character, has become much mixed and subject to Hindu religious and other influences. The Hindu system of caste and religion, in fact, completely displaced the earlier Buddhism, which itself must have been a foreign importation. The local dialect, Assamese, is a comparatively recent modification of Bengālī. Local traditions, and even written records, exist. From time to time the names of kings are capable of verification. From the remains of ancient temples, and still more ancient fortified cities of great extent, it is evident that traditional history is so far correct in asserting the existence of organised States from a remote period. And then came a time when Aryan or semi-Aryan chiefs had extended their dominion from the Ganges Valley as far as the western portion of Assam. The Aryan names, Kāmṛp, Brāhmaputra, and others similar, are relics of this contact. It is fairly certain that Assam was anciently divided into several, or many, small kingdoms, and that after the time of Buddhā, the Western kings adopted the Buddhist faith.¹ As might be expected, the western districts

¹ This is doubtless referred to when the Annals (written by Brahman authors) speak of the kings as *Asura* or *Dānava*, terms applied to 'heretics.' A good account of ancient Assam will be found in the *Calcutta Review*, xlv. 510, reprinted in 1884. This is followed by a further article about the ancient religion, which is more speculative in



are often found united under one ruler, whose sway extended as far westwards as Bihār or even Gorakhpur on the confines of Oudh. These Buddhist princes felt the effect of the Brahmanic struggle for ascendancy and were ultimately overthrown.¹

A distinction appears to have been early recognised between the west (*Kāmrup*) and the north and north-eastern part of the valley (*Uttarkol*). It was the latter that was most thoroughly Tibeto-Burman as regards its population. One of the most important immigrations was that of the *Boro* (or *Baḍa*) tribe,² which had several subdivisions. A *Boro* kingdom existed near the modern Sadiyā. The *Meç* and *Kāçāri* tribes, who will presently be mentioned, are probably branches of this race. The name 'Assam' (*Āsām*) is most probably traceable to (the *Boro*) *Hā-com*=the low or level country; while the *Boro* word for water (*dai* or *dī*) has remained in the names of rivers—e.g. *Dai-hang* (the Dihong of the maps). Under the *Boro* rule 'tradition states that the country was thickly populated, and reached a high state of civilisation. It was divided for the purposes of Government administration into numerous districts; and the executive consisted of a body politic, selected from the most wealthy and respected men in each division. The King exercised but a nominal control over the deliberative assemblies.'³

character, and the chronology is confusing. The name of King Bhagadatta, well known in literature, figures largely; he was a Buddhist, but his successors became Hindus in the ninth century.

¹ It is curious to observe how the traditions represent the oppressed Buddhists as seeking refuge through the hills as far west as Kashmīr; and, at least at one time, we hear of a prince ruling over Kashmīr leading an army into Assam. There are scattered remnants of these once ruling houses still existing under the name of the *Kultā* or *Kulitā* caste. A certain number, now Hindus, are in the Assam Valley. But two small colonies made their way to South-western Bengal, which has been a refuge ground to several tribes. One is now in the Native State of Bonaigarh, the other in the Sambalpur district of the Central Provinces. The name *Kulitā* is supposed by some to mean *kulā* (family), *itā* (gone or lost); but these Sanskritic derivations are open to not a little suspicion.

² In Bengal and Assam the 'ō' is generally the result of the dialectic pronunciation of the 'a' in the Sanskritic alphabets. Thus Bhagadatta is pronounced Bhogodott, and accordingly so written by some authors.

³ Quoted from the article referred to above. Perhaps we might put it in a little less 'modern' administrative form if we said that the country

It seems characteristic of Tibeto-Burman races that they have a number of separate local chiefs, who in many cases have no cohesion and no centralised control, so that in the course of time they fall under the dominion of some conquering prince. And even then the sovereign seems always to act in concert with a council of the chiefs. Thus in Naipāl to the present day there is a State Council of twelve nobles.¹ The old Burman State had also its *Hlut-daw* or council of chiefs, and we may well suppose its origin in a tribal form of government.² Nor was the rule of these north-eastern tribes confined only to the upper part of Assam, for as late as the fourteenth century, when the last of the Hindu dynasties was overthrown before the Muhammadan King of Gaur (Bengal), we find a *Meç* tribe ruling in Goālpārā, and also tribes of *Koç* or *Kūç*. Their rule was destroyed in the end of the fifteenth century. The memory of it still survives in the little State of *Kūç-bihār*, in North-eastern Bengal. The *Kūç* still form the chief constituent in the population of the Western Dwār districts, though at the time of the British occupation of that country they had fallen under the oppression of their neighbours, the *Bhūtiyā*. The *Meç* tribe also musters strongly in the district of Goālpārā. Of the *Kāçāri* we shall hear subsequently. But while these tribes were still ruling, an energetic race—as it must once have been—the *Aham* or *Ahōm*,³ was making rapid progress. They established

was, as so often observed, divided into districts or areas, probably connected with the clan-divisions or clan-chiefs' jurisdictions, and that the elders and wealthier men formed councils for the control of internal affairs, while a king or head chief had a general supremacy.

¹ The Gorkhā rulers of Naipāl were Aryan (or semi-Aryan) conquerors. They would doubtless, however, find it politic to adopt local or indigenous forms of administration.

² At one time in the early Assam history we hear of a rulership of the *Bāra-bhūtiyā*, which may only mean 'twelve chiefs,' during a time when the supremacy of a king had been destroyed by war. Others have supposed the term to refer to the temporary rule of a race called *Bhūtiyā*—one of the many Dravidian races, relics of which, with this name, are still found in some parts of Eastern India. The matter is, however, too uncertain to call for further notice.

³ It is sometimes said that Assam (*Āsām*) derives its name from 'Aham;' but the derivation is unlikely; though the local dialect would easily soften an *s* into an *h*, it is held that the contrary change here



themselves at first in the extreme north-east; but it is impossible to fix a date for their arrival, which indeed was probably gradual. They ultimately extended their rule over the whole valley, and about the thirteenth century we begin to have something like an historic record. The Aham princes were able to withstand the Muhammadan power: their rule, in fact, lasted down to our own times.¹ The race was completely non-Aryan, but their princes ended by adopting Hinduism; not, however, till the close of the sixteenth century. The Aham still number some 180,000, though now mingled with other castes.² From an early time they had a king, and a number of 'nobles' who bore distinctive titles. It is stated in most of the accounts of Assam that I have seen, that the Rājā as conqueror assumed the right in the soil of his dominions; but this does not appear to me necessarily to be inferred from the facts. The King had, however, other and far more curious pretensions, which seem characteristic of Tibeto-Burmans. He organised the whole of the subject-population into groups, so that he might exact military service, labour, and supplies, from all, rather than demand an over-lord rent from the soil, which, as cultivation was extremely sparse, would have been less profitable.³ The grouping was carried out in this way. Every male above sixteen years of age was designated a *pāik*. Each group of three *pāik* formed a *got*—observe the adopted Aryan term for a

requisite, would be dialectically impossible. Altogether, the *Boro* name given above (p. 135) is more probable.

¹ As usual with such dynasties, the end was brought about by intestine decay and family feuds. The interference of the Burman sovereign was invoked by one of the rivals, and the Burman rule, one of great cruelty, was for a short time established. As it is graphically expressed in a petition presented by certain inhabitants to the British Government, 'the country fell into the hands of the Burmans, and the people into twelve kinds of fire' (Mill's *Report on Assam*). The Burmans were driven out by the British in 1824.

² The whole population consists of *Aham*, *Kūç*, *Meç*, *Kāçāri*, *Çutiyā*, and a considerable admixture of Hindus from the west. Sir W. Hunter observes that the 'Assamese' are by no means strict in caste ideas, and that intermarriages are common.

³ Not that he took *no* revenue from the land; only it was not the chief thing as it was elsewhere.

family or minor clan. One person in each *got* was always to be available for service, not only in the army, but in supplying carriage, collecting wood and grass, and, if a craftsman, contributing of his handiwork; or he could be called on to aid in executing public works. The Aham rulers left abundant traces of their zeal in providing tanks for irrigation, as well as other monuments. It will be observed that this obligation to service was not serfdom; there were large bodies, probably of the 'inferior' and conquered tribes, who were actually serfs or slaves, and were employed in the cultivation of lands to which they were attached—lands held by the Rājā or his chiefs, or by the religious grantees, who became numerous when the princes adopted Hinduism. In order to facilitate supervision and to ensure the due rendering of the service, the *got* were further aggregated into larger bodies called *khel*: 20 *got* went to a *khel*.¹ It became the practice for the several *khel* to subdivide their duty; one undertaking the supply of wood and grass, another of fruit and betel-nuts, and so on; so that it became customary to speak of 'the wood and grass *khel*,' the betel-nut *khel*, &c. The *khel*-service could be assigned: e.g. to the King's wife, or to a relative. And when land was granted to a Brahman, the service of certain *khel* was granted with it, besides the serfs belonging to the land.² The working population, thus organised,

¹ The terms used are modern dialectic forms which, perhaps, once had older indigenous equivalents, just as we find the Kol, Gond, and other races now using, in connection with their own customs and institutions, terms which they borrowed from the Hindi. The use of the term *khel* is somewhat remarkable, but perhaps it is only a coincidence of form. It may be compared with the Santāl and Kolarian term *kili* for a sub-division of a tribe. There is a Persian word *khel*, which properly means a troop of horsemen and then a tribe. This may have gained currency in India. On the north-west frontier the village groups are called *khel*—sections of tribes. In Berār the term *khel* was formerly used in connection with joint family holdings.

² It may be worth while to notice that this method of obtaining supplies for the Court was not unknown to the Aryan princes. In Manu (vii. 118) we hear of the Rājā assigning to certain district officials as their perquisite 'such food, drink, wood, and other articles as by law should be given each day to the King by the inhabitants of a village.' It is also noticeable that in the Simla Hill States, and, indeed, throughout the hill country, certain of the lower castes had to give a certain number of



was subject to a corresponding series of officials. Over each *khel* was a *Barā*; over 100 *got* (i.e. 5 *khel*) was a *Saikyā*; and over 1,000 *got* was a *Hazārī*. In order to provide for the support of the people, each *pāik* was allowed a plot of land for his house and garden (*bāri*): on this only a small 'hearth-tax' was payable annually. Each also held a small allotment of arable land (called *goamatti*, said to mean 'body-land') amounting to about 2½ acres, which was held free of charge.¹

I have not been able to trace any similar organisation under the kings of Burma. But the latter were sometimes of Aryan descent, and the historical conditions were different. A nearly similar organisation was, however, imposed on the *Kūç* and *Mec* tribes by the conquering *Bhūtiyā* in the West Dwar. The individual holdings of land (there called *got*) were made to pay land-revenue; each small cluster of houses was headed by a *pradhān*. Over several of these groups was a *siyāna*.² Over these, again, was a local collector; and finally a chief of the district aided by a deputy.

In the Cachār district of Assam we are introduced to an interesting variety of the *khel* system. Cachār is now known principally as a district of tea-planters; its native population is miscellaneous, largely made up of settlers from the hill country around it. It fell under the dominion of a ruling house of the *Kāçāri* tribe as late as the eighteenth century.³ One of the

days' unpaid labour (*begār*), and, at the harvest, special offerings of maize, &c., to the *Rājā*, independently of the regular revenue dues. The obligation to work and service was, in fact, imposed by many conquering rulers in India, in one form or another; the demand being, as a rule, confined to the lower-castes or out-castes. It was carried to great lengths in Kashmir, as the recent account of the country by Mr. Walter Lawrence shows. Cf. also H. E. Seebohm, *The Structure of Greek Tribal Society* (Macmillan, 1895), p. 115 ff, showing similar customs among the ancient Greeks, the Persians, and even the Israelites.

¹ It is said that the *goamatti* was neither hereditary nor alienable, and that it was regarded as the property of the State or ruler.

² The reader will note these terms as reappearing in Kumāon, where the population was so largely Tibeto-Burman in origin.

³ I may repeat that the *Mec*, *Kūç*, and *Kāçāri* are believed to be branches of one tribe. Indeed, it has been thought that the term *Kūç* was only invented to distinguish those *Kāçāri* who adopted orthodox Hinduism. The *Kāçāri* families dominated at one time a considerable



Rājās became a Hindu by the process, not unknown elsewhere, of placing himself and his son in the body of a cow made out of copper; of course they became 'Rājbañsī,' or 'Royal' Hindus, and claimed rank as Rājputs. The *Kācāri* kingdom, as usual in this group, included a number of chiefs under the Rājā (called in the books *Bar-man*, perhaps *barā-mānus* = great man). The land-holders were grouped into *khel*, and the Rājā had the right to demand service and supplies for the royal household, from the *khels*. As, however, the kingdom was a new one, it was obliged to deal gently with the cultivators. By that time the neighbouring province of Bengal had long been paying the State-revenue in cash, and doubtless this example was followed in Cachār. For this purpose each *khel* formed a *jointly responsible* body, the responsibility being, for a lump sum, assessed on the *khel* as a unit or whole. A headman called *mukhtār* (agent) was appointed to each, and a number of *khel* united had a *rāj-mukhtār*, or superior representative, with the State officials,¹ and the group of *khel* so represented formed a *rāj* or *rājī*. The joint responsibility for the revenue was in fact a measure of protection against internal inquisition by petty officers of the State, with their frequent opportunities of levying fees on individuals. A lump sum, whether high or low, was (necessarily) fixed, and, on the official representative producing that, there was much less pretext for further interference. The responsibility was worked by means of a custom called *ghasāwat*. If anyone failed to pay, unless some richer neighbour would make good the arrear and take over the land, the whole body contributed the amount and took the land. If a whole *khel* failed, then the *rāj* was answerable and took over the village land. It is quite certain that the system had nothing to do with joint-ownership

portion of Assam; and the district which now distinctively bears their name could only have been a lately occupied southern territory taken when the tribes began to be pressed by other competitors. The earlier kingdom extended much more into the hill country. The last *Kācāri* Rājā died in 1880 without heirs, and the country became an escheat to the British Government. The neighbouring state of Tiperah (*Ṭripura*) has still a ruler of *Kācāri* descent.

¹ These names of course are purely modern. *Mukhtār* is the ordinary Persian word for an agent or attorney.



such as exists in a North Indian village: none of the groups had any tribal or family connection; they were miscellaneous and recent settlers. It is at best uncertain whether the joint system was imposed by the ruler or voluntarily adopted. I think the latter the more probable. It is remarkable that in one of the northern districts of Madras (Cuddapah) a similar system, which could have no connection with Assamese customs, prevailed under the name of *visabadi*: there the villagers clubbed together to manage the whole of the lands, and to meet the revenue charges, on the joint-stock principle—each undertaking a certain portion of the area against a fixed fraction of the assessment.¹ The fractions were the series known to Tamil arithmetic ($\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, &c. ; *visa* = $\frac{1}{16}$). In both cases I suspect we have a voluntary device which had nothing to do directly with customs of any particular race; but the matter deserved some mention, as showing how an appearance of common ownership may be misleading if its origin is not inquired into.

In themselves, the Assamese land-holdings are always purely individual, and are based upon the right of first clearing; unless, indeed, they have arisen, as in the case of some larger estates, by the direct grant of the ruler.

There is no word for 'village' in Assamese nor in the older local dialects; the revenue term *maiza* has been introduced solely for administrative purposes, and is used, in a quite local and special sense, to indicate a circle of holdings under one petty official charge.

It will be permissible to make a rapid sketch of the modern land-holdings which have arisen out of this previous state of things. The province of Assam is treated in effect, though not called so officially, as *raiyatwār*. The only exception is where some of the larger purchasers of waste-lands, or grantees and others, have become landlords or proprietors, or where certain of the larger land-holders were acknowledged as landlord-owners under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, which extended to some of the districts. There are only some cases in which any-

¹ See Munro's Minute in Arbuthnot's *Sir J. Munro, &c.*, ii. 360. See also *Godāvari D. M.* p. 314. This plan was accompanied by a rule that any co-sharer who thought his share was too highly rated might offer to exchange it with another; the details cannot be here gone into.

thing like a village group is formed, although there are parts of the country where there is no physical peculiarity to prevent it. The genius of the people evidently does not lead them to any union ; and the holdings are completely independent. In some parts the assessment is still made annually ; but in others, settlements for a period of years have been found possible ; here especially, as cultivation increases, village-groups will probably be consolidated, but in a *raiyatwāri* form.

In the country known as the Bhūtān-Dwārs there is a noticeable tendency to form what will become small landlord estates rather than villages. I find an interesting article on this country written shortly after its annexation at the close of the Bhūtān war.¹ The individual farmer or cultivating settler is called *jot-dār*, or holder of a *jot*—a term frequently met with in Bengal for the individual holding, whether (locally) as proprietor or (more commonly) as tenant-farmer.

‘The whole of the land,’ says the writer, ‘at present being held in detached farms, has a very marked effect on the arrangements of the population, and . . . there is scarcely a village to be seen from one end of the Dwārs to the other. The plan adopted is for every holder of a *jot* (cultivating lot) to establish his homestead on the most eligible site for building on, within the limits of his *jot* ; and around the *jot-dār*’s house those of his dependents cluster. . . . The size of these homesteads varies, of course, with that of the *jot*. Some contain as many as forty or fifty houses (*i.e.* cottages), whilst others have not more than six or eight ; but in all, the same characteristics prevail : the *jot-dār* is the head of the little community and is looked up to as the master over all ; it is he who manages the affairs of the whole *jot*, lets out the lands to his under-tenants, and retains what he chooses for his special use. His word is law ; he is, in fact, a little patriarch living in the midst of his family and dependents, whose influence for good or evil is felt by every member of the society.’ The whole country is dotted over with these separate homesteads.

¹ *Calcutta Review*, vol. xlviii. (January 1869). The two portions forming the Eastern and Western Dwārs (or Duārs) have been attached respectively to Bengal and to Assam. The Eastern Dwārs form part of the Jalpaiguri district ; the Western, of Goālpārā.



I am not aware of any local peculiarity which would discourage the 'village' formation; but apparently it is not here in the nature of the people. It often happens that one man owns more than one *jot*: in this case he lives on one, and lets the others out either to some substantial tenants (*çūkanīdār*, or *mālandār*), who agree with him for a yearly rental in cash, or to poorer people (called *parjā* or *raiyat*), who, in fact, somewhat resemble metayers, receiving plough and oxen from the *jotdār* and giving him one-half or even two-thirds of the produce in kind.

It would be impossible to leave the description of Assam without some allusion to the *hill tribes*, who from their remote situation have been much left alone, and probably retain the customs of their ethnic group much unchanged. In the northern hills are the *Ākā*, *Daphlā*, *Mīri*, and *Abar* tribes, at the western end, and the *Mishmī* at the eastern. In the central ranges south of the valley proper, are the *Gāro*, *Khāsī*, and *Nāgā*. In the hills on the south-east are the *Kāki* or *Lushai* tribes. We have but little definite information about their land-customs; but this is owing partly to the nature of the country, which lends itself chiefly to shifting cultivation;¹ but there is evidence of some method of tribal allotment by which the various clan groups have their own 'beats,' doubtless indicated by natural limits of valley, ridge, and stream. I have been told by persons of local experience that within the last thirty years the men of one group in the Gāro Hills would turn out in war array to resent any encroachment on their land or pasture ground. It will be borne in mind that the origins of these tribes are in some cases very doubtful. In the central hills, for instance, there are tribes whose language is not to be classified in the general group; and it would seem that some considerable tribes unconnected with the rest of the group found refuge in these hills.² In general there is a very loose cohesion; separate chiefs of territories are recognised, some with very little authority over the minor or local chiefs of villages or ultimate clan-groups. Under such a state of things there must always be a natural

¹ See *ante*, p. 52.

² See Census Report, 1891 (*Parliamentary Blue Book*), p. 137.



tendency for the chiefship to remain in certain families, and for a chief of energy to enlarge his pretensions and become a sort of Rājā over a number of others. Or, on the other hand, it is not difficult for some neighbouring foreign chief to compel a number of his neighbours to submit to his suzerainty. We should like to know for certain on what principle the groups forming villages are separated. Fixed hereditary ownership of land is hardly possible, at least until the clan begins to adopt some customary principle modifying the shifting cultivation, or *jūm*.

Sometimes the village groups are placed so as to crown the tops of separate hills, and each is securely stockaded. The frequency of clan feuds and the malarious character of the valleys would combine to account for this. The *Nāgā* clans, for instance, live in stockaded villages: they acknowledge a sort of chief over a clan or group of villages; but he is not hereditary, and apparently his authority is not strong. But in the north, I find it noted that among the *Mīri* (a branch of the same stock as the *Daphlā*, *Abar*, and *Ākū*) the chiefs are hereditary; and it sometimes happens that one of them acquires sufficient influence to establish a kind of lordship over a considerable area.

In the southern hills, the *Inshai* (or *Kūki*) are said 'markedly to differ'¹ from the others, inasmuch as the clan chiefs are not only hereditary but are all taken from a certain 'royal stock.' Captain Shakespear, who read to the Society of Arts the interesting paper referred to in the footnote, has described how the chiefs are selected from one or two families in different parts of the country. Each village has its own chief also, and is located independently on the top of a hill. Some groups are large enough to have 200 to 800 cottages. An incompetent village chief is removable by the voice of the villagers; or rather the villagers will desert the chief and build a new village (the bamboo structures are easily replaced) on another site. Each chief (I am not sure if this refers to *village* chiefs) is advised by one or two men called by a local term signifying 'old man,'² or by the borrowed (Hindi) term *kārbāri*. Property, Captain Shakespear informs us, belongs to the family, not to the indi-

¹ See *Imperial Gazetteer* (2nd ed.), xiii. 530, and *Journal Soc. Arts* (January 1895), xliii. 167 ff.

² Cf. the *siyāna* (= wise man) already mentioned.



vidual members; and the family 'lot' for *jūm* cultivation (hill rice being the chief crop) is worked by all the capable members together. Without this co-operation such cultivation would be impossible. Fixed fields seem to be unknown. In some parts, however (as among the *Chin* tribes), Captain Shakespeare notes that the village-site is located not on the hill-top, but on the slope, so that a local stream can be laid on to fields terraced for rice cultivation. Here we have the beginnings of permanent land-owning.

The central hills (*Gūro* and *Khāsi*) have this difference, that the inhabitants have more intercourse with the level country both to the north and south; and in the *Khāsi* Hills we have a strange tribe, settled as already noted. We are not surprised to find that the chiefs ruling over a group of villages sometimes adopt the title of *Rājā*. But the *Rājā*'s authority is small, as everything is decided in the village assembly under the village chief; and contiguous villages will cause their chiefs to assemble to discuss a matter that interests several of them in common.

I have come across an interesting article on the *Khāsi* Hills.¹ The author states that these hills were divided into twenty-three petty 'States,' each having its own '*Rājā*.' This chief, however, has but little authority, except in administering justice; he receives a small revenue or tribute in kind from traders and others, and has something from fines; there is no regular land-revenue, as there is but little permanent cultivation. As usual, public business is decided at a meeting called in the name of the *Rājā*; and in each village any matter of local dispute is decided by such an assembly in the village.² The proceedings

¹ *Calcutta Review* (Reprint of 1884), vol. xxvii. September 1850.

² See article alluded to, p. 24. 'The village is assembled by warning given the previous evening. The crier goes out at an hour when the people are likely to have returned home, and, placing himself at some suitable spot where he is likely to be heard, he attracts attention by a prolonged unearthly yell, and then delivers himself of his errand: "*Kaw!* Thou a fellow-villager, thou a fellow-creature, thou an old man, thou who art grown up, &c., thou who art great, thou who art little! *Hei!* in his own village, in his own place! *Hei!* there is a quarrel! *Hei!* because there is a contest! *Hei!* to come to sit together! *Hei!* to come to deliberate together! *Hei!* ye are forbidden! *Hei!* ye are stopped to draw water then, to cut firewood then! No *Hei!* to go to work then! No *Hei!* to



are opened by the village priest, and witnesses are heard. The chief at the end states what he thinks about the matter in dispute—'making at the same time a hearty appeal to the assembled villagers—"Is it not so, my young, energetic ones?"' To which they respond unitedly, 'Yes, it is so, young energetic ones,' and the matter is thus settled. It will not fail to be noticed how prominent the idea of assemblies is in all the races of this group. We shall, however, find similar assemblies, both local and tribal, to be a feature of Vedic life among the early Aryans.

It is to be hoped that, with regard to these tribes and the Shān and Karens in Burma, we may have more definite information as to how the tribal, or clan, and village, areas for cultivation and for general occupation, are determined on. So much only can at present be said, that some such allotment is apparent, and that the tribal stage, with the feeling of equal right to a share for each household or family or individual, as the case may be, is recognised. Community in property, except for the necessary co-operation of all hands in a family or household for forest-clearing, can hardly be looked for.

We may now turn to BURMA, where we expect to find the most characteristic exhibition of the customs of the group we are considering. The population is, as a whole, scanty. It is only, in fact, in certain districts in the rice-plains or valleys of the great rivers that the cultivation is continuous in area and the people fairly numerous. There are no jointly-owned villages on the Indian model; but villages of the other type are everywhere found, and there is a tendency, I am told, for families of the same descent to settle together. In Burma it is quite possible that elements of custom of diverse origin may be found; there is of course the Mongol element (Sai or Shān) strongly represented; but there is reason to believe that some tribes, known as Talaing, were Dravidian and came from the South of India. They call themselves *Mūn* or *Mwūn*. There was also a small Aryan element.

descend to the valley then! *Hei!* now come forth *Hei!* the hearing is to be all in company! *Hei!* the listening attentively then is to be all together! *Hei!* for his own king! *Hei!* for his own master! lest destruction come, lest piercing overtake us! *Kaw!* come forth now, fellow-men!"



In early times, but at a much later date than the Burman annalists place it,¹ some Kshatriya prince and his followers made their way, by Manipur, into the upper part of the Irāwādi Valley, and founded a kingdom at Tagong, on the Irāwādi, and afterwards one near Prome (*Tharē khetara*).² Another group appears to have entered Arakan, which was not difficult when once Aryan influence had extended as far as Eastern Bengal and Chittagong. That such adventurers would be pure Aryan is, however, very unlikely. The Aryan element was Buddhist not Hindu, and its Pāli language affected both names of places and the language generally; but the Aryan people readily fused with the Mongoloid.³

As to the Mūn or Talaing, their chronicles have been so largely destroyed that little is known beyond the fact that the Irāwādi delta and Martaban were anciently colonised from the East Coast of India. Talaing is apparently connected with *Tilinga*. The race is now represented (in a distinctive form) in Siam better than it is in Burma.⁴ The various Tai or Shān irruptions mentioned by Phayre need not occupy our attention. The overthrow of the Aryan dynasties was probably due to them. It is only needful to remark that there is nothing to show that there were no Mongoloid inhabitants in Burma previously; or that Aryans, or Talaings, were the first settlers of all.

The Indian element, whether Dravidian or Aryan, can only have been comparatively small. It is not possible to trace any Burmese custom to either source. The Burman kings had 'Royal lands,' *i.e.* lands specially set apart to furnish an income to the Court; but this, though a Dravidian institution,

¹ See Lassen, ii. 1047 ff, and Phayre's *History of Burma* (Trübner: Oriental Series), p. 3.

² This name Lassen thinks a modification of the Sanskrit *Sri khetra*. See Phayre, pp. 10, 11, note.

³ 'The Indian settlers,' says Phayre, 'gave to them (the indigenous Mongoloid people) and adopted themselves, the name of *Brahmā*, which is used in the Buddhist sacred books for the first inhabitants of the world. The term has survived in the form *Mṛāmmā* (generally pronounced *Brāmā*). This term is evidently the origin of the entirely Anglicised forms, Burma, Burman, or Burmese.

⁴ Phayre, *History*, p. 28.



is also found among other early races of Tibetan origin when they had Sovereigns and Courts. The joint succession of the heirs to property is not necessarily Aryan; if it were, it would have become general in Burma through the influence of the Buddhist religion which spread over the country. Only one Mongoloid feature we notice, the tendency for the country to be divided under a number of local (probably clan) chiefs; these, when falling under some superior royal house, are regarded as subordinate, but are conciliated with local titles, or form a Council of State. Where there is a powerful sovereign like Alompyā or Anawrahtā, the kingdom is held together and extends its sway. When the reins of government fall into feeble hands, the dynasty perishes and the independence of the local magnates is reasserted.

Cultivation in the *hill country* of Burma is by the shifting or temporary method (*tawngyā*); permanent rice lands and orchards are found in the level valleys only; we have no evidence, traditional or other, of any tribal settlement or allotment of lands. The early kingdoms, as I have said, relied rather on the possession of 'Royal lands' for their revenue, than on a system of land-revenue collected in kind, for the latter cannot be effective unless there is a fairly continuous area of cultivated territory. The kings did indeed exact a 'rice land-tax,' but whether this was very ancient there is no means of knowing; it never formed (even up to the date of the Burmese war) the real staple of the royal revenue, as the land revenue did (and still does) in India.

There is not, as far as I am aware, any real word for 'village.' The term *kwin* (otherwise written *queng*) is said to mean 'level ground'—*i.e.* rice cultivation as opposed to the temporary clearings on the hill slopes beyond. But though the various holdings are always independent, and nothing like a community of land or joint-holding of an entire village is known, the holdings are in compact village groups, and the dwellings also are placed together, often on the banks of one of the numerous creeks or streams which so often serve also as boundaries between the *kwin* groups. Thus, without violence to terms, the *kwin* can be called a 'village.' There is always the probability that such groups settled together originally



on a clan basis; and we are not surprised to find *two* local headmen, one chosen by the villagers themselves, and one (*kyedāngyī*) appointed by the State, to look after the revenue and administrative matters. I have found no mention of any staff of artisans, serving only the one village, hereditary, and specially remunerated by free holdings or grain fees, such as we meet with in all Indian villages.¹

Land has at all times, in Burma, been so largely in excess of the population to till it, that we may reasonably believe the first settlements to have been very much by choice—each group of settlers taking land as much as, and where, they pleased, but keeping together to a certain extent, both for safety against wild animals and against hostile incursions, as well as for society. The land is registered as the property of one man; and when he dies, his sons, and also the widow and daughters, succeed jointly according to Burmese law. If the holding is large enough, it will simply be divided into separate holdings for the several members of the family; if it is too small, the house-father will arrange before his death for one or two members to take the land and the others his moveable property; or one member will possess and work the whole holding and pay rent to the other sharers, or will buy out their interest. The Burmese idea of right in land is, as might be expected, solely based on first occupation and the labour of clearing. The later Burmese kings, at any rate, established the usual principle asserted by conquerors, that they had a superior right in all land; but this was consistent with a practical hereditary right of private holding; and the seizure of occupied land was always looked on as an act of oppression.² So strong was the right in private

¹ In modern times, the land revenue system is in effect a *rāiyatwāri* system; the *kwin* has become regularly demarcated, mapped, and registered as the geographical village division, which is essential to all our revenue systems (at least where great landlords are not dealt with). And there are now civil and police headmen, and accountant-surveyors to keep up the land records.

² See *L. S. B. I.* iii. 403, 404. The Burmese law originally recognised seven modes of acquiring land: (1) allotment by Government officers; (2) gift by the king; (3) inheritance; (4) gift; (5) purchase; (6) clearing the virgin forest; (7) 'prescription' (as we should call it)



land, that when it was mortgaged, no limit of time was allowed to bar the right of the 'owner,' or his heirs, to redeem. I have already given some account of the interesting phenomenon of a transition state, in which temporary *taungyā* clearings are passing into permanent ownership.¹

Our information about rights in land as understood among the hill tribes of Karens and in the Shān States is very limited. There are probably fixed territories indicated by natural features of hill and valley, in which the different clans and family groups have their several locations in which the *taungyā* cultivation is practised over the suitable slopes taken in rotation. Among some Karen tribes I find it noticed that the bamboo dwellings are adapted to the method of living, so that there is no difficulty in abandoning one site and erecting a new abode. The houses, in fact, are like long barracks with a single entrance at the gable end. In these, several connected families live together, forming a sort of house-communion under the control of a family elder or headman.

Among the Shāns, while the *taungyā* form of cultivation is practised by tribes in the hills, there is an abundance of permanent cultivation of palm-groves, gardens, and rice fields in the level valleys and plains. Everywhere the organisation of agricultural society seems to be very similar to that of Burma; and the 'villages' are local clusters of families each with its own headman: a number of these 'villages' are united under the jurisdiction of a local chief.² One of the reports I have seen alludes to the difficulty of settling terms of protection or of relation to the British Government as regards trade or frontier affairs, because there is no really responsible authority over the territory to deal with. Here and there some chief of greater ability or energy will take the lead and maintain a kind of suzerainty for a time. It is obvious that a number of petty and loosely held local chiefships must always tend to fall under

or adverse holding for ten years with the knowledge of a former possessor, who did not interfere to assert his own claim.

¹ *Ante*, p. 55, and *L. S. B. I.* iii. 506.

² There is a charmingly written paper describing the Shān States, by Colonel Woodthorpe in the *Journal Soc. of Arts*, xliv. 197 (January 1896). But this gives no direct information about the modes of land-holding.



some other authority. Hence it is that we see the Karen and Shān States some independent and some acknowledging the control of Burma, China, or Siam, as the case may be.

In conclusion, it may be observed that, as regards India, these North-eastern races have become so mixed, and so altered by the adoption of Hinduism, that there is now but little in the way of distinctive custom to mark them. When they first settled in India, their stage of social progress was evidently a tribal one; and that resulted in the formation of small groups of families and a certain local dominion of chiefs of territories. These from time to time are aggregated under the rule of some prince or dynasty strong enough to keep them together. No kind of community of ownership is traceable; but it is highly probable that every member of a clan considered himself, and was generally acknowledged, to have a right to a share in his clan-territory, and to the use of the pasture grounds. Right by occupation and first-clearing seems to be the general (as it is the most natural) basis of title in a country where every acre has to be won from the primeval jungle under considerable difficulties.

SECTION II.—KOLARIAN CUSTOMS

There is really no need for a separate section under this heading, except to contain a notice of the surviving and apparently unchanged customs of the *Ho* and *Mundā* tribes (so called *Kol*), who found refuge in ancient days in the plateau-land of Chutiya-Nāgpur, and to include some customs of the *Santāl* people in Bengal. These are distinctly non-Aryan customs; and they seem also to differ from the purely Dravidian customs also to be found in Chutiya-Nāgpur, in Hill Orissa, and in the South. They are accordingly described under a separate heading, but merely for convenience, and without any intention to formulate any opinion as to how far Kolarian races are ethnically distinct on the one hand from the Tibeto-Burman group with whom they have a certain amount of affinity,¹ and how

¹ This curiously appears in small matters—e.g. that the Tibeto-Burmans make no use of milk, nor do the Kolarian. In point of language I am informed that the speech of the *Ho*, *Mundā*, and *Santāl* tribes has points



far, on the other hand, they may be connected with some of the more northern-dwelling Dravidian races, which Dr. G. Oppert proposes to call the 'Gaudian' branch. Nor need I enter on the question of the affinities of certain hill tribes such as the *Kurkū* or the *Baiḡā*, since, being almost nomadic and living by the chase, we have but little to learn about land-holding customs among them.¹

In this group, I will, however, mention the *Bhīl*,² as a portion of the race has locally settled down to agricultural life in the Vindhyan country; and here we see the outlines of a *tribal settlement*. 'In the Udaipur State,' says Sir W. Hunter,³ 'they are now settled in little hamlets, each homestead being built on a separate hillock, so as to render it impossible for their enemies to surprise a whole village at once.' By 'village' is meant a group of such separate homesteads, which is called *pāra*, or *parra*.⁴ The groups are small, and separated by the cultivated and waste lands held by each. Each has a chief, called *Tarvi*. In a tract sixty miles by ten (from Mandu as a centre) in Mālwa, it was found that there were 112 *pāra*, each on the average containing nine huts or cottages, with four or five persons to each dwelling. There seems also to be some larger clan-grouping, but this is not clear; and the *Bhīls* acknowledged a chief of their own, who called himself by the Hindi title of *Rāwat*.⁵

of contact with that of the *Khāsiya* hillmen of Assam, and that of the *Meç* in North-eastern Bengal. See *J. R. A. S.* xx. part iii. 329; Cunningham, *Anc. Geog.* p. 506.

¹ These tribes in the Melghat Hills are in a very primitive condition, and are described as very dark-skinned and with Mongoloid features. Even if they are of the same stock as the *Mundā* (compare Colonel Dalton's description of these latter quoted in Cunningham, *Anc. Geog.* p. 507), we are quite familiar with the circumstance that races of the same stock, ethnically speaking, may be now in very different stages of civilisation.

² Following the *Census Report of 1891*, p. 147 (Parliamentary Blue-book).

³ See Hunter, *Short History, &c.*, p. 43, and *Imp. Gazetteer*, ii. 388.

⁴ Malcolm, *Memoir of Central India*, ii. 53, 54, and 184. In Appendix XIV. C, the author gives a sort of census of the *pāra* and their population.

⁵ Some of the families may have a certain admixture of Aryan blood. See p. 114, *ante*.



Turning next to the east side of India, the interesting feature of the Chutiya-Nāgpur districts is, that they afforded a safe refuge to Kolarian tribes who have remained to some extent unchanged. The Kolarians also came in contact there with tribes of Dravidian stock, and accepted their rule, when the latter, pressed in their turn by enemies, found their way into the same fastnesses. The 'Kol' appear to have had no centralised government, but a loose cohesion of clans under chieftains; and the clans, again, were subdivided and grouped into village communities of a special form.

On the north-east of Chutiya-Nāgpur, again, we find the tract called the 'Santāl Pergunnahs,' from its being chiefly peopled by another tribe, the *Santāl*, also marked by Kolarian customs. The settlement of these latter in this locality dates only from the eighteenth century, when they were driven by the oppression of the Marāthās from their former home in Orissa.¹

The 'Kol,'² says Mr. Hewitt, 'still form the bulk of the population in the east of Chutiya-Nāgpur; but in the west they have been deprived of the best lands by the Gond and Urāoñ (Dravidian) invaders, whose superior organisation made them permanent rulers of the country.' The British districts of Hazāribāgh (with Lohārdagā), Singhbhūm, and Mānbhūm, are largely peopled by *Mundā*, *Larkā* (or *Ho*), and *Bhūmij*, respectively. 'The Ho adds Mundā,' says Mr. Hewitt, 'who now hold what must have been very early settlements of the race in their progress westwards from Arakan and Burma, have . . . maintained themselves as a separate and distinct people from

¹ The *Santāls* found the central hills of their new home already occupied by wild Pahāria, or hill-people; but there was ample room in the lower hills and valleys, into which the Pahārias did not venture. Article quoted, p. 401.

² Mr. J. F. Hewitt was Commissioner of this division and knew the people well; while his after experience of the more Dravidian population of the Central Provinces gave him opportunities for comparing and contrasting their customs. He has written an interesting article on Chutiya-Nāgpur and its people (*Asiatic Quarterly Review*, April 1887, p. 396). The chief tribes are *Ho* and *Mundā*. There are others—the *Sāoñt*, *Rautia*, &c., but their numbers are few and their affinities little known. The *Bhūmij*, or *Bhūinjyā*, are said to show certain marks of Dravidian origin.



the earliest times.' The Ho of Singhbhūm have always remained independent; and though Urāoñ and other immigrant tribes settled in the Mundā country and took the rule, 'tradition says that they were admitted peaceably: they imposed their own organisation on the Mundā villages of the west, and left those of the east undisturbed.'¹ The Rājās of the States formed in Chutiyā-Nāgpur were in fact Gond or Urāoñ in origin; others in the neighbouring States are called 'Nāgbañsi'—a Hindī name given to royal families of non-Aryan (probably mixed Dravidian) origin, and meaning sons of the Nāgā or Snake. Some of them have since been admitted to Rājput rank.² In fact, the loose tribal organisation of the Kolarian tribes invited the assumption of sovereignty by any neighbouring chief whose family had attained sufficient dignity and power.³ Of the other States of Chutiyā-Nāgpur, Sirgūjā (and with it Jāshpur) is occupied by Gonds and Urāoñs.⁴ In the western hills we find a separate Kolarian tribe, the *Korwā*, having the characteristic tribal organisation by *totems*; one part of them are still nomadic, but others are beginning to form more

¹ Quoted from *Journ. Soc. Arts*, xxxv. 620. The Urāoñ were a Dravidian people (see p. 110, *ante*), whose name is preserved in 'Uriya'—'Orissa' (= *Uṛā* or *Oḍra-des*).

² In the *Central Provinces Gazetteer* (Introduction, p. lxxvii.) mention is made of 'the Mundā Rājās of Chutiyā-Nāgpur'; but the Rājās themselves were either Urāoñ or from the Gond country. See also *Journal As. Soc. of Bengal* for 1866, xxxv. part ii. 16. An inscription as old as A.D. 1073 shows the Rājā of the Bastār State as 'Nāgbañsi,' though now the chiefs are accounted 'Rājput.' As to the advancement of the Nāgā chiefs to Rājput rank, see some good remarks in the Introduction to *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, p. lxiv. ff.

³ I am not aware of any instance of a certainly Kolarian clan giving rise to a ruling house. It is probably by a mistake, originating with Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton, that the *Çeru* or *Çiru* are sometimes called 'Kolarian.' They certainly furnished rulers for a somewhat extensive kingdom in and about Bihār, but it is fairly certain that they were Dravidian—possibly connected also with some other northern foreign race; they were originally snake-worshippers, which Kolarians were not. Ultimately, of course, the still surviving remains of the race became Hindu (Beames' *Elliot's Glossary*, s.v. 'Cheru'; and *Journal E. A. Soc.* xx. part iii. 354).

⁴ In Sirgūjā State the Dravidians form 40·1 per cent. of the population, and the Kolarians 21·5 per cent. (*Imperial Gazetteer*, s.v. 'Sirgūjā').



permanent cultivating settlements. Mr. Hewitt notices one interesting point, which is that in this transition stage, though the families of the same *totem* make their dwellings together, they have as yet *no fixed boundaries to the incipient villages, nor any village-headmen*. At the same time the *clan* territories are defined and well guarded, and there is an hereditary chief-tain over each.

The separation of the several Kolarian tribes must have been of long duration, since the dialects, though radically connected, are distinct. The *Ho* tribe is divided into minor clans called *kibi*, which are numerous, each having its own name. The Santāls are also so divided.¹ The more settled tribes have villages in which the groups were (at any rate originally) formed by families with the same *totem*.² The 'unions' of villages or clan-territorial divisions of the country were called by some word which has survived locally as *parhā*. Each such *parhā* contained from ten to twenty-five villages, and had a chief called *mānki* (and by other names locally). Unless these chiefs became united in subordination to some 'Rājā,' they remained independent and hardly in a sufficient degree of relation to form a confederacy; though it seems that they met in assemblies to confer on any matter that concerned several of the *parhā* in common. The *parhā*, or union grouping, is still traceable, and on festival occasions each one exhibits its own flag with the distinguishing device or *totem*.³ The *parhā* chief is not always hereditary, though he is so among some of the tribes.

¹ *Journ. Soc. Arts*, May 1887, pp. 621-2. And see Dalton, *Ethnography of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 151 ff. The names of the Santāl clans are believed to have meanings—perhaps names of the animals selected for the *totem*. One only is so recognised with reference to existing speech; but the names may have been gradually corrupted. The clans are so far exogamous that a man of one *totem* has to seek a wife in a family of a different one. See also Risley, *T. & C. of Bengal*, ii. 230 (Glossary).

² See *J. R. A. S.* xx. (1889) 330, where Mr. Hewitt remarks on the absence of the *village* priest, and that the villages in one group or union are served by the same priest, who goes on circuit and propitiates both the village deity and the *desauti*, or territorial deities.

³ *Journ. Soc. Arts*, xxv. 622; also Risley, *T. & C. of Bengal*, ii. 105, Glossary.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE COMMUNITY

Each separate group of families or village had its own headman, known as *māndā* among the *Ho* and *Māndā* tribes, *mānjhī* among the *Santāl*, and *sirdār* (a later borrowed Hindustāni word) among the *Bhūmij*.¹ In the more settled *Ho* and *Mundā* districts we find the village-headman quite a permanent institution; and there is a village-priest also, though not hereditary. There are some other village officers, but these were probably added at a later time by the ruler, for the purpose of control and for facilitating his revenue collections. When a permanent cultivating settlement was made, and the jungle was cleared, a grove (*sarnā*) was left as the sacred abode of the village gods; but the grove has often dwindled to a single tree.

It is worthy of remark that this idea of a village sacred tree or grove is not confined to the *Kolarian* tribes, though it may have originated with them in the remote past. It is noticeable among the *Southern Dravidians* (e.g. the *Devara-kādū*, or sacred groves of *Coorg*). True it is that the circumstances of Eastern life in all the provinces of the plains would make a grove or a large shady tree almost a necessity of existence where any place of public meeting was required; but this alone would not account for the idea of sanctity connected with the tree; and we find that in the provinces where the country is barer, the planting of a tree is an essential feature of the village foundation. In the dry and almost treeless plains of the *South-eastern Panjāb*, among a totally different class of people, we shall notice a custom of driving in a stake (*moṛī*), cut from a particular kind of tree, at the foundation of a new village, and how very lucky is the omen if the stake should be induced to strike root and grow into a tree; a result which would only occur with certain species and under favourable conditions.

But to return to the *Kolarian* village. The headman is the person to allot the lands within the area, and to settle any

¹ This is perhaps owing to the circumstance that in *Mānbhūm* and *Barābhūm* districts the *Bhūmij* have so frequently become *ghāt-wāl* or frontier militia and wardens of the marches under the local ruler; hence they have become familiar with the modern military title *Sirdār* (= troop-leader).



dispute as to the location of a family. As each village begins to outgrow its limits, small hamlets (*ṭolā*) are formed outside, in the waste, but still consider themselves as portions of the parent-village; for the headman is temporary and acts in concert with the original *mundā*.¹ He only attains separate rank, and the office becomes hereditary in his family, when the hamlet has developed into a separate village.

The villages of the Santāls have been picturesquely rather than fully described. Tribal areas, like the *parhā*, are recognised, and are under a chief now called *parganait*: his functions are chiefly social, and he gives his sanction to all marriages and consults with the village elders on occasion. All the families have their separate holdings, and the headman settles any dispute; the stage of society is purely patriarchal.² As the Santāls have only moved within a century to their present home, every village must have been founded separately under a *manjhī*.³ Accordingly, the spirit of the original head of the group (*manjhī-hanan*) is worshipped in the village sacred grove, and the existing *manjhī* derives his hereditary authority from him. But there is a second headman (*pramānik*) described as a 'deputy.' Both these officers are aided by an 'executive,' *jag-mānjhi* (also with a deputy), who sees to the actual execution of orders and the routine business, while the *manjhī* sits and issues the orders, and, as Hunter adds, only 'interferes on great occasions.' The *jag-mānjhi* seems also to act as a sort of censor of the morals of youth; and his control lasts till they are married.⁴ Each

¹ *Journ. Soc. Arts*, May 1887, p. 621.

² *Annals of Rural Bengal*, i. 217 ff; and see Risley, *T. & C. of Bengal*, ii. (Glossary), 234.

³ I write this word as I find it. I am not really aware whether it is *manjhī* or *manji*, and whether the *a* is long or short (*a* or *ā*). Wilson gives *mānjhi*, but then he identifies it with the Hindī word of the same form, meaning steersman of a boat; so does Risley, who also says that *mundā* is Sanskrit. I should like to feel sure that these words and others of the kind are not much older than Sanskrit, and that they were not given to the literary language from an older dialect.

⁴ The Santāls, like other Kolarians, do not adopt the plan of keeping all the youth of the village together—the males in one house, the girls in another. This is a Dravidian custom.



village has its watchman and its priest (*naiki*) to scare away evil spirits. The *pramānik* was specially concerned in seeing that there was an equable distribution of land, so that all the families might share and share alike, and not that one set should monopolise all the good land and leave the bad to the rest. It will be observed that there is no appearance of any joint-ownership among the village bodies: the 'title' to land is by occupation and clearing, under the direction of the tribal authorities; and the only idea of right in the uncultivated jungle is that it is within the territory of this or that *parhā* and cannot be encroached on by another.

A few words may be added about the organisation of the Kolarian population by the Rājās of frontier States, to form a militia to protect the passes. This has perhaps its points of resemblance to the organisation made by the Ahom rulers (in Assam) of the subject people into groups for service. In Chutiya-Nāgpur the plan had this advantage, that it conciliated the people by allowing a free holding of land to each man according to his grade; and at the same time it utilised the superior knowledge they must have possessed of the byways and intricacies of so difficult a frontier. In organising the force, it is evident that natural clan-divisions and grades of authority were made use of, as being already familiar. The lands held free on what is known as the *ghātwāli* tenure in certain British districts originated in this way: the Rājā's rule has passed away, but the holders of land still remain, willing to perform frontier duty if required, but clinging to the privileged holding of land. In Bengal such tenures were common along the 'frontier' between the hill country and the plains of Birbhūm and the Ganges Valley: similar tenures are known in Berār and elsewhere. In Chutiya-Nāgpur the rank and file of the militia (so regarded) are largely 'aboriginal' tribes, though some of the upper grades of officers may be of different race. In the absence of any survey and record it very naturally happens that the area of privileged lands increases beyond all bounds, and the Rājā's revenue is seriously threatened. Such a complication had arisen in Mānbhūm between the local chief and his subjects. A British officer was



deputed to settle the matter and determine what lands were *ghātawālī*, or privileged, and what were not so.¹

The rank and file of the clansmen (locally called *chhuār*) were grouped for service in small companies under petty officers called *digwār*—i.e. guide or way-shower. A number of these were again subordinate to a superior officer, the *sirdār ghātawāl*. But in the *land-holding* arrangements for the remuneration of all grades we see something of the natural (tribal) grouping. Each village had a headman called *sirdār*, who was, in fact, the *mundā* already spoken of. Then a union or group of villages is called '*tarf*,' and the union-chief is '*sirdār ghātawāl*.' This latter officer, however, is one of the Rājā's creation, and he sometimes gives himself great airs of rank and dignity. But in fact he was found to be ousting or replacing another official called *sadiāl*; and at first various questions were raised as to what the real position of this latter officer was. There seems to be no reasonable doubt that in fact he was the indigenous chief, or *mānkī*, of the union; but in order to secure a preponderance of the Rājā's authority he was rather overshadowed by the *sirdār ghātawāl*, though still left with certain privileges and perquisites.

SECTION III.—THE DRAVIDIAN GROUP

Though the Dravidian races are very numerous and have formed the basis of a large part of the existing population, and though they are represented by existing languages having a very distinct structure of their own, yet there has been nothing in their history or circumstances to prevent their progressive alteration and their fusion with other races, whether Aryan or Kolarian. But, more than that, the gradual but complete adoption of Hindu caste and Hindu customs has had a very great effect in obliterating the traces of earlier distinctive Dravidian tribal law or custom. The principal object of our remarks in this section is, therefore, a limited one; it is to endeavour to eliminate such vestiges of custom among confessedly Dravidian peoples as can be traced back to early times, before the Hindu

¹ Mr. H. Risley, B.C.S. His elaborate Report to the Board of Revenue, Bengal, full of interesting details, is dated December 20, 1883.



influence was felt. These vestiges are more numerous than they are in the case of Kolarian tribes, but they are still somewhat scanty. The country around Chutiya-Nāgpur and Hill Orissa—the refuge-ground, as I have called it, of early tribes—has also preserved to us the Dravidian village in what there is every reason to believe to be its original form. And there are a few other localities in which we find ancient Dravidian races evidently in varying degrees of progress; and here again customs regarding village life and land-holding have to some extent been preserved. But Dravidian custom must necessarily have had a much wider influence than these special localities indicate. The main bulk of the population of India below the Vindhyan Hills was confessedly Dravidian, and there can hardly be any serious doubt that the Central and Southern Indian *rājyatwāri* village, marked by the existence of an influential hereditary headman, and by the method of allotting free lands as the special privilege of the village chief and the accountant, as well as to remunerate its hereditary staff of artisans and servants, is the direct descendant and surviving representative of the old Dravidian form of agricultural settlement.

It will be desirable, in the first instance, to give a brief *résumé* of what has been said as to the position of the Dravidian group of races in India. We observe that north of what I have called the Vindhyan barrier we have now few, if any, traces of *distinctively* Dravidian custom. The Aryan population has there dominated, and has impressed its character and language on the whole country, so as to leave, it is true, a very large amount of the aboriginal element in the population, especially in the humbler castes and classes, but little of what can be proved to be non-Aryan custom. And not only Aryan invaders, but other northern races like the Jat and the Gujar, have had a large share, especially in the North-West, in modifying original conditions. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that extensive Dravidian races were once to be found even in Northern India. For this we have no direct explanation to offer. We know nothing of how such Dravidians came, and whether they entered by a route (like the Indus Valley) which would give access both above and below the Vindhyan, or whether they spread from south to north, or *vice versa*. The long course of time, and the absence of any



apparent opposition to their spread, may have combined to make the diffusion of this stock on both sides of the Vindhya possible. All we can perceive is that Dravidian races in the North have gradually fused with, and merged into, a general 'Hindu' population, losing all definitely separate languages or dialects. Even below the Vindhya, where the Dravidian element is far stronger, we find a distinction between the modified Dravidian type of the upper part of the peninsula and that of the South. For this we can only partially account. In the upper West of India, however, there is reason to believe that the introduction of an Aryan element—and very likely a Scythic element as well—has been the cause of the difference. Indeed, we meet with some curious local traditions which connect some of the (mainly) Dravidian peoples of the central region, such as the Gond, with the North.

At the eastern end of the Vindhyan country, as in Chhatisgarh-Nagpur, the Dravidian races have become intermingled with the Kolarian, and to some extent with races of Aryan origin, when these latter ultimately reached Orissa and the North of Madras—an event which, naturally, could not have occurred till comparatively late historic times.¹ When we pass below this Western and Central belt of modified Dravidian tribes, we find the South occupied by almost unmixed Dravidian peoples speaking their own languages; and, though these ultimately adopted Hinduism, it was by the efforts of individual Brahman missionaries and possibly the occasional adventures of Aryan princes, not by means of any general Aryan immigration or extensive fusion of races.²

Among these different Dravidian tribes and peoples it is evident that civilisation had made progress in varying degrees.

¹ For instance, by the time the (Hindu) Gajapati kings occupied the plains of Orissa, they had developed the Puranic religion and a State organisation such as we find in Rājputāna.

² It is to be remembered that it is quite possible for the language to be much affected, consequent on the complete diffusion of religious and caste ideas, without any very extensive admixture of the people, and certainly without going back to any very remote period. The Orissa language is very Sanskritic in character, yet no Aryans came there till the days of the Gajapati kings. The same is true also of the Marāthi language. (See p. 112, *ante*.)



There was frequently a strong tribal organisation and government, and we shall see southern kingdoms established in an apparently civilised form in very ancient times. Vast ruins of forts, tanks, and other works show that the Dravidian people were builders; agriculture flourished among them, and it is impossible to suppose that the regular institution of villages, unions of villages, and territorial divisions, of which evidences meet us everywhere, could have had no existence until Aryan teachers came and introduced them. But in so vast a congeries of people it is not to be expected that there should be any uniformity as to custom, or as to the stage of civilisation attained. We find in some places tribes much more developed than in others. The physical features of the country had probably a good deal to do with such differences. Some tribes would have been dwellers in the hills and so been less accessible to civilising influences. Others would have inhabited the broad and fertile plains, where, the difficulties of clearing the jungle once surmounted, everything would have been favourable to the development of wealth and to the growth of the art of government. Whatever the cause, the fact of the difference cannot be doubted. The best races were civilised, and had cities and armies and a monarchy; the lower races must have either fallen back, through defeat, subjection, and poverty, into a stage which we must call half barbarous, or have been isolated and never raised above a stage of society, which was primitive rather than uncivilised. Nor must we forget that after centuries of local war, and, later on, of foreign conquest and internal feud, as well as of social and religious revolution, many changes, both in advance and in retrogression, must have occurred. Tribes may now appear enslaved or in the lowest rank, that once were important and wealthy. If, as appears to have been the case, the adoption of Hindu caste rules was, in earlier days, the road to success, many tribes who clung to independence and refused conformity may have found themselves losers—forced back to a roving hill life and nomadic cultivation, or sunk to be the helots of races which marched more with the times. It is not surprising, then, to find that distinctively Dravidian customs can now only be found in certain limited localities where circumstances tended to preserve them. It will be well to examine first the tribal,



and ultimately the monarchical, organisation, as it can be traced in Dravidian countries, and then to describe what are more specifically Dravidian land-customs, including the form of village settlement.

The Dravidian Tribe and its Developments.

Of a very early tribal organisation, the Kāndh clans¹ afford us a still surviving example; and, from traces of *tribal* territories and subdivisions found in all parts of the South it is only reasonable to conclude that a similar organisation was once general. We also have some indications of the way in which patriarchal government developed into the monarchical.

The Kāndh tribes had long ago separated. One section simply merged into the low-caste population of the plains; another allowed itself to be absorbed in the militia system of a neighbouring Rājā; while a third section, which acknowledged the suzerainty of a neighbouring Hindu ruler, retained practical independence and its own patriarchal constitution.² In some respects these latter clans represent very primitive ideas: witness the practice of human sacrifice, only abolished in our own times; in others they exhibit certain marks of advancement—a strong family organisation of an earlier type than the Hindu joint-family, and well-defined customs of social life. It happened that one principal section of the tribe inhabited a part of the country represented by the Bod and Āthmālik States, and by what was once the Gūmsūr State, near the Mahānādī River, now in the Ganjam District of the Madras Presidency. The rebellion and misconduct of Gūmsūr in 1835 led to the suppression of

¹ The name is variously written, as Khond, Kāndh, &c. The tribe will not be confused with the 'Gond,' from whom they are distinct, though ethnically of the same stock. Dr. Macleane has collected a great deal of the information about this people (*Ethnology*, i. 36-51). There is more than one dialect of Kāndh speech; the language is distinct from that of the Gond tribes, and has a resemblance to Tamil and Telugu.

² 'This section,' says Sir W. Hunter (*Orissa*, ii. 72), 'wrung from their Hindu neighbours the position . . . of free allies. A system of military aids, homage, investiture of the tribal chiefs and patriarch by the Rājā, and other feudal incidents, sprang up as the superior civilisation of the Hindu prince more and more exerted its influence.'



the State, and consequently the Kāndh population was brought under direct British administration.¹

The Kāndhs regard war *and agriculture* as the only business of life; they despise trade and money concerns of all kinds. The families form connected village-groups; of these we will speak presently. These village areas are the locations of groups of families united in a larger clan-territory, now called by the borrowed Hindī name *mutthā*. This is evidently the territory of some clan-division, which we also see as the *nādu* in so many of the other districts. Each village has its chief, and the *mutthā* has its chief, called *abāyā*. When there is business which concerns a number of villages, the village chiefs meet in council under the presidency of the *abāyā*. Just as the head of the eldest family in the village is the village chief, so the head of the eldest family in the whole clan-territory or *mutthā* is the *abāyā*.² The general supremacy of the various *mutthā* has now passed to a Hindu sovereign; or, in the part of the country I am describing, to the British Government; but in former days it would seem that the heads of clans would meet in council to settle matters of such wide import as to interest the several clans in common. There is another similar tribe called *Bhūyā*, or *Bhūñyā*, in the Keūnjhar State; but they have lost their original language and now speak Uriyā. They have accepted the supremacy of the Hindu Rājā, but it is curious to observe that they couple this with an assertion of their own independent title to the soil they occupy, which they maintain by insisting on the right to instal the Rājā (putting on him the *tilak* or mark of sovereignty)—a right which they have again and again maintained by obstinate wars.³

¹ They found a sympathetic superintendent in Lieutenant Macpherson, whose efforts in helping the tribes, and putting a stop to the sacrifice of aliens to the Earth Goddess, are justly appreciated in Sir W. Hunter's *Orissa*. It is to Lieutenant Macpherson's reports that we are chiefly indebted for our knowledge of details. Sir W. Hunter has rightly attached much importance to the customs of the Kāndhs, and the full account in vol. ii. of his *Orissa* makes it unnecessary for me to do more than notice those points of custom which have a direct bearing on our subject.

² Each *mutthā* has a priest of the *Domnā* tribe for the whole territory. This recalls the Kolarian *Baigā* priest.

³ Cf. *ante*, p. 89. An account of the matter will be found in Hunter's



Here we have tribes with no monarch of their own, and consequently—even with their strong feeling for independence and tribal union—obliged sooner or later to place themselves, or fall, as the case may be, under the protective suzerainty of some foreign ruler.

In Chutiya-Nāgpur, on the other hand, the Dravidian chiefs developed a more centralised rule; and here we find the usual model—a central territory held by the Rājā or greater chief, and outlying domains governed by lesser chiefs in a sort of feudal subordination. The ablest military leader among the chiefs is usually entrusted with the frontier marches. We can still trace the site of the central demesne and its capital at Pātkum, in the Mānbhūm District.¹ The outlying chiefships were Dhālbhūm, Barābhūm, &c. These chiefships at one time fell under the suzerainty of the Haihaiyā princes in the Upper Narbadā Valley, but were not much interfered with. Descendants of the ancient chiefs still held the country when the Permanent Settlement of Bengal was made, and they were recognised as 'Zamindārs,' or landlords of their territory, paying a fixed land-revenue, or rather tribute.

All around this part of the country we have a series of Native States, and some chiefships not of sufficient rank to be 'States,' but recognised as 'landlord' estates with special terms of Settlement. Towards the west, beyond the territories of the Urāoñ chiefs above mentioned, are the lands of Gond chiefs and others, who were originally 'Nāgbañsi.'² It is not known how ancient the

Orissa, ii. 114 ff. There are some interesting remarks about the *Bhūñyā*, in the State of Bonai, in Mr. Hewitt's article above quoted (*Asiatic Quarterly Review*, April 1887, p. 404).

¹ Hwen Tshang had visited this country, then called Kirana-Suvarna, in the middle of the seventh century. He found the people 'honest and amiable,' and notes 'that they loved learning exceedingly and applied themselves to it with earnestness.' General Cunningham supposes the capital to have been at Barābāzār; but Mr. Hewitt, with better local knowledge, points out that this place is not near the Subanrikha River, as the traveller says the capital was; while Pātkum not only is so placed, but at Dalmi Village in the neighbourhood, vast ruins of an ancient city still exist.

² The Rājās and chiefs in time became Hindus and of course Rajputs; the Nāgbañsi descent, of which they were once proud, and the snake-



Chutiya-Nāgpur chiefs really are, nor when the idea of a monarchy was developed. In the case of the Gond dynasties of the Central Provinces, they did not emerge to notice till quite late times, and were overthrown by the Marāthās. Seeing the very ancient establishment of some form of kingdom in the Narbadā Valley, both in the lower valley and in the upper part at Garhāmaṅḍlā, it is always possible that the Dravidian chiefs copied the institutions of their neighbours of Aryan or northern origin. In any case, it is not easy to feel satisfied that these Uraon and other chiefships, though certainly Dravidian, were the result of a development unaided by example from without. Mr. Hewitt, however, to whose local knowledge great weight must be attached, thinks they were wholly indigenous.

We turn naturally to the more celebrated southern dynasties connected with the names of *Pāṇḍyā*, *Çerā*, and *Çoḷā* (*Çorā* or *Shozhā*),¹ which in early times extended over the greater part of Madras. The former was in the south (Madurā, &c.); *Çerā* (or *Kerāla*) was in the upper-west; and *Çoḷā* extended over the whole Tamil country. They were known to the Greek writers three centuries B.C. In this case an indigenous origin can hardly be doubted, even if it be true, as it well may be, that the name *Pāṇḍyā* is derived from an Aryan prince. The other kingdoms have not even this asserted for them.² Indeed, symbol which they once engraved on their signet-rings, have gone out of fashion (see *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, Introduction, p. lxiv.).

¹ *Çoḷā* is spelt with the peculiar Tamil letter which is poorly represented by 'l'; some think it better represented by 'zh' or a liquid 'r'—hence we sometimes find 'Shozhā' written. The *Çoḷā* and *Çerā* kingdoms are mentioned in inscriptions of Asokā (circa 250 B.C.) *Pāṇḍyā* was known to Megasthenes and Strabo. In vol. ii. of the *Southern Archaeol. Surv. Rep.* there is an account of these dynasties by Mr. Sewell. For an estimate of their antiquity see Caldwell's *History of Tinnevely*, pp. 26, 27, and Nelson's *D. M. of Madurā*, part. iii. Professor H. H. Wilson's sketch is well known (*J. R. A. S.* iii. 199).

² It is quite possible that some wandering Aryan adventurer of the *Pāṇḍu* House may have obtained a ruling position in the South; and the capital, Madura, may thus be connected with the Sanskrit name of Mathurā. See G. Oppert, p. 98, as to the popular tradition and worship of *Pāṇḍavas*. Even if an Aryan prince did obtain the rule and give his name (or rather his patronymic) to the kingdom, it does not follow that the form and constitution of government were Aryan, or that it was the first essay of the kind in the South; such, indeed, is in every way unlikely.



given the strong tribal organisation which marks the Dravidian races, to start with, it is a most natural development that either in time of war with neighbouring tribes, or by the action of personal ambition, some chief of commanding ability should have taken the decided lead, and persuaded or compelled others to act under him. That a chief thus exalted above his fellows should sometimes be a foreign adventurer coming with all the glamour of his romantic journey, as well as his personal superiority, and probable military skill, would be in no way remarkable. All over India we are familiar with the manner in which princes have gained the rule over provinces or States with which they have no connection by birth, and in which they have no strong clan-connection or support. I will only add that South Indian history has always shown the turbulent power of independent local chiefs, who evidently trace their origin to tribal chiefs of the *nādu* or local division of territory. In the days of peaceful tribal government such chiefs act in concert, and the *nād-kuttam*, or territorial assembly, maintains its influence; but soon the chiefs are forced into more or less unwilling submission to some superior, or to the suzerainty of some (possibly foreign) dynasty; in that condition, they are scarcely heard of, but when the dynasty is overthrown they throw off all restraint, and resume their freedom, very generally becoming oppressors of their people. All over the South we find these chiefs with the title of *nāyak*,¹ or *pālegārā*, and the like, who, after the overthrow of the southern dynasties, became emancipated from all control. The result in modern times has been curious; for, when the provinces became British at the beginning of the century, a Permanent Settlement on the Bengal model was ordered; and, had these various local chiefs appeared in peaceable possession of their estates, and had they accepted the inevitable as the Bengal

¹ *Nāyak* (*Nāyakku*, Tam.; *Nāyaḍu*, Tel.) is said to be a Sanskrit word. Caldwell (*Gramm.* Introduction, p. 29) refers these chiefs to 'the descendants of those soldiers of fortune by whom the Pāṇḍyā and Çōḷā kingdoms were subverted.' But in truth there is no occasion to come to any late event for the origin of local chiefs; under whatever local name, the *nāyak* or *pālegārā* are among the earliest Dravidian institutions. Even in the days before the colonisation of (what afterwards became) Arcot, tradition shows the ancient Pallava territory divided into twenty-four *kuttam*, each under its own chief.



chiefs did, they would one and all have been recognised at least as dignified landlords, with only a moderate permanent land-revenue or tribute to pay; and the prevalent tenure of the greater part of Madras might now have been that of considerable landlord estates or properties. But, so long had these petty chiefs been accustomed to turbulence and to unchecked indulgence in local fighting and marauding expeditions, that they could not settle down to a new position; consequently, they revolted, and for a time carried on what have been dignified with the name of 'Polygar wars' in the southern Presidency. The result has been that they have disappeared—all, in fact, but a few of the greater chiefs, to whom the above description has no application, and a very few of the lesser ones.

There is one curious example of the growth of a Dravidian monarchy, and the subsequent conversion of local chiefs into landlords, which deserves mention. In Malabār, on the west coast, we know that the population was made up of various immigrant races from the South and other parts, including, in time, a colony of Brahmans.¹ The ruling tribe which furnished the chiefs was called *Nāyar*.² The country and its language are Dravidian. There is a somewhat fabulous local history called the *Kerūlopati*. Of Brahmanic authorship, it is written to glorify the caste, whom it represents as the original owners of the whole land! But through the legendary matter runs a vein of real

¹ Who must have been a comparatively late addition, as they came with developed caste and Puranic religious ideas, and so must have represented a time when the Aryan settlement in the Ganges Valley had long been consolidated.

² The Nair of books, *Nāyar* is the plural of *Nāyan*. Mr. Logan derives the name from the Sanskrit *Nāyaka*. It is quite possible that the original name may have been different, and that this was adopted later with the Hindu caste. The whole details are to be found in Mr. Logan's *Malabār District Manual* (2 vols., Madras Government Press, 1887), which, in spite of some untenable theories about the origin of the *Nāyar* claims to landlordship, is full of interesting information. The *Bant* caste of South Kānara has had an almost exactly similar history. It is curious to observe that in this district, which adjoins Malabār, the date of the arrival of Brahman colonies can be fairly well fixed, and it does not occur till about the eighth century of our era. (*South Kānara D. M.* i. 145).



tradition which is often supported by other evidence.¹ Practically, it seems that in Malabār the Brahmans were content with a great measure of influence, while the Nāyar chiefs were the military and ruling class—just as the Khsatriyā Rājās and their Brahman counsellors became a feature of the Hindu polity in the North.²

What is important for our purpose is that this country was also from early times divided into districts called *nād*. The *nād* was at a later time subdivided into *deṣam*, which was a matter of military organisation, each *deṣam* having its quota of men to send to the army. Traditionally, four of these *nād* had the pre-eminence, and the group of their representative chiefs formed a council to govern the country. But the plan was not successful. Next we find that for a time a head chief was elected for three years; but, this also failing, an assembly was held to choose a king from the neighbouring country of *Çerā*. (*Kon* was the more ancient title of the king.) This elected king was to hold office for twelve years.³ It is not necessary to pursue the history in detail; the time came, as might be expected, when the overlord, by this time entitled *Parumāl*, established himself for life. At last the dominion broke up, when, as there is historical ground for believing, one of the kings became a convert to Islam and determined on a pilgrimage to Arabia. Curious enough are the legends telling how, before his departure, he distributed his territories; but they do not touch upon our point, and must be left aside with the remark that, though certain territories were

¹ For example, the legend suggests that the Brahmans were troubled by the 'Snakes' (Nāgā, or Dravidian) races, and came to terms with them. Malabār was once converted to the Jain religion, which seems in the South to have so often replaced the Dravidian snake-worship, as Buddhism did in the North.

² The Nāyar could only be *Çūdra*, and are so ranked in the Brahmanic caste-system; but they are great caste purists, and regard themselves as of very high rank with reference to the many grades below them (see p. 88, *ante*).

³ Dr. Day (*Cochin Past and Present* [Madras, 1863], p. 42) mentions that at the end of the twelve years the proper course was for the king to commit suicide, or at least to retire into a hermitage. Dr. G. Oppert (p. 69) mentions that the *Valluva kon*, or chief of the *Valluva nād*, was president of the elective council or assembly.



aggregated under one head, the general condition which ensued was the resumption of local rule by a number of independent, and doubtless rival, chieftains. The lapse of years only aggravated the weakness of such a system, and the chiefs fell before the attack, however short-lived, of the Mysore Sultāns. Out of the ruins ultimately arose the claim of the *Nāyar* chiefs and their descendants to be *janmī*, or hereditary landlords of the territories they once ruled—a claim which was admitted by the British Government, though under much misunderstanding of its real history. This landlordship, however, as usual, rather affected the legal status of the subordinate tenures than changed their form. Though not directly connected with our subject, I may be permitted to mention that these tenures arose out of a system of 'fiefs,' or service-holdings, which were provided for the minor chiefs and yeomen of *Nāyar* caste, under the greater land-holders, or *janmūdār*, as they were called. Each of the subordinate holders had his land on permanent tenancy on condition of paying a cash deposit for the use of the superior or territorial chief; the interest of this sum was the equivalent, wholly or in part, of an annual rent. Such tenures were naturally not understood by British officers of the late eighteenth century; they accordingly were supposed to be a sort of 'mortgage-tenure' which the landlords had a right to redeem; and thus the position of the subordinate holders was materially lowered. Originally the idea of 'mortgage' arose out of the fact, not only that the tenant paid a sum of money to the landlord, but there were customary rules for revising the terms on the death of the landlord or at certain recurring periods.

But to return to the monarchical organisation. Though a central government was established, the *nād* divisions long retained their importance. We continue to hear of a great council of 600 chiefs of *nāds* assembled from time to time.¹ This institution, in fact, lasted down to a late period, for in 1746 we find a British officer reporting: 'These Nairs, being heads of the Calicut people, resemble the parliament and do not obey the

¹ See Logan's *Malabār D. M.* i. 88, 89. It was probably a united assembly of the chiefs of the 150 *ṭarā*, or family groups, for each of the four leading *nād*.



King's dictates in all things, but chastise his ministers when they do unwarrantable things.'

The earlier Dravidian plan seems to have been not to give a general produce-share or land-revenue to the chief or sovereign, but to assign¹ 'royal farms' or lands, cultivated by slaves, for the support of his dignity. We shall notice the same plan, on a smaller scale, in the *mānjhikas*, or lands for the chief, set apart in each village of Chutiyā-Nāggpur. The same institution appears also in the little kingdom of Coorg, where the *pamniya*, or royal farms, were still recognisable at the British Settlement.² In the Chutiyā-Nāggpur States we see further how the chiefs became dissatisfied, or unable to live on the original provision, and how they imposed the contribution of a share in the produce on other lands, exempting only the priest's lands and those of the original settlers and privileged families who furnished the hereditary village-officers.

Whatever, then, may be the antiquity of the monarchical form among the Dravidians, and its claim to be pre-Aryan in point of origin, it is evident that from the remotest times a division of the country—evidently marking the territories of different clans under their chiefs—was a universal feature. And this prepares us to expect that some minor subdivision inside the *nād* was equally ancient.³

Dravidian Village-organisation in Orissa

Turning now to the *village* as found among Dravidian races, I will revert first to the less advanced members of the race, and describe the Kāndh custom as regards the *village*, as I have already done on the subject of tribal-organisation. The tribe, or

¹ See Logan's *Malabār D. M.* i. 223, 225.

² Coorg, it may be mentioned, is another instance of a country held by a number of proud independent chiefs of *nāds* without much coherence; and so they fell under the power of a foreign Rājā, who reduced the Coorg chieftains but left them their lands on permanently favourable terms, constituting the *jamma* tenure of Coorg.

³ In the early attempts to settle the 'Jaghire' territory about Chingleput in 1795-9 we find a class of people still surviving called *Nātvar* (Nauttwar of the Reports; see *Mirasi Papers*, p. 8). These were certainly *nādu-vār*, chiefs of the old *nād* divisions. Cf. the *Nāduvār* of Kānara.



rather the clan, is first subdivided, it will be remembered, into *mutthā*, which I may call the minor-clan group, each descended from a common progenitor.¹ Each *mutthā* territory contains a number of hamlets or villages. We have no direct information, as usual, as to what caused the various families of one *mutthā* to separate themselves into smaller groups. But, however formed, these villages represent small aggregates of independent families, kept together not by any holding of land in common, but by some connection of *totem* or for some other clan reason, and under the control of a hereditary chief who was always, unless specially incapacitated, the head of the eldest family in the group.

The stage of progress represented by the Kāndh tribes does not place the family in the same position as the Hindu joint-family, where ancestral land is regarded as the joint property of the whole body, and the house-father is merely the representative, and is strictly limited as to his power of disposal of any part of the ancestral estate.

Among the Kāndh, the head of the family alone owns the homestead and all the land attached to it. His sons continue to live with him even after marriage; so that there is a sort of house-communion, and all share in the family meal prepared by the mother or—I suppose, possibly—the grandmother. The sons have no property during the father's life; it is only on his death that they will divide the land equally, daughters receiving no share, on the ground that they are unable to defend their possession.² The eldest son alone, unless incapacitated, succeeds to the chiefship if the father is village-headman. There is no trace whatever of each family having a certain fractional share in the entire village area, still less of any common ownership.³ There is no evidence as to what was the rule or principle of allotting

¹ Macpherson's Report, quoted in *Orissa*, ii. 72.

² The father's brothers succeed in default of direct descendants; and, in default of all heirs, the land is divided among the other families of the village.

³ This is expressly stated; see *Orissa*, ii. 72. Other Dravidian customs are noted, from Dalton's *Ethnography*, in Dr. Balfour's *Cyclopædia* ii. (Art. Kandh), such as that the youth of both sexes are separated, the males having their own club-house, in which they sleep at night; all the girls are kept in a separate dormitory under charge of a matron.



lands to each family, or even to each clan. It is observed that the clan, or rather the minor-clan (= *mutthā*) was recognised in its *locale* simply by priority of occupation; and within the *mutthā* it would seem that sometimes the boundaries of each village were fixed and the waste allotted to each. Throughout large tracts, however, the villages had practically no boundaries whatever, and a Kāndh could claim any unoccupied land within the tribal area; that means, I understand, within the limits of his own *mutthā* or immediate clan territory.¹ Within the village areas, again, it seems that each family simply took out of the abundant waste² just what piece of land suited its means and requirements to clear and cultivate. Evidently a strong abstract idea of property in land had not arisen; land became property when it was cleared and occupied; while it lay waste it was hardly regarded as 'property' at all. No doubt, however, the entire area of land held within the *mutthā* location was regarded as a territorial possession, so that a hostile tribe trying to encroach would at once be driven out. Land once occupied and cleared was not only regarded as heritable property, but it could be sold by calling witnesses and informing the *mutthā* chief; this was done, not to gain his consent (so Lieutenant Macpherson informs us), but to secure the transaction being known.³ The farms or homesteads forming a village-group are not closely placed together; they are, however, so far in a group that there are recognised servile castes or hereditary menials, blacksmiths, potters, herdsmen, and distillers, who 'hang about the outskirts of the village or live in a separate row of huts assigned to them.'⁴ Thus in some parts

¹ Macpherson's Report, quoted in *Orissa*, ii. 210.

² In 1841 it was reported that only about *one-eighth* of the Kāndh territory was in the occupation of individuals, so that there must have been ample room for any settler of the clan to take up what he would, and acquire his 'title' by occupation and first clearing.

³ The sale is completed by the vendor leading the buyer to the hamlet where the field lies; and, calling together five husbandmen of the place, he delivers to him a handful of earth and publicly receives part of the price. I find a similar form of land transfer mentioned among the Coorgs.

⁴ This is still the characteristic of Madras villages generally (see p. 68, *ante*).



the Kāndh village or hamlet consists of two 'streets'—one a double row of family houses with a barrier at each end; the other a row of inferior huts for the servile families. In other parts the hamlet consists of a row of houses with the menials' huts clustered at one end. In other hamlets, again, the 'patriarch's' house is in the centre, near the sacred tree, which was always either left when the clearing was made, or was planted on the establishment of a new location.

The village chief has no special holding of land in virtue of his official headship; nor do I gather from the authorities that there are any village officers connected with the 'Rāj' and concerned with the collection of the Rājā's dues or with the extension of cultivation. This happens in later times. The clan chiefs of all grades have no special remuneration beyond their personal holdings, though they receive occasional free-will offerings. Their authority is solely derived from the family and clan connection and eldership.

West Coast Land-Tenures

We may now turn to the west coast districts, about the government of which we have already spoken. Here there are no village groups, and we have a totally different result of Dravidian customs. There seems here to have been, in very early times, some differentiating cause at work, because we have already, in the comparatively narrow space between the mountains and the sea, two different dialects, the Malayālam and the Tulu; Kanarese¹ also appears in the north, and the Coorg (Koḍagu) dialect may be reckoned as separate.²

Whatever may have been the original form of independent land-holding, we have now to take note of the Dravidian custom

¹ Kanarese, or the language of Karnāta, more properly belongs to the north-west corner of the Madras plains—Bellary and the neighbourhood. It will be remembered that, by a strange freak of accident, the term 'Carnatic' has become applied to the *east* coast; really the Karnāta district was in the north-west.

² There is no doubt that India shows many instances of the readiness with which dialects become localised when there are any physical features of mountains and rivers to separate the people. In the Himalayan valleys it is quite surprising how the dialects differ one from the other, especially as to the vocabulary—the names for different objects.



as affected by the adoption of caste, and of the joint-family idea which may have come from outside. Then, too, the whole country was dominated by local chiefs and their followers, with the result that when their rule passed away their estates became landlordships with a number of subordinate tenures which represented the 'fiefs' or holdings of the minor chiefs and yeomen of the military caste, as I have above described. There being no village-groups in the west coast country, the interior organisation of the *janmi* estates was peculiar, and depended on the strong sense of union which the Nāyar families possessed. The basis of the territorial organisation, coming down from very early times, was the *nād*, and every *nād* contained a number of Nāyar family groups called *taṛa*,¹ while Brahman groups were called *grāma* and the inferior castes by other names. The lands belonging to each *taṛa* were not, I understand, necessarily contiguous or even in the same jurisdiction. The group of blood relations forming the *taṛa* is the *taṛavāda*. Owing to causes which cannot here be gone into, the principle of the matriarchate prevails, and the members of the *taṛa* are *as many of the descendants from the common ancestress as remain united*. The Nāyar, and other families of rank, prefer to remain undivided; and the common property of the whole *taṛavāda* is managed by the *Kāraṇavur*, or elders of the group. The *taṛavāda* can at any time be completely separated into a number of new groups, but only when all consent. As long as they remain undivided, every member, male or female, *has an equal share in the common property, though no one can claim to have that share separated off*. This family union does not prevent the members having the practically separate enjoyment of property and of the isolated fortress-like houses, or rather premises, so picturesquely described by Mr. Logan. For each member who has his or her separate family house, with the fields around it, forms a branch called *tāvali*; only the theory is that the partition is not real till a legal deed has been executed by the whole body.² This association, it will be observed, is very different from the Aryan joint-family, in which, apart from the fact that the descent is patriarchal, the several members have larger or smaller shares

¹ See *Malabār D. M.* i. 82 ff., 131, 133, 154-4.

² See especially *Malabār D.M.* i. 153.



according to their place in the table of descent. The *taravāda*, in fact, is a small 'minor-clan,' sept, or *gens*, which recognises its continuing bond of union by blood as a matter of dignity, and has some at least of its property undivided.¹ But, in reality, the plan of separating off the residences and the fields attached to them (*tāvāli*) prevents the theoretic community of family property from being practically inconvenient. The less dignified castes, who have also the Hindu idea of the joint-estate, carry out partition without objection. 'The process of disintegration,' says Mr. Logan, 'goes on continually, except among the highest classes, who pride themselves on maintaining a large common stock.' I should not fail to remark that the 'common stock' must, in any case, be maintained, under the Malabar custom of inheritance, I had almost said, automatically. This kind of joint estate is quite unique, and could not occur in any community with different customs of inheritance. For, as each male member of a *taravāda* dies, his share, as well as any property he may have separately acquired, *must*—unless he has gifted it away in his lifetime—go to the whole family, for *he can have no direct heirs*; his children inherit, not from him, but in their *mother's taravāda*.²

To the north of Malabār lie the two districts of Kānara (Kānnaḍa). These appear to have had much the same kind of tenure as Malabār; only that, being nearer or more accessible to the neighbouring States, they had fallen much more completely under the power of the 'Hindu' dynasties. At one time Kānara formed part of the *Kērala* or *Āerū* (Dravidian) kingdom, and then seems to have been conquered by Kadamba kings; in time it was prosperous under the rule of Vijayanagar and Bednūr, and finally came under the Mysore Sultans. 'Prior to

¹ Where some members of the group have some hereditary local dignity (*sthānam*), it is customary that a portion of the joint property should be made over, for life only, to that member for the support of his position.

² The *taravāda* in no wise resembles the joint-village of the North Indian *pattidāri* type; but as a group it has points of resemblance to the *khel* or minor clan of the north-west frontier in which common relationship is acknowledged, and the equal right to a share in the tribal property; only that in this latter case the share is nearly always divided out in a separate lot.



the introduction of Brahmans under the auspices of Kadamba kings in the eighth century,' writes the author of the *South Kanāra D. M.*, 'the early agricultural population of Tuluva seems to have held a subordinate position to the *Nāyar* or *Bant*, who were military adherents of the chieftains who ruled as feudatories of an over-lord, who in his turn recognised some more distant suzerain.'¹ In fact, the original separate holdings all over the district were gradually aggregated into lordships, under *Bant* castemen, who were possibly of the same origin as the Malabār *Nāyar*.² As usual, when the chiefship decayed, the families clung to the lands as owners; and the principal kind of hereditary estate, held by *Bant* and also by Brahman castemen, was the *mūlāvarg*, the estate going back to the 'root' or 'origin.' Owing to various causes, the estates became somewhat broken up, and so consisted of various plots scattered through several of the local aggregates of holdings (*māgane*) which do duty for villages. They are held by undivided families; and the same rule of inheritance by the sister's son (here called the *abiyasantana* custom) prevails as in Malabār. The term *varg* seems to be derived from the registers kept up under the early kings; a considerable estate of several plots would occupy a whole page in the palm-leaf books.³

These superior holdings, which correspond to the *javmi* of

¹ *South Kanāra D. M.* i. 54, by J. Sturrock (Madras: 1894). North Kanāra is described in *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. xv.

² They are now quite distinct. The Malabār *Nāyar* have adopted certain limits beyond which their caste will not permit them to dwell.

³ This word is derived, according to *South Kanāra D. M.* i. 118, from the Sanskrit *varga*, which is said to mean 'a leaf.' The writer of the North Kanāra memoir (*Bombay Gazetteer*, xv. 182) interprets it 'account.' But the Sanskrit *varga* means neither; it means 'kind,' 'class,' or 'category,' and is rather a term of art (used in grammar, philosophy, &c.), and so is unlikely to have come into use in connection with tenures—unless, indeed, it was locally adopted with some special meaning. On the other hand, many Arabic words found their way into use with the Mysore assessments, and very likely before that—e.g., *waidegeni*, a tenant on special contract (Arabic, *wa'da*), and *mauje*, *majre* (*mausa*, *mazrā*). It seems possible, then, that the word is really from the Arabic *warq*, which does mean a 'leaf.' Some of the records spoken of (locally called *kaddatam*) were perhaps seen by Sir T. Munro as late as 1800, but they have since perished (*D. M.* i. 94, 95). It is curious to observe that the superior



Malabār, have, as might be expected, numerous sub-tenures, which really are exactly on the same footing as the *kānam* holdings of Malabār. The *mūlgēnī* is the subordinate (military caste) holding under the *mūlavargdār*. It is permanent, the rent cannot be raised; and the amount of rent is sometimes reduced with reference to a fee paid in advance, the interest of which is equivalent to a portion of the rental.¹ Ordinary tenants are called *ṣāligēnē*, or if with a specified term of years, *vaidegēnē*.

In short, the *original* Dravidian agriculturist holdings, of which it can certainly be said that there was no community or joint-holding in villages, were overborne by over-lord tenures, with their connected fiefs and minor holdings. Under these, the original inhabitants became serfs or, at best, tenants. The joint ownership of the superior estates themselves seems very

hereditary character of the *varg* was never lost. Similar independent holdings that have been established on escheated or abandoned lands are distinguished as *sirkārgēnī varg*—*i.e.* established under the authority of the Government. Though in every way as secure and as valuable, they are not *mūlā*, or vested with the magic of high-caste 'inheritance.'

¹ See *South Kānara D. M.* p. 181. I cannot understand why the Board of Revenue in January 1818 should have written that the *mūlgenigar* was a class unknown in Malabār. In reality the tenure was exactly that of the *kānakkārar* in Malabār, only that in the latter country the details of tenure forms were better preserved, the country having been less subject to changes by foreign intervention. Extravagant ideas of the position of the 'landlords' were, however, early entertained; and, as was not unnatural in 1792, English ideas of tenure were largely imported into the discussion. As already stated (p. 170), the holdings of the subordinate classes of Nāyar came to be regarded (and treated) by our early English officials as 'mortgages'—with which they really had nothing to do. Mortgages, as such, are well known in Malabar, but are quite distinct. This idea of 'mortgage' not being attached to the Kānara *mūlgenī*, the two tenures were supposed to be different. But the Board themselves acknowledge the payment of the fee or *premium*, and in fact state all the features which show the real identity of the two tenures. Both were in origin not contract tenancies, but subordinate 'fiefs' for the minor ranks under the greater owners who held the *varg*, or estate in chief. The *mūlgēnī* holding was originally not alienable; it seems probable that some of its early features had become lost in Kānara, while they survived in Malabar, and that thus the tenures came to be distinguished.



likely to have been due to the adoption of Hindu caste; and it would certainly tend to keep up the position and the dignity of the families; while the peculiar customs of inheritance would help to maintain the joint-estate in the manner already alluded to.

Dravidian Villages in South-western Bengal

Leaving the West Coast, as the home of so many curious tenures in which Dravidian custom has been only partially preserved, we pass to the other side of India—to South-western Bengal, where we have a survival of the Dravidian *village-formation*, and one which indicates a somewhat more advanced stage than that which the Kāndh village represents. The Dravidian form of village, as we see it in the Chutiyā-Nāgpur districts,¹ was apparently based on the Kolarian model, but more consolidated and better organised. Here we find the grouping of families, and their settlement in compact village sites under their own officers and provided with a staff of artisans and menials resident and entitled to their regular remuneration. We have definite village boundaries and arrangements for the extension of cultivation. Agriculture was always esteemed, and the strongest attachment to landed-property is manifested.² In every village there seems to have been a more or less distinct plan or method of location, and of allotting the different holdings. First, there was set aside an allotment of land (*manjhi-has* shortened to *majhhas*), which, as its name implies, was for the support of the chief of the district (not village). Another land division, or *khānt* (this is a borrowed Hindu term), was assigned

¹ See pp. 153, 166, *ante*, where an account is given of the Dravidian occupation of these districts.

² Mr. J. F. Hewitt remarks (*Journ. Soc. Arts*, xxxv. 622, May 1887): 'The feeling of proprietary right in the lands held by their forefathers was, among the families with privileged right, stronger than among the Kol. Members of these families believe firmly in the indefeasibility of their rights; and I have met Urāoñ cultivators who have lived all their lives and held land in villages beyond the limits of their own country, who named to me the villages where their forefathers had owned lands which they had never seen, and believed firmly in their right to return and claim a share in the lands should they wish to do so.'



to the hereditary headman or chief of the village, *mundā*.¹ A third lot went to the *pāhan*, or priest, and was called *pāhanai*.²

The families who represent the first settlers and original 'first clearers' of the soil are distinguished as *bhūvīhār*, and are regarded as privileged in various ways: the family of the hereditary-headman always belongs to this number.

The rest of the ordinary, or non-privileged families and settlers (possibly of later date), have land allotments suitable to their requirements; but these were in former days periodically redistributed, so as to give each holder his turn at both the good and bad. An exception was made in favour of certain holdings which were, for special reasons, regarded as permanent: for example, those (now called *jalsāzan*, i.e. water-providing), for which the cultivator had laboriously constructed a small reservoir by damming up the angle of some ravine, and so supplying irrigation for his terraced rice-fields on the hillside. When new settlers were to be admitted, the whole of the holdings of the moveable class were redistributed, in conjunction, no doubt, with all the new holdings proposed to be created out of the waste.

When the princes of Dhālbhūm and its dependent States were well established, they introduced a change into the villages; the old 'chief's' lands (*majhhas*) were naturally appropriated to the use of the King; and a second headman, called *māhato*, was appointed to look after the Rājā's interests; accordingly, another special allotment of land (*māhtoāi*) had to be found for

¹ From this title of the headman it may suggest itself that the village had been originally established by Kolarian *mundās*.

² The *pāhanai*, or priest's, land was curiously organised; it was subdivided into three fields to make provision for a triple order of worship. First, there was the *bhūt-khetā*, or provision for the local spirits (*bhūt*), and the divinities of the village (*gāoñ-devatā*), whose abode was in the sacred grove or tree belonging to the village; next, there was a field for the *deṣautī*, or deity of the whole district (*deṣ*)—that is, the deity whose influence was conterminous with the clan-territory under the chief (*manjhū*); thirdly, there was the field called *dātīkātārī*, or land for the service of the earth god (or goddess?)—the general object of worship. Naturally, in after times, as the people adopted the Hindu faith, the *pāhan* tended to disappear, and his holding diminished or else lapsed into the form of some revenue-free holding by the Brahman who took his place.



his support. And yet another group of fields was set apart; for it became the rule to allow what were called *beṅkhetā*, or lands held free of payment, for the maintenance of the cultivators and labourers who tilled the 'royal' lands.¹

But the time came when the requirements of the Rājā's Court could no longer be satisfied by the produce of the *majhhas* lands; possibly it was because the princes had in many instances granted or assigned these lands to cadets of their own family or as rewards to other persons. Whatever the motive, the custom soon arose of also levying a *share of the produce*; the share was taken on all lands that were not privileged as belonging to the deities, or to the *bhūñhār* families, or to the village officers. It became the practice to designate all land which was thus made liable to the grain-share by the term *rājhas*. When the days of the native rule passed away, and the Rājā's descendants were recognised as feudatory chiefs, or in other cases as 'Zamīndārs,' the *majhhas* lands (if not already assigned or alienated), became the 'Zamīndār's' special holding, while the *rājhas* lands became the ordinary rent-paying *raiyyat's* lands. The older *bhūñhārī* lands, under the theory of the landlord Settlement, fell into the category of 'tenant' lands also, and that without any legal provision for maintaining the privilege of the holders. This gave rise to many troubles and to more than one local rebellion; for the older families had, as I have observed, strong ideas about their ancient rights; they could not, and justly so, conceive how the Zamīndār representative of the former ruling houses could be entitled to destroy old customary rights and privileges, merely because he had become 'landlord.' In the end our Government directed a special Settlement to be made, and enacted a law designed to preserve the tenures—viz. the 'Chutiya-Nāgpur Tenures Act' of 1869, supplemented by the local 'Tenancy Act' of 1879. The *bhūñhār* families are now exempted from any further increase of their 'rents.'²

¹ In other cases we find the 'royal lands' cultivated by slaves or serfs. This was the case in Coorg; the foreign (*Halēri*) Rājā there assumed the right to the *panviya* lands throughout the province, and had them tilled by slaves. These Rājās also levied a land revenue, in kind, in addition.

² I will only add that there have been differences of opinion about the value and sufficiency of the legal provisions enacted. I have been told

I shall not at this stage offer any remarks as to how the Dravidian and other pre-Aryan institutions naturally produced the existing *raiyatwāri* form of village; such remarks will be more suitable in another place, when we come to consider the connection of the tribe, or the tribal stage of society, with the village grouping of land-holdings. But I may notice how easily in the midst of such villages special lordships might grow up, and how in such a country as Malabār, for example, the exceptionally 'aristocratic' joint-families, or *taravāda*, kept united by pride of caste and ceremonial purity, might have produced land-lord-villages, held 'in common' or undivided, had not the features of the country and other circumstances been unfavourable to the formation of such village estates.

But it will be observed that nothing in any Kolarian or Dravidian custom as such, suggests a *joint* tribal holding of village or other areas; nor does it show a village owned in shares by a particular group of families. Indeed, the joint-family does not yet seem to be in existence. It is only when we come to the Nāyar families who have adopted caste and the Hindu law that we find their families keeping together and avoiding partition as lessening their dignity.

that protection was not carried far enough, and that in some cases the claims of the interested persons had not always been correctly understood. It is only right to mention the fact, but I cannot go into any argument on the subject. The whole of the details above given are derived partly from Mr. Hewitt's papers and partly from various official reports and correspondence relating to the Tenancy Act and the recording of rights under the Tenures Act.



CHAPTER V

*THE ARYAN AND LATER CONQUERING RACES AND THEIR
CONNECTION WITH THE LAND*

IN the last chapter, endeavouring to discover specific customs characteristic of the early tribes over whom the Aryans obtained dominion, we could only light upon fragmentary evidence; we find indications afforded by occasional survivals in exceptionally favourable localities, and we can take note of the general agricultural and social condition of parts of the country which are known to have been peopled chiefly by non-Aryan races. We are entitled also to draw certain inferences from a number of incidents—each perhaps small in itself—which, combined, produce a conclusive effect on the mind. It is hardly possible not to conclude that while the earliest settlements were in village groups, they did not represent bodies of men owning the land in common. If there was any general prevalence of the idea of a unit estate, or village held in shares at all in the manner of existing joint-villages, we should surely have some trace of it; but there is none. Nor does the 'Hindu' joint-family seem to have been known at first; we only find it among the higher Dravidian races, when they had taken, as they did almost with vehemence, to caste ideas and pride of religion. Once more, we cannot help noticing that the village of separate holdings is characteristic of the countries where the old or non-Aryan races were most widely spread, and were least disturbed. If, moreover, we turn to the indications afforded by the Aryan literature, we cannot help noticing that, whether in Manu, or the *Jātakas*, or any other, when the village is alluded to, it is the *raiyatwāri* form, with its hereditary 'headman.' And in all the traditional



evidence we have of the early Rājās and their mode of government, the villages are clearly groups of individual free cultivators, and not co-sharing lords of a petty manor. How, then, did the Rājputs (Aryans) get their joint-villages? What notions had they about property in land? As we have observed what we could of non-Aryan custom, so we may try and trace what is specifically Aryan. And then Jat and other races have established 'joint' villages as much as the Aryans, so that we must go on to see what further influence these later tribes have had on village land-holding.

Of the effects of the Aryan settlements in India itself in the earliest period, we have no real evidence beyond certain scattered allusions in Vedic literature, and some faint local traditions. We can fairly surmise that the chief feature of their conquest was the establishment of local kingdoms or chiefships. We also remember that one part of the Aryan tribes—that connected with the Panjāb (or north-west Himalayan) Hills, the Indus Valley, and the upper part of Western India—was separated from the others, so that these 'non-Brahmanical' Aryans, as I have called them, had no part in the later development of caste and of all the peculiarities of the 'Hindu law.' One result of this would have been that such tribes would mix more readily with other races, and with the superior tribes of the pre-existing populations, while very probably infusing into them something of their superior energy and organising power. It does not seem likely that the earliest Aryan settlers had yet any such definite forms of land-holding as to produce any great changes, except in so far as the erection of a local lordship is a change; such Aryan settlers of the humbler order as took to farming would in all probability form villages on the pattern they found existing. The more striking institutions which we associate with the name 'Hindu'—the quasi-feudal system of Rājputānā, the old ideals of monarchy still traceable in the existing Hindu States, the Puranic religion, the law of the text-books, and the complete establishment of caste, these are all due to the Aryans settled, beyond the Saraswati and the Jamnā, in the Ganges plain. When we come to later and more settled times, under the influence of the Hindu system, the actual knowledge we have of Rājput and other similar tribally and individually



founded villages, comes from local traditions, bardic legends, and sometimes from family histories, called *baṅsāvālī*.

In the attempt further to describe specific Aryan (Hindu) customs of village-tenure, and the customs of the other Northern tribes who followed their footsteps and made Northern India their chief home, we shall find that the best illustration will be derived from actual examples rather than from general and abstract description. Nevertheless, a chapter must be devoted to the discussion of some general matters of Aryan custom. In the first place, we have often been told that there is a specially *agricultural caste* among the Hindus; and this has, perhaps, tended not a little to spread the idea that Indian village institutions are essentially or mainly Aryan. This question of caste in relation to land-holding should be elucidated. Then, too, we shall in our subsequent allusions to specific village histories continually mention the *clans* of Rājputs, and the establishment of Rājput monarchies and chiefships; so that it is essential to give a brief account of the constitution of the older Hindu society and its government—as far as it bears on the land question. Lastly, we have some indications, in Hindu texts and elsewhere, of the general ideas held regarding property, and especially property in land, and these it will be well to consider. A final section on the effects of the settlement of post-Aryan tribes and of the Moslem conquest can also most conveniently be included in this part of the work.

SECTION I.—ARYAN CASTE IN ITS RELATION TO AGRICULTURE

Everyone who has opened an Indian Census Report knows into what a multitude of *castes* Indian society is divided; the system became so well established, and it coincided so easily with distinction of race and clan, that, in a certain sense at any rate, it became applied to Sikh and Muhammadan people as well as those called 'Hindu.' These castes are the growth of centuries. They have, in fact, multiplied, divided and again sub-divided times without number. Difference of caste, implying the general inability of one to eat, drink, or smoke with the other, and making intermarriage out of the question, has arisen, partly out



of religious distinctions, partly out of racial or tribal differences, and still more out of hereditary crafts, occupations, and modes of life.

In the Vedas we only see the beginnings of such a system. But long before any idea of religious and ceremonial distinction was developed, the tribes appear to have recognised a certain 'classification,' which, in fact, became the foundation of the caste-system.

There were, from the first, priests, or rather singers of those sacred hymns and invocations, the proper use of which had the greatest effect in securing victory and abundant spoil. And the course of adventure which the advancing tribes were pursuing could not fail to bring into prominence the warrior class¹—especially those noble and distinguished families which gave birth to the natural leaders of the clans, and which afterwards furnished the Rājās and chiefs who arose out of the earlier tribal organisation. These two classes grew into the 'twice-born' (Brahman and Kshatriya) castes. Both, from the first, had the least possible connection with agriculture, except as over-lords of the soil and receivers of shares in the produce.

Setting apart these two chief castes, all the bulk of the people are merely spoken of collectively as *Vīṣ*, which later became *Vaiṣya*—i.e. 'the (Aryan) common people.'² Every invading army or colonising nation, however, comes with a host of camp followers and inferiors, probably of various origin; among the Aryans some had apparently been admitted at least to the outer-courts of the community, and had conformed to Aryan customs. Accordingly, as the settlement progressed, so another (fourth) group came to be distinguished. Perhaps one of the tribes early admitted within the Aryan 'pale' may have originally had the name of *Çūdra*; or it is possible that some of the camp-followers, or serfs, were called by this name.³

But no sooner were Aryan tribes settled in India than mixed

¹ King Alfred in his Saxon translation of Boethius remarks: 'Unless their are priests, soldiers, and workmen—*gebedmen*, *fyrðmen*, and *weorcmen*—no king can show his craft': quoted in F. Seebohm's *English Village Community*, 3rd ed. p. 138.

² See Zimmer, p. 214.

³ That the fourth group was an after addition will, I think, be



aces began to grow up. In fact, the Aryan influence extended as much by mixed marriages, alliances, and conversions, as by direct conquest. Before long the converted aboriginal and mixed races acknowledging Hindu customs, alike required a new name; they became fused into one general class, and were called *Çūdra*. The races who were not received into the pale at all remained 'out-caste.'

These broad divisions soon came to split up into many groups, and into subdivisions innumerable, and the old general names remained chiefly in books, and were used as generic terms rather than as actual caste-names.

The military caste of the older organisation is now represented by a few of the higher families, who still call themselves *Kshatriyā*, as well as by the mass of 'Rājput' clans¹ and castes, some of, perhaps, 'Indo-Scythian,' and others of more or less mixed race. The bards early recognised thirty-six 'royal' houses, which were divided into 'Solar' and 'Lunar' branches, but included the later 'Fire-born' (*Agni kulā*) houses,² as well as, if Colonel Tod's lists may be trusted, some Northern

admitted. The name *Çūdra* occurs but *once* in the Ṛgveda and that in the *Purushasūkta*; but this *maṇḍala* is, I believe, held to be a late addition to the original. See Caldwell, Introduction, p. 111 ff, and Zimmer's note on Ptolemy's *Sudroi*, p. 435; and on the subject generally, Zimmer, p. 204 ff.

¹ It is curious that, as a *general caste-name*, *Khsatriyā*, or in the Hindī form *Chatri*, has almost disappeared, except as presently noted. It is commonly said that the large caste of *Khatri*, the shop-keeping and trading caste, derives its name from the Sanskrit *Khsatriyā*. I believe this to be doubtful, for why should the other form, *Chatri*, also survive? The military, or royal caste, is now usually called *Rājput* (= sons of the king), and in some places, generically, *Thākur*, barons or lords of the soil. But it is curious to note that as the *Rājputs* have in so many cases descended to the peasant rank, and become mere landholders in villages, cultivating their own fields, the higher families disdain the name. In Oudh the chiefs always call themselves *Chatri*, and would be insulted if told they were *Rājput*. So it is in Kāngrā (Ibbetson, *Ethnography*, § 456); the near descendants of the ruling chiefs returned themselves in the census as *Chatri* or *Khsatriyā*, to distinguish them from the *Rājput* peasantry or cultivating landholders.

² This later addition is very remarkable, and points distinctly to an extension of the 'military caste.' See p. 118, *ante*, and Tod, ii. 408-9, and i. 82.



princely houses—the *Kāthī*, *Bālā*, *Hūna*, &c. To these divisions belong all the multitude of Rājput clans of the present day—the *Çauhān*, *Tumār*, *Rahtor*, *Solankhi*, *Pramāra*, and many more whose names will occur in the sequel. Others, like the *Jādu*, *Tharējā*, and *Sammā*, are probably still older, and connected with the earliest (non-Brahmanical) Aryans. The Brahmans have also split up into a number of distinct branches, many of whom are quite strangers one to the other, and are looked upon as inferior by the rest. Some have descended so low as to take to cultivation. All the rest of the people, the original *Vaiçya* and the *Çūdra*, have long ago been classified anew into hundreds of castes largely dependent on trade or occupation, some of them being more nearly Aryan, and the vast majority being mixed, or more approaching the 'aboriginal' races.

That originally the Aryan tribes were a pastoral people is generally admitted. But a people occupying, even for a time, a country like that beyond the north-west frontier, consisting of mountain lands and intramontane valleys, could not possibly subsist without growing cereal crops; and we are not surprised to find several allusions to agriculture as essential to life in the earliest Vedic hymns.¹

These allusions to agriculture in the R̥gveda are often introduced only by way of metaphor or simile; and there is no description of any form of land-holding or mode of settlement for agricultural purposes. The modes of tillage known seem to have been of quite a primitive character; but in many respects the same character attaches to the implements as well as the methods in use at the present day. It seems that as the Atharvan Veda represents a later stage of Aryan progress, so the allusions in the book indicate a somewhat more extended

¹ *Kṛṣhtī*, the Vedic word for 'people' in general, is connected with *kṛṣhī* = cultivated land, and *karsha*, a plough (Zimmer, p. 141). But this merely shows that the general notion of mankind living by the produce of the ground is very ancient. From the way in which the phrase *pañca kṛṣhtīyāḥ*, the 'five people or tribes,' is used, it is evidently synonymous with *pañca-janāḥ* or *pañca mānava*—i.e. the nation at large (see G. Oppert, p. 577, note). It does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the early Aryans were naturally agricultural by habit, rather than pastoral.



or advanced agriculture. It is here alone, for example, that we hear of ploughing, evidently in the open fields and heavy soil of the Gangetic plain, with yokes of six and eight oxen.¹ It is here also that we hear of the iron ploughshare (*paviravanta*). This, however, does not imply more than the primitive plough still in use. The plough—in two chief forms, one heavier and the other lighter—is to this day made in the rudest manner; and the share is only a pointed cap of hammered iron covering the spike of wood which digs the furrow. As soon as the art of hammering the soft and excellent iron which abounds in the Himalayas became known, the preparation of this iron cap or point would be among the simplest discoveries.² So, too, the mention of water-channels (*khanitra*, Rgv. 7.49.2) does not indicate any advanced artificial irrigation works; it is just such a natural diversion of a stream in a valley as can be seen in abundance all along the Haro river in Hazāra, for instance, or in fact anywhere in the mountains where a stream is led on to the fields, and sometimes carried along the hillside for some distance.

There is no specific mention of the crops grown; the words relating to the 'grain' are of general import only. It is clear, however, that though nothing is stated as to who cultivated the land, whether the tribesmen, or serfs, and subject people, there is no indication that agriculture was despised, as it afterwards was. From several passages we gather that the plough as the producer of food was thought of importance; and in one place the singer, apparently addressing people in general, urges them to leave idleness and gambling with dice, and attend to their fields and to getting food. We shall have to speak of the Vedic *grāma*, or village, in another connection; but there is not the least suggestion that it is a group of land-holdings held in common, or in any other way. But the idea of fields, owned by some one, seems familiar, from the allusion found to measuring

¹ *Ath. Veda*, 6.91.1; 3.17.3.

² The Sanskrit *pavī* evidently implies only such a rude iron tip or point as is in use at present; for the word also is used for 'spear-head.' A rude process of smelting iron (in a malleable form) at a low temperature by charcoal, is evidently of great antiquity in the Hill States and in many other places.



the fields with a staff of reed; and to there being bare strips or balks (*khilya*) left between the fields.¹

So far, then, as the early Aryans are concerned, agriculture appears to have been in no disrepute; nor can we learn whether it was the business of any particular tribe or class. It is probable that the very fact of settlement would have effected a sort of natural division of labour and adjustment of suitable occupations. Some of the tribes or families would take to agriculture, and these would form the majority of those who remained stationary when the rest moved on. Naturally, therefore, the farther the Aryans moved into India, the more would the advancing body be composed of Brahmans and fighting tribes, and the more disposed these would be to relegate agriculture to the humbler classes, and to the conquered 'aborigines' and the mixed races who so soon sprang up and multiplied.

Whatever may be the true date of the *Laws of Manu*, we have no earlier literary mention of agriculture, after the Vedic hymns. In *Manu* we are already in times of settled royal government. The kingdom is internally organised into administrative divisions under appropriate officers. The *Vaiçya* (the term is now applied to a caste) is represented by the merchant whose business is with trade and with buying grain and other goods; he is regarded also as the owner of flocks and herds. 'The cultivation of land' is only casually thrown in among his permissible occupations as a subsidiary matter. And even so, the expression used seems quite possibly to refer to agricultural land-holding, not as a personal occupation, but as a means of employing capital. At the present day the *Khatri* and *Baniya* (traders and money lenders)—the most non-agricultural Hindu class in the country—are eager to buy and to hold land as an investment. Thus in the 'Laws' we read, 'to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study [the Veda], to trade, to lend money and to cultivate land'—are the 'duties assigned' to a *Vaiçya*.²

¹ In *R̥gv.* 1.110.5, the divine artificers (*R̥bhū*) are spoken of as measuring 'as a man measures a field with a staff of reed' (*Rokrstab* in Grassman's translation). In *R̥gv.* 10.142.3, in a hymn to Agni, the bare strips or balks are mentioned.

² *Mānava Dharmasūtra*, chap. i. p. 90. G. Bühler translates 'assigned'; Sir W. Jones makes the Glossary addition 'or permitted.'



The author has indeed little feeling for agriculture, as in another place¹ he says that 'some declare that agriculture is something excellent; [but] that means of subsistence is blamed by the virtuous; [for] the wooden [implement] with iron point [the plough, *i.e.*] injures the earth.' The idea that the *Vaiçya* is the agricultural caste *par excellence* is quite without foundation. Indeed, in spite of the employment of the term in Manu, *Vaiçya* did not generally come into use as a caste-name at all. There is no general caste so called, although locally some unimportant groups may be found calling themselves so, for want of a more distinctive name.

What is perhaps stranger still, the *Çūdra* caste, though it must, in the times we are referring to, have come to include a large body of settled cultivators of mixed as well as of non-Aryan race, is not treated as a specially agricultural caste, nor is there any allusion to ploughing or farm labour. And although the laws of Manu may deal more with ideals than with actual facts, still it is very remarkable that agriculture should not have been specially attributed to the *Çūdra*² unless,

In chap. ii. p. 31, we are told that a *Vaiçya's* name should be connected with wealth: in chap. v. p. 37, mercantile business seems to be the object of his life. So in chap. viii. p. 113 the *Vaiçya* witness is to be sworn 'by his kine, grain, and gold'; if he were essentially an agriculturist, attached to his land as Indian villagers notoriously are, surely the ancestral acres would be a much more natural object to swear by. So in chap. x. pp. 79, 80, agriculture is just mentioned as a means of livelihood—when necessary; but trade is the most commendable for a *Vaiçya*. Cf. also chap. ix. pp. 326, 327, 330, where the only direct indication of a *Vaiçya's* interest in agriculture is that he ought to be 'acquainted with the manner of sowing seeds and with the good and bad qualities of fields.'

¹ *Ibid.* chap. x. p. 84.

² Of a *Çūdra* it is said, Manu, x. 99, 100, 'if he is not employed in waiting on twice-born men,' he may principally follow such mechanical occupations as joinery, masonry, or the various practical arts, as painting and writing, by which he may serve the twice-born. I have not found any text which speaks of a *Çūdra* agriculturist. The *Çūdra* of the 'Laws' appears rather to be regarded as the lowly camp-follower of the higher Aryan castes—but still within the pale; he is not treated as what he really was, or very often was, an aboriginal tribesman who had accepted Hinduism, or a half-blood.

as seems probable, the then existing agricultural communities were largely, and indeed essentially, non-Aryan or of mixed descent, and therefore beneath the specific notice of Brahmanic authors. Nor can it be said that this proves too much; it does not exclude the practical certainty that a large number of the humbler ranks of Aryans took to agriculture, or at least to farm management, with the aid of aboriginal and other races as their tenants and labourers. But it was just these humbler Aryan clans that were most likely in time to fuse completely with the original population. To summarise our conclusions, it may safely be asserted that all the upper classes of Aryan origin had little feeling for agriculture, and that India does not owe to them either the introduction of settled cultivation or (directly) any particular policy or principle of land-ownership. To this day castes with some pretensions, though they may have been reduced to the necessity of cultivating their own lands, are usually in the position of proprietary co-sharers, or at least privileged tenants under greater landlords. The position is well stated by Sir W. Hunter when he says: 'We know that the Aryan invaders never penetrated in sufficient numbers into India to engross any large proportion of the soil. That throughout five-sixths of the continent the actual work of tillage remained in the hands of the non-Aryan or Sudra races, and that even at a remote time husbandry had become as degrading an occupation in the eyes of the Aryan conquerors as the tending of sheep was to the Mosaic Pharaohs.'¹

SECTION II.—THE ARYAN CLAN-ORGANISATION AND THE 'HINDU STATE'

If we make a general survey of the existing Aryan (Rājput) land-holding communities in Upper India, and remember the fact already explained,² that the present allocation is due to an extensive redistribution and resettlement which occurred long subsequently to the original establishment of Aryan chiefs around Delhi, in Oudh, and in the Ganges Valley, we are

¹ *Orissa*, ii. 206.

² *Ante*, p. 121 ff.



struck by one notable circumstance. Some of the Aryan agricultural communities appear in a still purely clan and family stage, and have always remained democratic in their constitution.¹ Otherwise, the *Kshatriyā* class usually developed a monarchical system; and this system appears in some cases constructed distinctly on *clan-lines*—that is to say, the ‘Patriarch,’ and sectional chiefs become ‘Rājās,’ and Thākurs or ‘barons’ graded in a kind of ‘feudal’ order. But very often also there is a single royal house or a single chiefship, which is quite unconnected with any clan-gradation, or with the presence of adherents of the same clan.

Both the *clan-organisation*, and the monarchical system as producing the *Hindu State*, are intimately connected with the history of village tenures. It is to the *clan-organisation* of the Aryan tribes that we owe the features of those Hindu land-holding communities of the joint type, but which had nothing to do with aristocratic origin or territorial rule. It is also ultimately to the *Hindu State system* that we owe a large part of those greater landlord estates—the *Zamindāris*, *Taluqdāris*, and other forms of general over-lord tenure—with which this work is not directly concerned.² But it is also to the same development, whether in the more perfect form of the *Hindu State* or in the mere local lordship of adventurous knights and scions of noble houses, that we owe many *village communities* of Aryan connection.

It is, then, a matter both interesting and important to trace back the Aryan polity to Vedic times, and notice how (1) its clan-system was organised and (2) how the prominence of the *Kshatriyā* or warrior caste has led both to the perfect ‘clan monarchies,’ as I will call them, such as we see in *Rājputāna* and elsewhere, and also to those rulerships and chiefships in *Oudh* and elsewhere founded by single individuals without any clan connection at all.

(1) The earliest Vedic accounts, though showing only the

¹ There are some excellent remarks on this in the district article ‘Hardoi’ in the *Oudh Gasetteer*, ii. 40.

² For the sake of clearness I omit, at present, all mention of the Muhammadan dynasties, which in fact copied or adopted the Hindu system and thus gave rise to similar tenures among *their* descendants.



germs of the *caste* system, always represent the Aryans as consisting of differently-named tribes, and as having divisions and subdivisions of tribes and clans, each headed by its appropriate grade of chief. We are also prepared to expect that this patriarchal or social tribal system will be in part modified by a military organisation; and the two together may be the source of some confusion in our minds.

The main groups or tribes in early Aryan times are described by the term *janāh*, and the clans or larger branches by *viçā*.¹ There is one passage in the *Ṛgveda* (2. 26. 3) which specifies the entire series of the divisions. The favour of the Father of the Gods, it tells us, is to be sought by sacrifices, &c., that wealth may be acquired through the tribe, the clan, the minor clan, and the families; or, as Zimmer translates: 'Wer den Vater der Götter für sich zu gewinnen sucht . . . der erlangt Beute und Reichthum durch die Männer; durch Stamm (*janena*), durch Gau (*viçā*), durch Verwandtschaft (*janmana*), durch Familie (*jntraih*)'.² Here we have the *tribe* or whole, then the *clan* (Gau = *viçā*), then the *minor-clan* (Verwandtschaft = *janman*)—i.e. the wider kindred or body of related families that have still some connecting link, whether or not they have settled together in one village,³ and lastly the close kindred—the existing single family—whatever may have been the customary limit of descent.⁴

There are various grades of leaders and chiefs; the *grāma* we have already heard of as a cluster of buildings or fort of refuge,⁵

¹ In the bardic records (and the *Çōran*, or bard, is a great personage in Rājput Courts) the whole tribe was called *kulā*. The *kulā* divides into *çakhā*, or clans, and the clans into *gotra*, or *got*, which are septs or minor clans. In ordinary (non-royal) castes that had a tribal basis, popular use has adopted the Arabic word *qaum* for the whole 'caste' and *got* for the clan. Thus a man is described as *Qaum Jat, got Sidhū*, meaning a Jat of the Sidhū clan. Sometimes there is a further division of the *got* into *al*. The Hindī word *al* is traced to the Sanskrit *āvali*, or *ali* = a line or row. There is also an Arabic word *āl*, which has a somewhat similar meaning = progeny, &c.

² Zimmer, p. 160; *Ṛgv.* 2. 26. 3.

³ The learned author thinks that *janman* refers to a 'village community' ('Dorfgemeinde'); but there is, as I shall afterwards show, no authority for this whatever.

⁴ This question will be discussed when we speak of the tribe and the village, Chapter VI.

⁵ Zimmer, pp. 141, 142.



and the leader or commander of such a place (*grāmani* or *vrāja-pati*) is apparently connected with the disposition of the quota which each centre of residence contributed to the clan forces;—as Zimmer puts it, he is the ‘Anführer des Heerbannes der bestimmten Ortschaft.’¹ The clan has a chief called *Vicpati*. Over the whole there is a *Rājā*—such a rank at least is frequently mentioned; but the Vedic *Rājā* appears very different from the autocratic ruler of later times. The office was hereditary, but sometimes apparently elective.² No regular revenue or tax is yet levied—in a stage of society which is still a continuous war-like campaign—but contributions and gifts are offered, and enemies are made to pay tribute. The king also, as such, receives a share in the booty gained by a successful foray.³ The *Rājā* is evidently not independent of some great popular assembly; and affairs seem generally to have been managed by councils of the tribe—of the clan, or of smaller groups, for more than one distinct term is used. The *sabhā* appears to be the council of the minor-clan, or other limited group; the *samiti* would be a larger gathering of the clan or tribe⁴ over which the king presides—rather, however, as *primus inter pares*.

(2) Out of such a social stage we pass quite naturally to the later *monarchy*. The tribal organisation has to be strengthened for war, or ultimately for the domination of a conquered territory; a greater degree of power in the king, and of military obedience and loyal service on the part of the chiefs, become a necessity of success. The king himself rules the central territory, and the chiefs take charge of districts all round; the frontier most exposed to danger of any kind being entrusted to the one who, as *senāpati*, or captain of the host, has the greatest military skill.

The land-revenue arises in the same natural order. When

¹ Zimmer, p. 171.

² *Ibid.* pp. 159, 162. Possibly elective out of certain suitable families only. In *R̥gveda*, 10. 124. 128, there is mention of the clans (*Gaue*, as Zimmer translates) electing the king.

³ Zimmer, pp. 166, 167.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174. We shall see afterwards how this idea persisted in Rajputāna, where the chiefs considered themselves the ‘brethren’ of the Rājā, and often asserted their right to be consulted, which the Rājā was apt to forget.