



ownership now appearing is due to the main branches representing, according to universal custom, the three primary grades of descent, and to such families, descendants of these, as remain joint among themselves being subject to the operation of the 'joint-family' custom and the law of joint-inheritance.

We sometimes find it insisted that the order of these *three* modes ought to be reversed. I do not, however, desire, by placing them as I have done, to imply *any* theory of sequence of development.

It will be well, however, as such a theory has been propounded, to consider the modes of ownership in connection with it. We may readily admit some plausibility about the general idea that (1) the *joint-ownership of land by a whole clan* is natural as a first stage; that (2) this dissolves into the ownership of isolated joint-families; and, finally (3), that family shares are lost sight of and there remains nothing but the modern individuality of title to the several holdings. But I do not think that the evidence in India will really bear out such a succession. For whatever clan-ownership can be asserted, it is not of a kind to change into or produce the real joint-ownership by a family. I should rather say that the process was just the reverse: that the earliest idea was appropriation by the individual—*i.e.* the father of the family, whose power was a sole and unrestricted power; that this gradually develops into an idea of equality between all the sons in succession to the father's property, which again leads to the restraint of the father's power to deal with ancestral land, and so to the idea of a joint-ownership by a close-kindred of which the father is the head. When a number of such families of common descent, kept together by circumstances, continually fighting side by side and conquering together, have acquired and settled on a new land, they constitute a *clan*, and there is, further, a kind of collective sense of right to the whole, which is over and above the family right to the several lots that fall to each, and is largely dependent on the sense of unity which clan life naturally produces, and on the sense of the right of every member to share in the common acquisition.

But let us briefly recall and analyse the kinds of tenure which we have found to result from the settlement *where a clan-union*



is still to some extent maintained. The details have already appeared in Chapter VI.

We may pass by those early Kolarian and Dravidian clan settlements which resulted in the *rāiyatwāri* village, because we have no evidence on which to found any assertion of collective ownership among them.¹ Whatever indications they afford of growth of ideas of ownership relate to the family and to the father of the household and not to the clan as a whole.

The clan settlements of Upper India, which introduce us more directly to the question of clan-ownership, are some of them of comparatively late date, but they show tribal ideas in full force, and, at any rate, are the only examples of clan-settlements which afford us any details as to the principles on which the territories occupied were held. It will be remembered that we have two forms of such settlement—(1) of already formed clans; in this case clans with a strong sense of union under patriarchal authority; (2) of clans grown up on the spot out of a single family of settlers on a wide area; so that in this latter case we had the family estate, only expanded in a manner and to an extent that was impossible in the limited area of an ordinary village, and, because of the blood connection of the cultivators throughout the whole area occupied, it preserved some of the features of a clan-settlement.

It is not known, in either case, whether the settlers had had any experience of permanent cultivating ownership of land in any previous home. It cannot be said with certainty that, for example, the frontier tribes, on settling in our north-western districts, emerged for the first time from a nomadic stage and took to agricultural life; probably not. Nor do we know how far the Jats had any experience of settled agricultural life before they came to India. But all tribes possessed herds and flocks, and they necessarily possessed the idea of individual or family property as far as moveables were concerned.

Our north-west frontier tribes certainly exhibit a strong sense of territorial right, which is necessarily a collective one,

¹ If, too, we may take such surviving cases as the Kāndh and a few others as representing very ancient custom—and they very probably do so—they do not show any collective ownership in the clan; and even the 'family' is not regarded as collective owner.

and exhibits itself in the acknowledgment of an '*ilāqa* for the whole body and of certain sub-territories for clans and minor clans, each of which certainly constitutes a unit area. These territorial areas correspond to the main branches of the family of the founder with whom the clan originates. Consequently, the names of the primary divisions follow those of the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of the founder respectively. All later and now existing families belong to one or other of the thus established groups and sub-groups, and take shares within the territory belonging to each: there are no new designations given to subsequent divisions. Only, should a certain group move off to another locality, then the whole process would begin anew.¹

Two sentiments appear to have taken hold of the tribal mind: the territorial right to the main divisions as so many units or wholes; and the right to a specific—usually equal, but sometimes ancestral—share within the proper unit-territory. The action of the tribal heads at the time of the settlement seemed to go no further than allotting the primary or major divisions or territories: inside each, the further allotment of actual holdings was made by the minor or sectional chiefs. The space relatively required by each recognised group was roughly estimated by counting the number of single shares which represented the total population of the group. The whole process seems designed to provide for the separate enjoyment of the individual family share.² The shares being intended to be as equal as possible, equality was further ensured by the custom of periodical exchange, which, however, did not apply where the holdings were specially prepared for irrigation, or, in any case, there were circumstances of expenditure which tended to evoke

¹ It is true that sometimes a new series is begun within the lowest original division, called *kheḷ*. We may have the *kheḷ* divided into *kandi*, and that into *thal*—a new series of three grades. This, however, only emphasises the principle. Evidently, here the tribe is old and has much expanded, so that it is convenient to begin again; the lowest of the original divisions has become so big as to be itself a clan.

² In dividing a large surface into a great number of small equal portions, the process is obviously facilitated by first making a few large divisions to start with.



more particularly the natural sense of individual right to the plot.

The shares were assigned on one of two principles: either (1) there is a *per capita* distribution—i.e. every man, woman, and child was counted, and each household thus received the number of shares which the count of heads indicated; or (2) the ancestral shares were calculated according to the pedigree table, in descent from the heads of each recognised group. The lots might consist of various bits of different kinds of soil scattered through the whole major-divisions (a *tappā*, or a *khel*) dealt with. Diagram I. (on the next page) explains this.

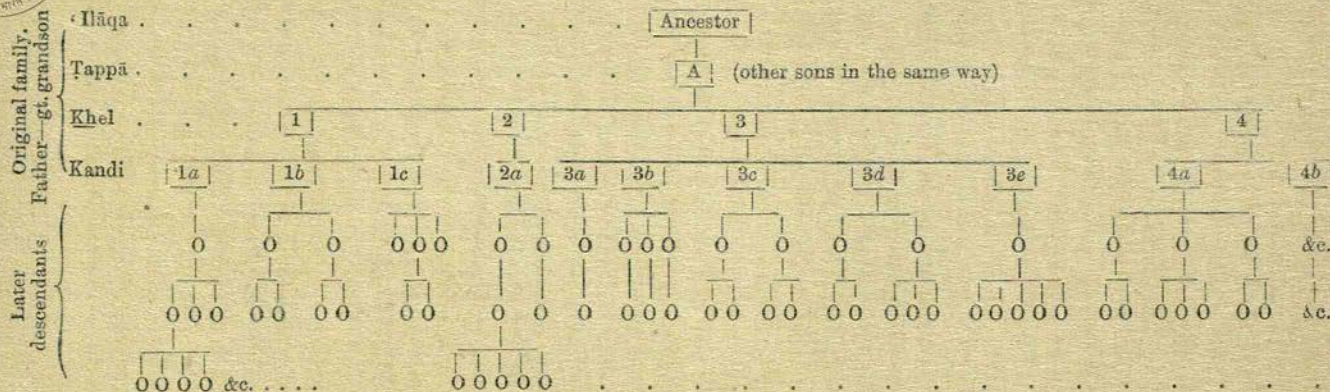
It is quite possible that groups of close kindred will cultivate their shares jointly; it being more profitable to do so than to split up the land into small severalty holdings.

As regards the tenure of the whole major division, nothing in the nature of 'holding in common' ever appears; for in any real sense, 'common holding' implies that all should join in cultivating as large an area as necessary, and that each should then receive a portion of the harvest suitable to his wants, without thought of any particular share calculated on any principle whatever, and without thought of the proportions between the amount of sustenance required and the actual amount of labour and capital, or the number of cattle, contributed to the common task.

Nor is there any evidence of 'joint-holding,' save for special reasons, in special plots of land. I am now speaking, it will be remembered, of the joint-holding by a whole clan or clan-section. Whatever the rule of distribution, partition, or allotment on the ground of the several holdings, appears to take place as soon as may be after the settlement of the clan. Some portion of the area may be left undivided, either because it is not yet wanted for cultivation and is reserved for future extension of the family holdings, or because it is grazing ground, or jungle for wood-cutting, which would be rendered useless by division. If there is any area of cultivated land left undivided, it is for special reasons, and the shares are defined though not partitioned. On the other hand, some kind of 'collective right' may very reasonably be asserted, which is something more than that mere territorial claim which every nation, even under modern conditions of life, feels with regard to its own country. The clan has not only its



DIAGRAM I



I. Tribal sharing (*khulāvesh* or *per-capita* method). There will be as many *tappa* arranged as there are sons of the founder, A, B, &c. [Only one of these is followed out in the above table.] *Tappā* A will be divided into four *khel*, which will contain 3, 1, 5, and 2 *kandī* respectively. Here the descent of the first rank, counting from the ancestor, ends. All the existing heads of households at time of settlement (represented by the last complete line of little circles) will be counted, and each will get such a number of unit shares as represents the number of heads in each.

II. Sharing by the 'ancestral' method. Here the division up to the *khel* areas will be as before; but *khel* 1 will be divided into three equal portions for *kandi* 1a, 1b, 1c. The whole of *khel* 2 will descend to the *kandi*, as there is only one. *khel* 3 will be equally subdivided among five *kandi*—3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, and so on.

And coming to the lowest line in the scale, the whole *kandi* 1a will go equally to the three sons; that of 1c will go between two surviving descendants, two being deceased without heirs. So with *kandi* 3a, the one son will take the whole, while 3c will have to be divided among four equal descendants, so that the shares or lots actually held will be very various; the families with fewer members will have larger holdings.

Supposing the *tappā* to be 40,000 acres, the four *kheḷ* in A would have 10,000 acres each, and *kandi* 1a—1c would have each $3,333\frac{1}{3}$ acres, *kandi* 2a would take the whole 10,000, *kandi* 3a—3e would each get 2,000, and so on.

Under the first method (which is common) the *kheis* would probably have unequal areas, roughly proportioned to the number of houses in each: *khe* 3 having many descendants might be much larger than *khe* 2, for instance. Supposing 15,000 acres to be the area, as the *khe* 3 has eighteen existing houses, each containing (say) five souls or a total of ninety, then taking ninety shares of $166\frac{2}{3}$ acres each, *kandi* 3a could take five (for its one house); 3b would take fifteen, and so on.



general boundary, which it would be prepared to defend resolutely as a whole, but every clansman has an indefeasible right to a share in that territory.¹ They will also combine as regards the responsibility for land-revenue and similar charges. All this, however, seems to me to point much more to the sense of kinship and personal obligation to mutual help than to any idea as to the soil being owned jointly. Union is the life of a clan; each section of it must be prepared to send its quota of fighting men to the field, to pay its portion of the contribution necessary for defence, and so forth. Moreover, there is the patriarchal feeling of the obedience due to the chiefs. In a family, as distinct from a clan, there is a recognised bond, which is that of felt blood-relationship, and may be accompanied by a system of joint inheritance and co-ownership. This kind of connection ceases to apply to purely collateral branches, who are only connected at a point a long way back in the pedigree table, and in the person of an ancestor whose very name is probably unknown to a number of the families; but if circumstances have maintained a large circle of ancestral connections through a whole clan, the connection of one family with another is kept up by other feelings: clan-union and all that it implies has survived. I can see no evidence that this ever amounts to a real joint-ownership of the territory by the entire body, such as is observed when a number of co-heirs have each (in theory at least) a definite fractional share of an estate inherited from one original owner and possibly held without actual partition.

This question of joint-ownership by a whole clan is further illustrated by that other case of clan-settlement illustrated in Chapter VI., which is in fact the converse of the one just described: the clan does not arrive ready made, but a family obtains a wide area, and expands, upon it, into a clan. The districts that presented the requisite conditions favourable to such a development are only occasionally to be met with. There must have been a wide extent of suitable land (sometimes twenty to fifty square miles or even more), and circumstances of position such that the entire area has been preserved to the group without disturbance all through the long period during which only

¹ See p. 49, *ante*, as to the effects which physical conditions of agricultural life have on the form which the tribal union takes.



a limited portion could have been actually occupied, and up to the time when the multiplied families had become numerous enough to fill the whole. But here again, judging from the instances which have already been given, though the first family were evidently in a stage of society in which they regarded themselves—father and sons together—as joint-owners, it can hardly be said that this sense of joint-ownership continued as between the more and more distantly related families that grew up and branched off, but still lived on part of the same great area. We observe some cases in which no definite sections of the area corresponding with main branches of the family are demarcated. The *whole area is held directly in separate household-holdings*, usually consisting of so many 'ploughs;' and they appear to have been added on to the first centre of cultivation, one by one, as the different male descendants came to an age at which they needed their own separate home with its farmland. Nevertheless, a certain union is maintained all over the estate; but the union appears to consist essentially in a clan-feeling of readiness to defend the common interest in this settlement, and to resist any intrusion of strangers. In India such a union necessarily involves the acceptance of a joint responsibility for the revenue demanded by the sovereign. Sometimes we have the case of a number of smaller compact circles of new cultivation, established round, and in extension of, the original location; and as the original village-site becomes too small to accommodate the new families, fresh hamlets spring up in the centre of the blocks of new cultivation. These in time become completely separate villages; and the only remaining bond of union is some social and ceremonial connection with the parent village on occasions of rejoicing or mourning, of appointing a new headman, and the like.

In other cases of this kind we find that the whole area was, at an early stage, *divided into certain large primary blocks* which represented the sons, and perhaps, further, the grandsons, of the original family; here anything that can be called union is maintained chiefly within the several major divisions. And it depends on the nature of the soil and the conditions of agriculture which have suggested a certain form of holding what sort of union is maintained. Sometimes the plan of cultivation,



within the primary divisions of the area, may have been one according to which each connected group holds its land in several portions—as many portions, in fact, as there are recognised kinds of soil. In that case, groups which under other circumstances might have formed distinct villages must remain intermingled, by reason of the scattering of their lands; and they arrange to distribute the burden of the revenue and expenses by treating the holdings as representing certain artificial measures each containing a certain number of actual measures of each quality of soil, first, second and third—good, bad, or indifferent. Here, again, the household-holdings are very probably minutely subdivided, and are held in complete severalty; but these groups and sub-groups cannot appear on a map as compact local blocks. The groups are only separated in the official records; and the closely connected families retain a joint responsibility as among themselves and for the joint estate they represent. This arrangement will be easier to remember by reference to Diagram II on the next page.

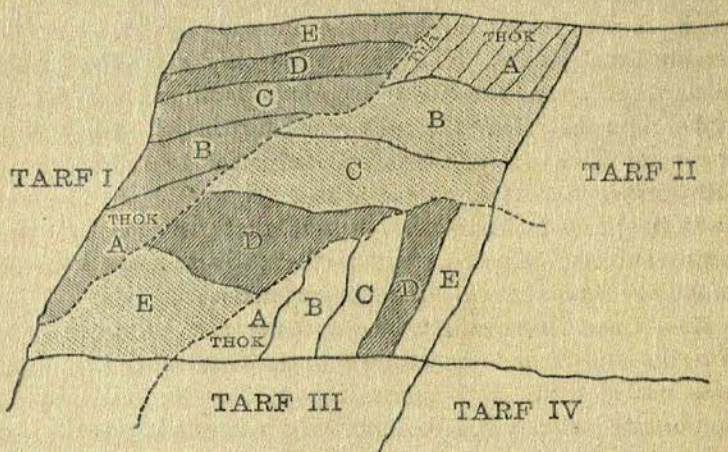
It is chiefly in cases of this kind that we look for those peculiar *bhaiāchārā* arrangements of equally valuated holdings which are characteristic of the clan-expansion.

Thus, in the case of a 'clan-expansion area' the nature of the soil and other circumstances may produce either one of the three varieties we have successively noticed in this class of settlements. We may have (1) the whole of a large area (*e.g.* cases in the Jihlam district, p. 270) held directly in a great number of separate individual or household shares; (2) the area represents the original location of a parent village, with numerous subsequent hamlets, as offshoots from it, developing into separate villages (*e.g.* South-eastern Panjāb, p. 276); and (3) the more complicated *bhaiāchārā*, where the holdings are, within certain main subdivisions, all intermingled (*e.g.* the Mathurā district villages, p. 282). How joint-ownership, beyond the ultimate groups of closely connected relations, can be said to exist in these large areas, I am at a loss to understand. What really exists, or formerly existed, is a personal sense of clan-connection which facilitated distribution of holdings, local government, and the like, while it induced a general willingness to accept a joint liability for the revenue.

DIAGRAM II

Partition among descendants of four sons (of the Founder) whose areas (*tarf* I-IV) were separated in the lifetime of the Ancestor. The *thok* are the groups by sons of the *tarf* holder; the *ṭulā* are the sons of those again: all existing houses are aggregated under one or other *ṭulā*.

Tarf (I) alone is shown entire. We suppose it to include holdings for five *thok* (grandsons of founder) A, B, C, D, E. We assume also that the managing committee recognise three qualities (having different practical



values) of soil (white, and shaded in two degrees), but in many cases there will be more. Each *thok* for equality's sake must take part of its allotment in each kind of soil. Each such part has again to be subdivided among as many *ṭulā* as the *thok* contains. The allotment of one *thok* (D) has been made darker so as to show more readily how the *thok* lands lie about, and hence how the *thok* cannot form separate compact 'villages,' at least not until in course of time exchanges of land, sales, and other accidents have brought their holdings more within a ring fence.



I venture to doubt whether, on the basis of the Indian phenomena alone, we should ever have heard anything about a common or joint-ownership of a whole clan, had it not been for the fact that, in one way or another, these large areas do tend to split up into smaller groups; and, as the bond of clan-union is forgotten under modern conditions, the several local sections are assimilated in many respects with that larger class of real 'villages' which began as the estate of one founder, or one or two conjoined. These latter villages, though never held *in common*, may really be long held *jointly*; as long, that is, as the existing households are sufficiently closely related. Beyond a certain limit of blood-relationship the joint-holding never goes; and when the primary divisions (*patti*, *thok*, &c.) have become established by partition in the earlier stages of the family history, the subsequent families in each group may again continue to hold their land jointly within them. Our North-West Provinces Revenue system was mainly adapted to this latter class of village; and, naturally, the revenue terms and the forms of land-records were also adapted to it. But the same terms and the same forms were applied also to all varieties of village, and to the larger (clan) areas, where there were shares of one kind or another, and where the joint responsibility for the land-revenue of a given area, whether large or small, was not objected to. Hence a much greater appearance of uniformity resulted than is actually in the nature or constitution of the estates.

CONSTITUTION OF THE 'FAMILY'

This leads us directly to consider the constitution of the *family*; for it is on this that the existence of joint and co-sharing forms of village-estate really depend. Whatever the source of the idea of ownership, it is obvious that the right to any kind of property may be felt to reside in an individual—*i.e.* in the head of the family or household; or, again, that it may reside in what we call a 'joint-family'—*i.e.* in the head conjointly with his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, if he lives to see them.¹ When-

¹ It is hardly necessary to remark that with the superior agricultural tribes leading a simple, healthy, outdoor life, where polygamy is rare and



ever we see an actually joint and undivided family holding, whether extending over a whole village or a smaller area, it will always be found to consist of members of the close-kindred.

Every reader of Indian books is familiar at least with the term 'Hindu joint-family.' But it is perhaps hardly realised that, though this is in itself an ancient institution, it need not be primeval, nor, in all probability, was it the form of family-union recognised by the earliest tribes. As we know it in the text-books of Hindu law, it bears the marks, I may say, of legal elaboration. If, for instance, we compare the customary rules of succession and those on the connected subject of adoption (*i.e.* artificial succession) and the right of the father to alienate ancestral land, as acknowledged by the various Jat, Gujar, and other agricultural tribes of the Panjāb, we observe that they differ in many respects from the rules of the law-books; and also, quite essentially and in principle, from the inheritance rules of the Muhammadan Law. Still, the idea of the joint family exists; and that is why there can be so much general similarity between the Aryan-Hindu, the Jat, and other superior tribes, in their village institutions.

But if we go back to the still earlier customs, of which vestiges remain among Kolarian and Dravidian tribes, it would seem that the head of the family is much more like the sole owner and representative of the share in the tribal possessions—whether divided, as in our Indian examples, or not. In the Welsh tribes it has been observed that as each son came to a certain age he had a claim to an additional maintenance-area of land, which he had, not as a share of his father's possession, but as a member of the clan. The father's authority, at a certain stage of tribal development, is in fact regarded as almost of divine right, and is doubtless the origin of the great influence

confined to the few wealthier owners, and early marriage the rule, it is no impossible thing to find, say, a great-grandfather of eighty-eight years, a grandfather of sixty-five, a father of forty, and a son of nineteen—himself just married, all living on ancestral land. In the earlier ages what reduced families so much was the continual loss of male members in wars, feuds, and forays. Local famines and epidemics must have been rarer because population was smaller and so localised; but when they occurred, as there was no means of combating or relieving either, their effects must have been very severe.



of the tribal and sectional chiefs and patriarchs which lasts long after the power of the head of the individual family has become much restricted. In other words, the *patria potestas* is much more complete at one stage of tribal life than it is at another. In the developed Hindu joint-family, it has almost disappeared except in certain ceremonial and religious aspects. The head of the close-kindred or family is now little more than the manager and elder member of a coparcenary body. Every son, as soon as he is born, has an inchoate interest at least in all the ancestral property. But in earlier (and non-Aryan) custom it was different. Among the Kāndh tribes, who evidently represent a very early (and probably little changed) tribal system quite unconnected with the Hindu law, we find the father regarded as the sole owner during his life; and this would imply in many cases a long continuing ownership in the presence of adult sons and grandsons. But here we observe that the rule has already been established that, on the father's death, the sons will all share equally. There is no primogeniture, which indeed appears to be a custom connected with some dignity or chiefship, and not to prevail in ordinary (not joint) families under their customary law.¹ In some tribes, indeed, it is the youngest who succeeds to the paternal house and homestead, the elder sons having established separate houses elsewhere, possibly on a certain holding that they were entitled to claim as clansmen, irrespective of what their father had.² Where, however, we find tribes of an historically later date, and therefore (presumably) in a later stage of progress, like the Jat or the Panjāb frontier tribes, there it is not surprising to find that the family-holding is already completely regarded as joint-property: a custom has been established that the house-father should not make an alienation of the 'inheritance' to the prejudice of his descendants and that a sonless co-sharer should not adopt an heir except from among the near agnates, and even then with consent of

¹ Primogeniture seems to be connected with the growth of the joint-family, because of the desire to keep someone as the head and representative where the divided members do not themselves become so many separate heads. This sentiment is also counterbalanced by the affection of a father for his 'youngest'—'the son of his old age.' Manu, it will be remembered, suggests a special share to *both* (p. 305, *ante*).

² p. 182, *ante*.

the rest. From this it is not difficult to pass to the stage at which a body of coheirs remain joint for a long time. The causes of this are various. If the family is of any pretensions, all the descendants are jealous of their equal representation of the dignified founder (equal, *i.e.*, in their proper grade of descent and kinship). And they avoid division for fear lest one or the other should gain an advantage over the rest. Sometimes it is that the land can better be held jointly because the greater part is in the hands of tenants, and the rents are as easily divided as the tenancies themselves. And in a joint-holding among cultivating proprietors, what usually happens is that various members have *de-facto* holdings, which are theoretically liable to be readjusted (partly or entirely) on a formal partition; some of them do not wish for change, and resist a partition as long as possible. Such a joint-holding, as I have before remarked, never continues outside the circle of the close-kindred. At least I have found no case on record; and if instances exist it would be extremely interesting to have them detailed and the circumstances of the holding stated. We are constantly, however, meeting cases in which the larger groups of shares have been separated to a certain degree, and there are groups of close-kindred still holding jointly within the first divided areas.

Just as I have suggested that one of the main types of village (the *raiayatwāri*) is connected with the idea of ownership by 'first clearing' and conversion of the jungle, and that the second type exemplifies the principle of right by superiority or conquest, so, on the further question of the right as residing in the joint-family or in the single head, it may be suggested that the *raiayatwāri* village seems to depend originally on the idea that the house-father is the separate and sole owner, whilst the *joint-village* represents the more developed idea of the joint-family and the limitation (not to say extinction) of the *patria potestas*. In the former case, the father may have remained very long in possession of the holding after the sons and grandsons had grown up to an age to cultivate land for themselves; and both on this account and on account of the growing inability of the elders to take an active part in the cultivation, there must have been a temporary partition if the holding was large, or the acquisition of fresh lands by the increasing junior



families till (on the limit of the direct descent being reached) a final partition was made (among second cousins). Thus there would be a continuous tendency to separate off the holdings; and as every village was composed of a group of such separate holders, and there was no one person who was regarded as the owner of the whole village, there was no possibility of a body of heirs having joint rights over the whole. At the present day, when Hindu law has introduced the Hindu family ideas to a great extent, the change has not affected the *raiyaṭwāri* village; it is still the individual holding that has to be partitioned among as many of the co-sharers as can get a sustenance out of it; if they are too numerous, some of them must take a compensation for their small shares, and go elsewhere. But in the case of the joint-village (i.e. in one numerous class of cases) the ownership of the whole village has originated with (or passed into the hands of) one man, and it is probable that a partition will have been made as soon as the first series of descents from the ancestor was accomplished. The *patti*, *thok*, and *ṭulā*, or whatever other names are used locally, will have been demarcated on the ground, and it is only the subordinate families within each that remain joint. This is at least the case with the typical *pattidāri* form of village; and it evidently marks a stage where the joint-family has developed fully, and where there is often some aristocratic feeling, and pride of family and caste. The curious 'Āzamgarh joint-villages cannot be explained on any other principle; we have here a number of families descendants from Rājput over-lords who acquired a right over a series of villages already to some extent marked out and existing.¹ But the joint-families and bodies of coheirs of the last lords declined to fit into these shells: they did not accept the village-areas as they stood, and assign them, one by one, to certain groups of connected families. They made a number of shares, parts of which were found in two, three, or more of the villages. The family groups can only bring their estates together into one whole on paper; and the lands of each such major-group are now divided into many varying fractions, because

¹ The over-lord families may have added many new villages in the course of their growth, but there evidently were a number of originally established villages to start with.



of the sense of *family* property existing : there is no democratic equality of a whole clan.

In that other class of joint-villages which have something of a clan-connection, and a more 'democratic' constitution, we may also trace the joint-holding to a family ownership, although in this case it is modified, by a larger sense of equality of all later descendants, which savours rather of the clan-feeling than of the strict joint-family. Still, in the Jat settlements and in those of non-monarchical and non-aristocratic tribes whose villages must for convenience be placed in the joint class, the people certainly show a sense of family-property ; their custom, as I have said, always objects to alienation by the head of the family ; and adoption, as defeating the expectation of other agnatic heirs, is more or less restricted. Such customs cannot be explained, except on the basis that ancestral land is regarded as belonging to the whole family. At the same time, there is a desire for equality, and a consequent tendency to disregard the exact fraction which depends on the grade of descent, as well as on the number of sons, &c., in each house.¹ When the whole land has become fully occupied, this desire cannot any further be given effect to, because there must necessarily come a point at which, of two existing holdings which we will suppose are equal in extent and value, one is inherited by a single son and the other is inherited by seven sons jointly, and no more land is available in the village or estate. It is only in the earlier stages of the growth of such a community, when waste land is still abundant, that the seven sons could add on enough out of the waste to make each of their holdings, if not quite equal to that of the more fortunate sole-heir, at least sufficient for their wants. So in some communities (usually holding large areas) we find the ancestral descent only followed in making the *primary divisions*, when it was the natural and indeed the only possible basis of allotment ; after that, the later families have all acquired holdings, added on one by one, as the numbers and general requirement, of each indicated.

¹ In fact, in some of the old *bhaiāchārā* areas, or 'cultivating fraternities,' we find exactly the same idea of equal holdings for all existing households that we found in the Panjāb frontier tribes under the *per capita* or *khulāvesh* custom. (Cf. Diagram I. at p. 410.)



To resume the general conclusion shortly, I believe that individual ownership of the personally cleared and prepared holding in the tribal territory is quite consistent with the customs of tribal society at an early stage. Actual joint-property does not exist among the whole clan: at best, there is an appearance of collectivity caused by the common origin and close defensive and offensive alliance of the whole clan; by the equal right of everyone to share in the land obtained by the united exertion of the clan; and by the obligation to obey the patriarchal authorities, and to submit to that equalisation of holding in the tribal territory to secure which custom decreed that all holdings should be periodically exchanged.¹ Actual joint-ownership is exhibited in the records of the Indian villages, as far as I can discover, only (a) among the *families* forming separated groups on a clan territory, (b) where there has been one owner of the whole village and his direct heirs continue to hold it without partition, (c) when the cultivation of an entire village has been undertaken by a group of colonists who prefer to arrange for each year, or cultivating season, what area or what fields each member shall take up, according to the number

¹ I have seen it argued that joint-ownership by a family necessarily implies an antecedent joint-ownership by a whole clan; but that is on the supposition not only that the idea of the joint-ownership as between a father and his sons existed when the clan began its growth and continued unchanged till it had reached its full dimensions, but also that the same joint idea was maintained through wider and wider circles of relatives so long as the whole body as a 'clan' were able to keep together, there being no limit to the degree to which joint-ownership can extend. Now, certainly it is not possible to assert that the notion of the family as a body of co-owners has never varied; and equally certainly it is possible to assert that we have no evidence in any tribe in the world of any jointness or common estate kept up to an unlimited degree of relationship. There is always a customary limit—usually of three descents, as I have explained in the text. It is possible theoretically that a whole clan may acknowledge a joint-ownership of an entire area conquered and settled by it on the ground of equal right to the acquisition by the united effort, but not because the original family was joint or because the jointness has been continued throughout the widening circle; of that no kind of proof exists. It is equally possible also that the idea of the joint-family may develop at any stage, and under varying circumstances. It has certainly not been uniformly found among any large number of tribes.



of hands, number of cattle, &c., he can bring to the work. The most extensive instance of this kind is that which has been fully explained in Chapter VIII., in connection with the traditional *Vellālan* colonies in the Tamil country. (d) It is also possible that particular plots of land may be always held in a sense jointly by a number of sharers, who may represent even an entire group of village owners, when there is some peculiarity, as for instance when a portion of the village lands are along a river, and so are both liable to be washed away at one time and added to at another, and also to be exceptionally valuable, a little further inland, owing to the unfailing percolation of moisture; here, besides devices of making narrow strips which run at right angles to the river course,¹ we often find that permanent shares are not allotted, but a series of holdings for the year only are arranged, and these are held in rotation by the different co-sharers. In all these cases the shares are perfectly well known.

If there are other forms or cases, of joint-holding, it will be very interesting to hear of them; but it is necessary that they should be reported in their actual form, and not merely called 'joint' or '*zamindāri*' or by some such indefinite name. I have not met with any such.

The theory, then, that all joint villages *begin* with a 'common ownership'—that this, by a process of natural evolution, goes on to strict shares; that, next, the shares become irregular; and, finally, that mere individual *de-facto* holdings emerge; is distinctly contrary to the facts. It is based on a false generalisation from 'joint villages' of different kinds and origins; and it ignores the fact, that when, in any given village, there has actually been a joint holding, followed by a partition into ancestral fractional shares, and these have been transformed into simple *de-facto* holdings, the joint condition was not original, but consequent on a prior *single* title of the founder, grantee, &c., of the village;

¹ This simple device secures each strip having a portion of all the advantages and disadvantages of the situation. If, for instance, the divisions were drawn *parallel* to the river, those nearest the water would be all liable to destruction or injury by flood; the few next would be of exceptional value, being moist and yet safe from erosion; and the furthest series would be all equally deprived of the benefit of moisture altogether.



the joint holding was the result of the joint-succession (on ancestral shares) to that one founder. There is no progress of ideas, or evolution, in the matter.

SECTION II.—SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE VILLAGE FORMS

It has been the argument throughout these pages, that the *raiyatwāri* village is of distinct origin from, and of quite equal importance with, the joint-village of Upper India; and that there is a fundamental objection to theories which, albeit unconsciously, ignore the one as an independent form, and, further, are based on a view which really takes in only one kind or class even of the joint-village. It may be interesting now to take note of some practical results which arise from the difference in question, and also those which arise from differences in the internal constitution of the joint-village. These points of difference have a direct bearing on the value of the 'village' as a form of aggregation in agricultural society with reference to economic and administrative considerations. In the first place, something should be said about the difference in the *modern title* to the land in each form of village, which is the outcome of their past history.

The origin of the claim of the ruler to be owner of the land in India, has been explained, and no further mention of the subject in this place is called for.¹ But the effect produced in former days on the two kinds of village, by the assertion of this claim, deserves to be noted. In the *raiyatwāri* countries² the several cultivating land-holders were in general regarded as, and called, 'raiyat' (*ra'iyat*=dependent, subject, &c.), a sort of indefinite name which well expressed the actual relations where the land-holder had theoretically no ownership-rights at all, and practically (under every settled and well-conducted Native Government) had all the assurance he needed of tolerably certain hereditary tenure, from which ejection was unheard of. The

¹ See p. 207 ff. *ante*.

² It will be perhaps useful to remind the reader that the term includes Bengal Proper (as far as its villages are concerned), the Central, Western, and Southern districts of India, and it practically includes Assam and Rājputāna.



State demands left him enough to live on, but no more; but he was not pressed in a bad season; and, on the whole, his position, if one of constant labour, and little prospect of accumulating wealth, was by no means intolerable.¹ In the Dakhan and in the South, the raiyat was not allowed to sell his land; indeed, it may be questioned whether as a rule it had any market value, as there was no surplus profit or value when the revenue was paid and the subsistence of the family taken into account. Ownership was only acknowledged in land granted revenue-free by the State, and apparently in lands held on the privileged tenure of *watan* (land held in virtue of office in a village or district). In the Dakhan also we remember that there were vestiges of the *mirāsi* right, that of superior families who once held the lordship of villages. We are told that even the Marāthā rulers would pay for land held on a *mirāsi* title when it was wanted for any State purpose. It is curious to remark that the privileged tenure was not unattended with corresponding drawbacks; for the rulers appear invariably to have taken advantage of the attachment which these older families, with pride of origin, had to their ancestral lands, to assess them at a much higher revenue-rate than could be taken from the raiyat, whose resource was flight when a rate was imposed which he could not pay.

It might be thought that, as the joint-villages of Upper India were held on a superior tenure and by more energetic and self-asserting agricultural and fighting tribes, and largely by

¹ I may once for all explain that in speaking of the old administrations, I refer to the normal earlier governments under well-established sovereigns, and not to exceptional (and generally later) times of war and turmoil, or to the precarious possession and temporary rule of Rohilla chiefs and the like, or the local tyranny of bad governors—which things, terrible as they were, can only be regarded as occasional at least in comparison with the entire period of history and the entire extent of Indian kingdoms. There have been periods at which, and countries throughout which, the raiyats have been cruelly robbed and oppressed, and land-holding made a burden rather than a profit; but these are abnormal, and it would not be fair to cite them as specimens of Native rule in general. And when I speak of the condition of the raiyat as 'not intolerable,' I mean with reference to the ideas and state of Eastern society at the time. Such a condition of life is obviously inconsistent with modern notions of political freedom or intellectual advance.



bodies having pretensions to dignified descent and general superiority of rank or caste, the State governors would have treated them differently. But in theory it was not so; the village co-sharers were just as much tenants on sufferance of the ruler, as the 'raiyat' of Central and Southern India; only that the joint constitution enabled the villages, on the whole, to make better terms, and at least to escape much internal interference, by their power of combining to meet the demands made on them. It certainly was the practice of former rulers to care nothing for forms of tenure, and to take every revenue from actual occupier, irrespective of his proper position as owner or tenant. Indeed, it may fairly be said that most Native revenue systems, before the universal adoption of revenue farming, were as nearly *raiyatwari* as possible. No doubt, where there was some local 'Zamindār,' who could be held responsible for the revenue of a given area, he was dealt with, because it saved trouble, or, in the case of an hereditary chief, was politically necessary. And so the local 'Āmils or revenue officers found it profitable to deal with districts made up of joint-villages all of one clan, and also with the stronger joint-villages generally, by making the local *Qaudhari*, or the village headman, responsible to bring in the required revenue total. In the Panjāb, to take another example, the Sikh governors took the revenue (here very generally collected in kind) from co-sharer and tenant alike; they made no distinction; the land belonged to the *Sirkār* (the governing power), and whoever held it must pay.

When we find Marāthās according a certain measure of respect to the higher family tenures, it was perhaps because these belonged to (virtually) the same rank or caste as the rulers themselves; and the Muhammadan kings of the Dakhan respected similarly privileged holders, because it was their policy to deal with the cultivators through them; but in the North the Moslem rulers would feel no particular sympathy with higher caste Hindu communities or with Jat co-sharers. When any special village-tenure was respected, it was because of some State grant, or religious obligation, as in the case of Sayyad communities or others which it was politic to preserve or countenance.

While the State theory did not distinguish, the people them-



selves cherished very different feelings. The *raiyatwāri* villagers may perhaps have acquiesced in the position they had as 'Crown tenants.' It has been observed that in some cases they were more anxious to secure the power of relinquishing the land when they could not make it pay than to have a fixed title. The Northern joint-villages would never have admitted any such change in their position, at least not to themselves. When a heavy revenue was demanded, they combined to meet it and called in other settlers to help; they always acted as far as possible as owners of the land. The State claim to the land was not one of defined principle, nor of declaration by Imperial decree, but of tacit assumption; it did not alter the position of the villages ostensibly. When proprietary communities lost their right and fell into the grade of tenants under a new proprietor or a new family of over-lords, it was that the latter had individually gained the upper place by reason of some revenue-free grant, some opportunity of farming the village revenue, or standing security for it to the State Collector; and not infrequently by reason of the village body voluntarily putting themselves under the protecting lordship of some neighbouring magnate. The State ownership of itself, produced no such ostensible degradation. It is probable, on the whole, that, owing to the power of combined effort and an internal sense of abiding right, the joint-village holders were more rarely interfered with or driven from their homes than the villagers in the *raiyatwāri* provinces.¹

The practical distinction became manifest when British rule began. In Upper India, the joint body of village co-sharers was recognised as the proprietor of the entire village, arable and waste together, the limit being ascertained by inquiry and equitable adjustment, and fixed by formal demarcation and survey. It is true that no proclamation was put forth acknowledging or conferring this right in set terms, as was done with the landlords of Bengal under the Permanent Settlement; nor did the first Settlement Law (Regulation VII. of 1822) of the

¹ Not that the *raiyatwāri* villages were always helpless. I think it is in the *Chāndā S. R.* (Central Provinces) that there is an account of how the *pāṭels* (headmen) defended their villages and fortified their *garhī*, or central residence, for the purpose.



North-West Provinces declare the right in so many words; but the fact of ownership is implied throughout the Regulation, as it is in the subsequent Land Revenue Laws; and it is evident from the terms of the land-records. The joint-village tenure is *zamīndāri*—i.e. a proprietary or landlord tenure, with no greater limitations than those which accompany the tenure of the Zamīndār or Taluqdār of Bengal or Oudh.¹ In both cases alike, the right is subject to certain limitations owing to the existence of subordinate rights and to the lien of Government on the land for its land-revenue; and the mere fact that the amount of the revenue is or is not liable to periodical revision makes no difference whatever in the tenure. The village co-sharer can sell and mortgage his land,² and lease it to whom he pleases, subject of course to any special rights of tenants; and so long as the Government Revenue is paid the owner is at liberty to cultivate or not, or to build on the land if he pleases.³

On the other hand, in the *raiyyatwāri* countries, where the Settlement deals direct with the several landholders in the villages, as in Bombay, or Berār, or Madras, there were various reasons why the British Government did not, as a matter of policy, completely or formally renounce its own proprietary right in the soil and confer it on the raiyats. Only in the Central Provinces was a proprietary title to most of the villages, under many limitations, exceptionally conferred on certain persons;⁴ and so the villages ceased to be *raiyyatwāri* and became *zamīndāri*. Speaking generally, the difficulty was this: the raiyat holdings had been so crushed by excessive revenue charges under the

¹ It is for this reason that I have called the joint-village also the 'landlord village.' It is always held on a superior sort of tenure, at all events throughout Upper India and the Central Provinces.

² Subject to any restrictions of his own tribal or caste law or custom, such as pre-emption, &c., but to none directly imposed by the State.

³ There is some difference about the subsoil right to minerals, which in the Panjāb and other provinces are expressly reserved by law to the State. In the North-West Provinces those rights, in all the plain districts, belong to the village owner, as the Secretary of State expressly allowed in a despatch of 1880.

⁴ It would be unnecessary here to go into any detail on the subject. The history of the conferment of right in the Central Provinces villages is given in some detail in my *L. S. B. I.* ii. 455 ff.



later Marāthā and Moslem rulers, and especially during the period when Central India became the focus of the wars of contending chiefs and armies, that the first relief required was to lower the charges, especially as the British system was at first much stricter and less elastic than the Native rule.¹ But such reduction was especially unpalatable to the authorities under the constant pressure which the times produced on the State Treasury, and it was but tardily acquiesced in. So much, however, was gradually conceded, that the raiyat might relinquish his holding, at a suitable season, if he felt unable to pay the revenue; and this rule came to be a fixed principle of the *raiya*t-wāri revenue system. It operated as an efficient test, in many cases, as to whether the revenue really was excessive or not. I am not, however, writing a history of the revenue management, and can only so far allude to the subject as helping to show why a formally 'proprietary' title was not recognised. A holder who can give notice that he will not be responsible for land after a certain date can hardly be called 'owner,' even under the ordinary limitations of Indian law. Accordingly, in Madras the question of the raiyat's title has been left undefined by law, though judicial decision has left no doubt that he has the practically proprietary enjoyment of his holding. But in Bombay, the holder of land is, by express legislative enactment, called 'occupant;' and in Burma and Assam, which are *raiya*t-wāri provinces in principle, though not formally so designated, he is called 'land-holder.' The right is legally

¹ The Native rulers in general put down the revenue demand at a high figure; but their officers were extremely good judges of the power to pay in each particular season, and were adepts in alternately squeezing and letting go by rule of thumb and without any system whatever. The British power was irresistible, and worked with mechanical regularity. Our early authorities sometimes forgot this, and were disposed to think that rates must be equitable when they were no more than former rulers had entered in their assessment-rolls, and when peace and security were now assured to the cultivator in a manner previously unknown. Hence it was that rates not nominally enhanced, but collected with strict regularity, proved intolerable in the first years of our rule. Those who wish to see specific examples will find plenty in Mr. A. Rogers's *Land Revenue in Bombay* (2 vols., Allen, 1892) and in the *Madras District Manuals*, *passim*.



defined as a permanent hereditary and alienable right of occupancy.¹ In prosperous times, under our modern well-adjusted assessments, nobody ever does 'relinquish' permanently cultivated land under any ordinary circumstances, but the power is there.

It may be noted that this theoretical distinction between the 'proprietary' tenure of the Upper Indian joint-village and the 'occupancy' tenure of the several holdings in a *raiyatwari* village, as well as the fact that in one case the right applies to the village as a whole, and in the other to the holding only, is the immediate cause of the difference between the Provincial Land Revenue systems. These distinctions are now well understood; but they would have been unintelligible to an Imperial Revenue officer of the seventeenth century, or, at all events, to one after the reign of Aurangzeb, in the early eighteenth century. For the old systems cared nothing for tenures as such, and in fact acknowledged none but the tenure of 'Government' land, and that of land held by some hereditary chief, or held in free grant [*milk*] which was an exceptional favour. In general, the country was classified into two large divisions—one that was *khālsa*, or paying revenue to the State; the other that was held in *jāgīr*—i.e. the revenue of the land was assigned to and collected by the grantee, the great State official, or the military tenant, who had the assignment. The assignee was bound to apply the revenue, to the amount fixed, to the support of the local administration, to the maintenance of a certain military force, and to the support of his own state and dignity. The grants (charitable, religious and special) of lands or villages revenue-free, and therefore free of all State claims, might be found in either division, but more commonly in the *khālsa* lands. The only considerable change in the system was brought about by the general introduction of revenue-farming on a large scale. It was a change, because then the details of villages and lands included in one 'farm' all disappeared from the Treasury Books; nothing was entered but the total due; and the farmer had the entire management. This

¹ See *L. S. B. I.* iii. 269, 408, 498. The difference is technical or legal rather than practical—i.e. affecting the actual enjoyment of the holding. The Madras theory is discussed, *ibid.* iii. 128 ff.



system of farming very often resulted in the farmer becoming so far owner of the land, whether a village or a larger estate, that in after years it was hardly possible to deny the title to his descendants.

The British Government went on an entirely different principle: it started with the avowed policy of defining, and confirming on an equitable basis, the right of private persons in the soil. At first, this right, from the experience of Bengal, seemed to reside in some one landlord; but, as further provinces came to be settled, it was found that other kinds or forms of right had to be acknowledged. It followed that whoever was entitled to the chief interest, whether called 'ownership' or 'occupancy,' that person was the one to be primarily and directly responsible for the land-revenue. Consequently, each provincial revenue-system differed according to the character of the legal tenure which was most generally prevalent.

In Bengal, land was held for the most part by great landlords; and hence the system was designed to suit the case of owners whose revenue assessment the Government thought it politic to fix in perpetuity, and whose title it was thought right explicitly to declare. In Northern India, again, in spite of the fact that in Oudh there were great landlords called Taluqdārs, and that similar landlords appeared in some parts of the North-West Provinces, the prevailing feature was the tenure of joint-villages; accordingly, the system provided primarily for dealing with these as units, fixing a sum of revenue on each, which was engaged for by the representatives of the village body, and distributed among the co-sharers according to their own custom and constitution. The minor variations of the system necessitated by the peculiar conditions of the Central Provinces, Ajmer, and the Panjab, caused subordinate varieties of the North-Western Provinces system to be formulated; but they are the same in general plan and principle.

There remained the Central, Western, and Southern districts, where, in general, the country was not held either by landlords or by joint-villages, but by separate holders in *raiyatwāri* villages; and here the two varieties of *raiyatwāri* management, the Madras system, and the Bombay system, were perfected in the course of time. Each holding is here dealt with on its own



independent merits, and assessed by a special method of valuation purely based on the consideration of the quality and value of the soil. Here, of course, the right of each holder extends only to the assessed holding; no area of waste is included in a village to be partitioned or held in common. Thus it will be evident that the difference between the great revenue-systems essentially depends on the difference of prevalent tenure, whether of a great landlord, a joint-village body, or the separate village land-holder.¹

It may be advisable here to note that a suspicion may arise in some minds that the *raiyatwāri* village, as it is under existing systems of administration, is something very different to what it was in old times; and that the system of revenue administration is quite different from that in use in former days. No doubt our modern surveys have defined, demarcated, and recorded the separate holdings in a manner that was never attempted in old days, but it certainly has not altered the characteristic custom by which the holdings are essentially separate, and the boundaries of each known. And so the modern mode of collecting the cash revenue is different from the old plan—first, of taking a share in the grain from each holding, and afterwards of calling on the entire village to arrange among its members for the payment of a total estimated cash sum. But the old method, equally with our own, recognised the individuality of the holdings; it never supposed that the raiyats were co-sharers, and that one was, under all circumstances, liable for the default of another. When injustice was done, or rights ignored, it was not by reason of any theory of land-tenures, it was simply from the oppressive methods of the farmer or the tax-gatherer.

It is curious to notice how the two ideas, now so easy to us, of the joint-village as a unit-estate, embracing arable and waste together in one general co-shared right, and the *raiyatwāri*

¹ Hence the absurdity of the attempts which were made in former days to compare and discuss the relative merits of this system or that. No comparison is possible, for each is only good for the particular sort of tenure it is designed to fit. Any one may be, and has proved to be, capable of great improvement in itself, and all of them may have certain features in common; but it is impossible to look upon one as intrinsically better than another, because each is based on a different groundwork.



village as a collection of individual families, each having its own holding without any joint responsibility to Government, struck the minds of the early revenue officers at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. When the co-shared villages of Benares and the Upper Provinces first came to the notice of officers accustomed to the Bengal system of individual landlords over considerable areas,¹ they were at first quite puzzled: there must be, so they thought, some one person who is landlord, and with whom the Settlement of the village-estate ought to be made. The idea of the village as an 'estate' within a certain boundary, consisting of arable and waste together, was intelligible enough; and it was understood that the Government claim to ownership, [except as to some residuary and super-eminent right] was given up; what they could not understand was that the title should reside, not in some one village-head, or other individual, but in a joint body under a more or less complicated constitution. It needed all the arguments of Holt Mackenzie's gigantic Minute of 1819 to make it understood. In the South, on the other hand, it was the idea of a village-estate, as an area of arable and waste in a ring fence and owned by the 'raiyats' as a whole, that was so difficult to realise. Here they felt that the Government was the absolute owner of the soil, except indeed where there was some special 'inām' (revenue-free) grant or some greater 'Polygar' or 'Zamindār' landlord, on whom had been conferred a patent 'of perpetual ownership.' The raiyat in a village was secure enough, no doubt, in the enjoyment of his individual holding; but he could not have a right to anything beyond the fields for which he held the Collector's *pattā* or lease; and the Collector would also insist on his duly cultivating the land, or else the revenue could not be paid. Hence, when the inquiry was made (as detailed in Chapter IX.) as to the former existence of a number of village-estates held by co-sharing bodies (*mirāsdlārs*), the officials could not well take in the idea.

¹ And these landlord tenures, as confirmed in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis's legislation, seemed to them to be in accord with the natural order of things. In early 'Minutes,' papers, and books, we often find expressions which indicate that in the mind of the writers, the tenure of land by a landlord with tenants under him was the natural and necessary order of things—the only conceivable kind of permanent tenure, in fact.



And so they confused the alleged village-estate rights with other hereditary claims to special privileges, which had nothing whatever to do with the question. This difficulty of conception is reflected in the laboured judgments of some of the courts on the claims of alleged co-sharers to such village rights, and in the language of most of the district Reports; and not least in the lengthy but very ill-designed series of questions which the Board of Revenue of those days circulated to District Officers with a view of elucidating the existence and history of *mirāsī* claims. Mr. Ellis, and, before him, Mr. Place, seemed to grasp the idea of the joint-village, but hardly anyone else; and it was little wonder that the joint-villages, which were no doubt in an advanced stage of decay, perished altogether.¹

But there is yet another practical result of the difference between the *rai-yatwāri* and the joint-village. In the former, as a simple aggregate of individual cultivating holdings, held together by local ties and under the authority of the hereditary headman and village officers, there were no superimposed rights, at least not as a general rule. The holder was the separate occupant, and held by hereditary descent² possibly from the first clearer of the soil. If he employed a tenant, as he often did, the tenant would, in most cases, have been located by him; there would, in short, seldom be anything but a simple contract tenancy. Here and there, no doubt, it would be otherwise. In the northern parts of the Bombay territory we have various local instances of over-lord tenures, where the occupants themselves have to pay rent to some *taluqdār*, *kashātī*, *gāmetī*, or other superior intermediate between them and the State. And even in ordinary villages it has happened that particular persons have been able to acquire lands and be recorded as the occupant, although cultivators were on the soil before them, and are now 'inferior occupants' or tenants

¹ The practical treatment of the remains of such rights is described in *L. S. B. I.* iii. 126.

² It will be remembered that the 'inheritance,' which is referred to by such terms as *mirāsī*, *warīsī*, &c., is always the landlord or superior title; it has nothing to do with ordinary holdings, which, notwithstanding that they pass from father to son by inheritance, are not held in virtue of any conquest or superiority, and so are not *mirāsī* in the technical sense.



whose position did not originate in any contract. In such cases there may be some express local customs about rent-payment, which, on proof, the Courts will give effect to. But, speaking generally, the practical effect of the *raiyatwāri* tenure has been to avoid tenant-right difficulties.¹

But in provinces in which joint-villages are prevalent it is otherwise. We have seen how often this tenure has arisen (especially in the North-West Provinces and Oudh) by grant, conquest, or usurpation (in the more or less distant past) over the heads of earlier cultivating bodies probably in the *raiyatwāri* form. Very often, too, the present body of co-sharers are the descendants of one or more 'farmers' or other intruders who have borne down the rights of an earlier joint-community who once had the village lordship, and are now reduced, in their turn, to being tenants. Then, there are sure to be distinctions of grade and privilege among the tenants: some will have claims as 'ex-proprietor,' or as descendants of a family that once held the village in grant and perhaps did much to improve it; and on other grounds also.

Even where, as in the Panjāb, the joint-villages are more commonly original foundations by superior agricultural clans and families, it is often found that tenants have claims by custom, as having taken part in the work of founding and having held their lands ever since; or they may be absentee co-sharers who have returned after many years, and have been admitted to cultivate, but have not been allowed their old place in the co-sharing body. Or they may be persons who were called in, in the days of Sikh or Durāni rapacity, to help cultivate enough land to make up the heavy revenue demanded, and have never paid anything beyond their quota of the total amount. It would be unjust not to recognise those who had borne the heat and burden of the day as entitled to consideration. To put it shortly; the joint-village tenure, being of the superior or over-lord character, is constantly associated with subordinate or inferior interests in particular plots or fields, and sometimes with interests extending over the whole of the older cultivation, if not over the whole village area. There

¹ In fact, they only appear in such special cases of superior tenure as the Khot's estates of the Konkān districts, and certain others, in which case there is a special provision made by the Legislature.



are, then, besides the ordinary class of contract-tenants located by the proprietors, others whose position is due to no contract whatever, and is on the basis of *status*. Fortunately, each province has been able, on the ground of an historical and practical view of the actual kinds of claim, to formulate its own tenant-law, which defines what circumstances have to be established, and what degree of privilege, as to fixity of tenure and non-liability to enhancement, or limited liability to enhancement, attaches to each kind of tenancy. It should, however, be added that a difficult question of tenant-right of a more general character arose, as it did under the Bengal landlords, chiefly in connection with the village estates of the North-West Provinces, where a number of the villages were owned by communities of non-agriculturist castes. In such cases, the lands were naturally entirely in the hands of tenants; and it became difficult, and sometimes historically impossible, to distinguish between tenants that had been located by the landlords, and who might be presumed to be tenants on some basis of contract, and those who were the old cultivating holders of the land, and over whom the co-sharing community of proprietors had grown up. Hence a general (arbitrary but equitable) rule was laid down of a presumption in favour of every tenant who had held, under certain conditions, for twelve years.

In the Panjāb the villages were so much more generally the result of original location, and were so frequently cultivated by the co-sharers themselves, that there this difficulty was not seriously felt; and the tenants who are protected by law are the purely natural classes, the circumstances of whose position it is not difficult to prove.

It is not within my present scope to justify these rules or to give a detailed account of the different kinds of tenant which are to be found in joint-villages, and in larger landlord estates,¹ but what has been said will have been sufficient to show the difference between *rai-yatwāri* and joint-villages as regards the existence of tenant-right.

¹ If a succinct account of the chief features of the Tenancy Laws in Bengal, Oudh, North-West Provinces, Central Provinces, and the Panjāb is desired, it will be found in ch. vii. sec. 5 of my *Short Account of the Land Revenue Administration in India* (Clarendon Press, 1894).



As regards the social and economic advantages of the village grouping of agricultural society, I find it impossible to make any choice between the two forms. That the 'village' formation (of either kind) facilitates revenue management, and is favourable to arrangements for police, sanitation, irrigation, and other matters of public administration, will not be doubted. But the advantages which can be claimed do not appear to me to depend much, if at all, on the internal constitution, whether joint or several.¹

No doubt, in past days the joint-village was especially well adapted to confront the class of difficulties and dangers peculiar to the times; though I suspect that the successful maintenance of so many villages intact was more dependent on the character and spirit of the castes and clans which furnished the proprietary families, than on the special features of their joint-holding. However that may be, the strong sense of union which exists, or once existed, in the North-Indian joint-villages, especially those that had a clan-origin, or that were proud of a connection with a common ancestor, was no doubt valuable in times of continuous war and local feuds and raids, and when defence was also needed against extortionate Revenue officers. But in modern times these evils have no longer to be guarded against; and the joint constitution does little for the village except that it keeps strangers out, to some extent, through the exercise of the power of pre-emption; and to some extent it promotes mutual help. But there is an undoubted tendency for the joint-villages, in some cases, to fall too much under the power of the official

¹ I do not propose to discuss the advantages of the village-aggregation with regard to the revenue administration. I will only mention that in former days it was supposed that the task of dealing with a multitude of individual holdings or 'survey-numbers' was beyond the power of any Collector, and that either a landlord-middleman or at least a dealing with whole villages as units, was the only practicable method. Such ideas have long since been exploded. The Collector of Bombay or Madras makes his annual demand accounts (*jamabandi*), and deals direct with every holding in every village in his district, with perfect facility; and the *raiyatwari* revenue management is just as easy and as efficient as that of the joint-village. Indeed, though in the latter only the village-total is (in theory) looked to, as a matter of fact, the local revenue officers have almost as much concern with the individual holdings in the villages as they have under the other system.



lambardārs or headmen, who presume on their position, so that they, with a few of the larger and wealthier shareholders, exploit the rest to their own advantage; while in others bitter party spirit arises and strong factions. This party spirit (*dhardāri*) is marked in the northern districts of the Panjāb, and is often the cause of affrays and even of more serious crime.

The actual condition of the joint-villages and the degree of good feeling which exists among the 'brotherhood' varies, of course, in different places. Officers whose experience is in one place will regard my remarks as needlessly depreciatory; others with less favourable experience will probably think I am too laudatory; over the wide extent of Upper India, it is not possible that any one estimate can be true throughout. I can only note specific points which are certainly true locally.

Excessive subdivision of holdings is certainly found in many villages, and it is a serious evil. This subdivision, to be sure, is not confined to holdings in joint-villages; for now that in the *raiyaṭwāri* countries Hindu caste and inheritance-customs have been established for many generations, it is quite possible that the *raiyaṭ* holding may be much subdivided among the heirs of the 'occupant.' As a matter of fact, however, in *raiyaṭwāri* districts subdivision is only carried to any length in the richer soils; and the Revenue rules about demarcation and record of shares, though liberal enough, act as a salutary check on the process. In the joint-village there is no limit; and where the holdings still consist of little strips in different parts of the village, representing so many varieties of soil, minute subdivision of each of these again, becomes a source of great confusion, and throws the people into the power of the *paṭwāri* (or village surveyor-accountant, who alone can know how the little plots are distributed. Hence the local saying, '*Gharīb k̄ā ustād paṭwāri*'— 'The accountant is the teacher (or master) of the poor landholder.'

The tendency undoubtedly is towards partition, and to a separate possession which shall be unalterable. And the strict fractional shares of the *pattidāri* system (as well as some others) tend to be lost, and to be converted into *de-facto* holdings, sometimes to the advantage of a few of the stronger, and the loss of the weaker, shareholders.



As the distribution of the revenue-charge over the holdings is always recorded, and each holder knows, or can know, exactly what revenue his particular plot has to pay, the practical difference, as regards value or profit to the holder, between the *raiyatwāri* holding and the joint-village share, becomes less marked, especially when all the common land has been divided up. In the North-West Provinces, if the several holders have any difficulty in getting credit for their share-payments, they can easily get permission to pay, and obtain receipts, direct from the local and subdivisional (*Tahsil*) treasury. In these Provinces, too, 'perfect' partition—that form which not only separates the holdings but dissolves the joint-liability to Government, and so constitutes a number of separate 'estates' (*mahāl*)—is not objected to, when all concerned agree to apply for it. In the Panjāb, the law restricts the power of such partition much more; but the joint responsibility, though useful as indirectly keeping up the 'brotherhood' ideal, and acting as an incentive to exertion and to combined action within the community, now but rarely needs to be enforced. The fact is that with our moderate Revenue demands there is not often any reason why in a tolerable year (or even under a short succession of bad seasons), a thrifty peasant owner should ever be in serious difficulty to meet his revenue instalments.¹

The power of relinquishment which exists in a *raiyatwāri* village, and is a feature of the tenure, was once (as I have explained) of consequence, but now has practically ceased to be so. The joint-village is owner of the whole estate; the co-sharers cannot therefore get rid of the responsibility which is the condition of ownership: but this again is not in any way a burdensome necessity, as no one wishes to give up land; and if

¹ I cannot of course say the same of the unthrifty or the lazier classes of agriculturists. Of late years great attention has been paid to a most important subject; the proper arrangement of several—but not too many—instalments in which the revenue is payable, so that the demand shall come when the rents are got in and crops profitably disposed of, and the means of payment are at hand. And the power of the Collector *at once* to suspend the demand in case of serious general or local calamity has been enlarged. Such suspension may or not be followed by total or partial remission, as the case requires. These, however, are matters of revenue administration, and are beyond my scope.



he does, he can easily find a buyer or a lessee. If in any case it were not so, that would argue something wrong with the assessment, or some other defect, in which case the revenue would probably fall into arrear, and the Collector's action would be sure to result in discovering the error and effecting the necessary remedy.

Another feature is that the *raiyyatwāri* village-holdings can only consist of the 'numbers' actually held and occupied; all surplus land belongs to Government; but, as long as any such lands exists, there is no obstacle to the increase of holdings for growing families. A person desiring land has only to apply for the vacant number and agree to become responsible for the revenue. And, as to the waste, as long as there is any, Government always allots to the village an area for its use, and this is secured as permanent grazing-ground (or for wood-cutting as the case may be). The Government ownership of such land is a positive advantage in some ways. In the joint-village, the estate being one, it naturally includes whatever land, arable or waste, lies within the boundaries. And in any case, even if the boundaries as regards the uncultivated area were uncertain, some provision was always made, at the first Settlements, for the natural expansion of the village; and a suitable area of the adjoining waste was always allowed to be included in it. This land is useful as grazing-ground, and also makes it possible that, as the several co-sharers' families expand, a partition can take place, and additional holdings be so provided. When there is no more land to partition, new families must necessarily go elsewhere. In this respect there is no greater, and no less, difficulty than occurs in the *raiyyatwāri* village, when a similar limit is reached and there are no more unoccupied numbers to apply for. But as the waste in a joint-village is thus at the absolute disposal of the co-sharers, no one can interfere, so long as the co-parceners agree to partition it,¹ even if it should be economically unadvisable to break up the land, and more profitable to keep it as grazing and wood-cutting ground.

¹ I have known cases where a contractor for railway fuel has persuaded a village to cut down the whole of a wooded tract, under the temptation of the several hundred rupees which he would offer and which would be divided at the moment. Yet the future inconvenience, which

A few words may be added as to the effects of the modern legal title to the land recognised in either kind of village respectively. I have explained in another connection the theoretical difference between the title to the land in a *raiyatwari* holding and that in a joint-village; and here it may be added that this difference does not seem to have any practical effect as to the value of the land for sale or mortgage. It is a question on both sides of which much may be said, whether in adjusting and conferring private rights in land, Government was well advised in conceding the power of free alienation to the peasantry in the joint-villages, and the power of selling their interest in *raiyatwari* lands. The practical result of the claim of Native Governments to be owners of the land was to deprive the peasant-owners of the right to sell the land; and even the sale of the occupancy was restricted, partly because only the best holdings would be saleable at all (under the conditions of the time), or, if they were bought up by a person desirous of forming a great estate or holding, he would be wealthy, and the Governor could exact a handsome fine or fee for sanctioning the transfer. It is not surprising that, following Western notions of jurisprudence, our administrators should have thought the power of alienation to be an essential feature of free ownership, and have thought it wiser to leave the matter to a natural economic solution than to

was never thought of, might often be serious, since a village is not likely to adopt the measures necessary to reproduce the wood on the cleared area. As to the disappearance of village wastes generally, however, it may be reasonably questioned whether permanent cultivation is not better than the maintenance of the wretched natural grazing which is found on the waste lands in all the 'drier' districts. This aspect of the question is one that is often forgotten, but it would be going beyond my subject to discuss it. It is sometimes asserted in argument that the people *must* have this wretched natural grazing ground; but it may well be doubted whether it would not be a positive advantage that they should be compelled by circumstances to grow grass and to cultivate grass-lands, as is done in Europe. The idea that grass cannot possibly be grown profitably in India is quite a delusion. It is not so long ago that our cavalry regiments used to be given the control of enormous areas of waste land—ten times greater than they really needed—on this supposition. But of late years, with irrigation and proper cultivation, they have found it easy to produce much better and more abundant grass on a much smaller area, giving up the rest to the plough.



attempt to impose any artificial limitation. It would be impossible now to return to a policy of prohibiting the sale of land in villages; but whether it would not have been a wise measure originally is another question. The general result of the power has been, among the less energetic castes, to facilitate the transfer of village-lands to a money-lending or trading and non-agricultural class. The loss of lands usually commences with a mortgage; and as payments on account are made in kind at practically the creditor's own valuation, and as the peasant keeps no accounts, and rarely knows how to preserve evidence of his payments, even by endorsements on the bond, it is very likely that the debt with interest will eventually reach such an amount that payment becomes hopeless and a sale completes the transaction. It will be observed that such a sale does not always, or even frequently, involve the removal of the landholder; he still lives on and cultivates as before, only that he is now tenant to his vendee, and has to give a cash rent, or a share of the produce by way of rent. Should he, however, fail to pay, or let the land fall out of cultivation, there will be the ordinary legal remedy against a defaulting tenant available, and then he must go to the wall altogether.

As regards the facilities, which either form of village affords for local government and rural administration, I have expressed my belief that it is the 'village' as such which offers them; and that in this respect there is little if any choice between the forms. The *pançayat* was once the special feature of the constitution of the joint-village. A council of the heads of houses took the place of a single hereditary head, as the agency for managing village affairs. But, regarded as a means of deciding disputes in general, the agency of a *pançayat* was just as commonly resorted to in *raiyatwāri* villages. In tribal-communities, the permanent village *pançayat* (and the tribal *jirgā* on the frontier) are still active institutions, and are made much use of. In the *raiyatwāri* village, the strong position of the hereditary headman or *pātel*, has also been utilised; and he is armed with small civil and criminal judicial powers, with or without the aid of assessors. The *lambardār* of a joint-village not being originally connected with the institution, his position is apt to vary exceedingly with circumstances: I know of few if any



cases where he could be allowed to act magisterially as the *pātel* is. Sometimes he has too little influence, sometimes too much. One source of weakness is that there are sometimes too many of them, one for each *patti* or section. In the Panjāb this is to some extent remedied by appointing a 'chief-headman.' And to aid in the repression of crime, and in rural administration generally, the Panjāb villages are often formed into circles (*zail*), over each of which an honorary officer, being a local landowner of respectability and influence, is appointed, with the title of *Zaildār*. There is no doubt, however, that more use might be made of village *panchayats* in disposing of petty judicial cases, both civil and criminal; and the legislation of the Madras Presidency is worthy of study on this subject.

Village organisation is admirably adapted for facilitating measures of sanitation, drainage, local communications, and education; provided such measures are not overdone and are kept to very simple and intelligible lines. In another important matter—the regulation of minor questions connected with canal or tank irrigation, the equitable distribution of the water, and so forth, the villages have of old been accustomed to manage for themselves; nor would it be difficult to form a union of several villages for such purposes when necessary. Generally, where there are a number of small hamlets, it is easy to aggregate them in circles;¹ and if the hamlets have a clan connection (such as has been described), the union will be still more easily maintained and managed.

It may be added that it is very probably owing to the village-system that Indian provinces dispense with a Poor Law and feed their own indigent and helpless (rural) residents.

It must be remembered, in schemes for local government by village agency, that while there is a natural tendency on the part of modern administrators to resort to the idea of a democratic and elective council, popular election in India (at any rate in rural districts) is still a very tender plant; and it is rare to find an election which means anything but the most unblushing

¹ As an instance, I may mention that the *patwāri*, being now a much better paid and educated and responsible officer, is usually (in Northern India) appointed not to a single village but to a 'circle' (*halqa*) of villages.



sale of votes or the exercise of personal influence. The fact is that in India, in spite of all modern and more superficial aspirations, there is a strong underlying current of aristocratic feeling; and to ensure the success of village councils, and the like, it is essential that well-chosen and educated chiefs or presidents, of really respected family as well as of local influence, should be induced to become associated with them.

Those who have hoped to see in the joint-village anything of a communistic or socialistic type will, I fear, be disappointed by a study of the real facts. By far the larger portion of the joint-villages were in origin the result not of communism but of conquest; of tribal and caste superiority, and of family pride in the common descent from a house that once held sway in the country round. Not a few are the descendants of successful 'farmers,' auction-purchasers, and land-speculators, who in common with others acknowledge the joint-family law and the consequent joint-inheritance. Even among the 'democratic' tribal settlements of Jats and the old free 'cultivating fraternities,' the sentiment of equality is all within the brotherhood and not in the least for the outside; their tenure is as much a 'landlord' tenure as any other form of joint-village community.

Village councils left uncontrolled would be a failure; there must be a chiefship and an efficient supervision, which, however, must be exercised with such wisdom as not to deprive the *panchayat* element of real influence or of its self-respect. This may be difficult of attainment, but it is not impossible. The danger always is that, when it is found necessary to define by law the powers which such local and rural boards are to exercise, the provisions may be too refined and complicated, and, with the best intentions of preventing mistakes and obviating sinister influences, the provisos and restrictions may defeat their own object.

One remaining point deserves notice, and that is, that the village-system enables a complete series of working and practically sufficient land-titles to exist throughout India.¹ The land-records prepared under the Settlement proceedings are now *kept correct* by annual and periodical revisions, and the

¹ Except in the landlord estates of Bengal. All other revenue systems include the survey and record of rights.



maps are also kept continually in accord with the facts, and this by the agency of the *patwāris*. It is comparatively of little importance whether deeds of transfer are drawn up or not; the village records make all titles as clear as possible. No extensive search or examination of documents is needed. There is a simple procedure for notifying and recording the fact of every permanent transfer by sale, gift, or inheritance. The system is only possible where the holdings are first aggregated into villages, each with its own staff; for these villages are then naturally grouped into 'Talūkas' or 'Tahsils' or other convenient revenue-subdivisions; and thus a number of local centres, as well for the receipt of revenue and taxes as for the compilation of statistics, are distributed over the country. From the head offices of these subdivisions the various inspectors of revenue, and of land records and statistics, continually move about through their respective circles. Every one of these local centres is in charge of one or more intelligent native officials. And these are under obligation to submit various returns and reports and diaries, which enable the Collector—the District Officer—to keep himself informed of everything that goes on. Moreover, the 'District' being so distributed and subdivided, it is possible at once to localise any complaint, or to trace the progress of any cattle disease, or agricultural calamity, or any economic change that affects the welfare of the people.

It would be easy to enlarge on the facilities which the village organisation gives for the discovery and repression of crime; and I might describe the customs by which (in the Panjāb, *e.g.*) cattle stolen and traced into one village must be traced beyond it again, or else the village becomes liable for the loss: these and other matters are connected with the 'village' as an institution; but I cannot go beyond the more directly 'tenure' aspects of the question.

I should like only to notice one interesting modern development, which is taking place in the dry plains of the Panjāb,¹

¹ In the Panjāb, in spite of the fact that each village had an area of waste adjoining it, and which became part of its property, there were enormous areas of waste in the centres of the tracts between the rivers which had never belonged to any existing village, and which, on the usual rule, are the property of Government.



where extensive areas of Government waste land have been made culturable by carrying out great works of canal irrigation. The Government might, of course, at once auction these lands to capitalists; but a wiser plan has prevailed. The lands are mostly level, at any rate are so situated that the canal branches and distributories can be arranged at pleasure to suit special schemes of locating colonies of peasant land-holders who are encouraged to emigrate from the over-populated districts. The result has been to form what will be artificial villages of peasant lessees. All the holdings will be in squares or half-squares of a fixed size, so that boundary disputes and difficulty in identification of grants, will be impossible. The canal distributories have already been arranged exactly to suit the wants of these aggregates of holdings; and a certain proportion of each group is to be kept as grazing ground. The peasant-holdings will be 'Crown-tenancies' without rights of transfer. Thus we shall have '*raiyatwāri* villages' in the course of time. It is not intended to make the whole of the reclaimed areas into such peasant tenancies: a certain number of large holdings (not exceeding 550 acres) will be offered for sale to capitalists, and a certain number will be made available (140 acres is the limit, in one instance, of such grants) for cultivators of the yeoman class. So that every type of land-holder will have a fair representation; but the peasant-lessee will be the principal figure. Provision is also made for reserving certain areas, which are to be stocked with wood for fuel and other purposes.

These details have been taken from one particular locality—the Chināb Canal Area: other smaller colonies also exist; and similar schemes will, as years go on, be doubtless extended, on the great scale, to the other tracts of open country between the Panjāb rivers, and will in future play a not inconsiderable part in the rural economy of the province.¹

¹ I may commend to the reader's notice a paper by Sir J. B. Lyall, giving many interesting details about these colonies and other matters connected with the Panjāb and its canal system. See *Journal of the Society of Arts*, xliv. 285 (February 21, 1896).



INDEX

(*Rai.* is used to abbreviate *Raiyatwārī*)

ABORIGINAL RACES. *See* Non-Aryan

Absence of villages in certain parts, 60

Adhlāpī custom, 345

Administration, rural : village in connection with, 441

Administrators, Indian : their minutes regarding tenures, 33, 379

Adnā mālik or 'inferior proprietor,' 212

Āgastya, the Sage, 118

Agnikulā tribes of Rājputs, 113

Agriculture : despised by higher castes, 192

— in the Veda, 188

— Manu's view of, 191

— aptitude of Dravidian races for, 119, 162, 164

Aham or *Ahōm* customs, 187

Ahīr, 109, 276

Akbar, Revenue Settlement under, 219

'*Alā lambardār*,' 24, 442

'*Alā mālik* or superior owner, 212

Alexander, population of the Panjāb in the time of, 97-8

Allotment of tribal holding, modes of, 257, 409

Amisham (*Amshom*), 64

Ancestral shares. *See* *Pattidārī*

— loss of the correct scale, 338

Artisans of village. *See* *Menials*

ARYAN : advance did not reach the South of India, 116

— chiefs in early times, 195

— clan-organisation, 193

— colonisation, extent of, 84

— communities, present location of, 121

— castes form only an upper social stratum, 88

— ideas of property in land, 202

ARYAN immigration, the, 78

— influence, in general, 80

— as regards land-tenure, 184

— in Assam, 134

— in Burma, 147

— in the Panjāb, 80

— in South India, 117, 162, 184

— kingdoms established, 195

— princes in South India, 166-7

— probable numbers of the tribes, 81

— remarks on the name, 78 (*note*)

— tendency to refer too much to this origin, 92

— traces of, in ancient Panjāb, 97

Aryans, Brahmanic traditions of first settlement, 97, 104

— early schism of the tribes, 79

— first settlement, place of, 78 (*note*)

— retreat of aboriginal races before : idea criticised, 127-8

Aryāvartā, 81

Assam, absence of village-groups in, 141

— customs of, 134

— Hill tribes of, 143

Āwān clans, holding large unit-areas, 271

Bābar tribe, curious customs of, 264

Bābhan, obscure caste of agriculturists, 87

Bāch, 336

— different modes of, in use, 346

Bangāhal. *See* *Kāngrā*

Bannu tribes, customs of, 258

Bant caste, the, 177

Bāra-balūte, 18 (*note*)

'Barbarous' tribes, remarks on, 91

Begār (unpaid labour), 139

Bengal, non-Aryans of, 109



- Bengal humbler castes of mixed origin, 110
Bhūichūrā: allotment of land by varieties of soil, 269, 275, 280, 283, 413
— constitution explained, 29
— varieties of, 333
— illustrated by a custom among tenants, 291
— misuse of the term, 356
— variety of villages commonly called, 357
Bhāgdārī villages (Bombay), 389, 392
Bhar tribes, 106
— as landholders in Oudh, 123
Bhejbarār custom, 339
Bhūl: their land customs, 152
Bhūmhār, a caste, 86, 125, 127
— name given to original soil-clearers, 180
Bikāner, joint and *rai*. villages found side by side, 394
Bilūchi tribes, 245
Birt, *Birtiā*, 300
Bombay, village-sites in, 68
— see Western India
Brāhmavartā, 81
BRANDIS, Sir D., on Karen cultivation in Burma, 55
'Brotherhood,' the, membership in, 26
Burma, customs of, 146
— elements in the population, 147
— origin of the name, 147 (*note*)
CACHAR (*Kāchār*), village-associations in, 139
Cak: a block or circle for calculation of relative value of holdings, 283
— a lot given to a grantee, 345
Čandel tribe, 125, 287, 311
Carnatic, the, 174 (*note*)
Caste (Hindu), the agriculturist, 185
Caurāsi, 198
Cawnpore (*Kāhanpur*), villages from dismembered chiefships, 311
Ceru, 108
Čatri, 187
Chiefs, grades of, in Hindu State, 197
— position of (Panjāb frontier tribes), 245-6
— tenure of, transformed by conquest, 307
Chota Nagpore. See *Chutiā Nāgpur*
Chutiā Nāgpur, Dravidian princes of, 165
— Dravidian and Kolarian villages, 153
— situation of, 47
— tenures of, 181
Čib clan, rulership dismembered, 308
— curious customs of, 309 (*note*)
Clan. See also Tribe, Tribal
Clan-areas. See also '*Tūga*, '*Tappā* &c., 230
— filled by expansion of families, 266
— in the Panjāb, 245, 269
— in the N. W. P. and Oudh, 283
— modes of holding, summarised, 411
Clans, totems, or insignia of, 120, 155, 230
Classification, official, of villages, defects of the, 353
Climate as affecting formation of villages, 38
Co-aration not found in India, 49
Colā dynasty, 166
Collective ownership of villages unknown to Manu or the Veda, 204 (*note*)
Colonist-associations in *Bikānēr*, 396
— in S.E. Panjāb, 324
— probable origin of the ancient joint or *mirāsi* villages in Chengalpat &c. (Madras), 371
— special privileges of, 377
Colonisation (State), modern scheme of, with aid of canal irrigation (Panjāb) 445
Common ownership: climatic considerations, 49
— different fields for observing in India (if it is real), 76 (*note*)
— in joint-villages, how managed in practice, 347
— in tribal areas, often apparent rather than real, 239-40, 409
— supposed illustration of, in frontier villages (Panjāb), 259 (*note*)
— Rohtak district, 277 (*note*)
— of waste land. See Waste
Communism and community: Mr. W. C. Bennett's remark on, 300
'Community': how applicable to villages of the *rai*. class, 9, 433
Constitution (village). See Joint-village
Co-operative cultivation, (N. Madras, Cāchār &c.), 140, 141
Co-sharer, absentee or absconding, 26 (*note*)
Councils of State, 136
Čudrā caste, the, 187
— occupation of, according to Manu, 191 (*note*)
— position of, in South India, 118 (*note*)
'Cultivating-fraternities,' 266, 269



- Cultivation, difficulties of first establishment, 50 (*note*)
— shifting or temporary, 52
Custom of Dravidian group, 159
— Kolarian group, 151
— Tibeto-Burman, 130
— Panjāb Jat, &c., 217, 220
- Daddi* (local), a tribal share, 260, 262
Dagar cultivation, 262 (*note*)
Dakhan (Deccan, Dekhan, &c.), features of the, 43, 381 (*note*)
Dasyū: remarks on the term, 83
Dera Ghāzi-Khan, tribes of, 265
Dera Ismail-Khan, tribes and varied customs of, 260
Difference of mother and status of wife causing customs of (*per-stirpes*) allotment, inheritance, &c., 247, 250
Dom, 106
DRAVIDIAN: contact with the Kolarian in Chutiya Nāgpur, 161
— custom affecting land, 159
— elements, widespread, 160
— people, general condition of, in South India, 119, 160-2
— traces of land measures in the Dakhan, 385 (*note*)
Dwārs, the (Eastern and Western) customs of, 139, 142
- ETHNOGRAPHIC conclusions, remarks on, 76
— chief groups adopted, 77
Exchange, periodic, of holdings in Dravidian villages, 180
— — (Panjāb frontier), 255, 257, 259
— — (Madras), 375, 376, 378
- 'FAMILY, the': constitution of, 241, 415
— the joint, not universal, 240, 418, 421 (*note*)
Farm. See Revenue-farming
Farūkhābād district, the empire of Kanauj, 105, 125
Female line, inheritance in the, custom of (West Coast), 176, 177
'First clearing,' right in the soil by, 207, 399
Fractions, system of vulgar, unknown, 263 (*note*), 335
Frontier, militia for defence of, 158
— see also *Ghātāl*
- GANGES plain, meaning of the term, 104 (*note*)
— population of the, 104
- Gautam clan, the, (N. W. Prov.), 312
Geographers, ancient, names of places &c. used by, 85
Geographical features affecting movement of tribes and armies, 39
Ghakar, tribe, 97, 98, 342
Ghātāl tenures of frontier militia, 153
Ghāzipur District, tribes of the, 125
Gond, *Gondwāna*, 114
Got: term as used in Assam, 138
— section of a clan or tribe, 194 (*note*), 273
Grain-share (for revenue &c.). See Produce
Grants (Royal), origin of villages in, 297
— illustration from the old Gondā Kingdom (Oudh), 299
Grass allotments in certain places (*see* Hay), 11 (*note*)
Grove, the village, 156
Gujar tribes, 101
Gujarāt (Western India), accessibility of, 43
— account of villages in, 69
— joint-villages surviving in, 387
Gundapur tribe, tenures of, 262
- HAIHAYĀ Kings, the, 46
Hal, or plough lands (as a unit of holding), 271, 275, 278, 325
— — further subdivisions of, 342
Hamsāya, custom of, 245, 246
Hay, cultivation of, in India, 11, 410 (*note*)
Headman of *rai*. village: his position, 10
— of joint village, 24
— of *rai*. village always hereditary, 13
— — strong attachment to office, 15 (*note*)
— — *ex-officio* holding of land, 15, 205 (*see* also *Pātel* and *Lambardār*)
Hill districts, Tibetan custom in, 131
— ranges, as affecting tribal movement, 39
— — Himalayan passes, &c., 40
Hill ranges, the Sulaimān, 41
— the Vindhyan, 42
Himalayan districts, mixed (Tibetan) population of, 40, 87, 131 (*note*)
— — conquest by Rājputs, 131
— — absence of villages in, 57, 132
— — customs of, 131
Hindu, process of becoming, by entering body of a cow made of brass, 90, 140
— caste, adoption of: its effect, 90

Hindu. See Joint-family

Hindu law, unknown in the Panjāb, 102

— the, on the question of the State-ownership of the soil, 209

Ho tribes, 153

Hujra, a characteristic building in frontier villages of the Panjāb, 254

'Ilāqa (clan area), 231, 247, 252, 267, 281, 286

'Imperfect' : a form of tenure (partial division) in joint-villages, 355

Imperfect-pattidāri and bhaiāchārā, 350 (see also Partition)

Individual foundation : originates the largest class of joint-villages, 293, 320

Indo-Scythian incursions, historic series of, 97

'Inheritance' : meaning of, 210, 433 (note)

Inheritance, joint. See Joint-family.

Irrigation mentioned in Veda, 189

— for State colonies (Panjāb), 445

JAGANNĀTHĀ : on State ownership, 209
Jalandhar district, tribal settlements in, 273

Janjhūā tribe and villages, 97 (note), 308

Jannī tenure, of Malabār, 170

JAT (Panjāb) Jāt (N. W. Prov. &c.), tribe, 99

— illustration of origin, 277 and note
— tribes settle in joint-villages, 216, 217

— — Gujrat district (Panjāb), 272

— — Lūdiāna district (Panjāb), 274

— — (Paṇḍrā clan) in Mathurā district (N. W. P.), 282

Jihlam district (N. Panjāb) : great areas, not really villages, 270

Jirgā (Panjāb frontier) tribal councils, 255

JOINT-VILLAGE, the :

(1) In general—

— forms a unit estate, 21

— includes an area of waste, 20, 439
— described, 20

— constitution of (general), 22, 28, 32

— subdivisions of, 31, 238, 278, 280, 283

— custom of pre-emption in, 27

— idea of 'the brotherhood' in, 26

— apparent uniformity of, by reason of the Revenue system, its official forms and terms, 9, 326, 327, 415

JOINT-VILLAGE, the (continued) :

(2) Theory and history of—

— as connected with tribe and clan stage, 29, 225

— as connected with individual foundation, 29, 293

— represents (at first) an over-lordship not necessarily connected with soil-ownership, 205, 298

— the product of conquest and superiority, 3, 403

— in a large class of cases dependent on the joint-family and the joint-inheritance, 28, 294, 419

— formed by Indo-Scythic and Moslem as well as Aryan tribes, 216, 217, 220

— idea of, recognised with difficulty by different classes of early officials, 431

— supposed allusion to in Veda, 204 (note)

— unknown to Manu, 204

— how regarded by old native governments, 425

— modern legal title in, 426

— party spirit in, 437

— why prevalent in Upper India, 215, 216

(3) Origin and forms of—

— on tribal areas, 244

— on areas on which a clan has grown up and expanded, 266

— old cultivating fraternities, 269

— from individual foundation, 293

— connected with State grants, 298

— revenue farming, 301

— auction purchase, 302

— 'commendation,' 310, 318

— from dismemberment of ruling chiefship or large estate, 304-308, 320

— example of this in 'Azamgarh, 314

— in Bareli (Oudh), 319, 320

— by private adventure without State connection, 320

— of individual foundation, may appear in stages as sole, joint, or partitioned, 295

— by colonist association, 323, 371

— example in Cachar, 139

— by effect of the Revenue system, 325, 343-345

— imperfect or partly divided, 356

— held on special kinds of shares, 341, 342

— artificially created by revenue system, 325, 344



- JOINT-VILLAGE, the (*continued*):
(3) *Origin and forms of*—
— minor varieties and changes by partition and otherwise, 328
— varieties of, summarised list, 348
— see also *Pattidāri*, *Bhaiāchārā*, Possession as measure of right
(4) *As to locality*—
— Madras, (ancient) from Royal grants, 367
— — — colonists, 375, 376
— — — question of date, 374
— — — traces of earlier over-lord shares in the Dakhan, 380
— — — Gujarāt districts of Bombay, 386
Joint-family, the, 241, 416
Joint-liability for revenue in joint villages, 21, 325, 438
— — — none in *raī* villages, 19
Joint ownership: where it really occurs, 421. See Common ownership
JONES, Richard, his views about Manu and right in the soil, 206 (*note*)
Jot, cultivating holding or tenant holding in Bengal, 142
Jum. See Shifting cultivation

Kāchār. See Cachar
Kālāpani, irrigation, 262 (*note*)
Kānara, tenures of, 176
Kanauj, 125
— villages from dismemberment of, 311
Kāndh, tribes, account of, 163
— village, the, 171
Kandā, subdivisions of *kheḷ*, 254
Kāngrā (district), villages not found in, 57
— peculiar tenures in parts of, 132
Kāniādsi (= *mirāsi*, i.e. 'inheritance') right of co-sharer in (early) joint-village in Madras, 362
Karnāl (district), village tenures of, 279
Karnam (Madras) = *Paṭwāri*, q.v.
Kashmir (*Kāṣmīr*, villages), 60
Kasūr-khwār, 345
Katheriyā clan, 126, 310
Kāthā, 98
Katoch and *Katorā* families, 129, 131 (*note*)
Khasdes, 130
Khāsi Hills, 145
Khālsa, 198
Kheḷ, division of a *tappā* or tribal area, 250, 254, 258, 408
— a group in the clan of related families; and further subdivided, 253, 408
Khel (in Assam), 138
Kherā (N.-W. Prov.), the parent village, 282 (*note*)
Khond. See *Kāndh*
Khulāvesh custom, 257
Kindred, degrees of, in early society, 234
— divisions of clans &c., depend on, 233
Kingdoms of ancient India, 104, 105
King's aggregate rights, 199, 208
— right to supplies of food &c., 138 (*note*)
Kohāt tribes, customs of, 256
Kolī tribes, not confused with *Kol*, 114
Kol tribes, 153
KOLARIAN: customs, 151
— absence of monarchy, 153, 154
— affinity with TIBETAN, 151
Koricā villages without boundaries, 155
Kos (measure of length), 12 (*note*)
Kshatriyā caste, remarks on the, 187 (*note*)
Kulkarni (Bombay) = *Paṭwāri*, q.v.
Kulā or *Kulitā* caste, 135 (*note*)
Kulā (district), customs of, 133
Kumāon (district), absence of villages, 61
Kumrī. See Shifting cultivation
Kunbi caste, 115, 389
Kurmi (idem)
Kwin (or Queng), village (Burma), 148

LAMBARDĀR, the, in joint-villages, 24, 441
Land: how classified under the Empire, 297
— alienation, power of, 440
— value of equal, in either form of village, 438
Land-revenue, not known in Vedic times, 196
— originating under Dravidian princes, 181
Land-tenures, too much reference to Aryan sources, 92
Laws of Manu. See Manu
Lillā, great tribal estate of, 270, 271
Lūdiāna, villages of Jat origin, 274
Lushāi villages, 144

MADRAS. See Southern India
Māgane, 63, 177
Mahāl (or *maḥal*: both forms in use), 21 (*note*)



Mahārāshtra, 114

Māhato, office of the, 13, 180

Mahratta. See *Marāthā*

Majrā, a hamlet, 279, 280

Majkhas land (in Dravidian village), 179

Malabar, customs of inheritance, 176

— kings and chiefs of, 169

— tenures of, 170, 175

— tribal divisions of, 168

Malba, or common expenses of joint-village, also the common fund out of which they are paid, 25, 346

Mālguzār (Central Provinces), made proprietors of villages, 344

Mālik-maqbūza, 340

Malli and *Multān*, 98

Mānpān (official precedence rights called), 14

MANU (*Mānava dharma śāstra*):

— account of non-Aryan tribes, 86

— degrees of relationship, 235

— Hindu State, the, as contemplated by, 196

— ideas of, regarding agriculture and caste, 190-192

— idea of, regarding ownership of land, 204

— joint-villages unknown to, 204

— on primogeniture, 305

Marāthā, origin of, 115

— administration, effect on tenures, 223

— ancient families of as over lords, 380

Marriages, offspring of different, have separate territories in some clans, 248

Mathurā district, villages of, 281

Mauza, in general, 20 (note), 74, 58, 62

— as used in Assam, 141

Menials and artisans in both kinds of village equally, 23

— — Panjab frontier, 255

— — mode of remunerating, 16

Minor-clan, 233

Mirāsī, origin of term, 210, 364 (note)

Mirāsī rights (Madras), confusion about, 364, 380 (note)

— (Bombay), recognised by *Mārāthas*, 385

Mirāsī village. See Joint-village (Bombay), (Madras)

Mixed races, 87

Monarchy among Aryans, 195

— not always developed by Aryan (*Rājput*) clans, 290

— Dravidian origin of, in Southern India, 168

— Dravidian form of, 165

Monarchy, land-revenue under the, 171

Mongoloid. See *Tibeto-Burman*

Moslem: colonies of village land-holders, 219

— conquests, general effects of, 217

— — dispersion of *Rājput* clans caused by, 121

— joint-villages, why like others, 220

— revenue-administration of, 221

Mūndā (Kolarian), village-headman, 156

MUNRO, Sir T., Minute mentioning *mirāsī* villages, 379 (note)

Muṭṭhā, division of *Kāndh* tribes, 164

Nāḍu, or tribal territory (South India), 167, 231

Nāgā. See *Serpent-worshippers*

Nāgbañsi, houses of C. Prov., Orissa, &c., 96 (note), 154, 165

Naglā (local) division of village, 283

Nair, see *Nāyar*

Nāla (division of tribal area), 260

Narvādārī villages (Bombay), 391

Nayak (or *Nāik*), 167

Nāyar (pl. of *Nāyan*) caste in Malabar, 88, 168

NON-ARYAN element: importance of the, 76

— tribes widely scattered, 82

— supposed inferiority of, 90

— varying degrees of civilisation, 8

— races in Bengal, 110

— — in the Ganges Plain, 105

— — Sir C. A. Elliott on, 127

— — in Oudh, 122

— — in the Panjab, 94

— — in Western India, 113

— — in Southern India, 117

Northern tribes in Western and Central India, 113

— — see also Indo-Scythian

N.W. Provinces, population of, 104

— Non-Aryan races recover possession for a time, 124

— — tribal or clan-areas found in, 286

— — village-building in, 70

Nose, form of, and the epithet *anāsū*, 83

ORIGIN of villages. See *Village*, *Joint-village*, *Rai*, *village*, &c.

Orissa, population of, 110 (note)

— *Kāndh* tribes of, 163

Oudh, non-Aryan and Aryan in, 122

— clan-areas found in, 287

- Oudh village residences, 71
 Outcaste races, supposed inferiority of, 120
 — — peculiar privileges retained in some cases, 89
 OWNERSHIP by a clan: its forms, 405
 — by a family, 415
 — general summary, 398
 — supposed evolutionary stages of, 406, 422
- PāLEGAŔ* (Polygar), 167
Pāna (also *pannā*: share in a joint-village), 278, 280
Pançayat (village council), functions of, 25
 — in Jāt villages, Mathurā, 283
 — utility of (modern), 441
Pāṇḍyā kingdom, the, 166
 Panjāb, the, accounted impure by Aryans, 80
 — — population of, 93
 — — Hindu element in, 102
 — — village buildings, 72
 — — summary of tribes and castes, 103
Pargana (Mughal revenue subdivision of a district), 231
 — originated in a clan-area, 287
Parhū, Kolarian clan-territory, 155
 Pariah (*Paraiyar*) and outcaste races, 89, 114 (*note*), 119
 Partition, 'perfect' and 'imperfect,' 21
 — when it effects village-tenure, 329
Pasī (*Raj-Pasī*) tribe, 109, 127
Pātel (headman in *rai*. village), 13
 — estimation in which the office was held, 15 (*note*)
 — origin of name, 298 (*note*)
 — utility of office (modern), 442
 Pathān tribes, 245
 PATTIDARĪ, term explained, 29
 — its origin and use, 355-6
 — village, instances of, 314, 321
 — — in 'Azamgarh, 315
 — — liability to change, 335
 — — peculiar mode of allotting shares, 340
 — — consequences of partial division in, 330
 — — consequences of loss of correct scale of shares, 336
 — — voluntary rectification of shares, 323
Paṭwārī (accountant and registrar of village or circle of villages), 14
 — necessary also in joint-village, 23
- Per-capita* principle of allotment 250, 259
Per-stirpes principle of allotment, 248
 Peshāwar (dist.), customs of, 252
 Plough in the Veda, 189
 'Possession,' area in, as the measure of right in villages, 343
 Pre-emption, custom of, 27
 Primogeniture, custom of, 305
 Private ownership of land, 207
 PRODUCE SHARE for Royal revenue (Oudh), 213
 — — — (Madras), 369
 — — for payment of village menials, 16
 — — easy means of settling various interests in land, 213
 PROPERTY IN LAND: separately demarcated fields noticed in Veda, 189-90
 — Aryan ideas of, 202
 — Manu, Laws of, regarding, 206
 — effect of sale and mortgage on, 441
 — in Burma, 55, 149
 Purchase (euphemistic), land held by, 259
 — at auction sale for arrears, 302
- QANZA* lands, 257, 264
- Rāj* cultivation, 53
 Races, position of the inferior, 89
 — see Tribe
 RAIYATWARĪ VILLAGE, the: described, 19
 — connected with tribal areas and tribal stage of society, 227, 241
 — tenure depends on right by first-clearing, 400
 — possible connection with stage in which 'family' is not joint, 242, 418
 — original allotment of holdings not generally traceable, 10
 — nature of lien constituting the 'community,' 18, 433
 — cannot be attributed to decay of a joint-constitution, 35
 — how affected by change in mode of revenue administration, 18, 431
 — not liable to vary in form, 329
 — modern (legal) title to holding, 427
Rāj, the. See State (Hindu)
Rājā, the, in Vedic times, 195
 — term explained, 197 (*note*)
 — investiture of Hindu, by aboriginal tribesmen, 89
 — as general owner of land (see State



- Rāj-hās* lands, 181
RAJPUT, use of term, 187 (note)
— thirty-six 'houses' of, 187
— Agnikulā, 113
— some clans without *Rājā*, 290
— process of raising to rank of, 90
— clans, dispersion and re-settlement of, 121
— conquest in Himalayan districts, 131
— locally called *Thākūr*; reason of, 124
— inferior marriages of, mixed races resulting from, 87
— Jat connection with, 100
— tribes of, now found in the Panjāb, 129
— settlements of, in the Hills, 131
Rassi-baṭā, custom of (dividing riverain lands), 281 (note)
Relinquishment of holding, right of, 428
Residence. See Village site
REVENUE, administration of:
— Moslem rule: its effects, 221
— assessment, change from grain-share to cash payment, 221
— effect of, on shares in village, 339
— difference between native and British mode, 428 (note)
— farming: acquisition of landlord title to village by, 301
— joint-villages in Kairā and Broach arising from, 388
RIGHT IN LAND, early ideas of, 399
— by 'first clearing,' 207 (note), 400
— by 'inheritance' or conquest, 210, 402
— found in 'strata,' one interest over the other, 212
— case of, in the N. Panjāb, 214
Rohtak district: villages (expansion on clan-area), 276
Royal lands and farms, 141, 181
— probably Dravidian, 171
— in Burma, 147
Royal rights, aggregate of, 199, 201, 208
Rulership, very often informal, 201
Sādir-wāred, 19
Santāl village, the, 157
Scattered holdings (variety of soil). See *Bhairāchārā*
Senapati, 195
Seori (or *Suviri*) tribes, 108
Serpent-worshipping races (Panjāb &c.), 95, 169 (note)
Shāns, the: land customs little known, 150
Shares, special forms of, in joint-villages (see Joint-village), 342
Shifting (or temporary) cultivation, 52
— gradual transformation of, 55
Shouting, as a primitive measure of distance, 12
Shozhā. See *Colā*
Sir land, 25, 337, 352
Son-in-law, resident, custom of, 220 (note)
SOUTHERN INDIA:
— population of, 116
— ancient kingdoms, 166
— village-buildings, 68
— remains of joint-villages, 362
South-western Bengal. See *Chutiya*
Nāgpur, Orissa
STATE, the Hindu, 192
— when on a clan-basis, 197
— said to be 'feudal,' 199
— when not on a clan-basis, 200
— grades of chiefs in, and titles, 197
— multitude of officials in, 299 (note)
— gives rise to joint villages by its grants, 296
— and by its decadence and dismemberment, 304
— and later by revenue-farming, 301
— ownership of land by, 207
— as influenced by Moslem conquest, 223
— effect of, on village tenures, 423
Sudra. See *Čandra*
Superimposition of rights and interests in land, 212
SYKES, Col., on Dakhan tenures, 382
Takā race, the, 95, 96
Talaing, the (in Burma), 147
Talūqa (division of district, locally), 231
— derived from clan-areas, 287
— why it has survived, 232
Tangana (tribe), 123
Tappā (subdivision of clan-area), 237, 247, 253, 267, 279, 282, 286, 289
Tarā, the, of Malabār, 175
Tawngyā. See Shifting cultivation
Tauzi-bighā, 334
Taxila (*Takāshila*), 95
TENANTS:
— in joint villages, 25
— rights of, in their houses, 26
— rights of, as arising under the *rai*. and joint forms of village respectively, 433, 435
Tenure, prevalent form of, determine the revenue system, 431



- Thākur*, name for Rājput (locally), 124
— title of subordinate chief, 197
Thapā = *Tappā*, q.v.
Thāru tribe, 123
Thok, (local) division of a village, 31, 283
Tibetan element in Himalayan districts, 77, 87, 93, 130
Tilokcandī Bais, estates of (dismemberment of local rulership), 319
Titles. *See* State, the Hindu
— (legal) to land in modern times compared with the Empire, 429
— — practical effect of, 440
— secured by village record system, 443
Tondaimandalam, vestiges of joint-villages in, 371
Transformation of villages of one kind into another, 36, 343, 344
Tree (or grove) planted or left at foundation of new village, 156, 324, 396
TRIBAL AREAS or territories found over India, 165, 230
— (Panjāb frontier) described, 250, 253
— *‘ilāqa, talūqa, &c.’*, explained, 245
— in South India, 167, 169
— where the clan has grown up *in situ*, 268
— — (customary law), 217
— rule gives way to monarchy, 197
— stage of society: village settlements necessarily began under, 225
— — villages: appearance of joint-holding in, which may not be real, 244
TRIBE (or clan), the, in relation to the village, 225
— — to the monarchy, 197
— principle of subdivision of, 233, 236, 238
— terms indicating subdivisions, 194 (*note*), 273
— the Dravidian, 163
— the Kolarian, 155
— the Aryan in Vedic times, 193
— assemblies of the, 195
— among the Israelites, 235
— in Greece, 235
— in Wales, 233
TRIBES, variety of, in India, 84
— of mixed origin, 87
— ‘outcaste’ &c., 89
— possessing custom of joint-family and a strong sense of union, 243
— Panjāb frontier, connected with the joint-village, 220
— Indo-Seythie, 215
— *see also* Aryan, Jāt, Moslem, Non-Aryan
Vaivā (caste), not specially agriculturist, 186, 191, 192
— view of, in Manu, 190
Vargā (Kānara), superior holding of land, 177
Veda, no mention in, of land-holding in villages, &c., 204
— agriculture, allusions to, in, 158
— caste as mentioned in, 186
Vellālar (agriculturist caste of S. India), 372. (Final *r* marks the plural, *n* the singular.)
Vesh (periodic exchange of holdings, Panjāb frontier); also the series or groups of soils recognised, 256, 257, 259, 260 (*note*)
VILLAGE:
(1) *Theory of, in General*—
— both types of, found in local juxtaposition, 361
— early literary allusions in Veda, 204
— — in Manu, are to the *rai*. form 183
— error arising from combining different accounts of, 34
— of Northern, Jāt, and other tribes: why in the joint-form, 216
— origin of: different views, 228
— — popular idea of, 3
— quotations from Sir H. S. Maine, 4
— reason of non-recognition of two types, 33
— two types: areas in which each is prevalent, compared, 8
— summary of all the varieties of, 348
(2) *General features of*—
— absence of, in certain places, 57, 60, 181
— not always found (at first) in connection with large clan-areas, 23, 245, 251, 260, 267, 270, 404
— formation of, as affected by climate and circumstances of cultivation, 48, 66, 67
— essential limit of, only when there has been individual foundation, 294, 331
— in Panjāb, not as a rule Aryan, 80
— artificial in various localities, 61, 261 (*note*)
— transformation of, 36, 343, 344
— vernacular terms for, 74
— number of, as a measure of the extent of a rājā's and chief's territory, 198
— waste included in boundary and difference as regards ownership thereof, 12, 20, 173
— site or group of residences, 13, 67
— general statistics of, 73

VILLAGE (*continued*):

- (2) *General features of*—
 - in Gujarāt, 69
 - Ratnagiri and coast districts, 70
 - Central Provinces, 70
 - N.W. Provinces and Oudh, 70, 71
 - Panjāb, 72
 - central site and hamlets, 276, 279
 - built on elevated ground, 72
 - separate suburb for menials (S. India), 68
 - area, general extent of, 12

(3) *Administrative and practical*—

- VILLAGE—tenures, ostensibly not affected by Moslem conquest, 217
- how affected by British rule, 426
- by assumption of State right in the soil, 423
- two types of: how differing as regards tenant-right in them, 433
- either type equally advantageous, 436
- when held by agriculturist and non-agriculturist owners, 351
- aggregation from an administrative point of view, 423, 441
- records, value of the, 443 (*see* Titles)
- officers, &c. *See* *Paṭwāri*, *Pātel*, *Headman*, *Lambarḍār*, *Menials*
- curious features of: Assam hills, 145
- in Burma, 146–48
- Dravidian (*Kāndh*) in origin, 171
- in Chutiya Nāgpur, 179
- Kolarian forms of, 155
- frontier of Panjāb, a unique type, 246
- *see also* *Rai*. village, Joint-village
- Vindhyan hills, barrier formed by, 42
- passes through, 44
- eastern end, refuge ground in, 46
- Viśābadā* custom (North Madras), 141

Waish or *Wesh* = *Vesh*, q.v.

Warg. *See* *Vargā*

Wāris (*virāṣat* &c.), euphemism for title by conquest (= inheritance) 211, 252, 403 (*cf.* *mirāṣi*)

Wāris in Kāngrā: view of his position, 215

WASTE-land, the, general State right to, as descending from ancient Rājās, 12, 21 (*note*), 199, 203, 243, 318, 444 (*note*)

— not the property of *rai*. village, 11

— always included in joint-village estate, 20, 365, 439

— surplus area, 21 (*note*)

— practical use of, in villages of either form, 439

— in *Kāndh* villages, 173

— not regarded as 'property,' 242, 400

Wāṭan, 15

Water-shares, 258, 264

Wells for irrigation, shares depending on, 342

— forming units of cultivating settlement, or of assessment, 65, 342, 345, 346

West Coast, villages not found, 62

— land-tenures of, 174

WESTERN INDIA, population of, 111

— Dravidian element in, 161

— *see also* Gujarāt, Dakhan.

Yādava or *Jāduñ* clans, 97, 111

Zai, in tribal names (Panjāb frontier), meaning of, 250

Zaildār, 442

ZAMINDĀRI:

— used to indicate the aggregate of Royal rights, 208

— grant of the, 300

— meaning when applied to villages, 350, 355, 427

Zones of cultivation in villages, (N.W.P.), 334

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INDEX OF AUTHORS AND EDITORS.

	Page		Page		Page		Page
Abbott (Evelyn) -	3, 18	Babington (W. D.) -	17	Blackwell (Elizabeth) -	7	Carmichael (J.) -	19
— (T. K.) -	14, 15	Bacon -	7, 14	Boase (Rev. C. W.) -	4	Chesney (Sir G.) -	3
— (E. A.) -	14	Bagehot (W.) -	7, 16, 29	Boedder (B.) -	16	Chisholm (G. G.) -	25
Acland (A. H. D.) -	3	Bagwell (R.) -	3	Bolland (W. E.) -	14	Cholmondeley-Pennell (H.) -	11
Acton (Eliza) -	28	Bain (Alexander) -	14	Bosanquet (B.) -	14	Christie (Nimmo) -	19
Acworth (H. A.) -	18	Baker (James) -	21	Boyd (Rev. A. K. H.) -	7, 29, 31	Cicero -	18
Æschylus -	18	Baker (Sir S. W.) -	8	Brassey (Lady) -	8	Clarke (Rev. R. F.) -	16
Ainger (A. C.) -	12	Balfour (A. J.) -	11, 31	— (Lord) -	3, 8, 12, 16	Clodd (Edward) -	17
Albemarle (Earl of) -	10	Ball (J. T.) -	3	Bray (C. and Mrs.) -	14	Clutterbuck (W. J.) -	9
Alden (W. L.) -	21	Baring-Gould (Rev. S.) -	27, 29	Bright (J. F.) -	3	Cochrane (A.) -	19
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Aristophanes -	18	Beaufort (Duke of) -	10, 11	Browning (H. Ellen) -	8	Coventry (A.) -	11
Aristotle -	14	Becker (Prof.) -	18	Buckle (H. T.) -	3	Cox (Harding) -	10
Armstrong (E.) -	19	Beesly (A. H.) -	19	Bull (T.) -	28	Crake (Rev. A. D.) -	26
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— (E. J.) -	7, 19, 29	Bent (J. Theodore) -	8	Burrows (Montagu) -	4	Cunningham (G. C.) -	3
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— (Dr. T.) -	3	Bickerdyke (J.) -	11, 13	— (Samuel) -	29	Cutts (Rev. E. L.) -	4
Ashley (W. J.) -	16	Bicknell (A. C.) -	8	Cameron of Lochiel -	12		
Astor (J. J.) -	21	Bird (R.) -	31	Cannan (E.) -	17	Davidson (W. L.) -	14, 16
Atcher du Lys (Author of) -	26						



CSL

INDEX OF AUTHORS AND EDITORS—continued.

	Page		Page		Page		Page
Davies (J. F.)	18	Hume (David)	14	Murdoch (W. G.)	9	Soulsby (Lucy H.)	26
De la Saussaye (C.)	32	Hunt (Rev. W.)	4	Burns	9	Spedding (J.)	7, 14
Deland (Mrs.)	26	Hutchinson (Horace G.)	11	Murray (R. F.)	20	Stanley (Bishop)	24
Dent (C. T.)	11	Ingelow (Jean)	19, 26	Nansen (F.)	9	Steel (A. G.)	10
Deplonge	17			Nesbit (E.)	20	Steel (J. H.)	9
De Salis (Mrs.)	28, 29			Newman (Cardinal)	22	Stephen (Sir James)	7
De Tocqueville (A.)	3	Jefferies (Richard)	30			— (Leslie)	9
Devas (C. S.)	16	Jones (H. Bence)	25	O'Brien (W.)	6	Stephens (H. Morse)	6
Dickinson (G. L.)	3	Johnson (J. & J. H.)	30	O'Connell (Mrs.)	22	— (W. W.)	3
Dougall (L.)	21	Jowett (Dr. B.)	17	Oliphant (Mrs.)	22	Stevens (R. W.)	31
Dowell (S.)	16	Joyce (P. W.)	4	Onslow (Earl of)	13	Stevenson (R. L.)	23, 26
Doyle (A. Conan)	21	Justinian	14	Orchard (T. N.)	31	Stock (St. George)	15
Dufferin (Marquis of)	12			Osbourne (L.)	23	'Stonechange'	9
Dunbar (Mary F.)	20					Storr (F.)	14
		Kalisch (M. M.)	32	Palmer (A. H.)	8	Stuart-Wortley (A. J.)	12
Ebrington (Lord)	12	Kant (I.)	14, 15	Park (W.)	13	Stubbs (J. W.)	6
Ellis (J. H.)	13	Kaye (Sir J. W.)	4	Parr (Mrs. Louisa)	26	Sturdy (E. T.)	30
Ewald (H.)	3	Kerr (Rev. J.)	12	Payne-Galloway (Sir R.)	11, 13	Sturgis (J.)	20
		Killick (Rev. A. H.)	15	Peary (Mrs. Josephine)	9	Suffolk & Berkshire (Earl of)	11
Falkener (E.)	13	Kitchin (Dr. G. W.)	4	Peck (H.)	20	Sullivan (Sir E.)	12
Farnell (G. S.)	18	Knight (E. F.)	5, 9, 12	Pembroke (Earl of)	12	Sully (James)	15
Farrar (Dean)	16, 21	Köstlin (J.)	7	Perring (Sir P.)	19	Sutherland (A. and G.)	6
Fitzygram (Sir F.)	9			Phillips (M.)	32	Sutton (B. von)	23
Florian	10	Ladd (G. T.)	15	Phillips-Wolley (C.)	10, 22	Swinburne (A. J.)	15
Follett (M. P.)	4	Lang (Andrew)	5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 26, 30	Piatt (S. & J. J.)	20	Symes (J. E.)	17
Ford (H.)	13	Lascelles (Hon. G.)	10, 12	Pleydell-Bouverie (E. O.)	12		
Fowler (Edith H.)	21	Laurie (S. S.)	5	Pole (W.)	13	Tacitus	18
Francis (Francis)	13	Lea (Walter)	31	Pollock (W. H.)	11	Taylor (Meadows)	6
Freeman (Edward A.)	4	Lea (H. L. Sidney)	39	Poole (W. H. and Mrs.)	29	Tebbutt (C. G.)	12
Froude (James A.)	4, 7, 8, 21	Lecky (W. E. H.)	5, 19	Poor (G. V.)	31	Thornhill (W. J.)	18
Forneaux (W.)	24	Lees (J. A.)	9	Potter (J.)	16	Todd (A.)	6
		Lewes (G. H.)	15	Prevoist (C.)	11	Toynbee (A.)	17
Galton (W. F.)	17	Lindsay (Lady)	19	Pritchett (R. T.)	12	Trevelyan (Sir G. O.)	7
Gardiner (Samuel R.)	4	Lodge (H. C.)	4	Proctor (R. A.)	13, 24, 31	— (C. P.)	17
Gerard (D.)	26	Lofthie (Rev. W. J.)	4			Trollope (Anthony)	23
Gibbons (J. S.)	11, 12	Longman (C. J.)	10, 13, 30	Quail (A. W.)	18	Tyndall (J.)	9
Gibson (Hon. H.)	13	— (F. W.)	13	Quillman (Mrs.)	9	Tyrrill (R. Y.)	18
Gill (H. J.)	22	— (G. H.)	11, 12	Quintana (A.)	22		
Gleig (Rev. G. R.)	8	Lucan	17			Upton (F. K. and Bertha)	26
Goethe	19	Lyall (Edna)	22	Raine (Rev. James)	4		
Graham (P. A.)	13	Lytelton (Hon. R. H.)	10	Ransome (Cyril)	3	Verney (Frances P. and Margaret M.)	8
— (G. F.)	10	Lyton (Earl of)	19	Rhoades (J.)	18, 20	Vincent (J. E.)	6
Grant (Sir A.)	14			Rhoscomyl (O.)	23	Virgil	18
Granville (Countess)	7	MacArthur (Miss E. A.)	17	Rich (A.)	18	Vivekananda (Swami)	33
Graves (R. P.)	7	Macaulay (Lord)	5, 20	Richardson (Sir B. W.)	31		
Green (T. Hill)	14	Macdonald (George)	20, 32	— (C.)	12	Wakeman (H. O.)	6
Greville (C. C. F.)	26	Macfarren (Sir G. A.)	30	Richman (I. B.)	6	Walford (Mrs.)	23
Grey (Maria)	26	Magruder (Julia)	22	Rickaby (John)	16	Walker (Jane H.)	29
Grose (T. H.)	14	Mackail (J. W.)	18	— (Joseph)	16	Walpole (Spencer)	6
Grove (F. C.)	11	Mackinnon (J.)	5	Ridley (Annie E.)	7	Walrod (Col. H.)	10
— (Mrs. Lilly)	10	Macleod (H. D.)	17	Ridley (E.)	18	Walsingham (Lord)	7
Gurney (Rev. A.)	19	Macpherson (Rev. H. A.)	12	Riley (J. W.)	20	Walter (J.)	7
Gwilt (J.)	30	Maher (M.)	16	Robertson (A.)	23	Watson (A. E. T.)	11, 13
		Malleson (Col. G. B.)	4	Roget (Peter M.)	16, 25	Waylen (H. S. H.)	30
Haggard (H. Rider)	21	Mandello (J.)	17	Rokeby (C.)	23	Webb (Mr. and Mrs. Sidney)	17
Hake (O.)	12	Marbot (Baron de)	7	Rolfen (N.)	7	— (T. E.)	19
Halliwell-Phillips (J.)	12	Marshman (J. C.)	7	Romanes (G. J.)	15, 17, 32	Weber (A.)	15
Hamlin (A. D. F.)	30	Martineau (Dr. James)	32	— (Mrs.)	7	Weir (Capt. R.)	11
Hart (Albert B.)	4	Martineau (J. N.)	13	Ronalds (A. C.)	13	West (B. B.)	23, 31
Harte (Bret)	22	Matthews (Brander)	22	Roosevelt (T.)	4	Weyman (Stanley)	23
Hartwig (G.)	24	Mauder (S.)	25	Rossetti (M. F.)	31	Whately (Archbishop)	14, 15
Hassall (A.)	6	Max Müller (F.)	15, 16, 30, 32			— (E. Jane)	16
Haweis (Rev. H. R.)	7, 30	May (Sir T. Erskine)	5	Saintsbury (G.)	12	Whishaw (F. J.)	9, 23
Hayward (Jane M.)	24	Meade (L. T.)	26	Sanders (T. C.)	14	Whitlaw (R.)	18
Hearn (W. E.)	24	Melville (G. J. Whyte)	22	Scott-Montagu (Hon. J.)	12	Wilcocks (J. C.)	13
Heathcote (J. M. and C. G.)	12	Merrivale (Dean)	5	Seeborn (F.)	6, 7	Wilkins (G.)	18
Helmholtz (Hermann von)	24	Merriman (H. S.)	22	Selous (F. C.)	10	Willich (C. M.)	25
Henry (W.)	12	Mill (James)	15	Selss (A. M.)	19	Wigham (T. M.)	12
Herbert (Col. Kenney)	12	— (John Stuart)	15, 17	Sewell (Elizabeth M.)	23	Wolff (H. W.)	6
Hewins (W. A. S.)	17	Milner (G.)	30	Shakespeare	20	Wood (Rev. J. G.)	25
Hillier (G. Lacy)	10	Miss Molly (Author of)	26	Shand (A. L.)	12	Woodgate (W. B.)	10
Hodgson (Shadworth H.)	14	Molesworth (Mrs.)	26	Sharpe (R. R.)	6	Wood-Martin (W. G.)	6
Holroyd (Maria J.)	7	Montague (F. C.)	6	Shearman (M.)	10	Wordsworth (Eliz.)	26
Hope (Anthony)	22	Moore (T.)	25	Sheppard (Rev. Edgar)	6	Wylie (J. H.)	6
Hornung (E. W.)	23	— (Rev. Ed.)	14	Sinclair (A.)	12		
Howell (G.)	16	Morris (W.)	20, 22, 31	Smith (R. Bosworth)	6	Youatt (W.)	9
Howitt (W.)	9	— (Mowbray)	11	— (W. P. Haskett)	9		
Hudson (W. H.)	24	Mosso (A.)	15	Solovyoff (V. S.)	31		
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