

CHAPTER X

LAND REVENUE
ADMINISTRATION

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION IN MUHAMMADAN TIMES We know nothing of the system of revenue administration prior to and little of that prevailing during Muhammadan times. We learn from the Ain-i-Akbari that in the time of Akbar, about A.D. 1600, his Finance Minister Todarmal made a *khas* or *raiyyatwari* settlement, and divided the Empire into 15 revenue divisions called Subhas. The Subha of Bengal was divided into 24 Sarkars, parts of 6 of which fell within the limits of Dinajpur. The Sarkars were again sub-divided into mahals, which corresponded to some extent with the present parganas. The mauzas into which the present parganas are divided are said to be village divisions dating from pre-Muhammadan times and which were not affected by Akbar's divisions. The system of revenue collection in force amongst the Muhammadan conquerors of Bengal appears to have been to appoint farmers of the revenue for larger or smaller areas, as might be convenient. These persons were made responsible for the payment of a fixed sum and were allowed to collect it, and as much more as they could squeeze out of the people, in

any way they liked. Revenue administration was, however, very lax and little attempt was made to insist on the punctual payment of the land tax, which no doubt frequently fell into arrears. The Muhammadans appear in ordinary times to have been content with a very moderate revenue, though there is evidence to show that when they were in need of money for purposes of waging war or for any other urgent cause, they did not hesitate to increase the demand out of all proportion to the ability of the people to meet it. The farmers of the revenue appointed by the Afghan rulers of Gaur and, after them, by the Mughals were in many instances the hereditary landowners, who remained in undisturbed possession of their estates and free in a great measure from interference, on condition of paying a reasonable tribute. This appears to have been the case in Dinajpur, the greater portion of which was settled with the successive princes of the Dinajpur Raj family, who were allowed the privilege of administering their own estates. They appear to have ordinarily been treated with much consideration by the Mughals, indeed it was under their rule that the Dinajpur family reached the zenith of its power and glory during the reigns of Rajas Prannath and Ramnath. In 1722, payments of revenue having become very irregular, Mir Jafir, Subahdar of Bengal, made a new settlement dividing the province of Bengal into Chaklas, to each of which a Chakladar was appointed as collector of the revenue. Raja Prannath obtained the appointment of Chakladar for the greater part of Chaklas Akbarnagar and Ghoraghat, within which Dinajpur fell. We do not know what revenue Prannath paid, but in the time of Raja Ramnath, his successor, it seems that this was fixed at the very reasonable sum of 12.5 lakhs of rupees. Ramnath succeeded in retaining the favour of the Muhammadan governors, and the assessment remained unchanged till his death in 1760. He was succeeded by his son Baidyanath, and in 1762 the assessment was raised to 26.5 lakhs. The reason for this enormous increase in the demand is unknown but it soon became clear that it was beyond the power of Raja to pay it in full, and a considerable portion of it remained unrealized.

In 1765 the Diwani or right of civil and revenue administration of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, was granted by the Mughal Emperor to the East India Company and from that year Dinajpur passed under British rule. The ex-

**EARLY
BRITISH
ADMINIS-
TRATION**

isting assessment, being reckoned excessive, was reduced to 18 lakhs. In 1772 the direct revenue control was assumed by the Company, and an English Collector, or Chief of the Revenue, of the zamindari of dinajpur was appointed, who made a new settlement with Raja Baidyanath. This settlement was effected in a more systematic manner than previous ones had been, each pargana being separately assessed, unless the revenue assessed on it amounted to more than a lakh of rupees, in which case it was divided. The assessment, however, remained much the same as before and it was not till 1774 that a further reduction to Rs. 14,60,444 was made. With the exception of the years 1781 and 1782, during which Raja Devi Singh held a farm of the estate at an increased revenue, the assessment remained unchanged till the time of the Permanent Settlement. A native Diwan was associated with the first Collector, whose work was also superintended by the Revenue Council at Murshidabad. In 1773 the European Collector was withdrawn and an *Amil* or native collector appointed, while one of the six Provincial Councils, newly constituted to supervise revenue administration, took up its seat at Dinajpur. In 1780 Raja Baidyanath died without leaving a male heir, and his widow, Rani Saraswati, adopted a boy of three years, named Radhanath, who was recognised as Baidyanath's successor by Warren Hastings, on payment of a succession fee of 730 gold mohurs. For the first two years after the death of Baidyanath the revenues of the estate were farmed by Raja Devi Singh of Dilwarpur in Murshidabad, who had also taken a farm of the Rangpur estates. This man seems to have been a clever but unscrupulous adventurer who gained the favour of the British by his adaptability and knowledge of English. The title of Raja must have been conferred on him by the Company as he does not appear to have been a zamindar or even a capitalist. He paid a revenue of Rs. 16,60,444 for the Dinajpur Raj estates, but his management was so dishonest and oppressive that he and several of his *amlas* were degraded and kept in confinement till 1791, when sentence was finally passed directing some refunds, the cancelment of some fraudulent purchases made by him, and his perpetual banishment from the districts he had mismanaged. His place was taken by Janaki Ram Singh, a brother of the Rani Saraswati, who agreed to pay revenue at the former rate of Rs. 14,60,444. In 1781 the Provincial

Committees were abolished and a Metropolitan Committee of Revenue appointed. In 1786 the Metropolitan Committee became the Board of Revenue and the post of European Collector of Revenue was recreated. Mr. G. Hatch was the first to be appointed managing collector of the Dinajpur Raj under the new system. Meanwhile Janaki Ram Singh, though he collected the rents of the estate regularly enough from the cultivators, does not appear to have grasped the necessity for making regular payments to the Collector and had fallen into arrear with his revenue. In November 1786, by the Board's orders, he was given three days to make good his balance. As he failed to do so, he was removed to Calcutta, where he died about 1790. In June 1787 Ram Kanta Ray, an uncle of the minor Radhanath, was installed as manager of the Dinajpur Raj, the assessment remaining unchanged. In a letter dated 15th January 1788 to the Board of Revenue Mr. Hatch, the Collector, explained that this assessment was indeed low, but that owing to mismanagement on the part of the native officials of the zamindar in the past, the estate could not afford a higher one at the time. He held out hopes that with more careful management the assessment might subsequently be raised. How Mr. Hatch endeavoured to improve the management of the estate is thus described by Mr. E. V. Westmacott in an article contributed to the *Calcutta Review* on the subject of the Dinajpur Raj :- "In June 1787 Ram Kanto Roy was installed as manager of the Dinagepoor estates, his cutcherry being a Government office and the Collector's servants attending daily to check the collections. Every detail of the management was supervised by Mr. Hatch, the estate being divided into sixty-four zillas each under a tahsildar, who collected from Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 1,00,000, receiving a percentage, while each ryot's lands were measured, and he paid rent according to the quantity and quality of his land, irrespective of the crop grown. The revenues of the estate were well managed, but it was long before the mischievous practices of Janaki Ram ceased to bear fruit. He had raised large sums of ready money by subletting lands at a low rent, and the annual income of the zamindar suffered accordingly until the Collector had resettled all the tenures. In spite, however, of the good management, I believe that at this time the Raja's income was injured by the abolition of numerous illegal cases, which had been collected by his predecessors, but

which could not be brought under the denomination of the *sayer*, for the abolition of which compensation was given, and which nevertheless is collected to this day by the proprietors in the district, though Government no longer receives ten-elevenths of it. The cesses referred to are transit duties on salt and other goods, the right of seizing the property of intestate persons, and taxes on bird-catchers, tom-tom beaters, and dealers in intoxicating drugs and the like." The revenue of some other estates in the district which did not form part of the Dinajpur Raj was fixed by Mr. Hatch at Rs. 1,52,445. Thus the total revenue of the entire district came to Rs. 16,12,889 sicca rupees. The value of a sicca rupee exceeded that of a Company's rupee by a little more than one anna. Meanwhile the rules for a decennial settlement, which was in contemplation, were being elaborated by the Board of Revenue. It seems that the intention of the Company's officers, in fixing the revenue payable by the zamindars, was also to fix the rent payable by the cultivators, who were to receive *pattas* from their respective landlords stating the amount of rent payable. Some time in 1791 the decennial settlement was introduced, and in 1793 this was made permanent by a proclamation issued by the Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, on 22nd March of that year. From a letter to the Board of Revenue written by Mr. Hatch on 28th February 1793 it appears that *pattas* had been issued to the *raiyats* throughout the district. The object of insisting on the issue of *pattas* clearly was that, whereas the Company undertook not to raise the revenue demanded from the zamindars above the sum fixed as payable by them at the settlement, the latter on their part were bound not to raise the rents of their *raiyats* above the amount fixed in the *pattas* and to content themselves with the reasonable profits allowed them by the officers by whom the assessment was made. This object has long since been lost sight of and the issue of *pattas* to *raiyats* discontinued. In the same letter the Collector stated that the revenue of the district was 16,12,576 sicca or 17,20,081 Company's rupees. There is no doubt that at the present day the assessment of Dinajpur is high as compared with other neighbouring districts, being over 50 per cent of the gross rental. This is accounted for by the fact that, at the time the settlement was made, almost the entire district was under the *khas* management of the Collector, who was consequently in a better position

to make a proper valuation of the assets of the estates under his charge than were other Collectors, who had to depend for information almost entirely on the reports, often biassed and unreliable, of their native assistants. The history of the ruin of the Dinajpur Raj, which forms an integral part of an account of the revenue administration of the period, may here be given at length in the words of Mr. Westmacott: "In January 1792, Raja Radhanath commenced his sixteenth year and was placed in charge of his estates; Ram Kanta Ray submitted his accounts as manager, and the Board of Revenue expressed themselves highly pleased with his conduct. The decennial settlement had been concluded two years before, and the Raja was to pay a yearly revenue of Rs. 14,44,107 for the first two years and then Rs. 14,84,107. This will give some idea of the extent of his estates, as the total land revenue of the present collectorate of Dinagepoor is now under Rs. 18,00,000. For a year and more all went smoothly; but when, in March 1793, Mr. Hatch was promoted to a seat on the Board of Revenue, his successor, Mr. John Eliot, soon found reason to be dissatisfied with the management of affairs at the Rajbaree. The Rani had surrounded the Raja with the old servants of Janokee Ram, the two Mojoomdars and others; and in spite of positive orders from the Board they were turning out the tahsildars of Mr. Hatch's appointment, and the Raja was receiving sums of money to appoint improper persons in their room. Mr. Eliot found satisfaction in believing that the Raja listened attentively to his advice, but the objectionable changes continued, and he saw no hope of amendment except in the banishment of the Mojoomdars and their company, and sending the Rani back to Gobindanogor. The Raja admitted signing blank papers and giving them to the *amlas* to make what use they pleased of them. In April 1794, the Governor-General decided that Raja Radhanath should be deprived of the management of his estates; his seal was locked up in the Collector's treasury, and Ram Kanta Ray was again installed as manager. Mr. Eliot used to make the young Raja come and read to him twice a week and write him a letter daily, and flattered himself that he was fitting him for the duties of his position. In October 1795 Mr. Eliot became Judge of Tippera, and Mr. Morgan, Assistant Collector, was in charge of the office until June 1796 when Mr. Cornelius Bird arrived as Collector. When Raja Radhanath



was for the second time placed in charge of his property is not quite clear, but it was before January 1797, when he already owed Rs. 69,677 on account of revenue, and the decree went forth from the Board to sell some of his lands. The unfortunate young man was then only 20 years of age, but neither Mr. Bird nor the board appear to have hesitated as to the propriety of breaking up the great Dinagepoor estate. The first sale was cancelled for informality, but in February 1798, in spite of the Collector's certifying that owing to drought the ryots had not been able to pay their rents, further sales were ordered, and yet, at the end of the Bengali year, April 1798, more than half a lakh of revenue remained unpaid, month after month instalments became due, and lot after lot was sold. The Raja was raising money on mortgage, Ram Kanto Roy being one of his principal creditors, and he saved some part of his estate by purchasing the lots in false names; while his wife Rani Tripoora Soondari bought lands paying a revenue of near Rs. 50,000, and old Rani Soroswotee bought others paying Rs. 21,517; but little was saved out of the wreck of so great an argosy, for by the end of 1800 everything had been sold and the Raja was prisoner, unable to leave the Rajbaree because his private creditors were endeavouring to seize his person and throw him into the common jail. On the 26th January 1801, having just completed his twenty-fourth year, he died. Mr. Bird, who had been the instrument of his ruin, had died on the 3rd June, and Mr. Courtney Smith was now the Collector. Whatever may have been the merits of the policy which broke up this large estate, there can be no question but that it was carried out with extreme harshness. The rule was sternly adhered to of selling to the highest bidder; Dinagepoor is a long way from Calcutta, Moorshidabad, Patna, or Dacca, and bears an evil reputation of unhealthiness, and no one from a distance cared to enquire whether the purchase of land in the district would be a good investment. The competition was left entirely to the servants of the estate, to the *amla* of Government, and to those other zemindars who had not been ruined by the Decennial Settlement, and the consequence was that the lots into which the property had been divided sold for much less than their value, some of them not bringing so much as the annual revenue assessed upon them, which an experience of a dozen years had shown them well able to pay. The only purchas-

ers who were on the spot were unable to bid higher. In one way the Raja gained from this some slight benefit, for a few lots were bought up by the ladies of his family, his wife selling her jewels, and Rani Soroswatee having as much as Janokee Ram's embezzlements had left her of her monthly pension of fifteen hundred rupees. Unless it was resolved that the Raja of Dinagepoor was too powerful for a subject, and therefore that as soon as a pretext offered his estates were to be broken up, which nowhere appears to have been the feeling of Government, it is difficult to see why a fair upset price should not have been fixed on each lot, and if no one bid up to that price, the lot sequestered and put under the management of Government officers. The indirect profits of the zemindars are so much greater than the legitimate ones, which under Government management are all that are carried to credit, that possession of the estate is worth having and the dispossession indicated would as effectually secure the punctual payment of Government revenue, as the absolute alienation of the estates. The swarm of *lotdars*, many of them absentees, who took the place of the ancient gentry have not done much for the country." Buchanan Hamilton speaks of these *lotdars*, who in his day constituted the majority of the proprietors of the district, as being despised as newcomers and upstarts by the people, though, in point of fact, their estates were better managed than the estates of the hereditary zamindars, and the *raiya*s on them better off than those of the latter. The contempt in which the new landlords were originally held may account for many of them living elsewhere, though indeed nowadays a fair proportion of them reside on their estates. When the Dinajpur Raj was split up, each of the lots sold was formed into a separate estate with a revenue fixed in perpetuity, and a number was assigned to each in the Tauzi Roll of the district. Up to 1829 the Dinajpur collectorate remained under the direct control of the Board of Revenue. In that year the Rajshahi Commissionership with its headquarters at Rampur Baulcah was created and the district came in revenue matters under the authority of the new Commissioner. In 1837 it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Revenue of the Bhagalpur Division under whom it remained till 1854, when it was again transferred to Rajshahi. Since then there has been no change in revenue jurisdiction.

SURVEYS AND SETTLEMENTS Since the year 1793 there has been no general settlement of the district, though cadastral surveys and settlements of rents for various small estates have been made from time to time under the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act, at the request of the proprietors concerned.

REVENUE SURVEY OF 1857-61 Between the years 1857 and 1861 a professional survey was made of the whole district. The object of this survey, as set forth in the Manual of Surveying for India published in 1851, was "the definement of each estate on the Collector's rent roll, and to determine the relation of land to revenue by the ascertainment of the areas and boundaries of estates and mahals." It was carried out in 18 main circuits and maps of each of these were prepared, which are still preserved in good condition in the collectorate record-room. The professional survey was preceded by what is called the *thakbast* survey, which was not really a separate survey by a preliminary demarcation of boundaries to facilitate the professional operations which followed. This preliminary demarcation work was carried out by an uncovenanted Deputy Collector with a staff of *peshkars* and *amins*, working under the supervision of a covenanted civil officer with the full powers of a Collector. The work was done *paragana* by *paragana*, and the boundaries of every village to be included in the professional survey operations were ascertained by detailed measurements and demarcated by mud pillars (*thak*) or other marks. Disputes about boundaries were settled on the spot, and an acknowledgment (*suprudnama*) obtained from the several parties concerned as to the accuracy of the boundary laid down. A note was prepared for each village explaining any peculiarities connected with it, the nature and names of the included *mahals* or estates, whether there were any other lands belonging to the village in other parts of the Pargana, whether the village contained within its boundaries lands belonging to other villages, and concluding with remarks as to the condition of the village, the proportion of cultivation to waste, and other matters of interest. When a *pargana* was completed a correct list of villages was made out, together with a general rough sketch or *mujmili* map showing each village in its proper relative position. All these documents were then forwarded for the use and guidance of the professional surveyor, who was interdicted from surveying and boundary without them. No field to field measurement

was made by the *thakbast* survey party except in the case of plots of land belonging to other villages enclosed by the boundaries of the village under survey. Such plots are called *chhits* and marked on the *thak* maps. The records prepared by these two surveys have proved invaluable for the purposes of land revenue administration, and the geographical and statistical report of the district, written by Major Sherwill, the Revenue Surveyor, gives a great deal of useful information about its condition at that time. I quote here an extract from this report which seems to have some bearing on land revenue administration: "The assessment in Dinagepore is considered high, but all *pergunnahs* are not equally assessed; that of *Pergunnah Gillabhaira* is notoriously high. Many estates are rack-rented and yield no profit, but being owned by men of small capital engaged in trade are retained by them in consideration of the position obtained in society by being land-holders. The northern *pergunnahs* are less heavily taxed. *Zamindars* often oppress tenants by demanding exorbitant rents and making other petty and vexatious demands; but the most liberal are the greatest gainers in the end, as the oppressed *ryats*, having got into debt and being unable to meet their obligations, run away and settle down on neighbouring estates on more liberal terms. Land varies in value indifferent parts of the district. The following are the approximate rates per *beegah* of 87 *hauts*, which obtain in different localities:—

Reclaimed land	...	...	4 annas.
Jungle, 1 to 3 years free, after that	...	...	8 to 12 annas.
Ordinary Paddy land	...	...	12 annas.
Boro Rice land	...	...	6 to 12 annas.
Best Rice land	...	...	1 Rupee to 1-8-0.

Defalcations in rent are not numerous, consequently the sales of estates, in default of payment of revenue, are few. During 1860 there were four sales, and the average of the three preceding years was $5\frac{1}{4}$. The *Sudder Jummah* or imperial Revenue of the District, exclusive of that portion transferred to *Bograh* in 1851, is Rs. 19,03,467-4-6, and was obtained as follows, in the financial year 1859-60 :—

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

	Rs.	a.	p.
Land Revenue	17,71,976	3	6
Akbarree	48,555	4	0
Stamps	82,703	13	0
Fisheries (1860-61)	232	0	0
Total	19,03,467	4	6

When we consider that the whole of this large country is kept in order by a few Thannah Police, there not being a single soldier of any kind in the entire districts, we must allow it is a very important and one of the best paying in all Bengal. The collectorate are less heavy in this than in other. Districts paying a less Jummah, "which may be attributed to the perpetual settlement."

All landed property in Dinajpur is included in one or other of the following classes of estates :-

- (1) Revenue-paying estates.
- (2) Revenue-free estates.
- (3) Resumed estates.

REVENUE-PAYING ESTATES The number of revenue-paying estates is 764, with a total area of 2,613,502 acres. All are permanently settled. They include also revenue-free estates, which were resumed by Government under the Resumption Law, Regulation II of 1819, and the title deeds by which the holders claimed to hold their lands revenue-free having been found to be invalid, were assessed to revenue and settled permanently with their former proprietors.

REVENUE-FREE ESTATES The number of revenue-free estates is 178 with an area of 33,904 acres. These are principally of the following kinds - (1) Brahmattar, for the maintenance of Brahmins; (2) Debattar, for the worship of the gods; (3) Pirpal, for the maintenance of mosques sacred to the memory of Muhammadan *pirs* or saints - and were granted before the British accession to the Diwani, either by the emperors of Delhi or the Dinajpur Rajas. All were attached under the Resumption Law of 1819, but were subsequently released and recognised by Government as revenue-free on the holders proving their titles to the satisfaction of the revenue authorities. These must not be confused with the rent-free tenures to be described further on, which are rent, but not revenue, free, the Government revenue being charged on

GAZETTEER OF THE DINAJPUR DISTRICT

the estates to which they originally belonged. In the case of many of the revenue-free estates and rent-free tenures alike the original object with which the lands were granted has been lost sight of altogether, and the lands have come to be regarded as the absolute property of their possessors, who may alienate them at will.

The resumed estates were estates held revenue-free prior to 1819, which were resumed by Government, and the proprietors of which did not appear to prove their title or take settlement. Under the law as it stands at present, such lands can neither be sold nor permanently settled with other persons than the original proprietors. They are therefore either managed directly by the Collector, or leased for various periods. There is now only one such estate in this district, with an area of 50 acres.

Owing to the trouble and expense involved in realising rents, the loss suffered owing to cultivators deserting their holdings, the large area over which the lands included in an estate are sometimes scattered and other causes, it frequently happens that a zamindar keeps only a small portion of his estate in his own management, and lets out the rest either in parcels on lease or in farm. Sometimes the whole estate is so let out. Hence the creation of subordinate tenures of various kinds which are described by Hunter in his Statistical Account of Dinajpur as follows:-

"(1) Istimrari or Mukarrari taluks. - These tenures are those which were created by the Zamindars or others having a proprietary right in the soil, before the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1793. They were granted to the lessees, their heirs and successors, in perpetuity, at a fixed rate of rent. The holders of these tenures can transfer or sublet their taluks in patni, ijara or otherwise. The tenures are liable to sale only for arrears of rent, and by a decree of the Civil Court, under the provisions of Act VIII of 1869. In the case of the sale of the parent estate under Act XI of 1859, for arrears of Government revenue, the holders of istimrari taluks are protected from ejectment or enhancement of rent on the part of the auction purchaser.

(2) This tenure had its origin on the estates of the Maharaja of Burdwan, but has since become common throughout Bengal. It is a tenure created by the zamindar to be held by the lessee and his heirs for ever, at a rent fixed in perpetuity. A *salami* or present, equal in value to from 3

to 5 times the annual rent, is paid by the lessee to the zamindar on the creation of the grant. The grant once made, the zamindar is divested of connection with the property, the patnidar acquiring every right of proprietorship which the zamindar possessed. On failure to pay the rent, however, the zamindar has power to sell the tenure under provisions of Regulation VIII of 1819. A patnidar has the power of subletting his tenure, the sub-tenant acquiring the same rights as the patnidar himself possesses from the zamindar. A patni when sublet becomes a darpatni; a darpatni when sublet becomes a sepatni. Arrears of rent from these sub-tenures are recoverable under Act VIII of 1869.

IJARAS

(3) An ijaras is a temporary lease or farm. The ijaradar has no permanent interest in the estate, and his sole object is to make as much as possible out of the cultivators during the term of the lease. He is, however, debarred from ousting the tenants, or from enhancing their rents. In some cases a zamindar makes over his estate in ijara to a person to whom he owes money, in order to liquidate the debt. These latter are called dai-sud-ijaras.....Ijaras are generally granted for a term of 4 or 5 years, sometimes for 8 or 10 years, but very seldom for a longer period than 20 years. A zamindar cannot oust an ijaradar, except by a decree of the civil court for arrears of rent under Act VIII of 1869. In the event of the sale of the estate for arrears of Government revenue, the purchaser can oust the ijaradar, except in the case of an ijara granted for a term of 20 years or upwards and duly registered under the provisions of Act XI of 1859. An ijara is sometimes sublet, and becomes a dar-ijara, the term, of course, being limited by that of the ijara itself. The dar-ijaradar enjoys all the rights and privileges of the ijaradar." The term *taluk* is not nowadays used in connection with *istimrari* tenures which are called simply *istimrars*. *Ijaras* are generally spoken of as *ijara mahals*. The number of *patni taluks* registered under Act XI of 1859 in the district is 163, with an area of 448,686 acres. There are also a few unregistered *patni taluks*, the number of which is not known. The number of *istimrars* and *ijara mahals* is not known, but the latter only occur on some of the larger estates such as that of Maharaja Bahadur. There are few *dar-patnis* and still fewer *se-patnis* in existence.

CULTIVATING TENURES

Next come the cultivating tenures or *jotes*, which are thus described by Hunter :- "(1) Maurusi jots are hold-

ings created by a zamindar, to be held by cultivators in perpetuity at a fixed rate of rent. These tenures are transferable, and the purchaser acquires all the rights and privileges of the original holder. (2) *Istimrari jots* are cultivators' holdings, the rents of which have not been altered for a period of 20 years, and the owners of which have thus acquired the right of holding them free from liability to enhancement. These tenures, like the foregoing, are saleable by the holders. (3) *Jots* of cultivators with occupancy rights are holdings of at least 12 years' standing. The owners of these jots cannot be ejected, but the rent can be enhanced by a suit in the civil court. (4) *Jots* of tenants-at-will are the holdings of cultivators who do not possess a right of occupancy and are liable to ejection and the payment of enhanced rents. (5) *Nij-jots* are the home-farms of the zamindars." He also describes some other kinds of holdings, which are now no longer in existence.

TENURES OR JOTES

Lakhiraj or rent-free tenures are of several kinds, viz., *Brahmattar*, *Debattar* and *Pirpal*. The meaning of these terms has already been described in connection with revenue-free estates. The distinction between them and these latter is that whereas revenue-free estates pay no revenue to Government, the revenue payable on rent-free tenures is charged to the parent estates of which they originally formed a part. *Chakrani* lands are holdings granted in return for services rendered to the zamindar, and are liable to be resumed by him when the services of the holders are no longer required. Rent-free tenures and holdings generally are exempt from all payments to the zamindar. Except in the case of *Chakrani* lands, most of the present holders are purchasers from the original grantees or their descendants.

RENT-FREE TENURES AND HOLDINGS

The holders of cultivating tenures are known as *rai-yats* or in local parlance *jotedars*. There is often little to distinguish them from under-tenure-holders cultivating their own lands, except that the latter have the privilege, which ordinary *jotedars* do not possess, of subletting their lands to tenants at fixed rates.

Besides the above there are two classes of cultivators who occupy land under the holders of cultivating *jotes*. These are *chukanidars* or under-*rai-yats*, who are allowed to occupy a piece of land for a specified term, generally one or two years, on payment of a stated sum as rent, the sum being fixed without reference to the quantity of land occu-

pied, and *adhiars*, persons who cultivate a *raiyyat's* land, and in return for their labour, and for supplying the necessary plough bullocks and agricultural implements, receive a half share of the produce. Neither of the above classes have any rights in the land they cultivate. The land occupied by a *chukanidar* is called *thika* land. A large number of the smaller holders of cultivating *jotes* in the district stand also in the position of *chukanidars* or *adhiars* to other *jotedars*.

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LORDS AND
TENANTS**

At the time when the Permanent Settlement was made there were, besides the Raja of Dinajpur, few zamindars of any importance in the district. With the splitting up of the Raja's estates a swarm of smaller zamindaris came into existence. The proprietors of these were the Raja's *amlas*, merchants, traders, and a few subordinate officers of Government, who had purchased parcels of the Raja's estates at the auction sales. They were popularly known as *loldars* and were looked upon with some aversion and contempt by the people, who had been accustomed to regard the office of zamindar as hereditary. Some of them, knowing little or nothing of the rights and duties attendant on their new position, were content to reside in the towns, leaving their estates to be managed by agents. This arrangement generally worked out very well for the agent but badly for the cultivators and the proprietor. Others, possessing a good knowledge and training in business methods, directed them to the management of their new estates and found, perhaps to their surprise, that the profession of an owner of land, if sufficient attention were devoted to it, was a very paying one, and that it was quite unnecessary to rack-rent or otherwise oppress their tenants to make a handsome profit for themselves. When the assessment which accompanied the Permanent Settlement was made by the Company's officers, the zamindars generally were regarded by Government as farmers of the Company's lands, and as such only entitled to one-eleventh of the net proceeds of the estates after deducting the cost of collecting rents. If this principle had been strictly adhered to it would have been rather hard on the hereditary landowners, who could justly claim to be regarded as proprietors rather than farmers. In the case of the new men, who had got their lands cheap, the hardship would not have been so great, or at all events, they would have known, when they bought the lands, what they had to expect. In point of fact, however, the portion of net rental

actually retained by the zamindars varied between 10 and 30 per cent., and there is little doubt that they received rent in kind, in services, or even in cash from the holders of many lands which never appeared on their official rent-rolls. Add to this the countless *abwabs* or extra-legal cesses, which formed a substantial addition to a landlord's income, and which, sanctioned as they were by ancient custom, the *raiyyats* rarely refused to pay, and we must conclude that the assessment was, on the whole, a moderate one. The inference, therefore, is that if the condition of the landlord class in those days was otherwise than good, it was largely their own fault. Their condition to-day is, or ought to be, still better, as though they have not profited as much as the actual cultivators by the rise in value of agricultural produce, they have nevertheless benefited by the extension of cultivation and increased demand for land, and their rent-roll to-day is larger than it was 100 years ago, while the Government revenue has remained stationary. On the other hand, the idea prevailing at the time of the Permanent Settlement that the zamindar was only a farmer of the state lands has been lost sight of, and the present zamindars regard themselves and are regarded as the proprietors of the estates for which they pay revenue, while the assessment is considered decidedly high.

Now, as formerly, an enquiry into the material condition of the landed gentry would reveal the fact that many of them are seriously involved in debt. This, to the casual observer, is hard to understand as the experience gained from the management by Government of private estates, the proprietors of which are minors or disqualified proprietors, shows that with careful management an encumbered estate can, in a few years, be cleared of debt and a handsome balance accumulated, notwithstanding that under Government management the realisation of the extra-legal cesses previously referred to as forming a material part of a zamindar's income, is strictly forbidden. The explanation of this unsatisfactory state of things is that the landlords as a class do not take sufficient interest in the management of their own estates. They are apt to leave things too much in the hands of their *naibs* and *tahsildars*, who in their turn have a fondness for sitting in their *kachhahris*, and leaving the actual work of collecting revenue, enquiring into complaints, and the like, to the *patwaris* and *mandals*. The

interest in the land which often makes the English country gentleman as good a man of business, in his own way, as the merchant or manufacturer, is generally regrettably absent. There are, of course, notable exceptions to this rule amongst the landed gentry themselves, while some of the estate managers are both just and conscientious in the discharge of their duties. It is, I suppose, a necessary result of the system which makes the rates of rent payable by tenants to their landlords a more or less fixed quantity, that the latter take little interest in the introduction of agricultural improvements. If a landlord exerts himself to introduce the cultivation of a more remunerative crop amongst his *raiyyats*, he must do it from altruistic motives, as he personally is not likely to gain thereby, except perhaps in the matter of more punctual payments of rent due to increased prosperity. I can only discover two instances in which proprietors of land have made serious attempts to introduce new crops to the notice of their tenants. One of these was the introduction of the West Indian varieties of sugarcane by Mr. Payter about 1840, and the other the attempt made in 1884 by Raja Syama Sankar Roy of Teota to introduce the cultivation of rhea fibre in Khansama out-post. It should be said, however, that Mr. Payter was a farmer of the Government Khas Mahals and not strictly speaking a zamindar. It would be dangerous to assert positively that this abstention on the part of the zamindars from interference with the agricultural operations of their tenants is altogether unwise, and it remains, I think, to be proved that the cultivator does not know his own business best in such matters. At the same time the attitude of the landlords is rather due to a lack of interest than to any other motive.

Works of improvement such as irrigation canals, embankments, etc., are rarely undertaken by owners of land in normal years, though in times of stress something of the sort has occasionally been done, more perhaps with the object of providing work for the distressed cultivators than with an eye to the intrinsic value of the improvement. It should be said in fairness to the zamindars that this attitude of non-interference which they generally adopt towards their *raiyyats* has also its good side. If the latter do not get much active help from their landlords, at all events they rarely have to complain of harshness or injustice, while in bad seasons the zamindars are accustomed cheerfully to allow their dues to stand over till the cultivators can afford to pay them.