A PLURALITY OF ELITES:
SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY, 1800-1855

by

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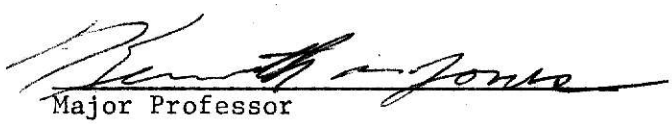

Major Professor

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Since I have been in India, now over five months, I have not had a word from the Governor, although I particularly requested him to communicate with me from time to time and let me know what was going on. Now and then a case comes up in which the Madras Government want to perpetrate some local job which we have to overrule; and they clamour for more money at Budget time. With these exceptions I know far less of what is going on in Madras than I do of what is passing in Egypt or France; and as for the supposed responsibility of the Viceroy, it has long ago vanished into thin air.

Lord Curzon to Lord Hamilton, 7 June 1899. Hamilton Papers, India Office Library, vol. 14, No. 26 Private letter, quoted in C. H. Philips, ed., The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858 to 1947, Select Documents (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 70.

INTRODUCTION

Writing from Calcutta, the hub of British power in India, Curzon summarized the feelings of an entire century of administrators. His frustrations, however, were more of an annoyance than a matter of great concern for Madras, ever since its establishment as Fort St. George in 1639, had maintained a degree of independence from other trading centers on the subcontinent. Becoming the seat of power of the British Raj in the nineteenth century, Madras retained its independence and distinctiveness. But this was a quality of weakness rather than strength. An image grew of the area as the peaceful, neglected, even 'benighted'[1] section of the Empire far removed from the political intrigue and excitement of Bengal. In this context, South Indians, supposedly provincial and clannish, only required a government that would provide stability with minimal interference in social mores.

The extension of British authority into South India had begun in the chaotic political climate of the mid and late eighteenth century. Besides a large number of local kings and petty chieftains the British had to contend with the ambition of the French East India Company for control of the trade in the area. Following a series of shifting alliances and a number of land and sea conflicts, the British subdued their European antagonists in 1760. They gained absolute domination following the defeat of Tipu, the Sultan of Mysore, in the 1790's.

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Throughout most of the eighteenth century the British controlled only the territory directly adjacent to Madras City and a large tract along the Coromandel and Golconda coasts to the north called the Northern Circars. After their victories expansion was swift and unchallenged. From 1792 to 1801 the British obtained a large portion of Dravidian India specifically, at first, a tract of land called the Baramahal, a predominantly agricultural area on the northern side of the Cauvery River. The nearby areas of Kanara and Coimbatore were ceded in 1799 following the final defeat of Tipu, the Raj's last great antagonist in the south. In the succeeding year they gained control over a large expanse, the Ceded Districts, composed of some 20,000 square miles of the lower Deccan south of the Krishna River. The British acquired this tract from the Nizam of Hyderabad as payment for their protection against the warring Marathas to the west. Finally, in the years 1799-1801 they extended their authority down to the southern tip of the peninsula by annexing large sections of the Tamil country, i.e. the districts of Tanjore, North Arcot, South Arcot, Trichinopoly, Madura and Tinnevelly. [See Maps 1 and 2.]

As a governing unit the entire area, called the Madras Presidency, contained many features which distinguished it from North India. Instead of a Sanskritic-based language, the vernaculars of South India (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam) were non-Indo-European in origin. The inhabitants of the Presidency, particularly south of Madras, were overwhelmingly Hindu, thus removing the danger of potential communal conflicts. The preponderance of Hindus further suggested to the British a strong and inflexible caste system, not easily amenable to change. From these factors early Madras administrators felt that only those who had personal experience in the region could understand its problems and know how best to solve them.

This emphasis on autonomy in early nineteenth century South India was difficult to maintain in view of the complexities of the British organizational apparatus. The Governor of Madras had two levels of bureaucracy above him: the Home Government in London and the Governor-General's Office in Calcutta--each with a somewhat different set of priorities. Officers of the East India Company and many members of Parliament stressed the importance of economic profitability and demanded maximum revenue collections from all areas under British control. The Governor-General, while in agreement with this goal, also desired to introduce uniformity in administrative practices for the entire subcontinent. Holders of this office emphasized consistent policies regarding land assessments, educational improvements, and opportunities for the employment of Indians. Madras administrators cooperated where possible but did not hesitate to disagree with policies they felt to be inappropriate for conditions in South India.

Still, an underlying theme of British rule was the restoration of political, economic and social stability. Those historians[2] who have suggested that they succeeded in their goal consider their accomplishment as one of the most important contributions of the British in nineteenth century South India. Those individuals and castes who came into contact with the new rulers, however, experienced significant change in their social status. In order to define the depth of this change, many questions deserve attention: What provisions did the British make for collecting revenue? What effects did an expansion of educational facilities have on the population? What role did the Christian missionaries have? Which Indians took advantage of the new employment opportunities in government service? And, perhaps most importantly, what kind of responses did South Indians make to the British presence?

Exploring source material to deal with these questions reinforces the feeling of separateness and neglect that one associates with South India. Since British power emanted from Calcutta, Indian historiography has been focused on the northern half of the subcontinent to explain major political and social developments. Madras has remained a peripheral area of study, particularly during the nineteenth century, with archival research still in its infancy. Much more needs to be done before any serious analytic interpretations of South Indian history during the British period can be contemplated.

In attempting to examine some of the elements of the British impact and the Indian response in the first half of the nineteenth century I have relied on available primary sources, particularly the relevant sections of the British Parliamentary Papers and archives of the Church Missionary Society. In addition, the Census of India, although first completed only in 1871, contained historical sections that provided some useful information about Madras in the 1800-1855 period. Biographies and reminiscences published in the nineteenth century furnished valuable contemporary views of British attitudes and policies as did two periodicals: the Calcutta Review and the Madras Journal of Literature and Science. Recently printed monographs and journal articles, especially the work of historians R. E. Frykenberg and R. Suntharalingam, supplied insights concerning the reaction of South Indian elites to the British presence.

I have endeavored to use these sources to trace the development of political awareness in the Madras Presidency from 1800 to 1855. During that time I suggest that Madras did not remain quiet, calm and unaffected but, on the contrary, that its people were actively seeking to understand

the character and purpose of British rule. Their attempts, sometimes successful and sometimes not, never failed to produce exciting results.

THIS BOOK CONTAINS NUMEROUS PAGES WITH DIAGRAMS THAT ARE CROOKED COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE INFORMATION ON THE PAGE.

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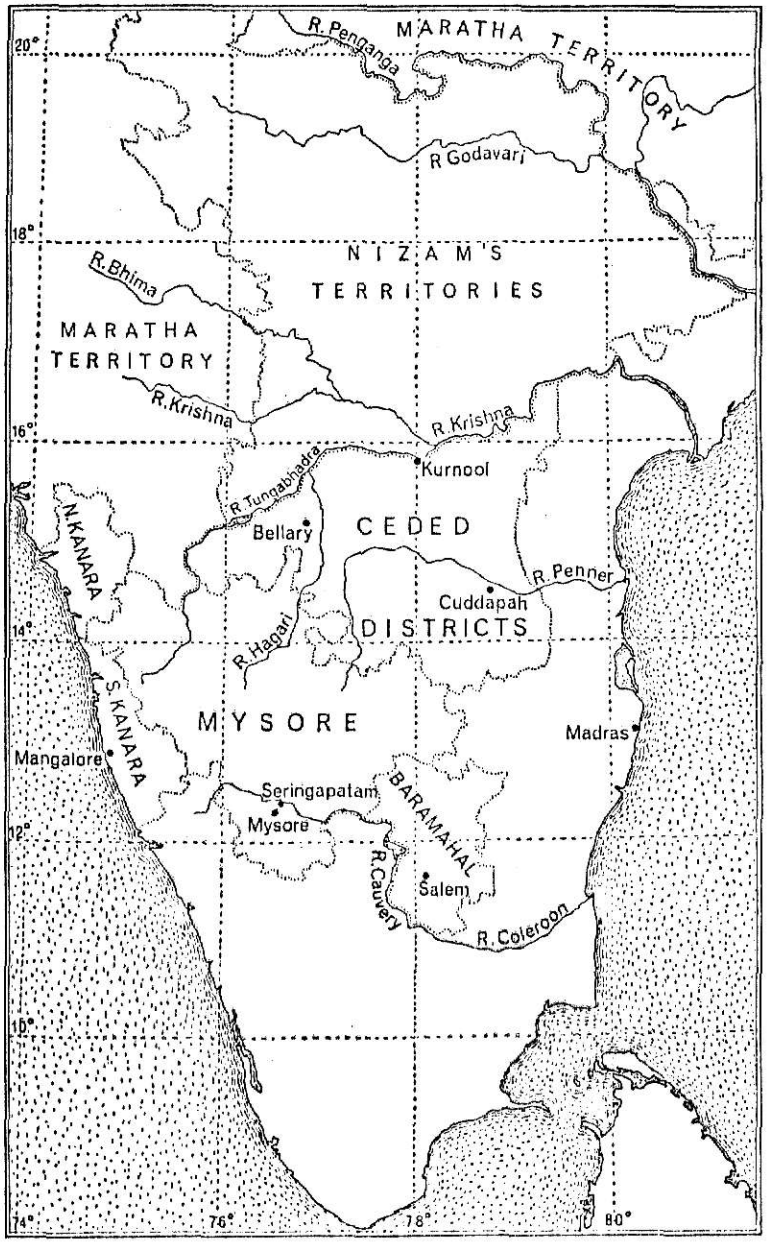
MAP 1



Map showing the territories under the government of Fort St George in which Munro was stationed. The Baramahal became the Salem collectorate; the Ceded Districts were divided into Bellary, Cuddapah and part of Kurnool.

Source: T. H. Beaglehole, Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792-1818 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 13.

MAP 2

Madras Presidency

Source: Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 94.

Note: In the first half of the 19th century Kistna District was divided into Guntur and Masulipatam Districts.

FOOTNOTES

[1]R. Suntharalingam in "'The Hindu' and The Genesis of Nationalist Politics in South India, 1878-1885," South Asia, No. 2 (August, 1972), 64, states that the term "benighted" became popular in the 1870's and 80's largely because of political apathy; John Bruce Norton, who was Advocate-General of Madras from 1828 to 1853 uses the word in his book, The Rebellion in India: How to Prevent Another (London: Pharoah and Co., 1857), p. 58.

[2]A common pre-Independence view of the British: "The imperial legislation relating to India in the first half of the nineteenth century is above all remarkable for the consistency of its course and the steady development of the policy which it was designed to promote. From the great India act of 1784 down to the statute which at last in 1858 abolished the administrative functions of the East India Company there was a gradual, persistent evolution, inspired by a common group of ideas, directed to a common object, and founded on principles in origin free alike from heady enthusiasm and obstinate fear of reformation." (H. H. Dodwell, The Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI [Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1964] [the first edition was published in 1932], p. 1.) A recent monograph on South India suggests much the same thing: "The change from Indian to British rule symbolized, among other things, a change from anarchy to order. It was as if the long decades of chaos and depredation were arrested at one blow, and in their place emerged the security and stability of the British Raj. Though this is a gross oversimplification of what actually occurred, this generalization has a grain of truth insofar as British intervention in South India eventually ended the destructive interstate conflicts of the preceding centuries. However, the more important heritage of the new regime was the creation of a centralized state authority where the decision-making process was rationalized, administrative procedures systematized, the machinery of public accounting and revenue collecting perfected, and uniform and impersonal law replaced customary rules." (R. Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891 [Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1974], p. 11.)

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHANGE

The expansion of British control in the Indian subcontinent under Clive and Hastings in the latter half of the eighteenth century brought about a growing awareness of the South Asian world in the minds of English legislators. From the conservatism of Burke and Sir William Jones on the one hand to the interventionist beliefs of Cornwallis and Charles Grant on the other and a multitude of opinions in between, the British intellectual and political community heatily debated the effects of Company government on Indian society.[1] Was the British goal to conserve Indian traditions and cultures through a minimum of interference in local affairs? Or was it the establishment of a new order based on English social and economic principles? Or was a more balanced approach, emphasizing gradual change over a long period the best procedure?

Ideological debates argued on the floor of the House of Commons and strategy sessions at the East India House on Leadenhall Street constituted only one phase of the governing process. Much depended on the local environment and the kinds of experiences British administrators had in their dealings with the indigenous population.[2] The Madras Presidency included a number of different language speakers, a wide variety of local cultures, land settlements, administrative procedures, religious beliefs and climatic conditions. This diversity constituted a serious impediment to the formation of a coherent, long-term policy of administration and

control. Instead British rule in Madras in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries illustrated the importance of both pre-existent ideological perceptions and local conditions in each area of the Presidency.

The social structure of the Presidency contributed its share to the near breakdown of social order following the wars of the late eighteenth century. Ever since the different classifications of society became delineated in the Rig Veda, scholars have centered their explanations of the Indian caste system on an analysis of a permanent set of social categories. Descriptions of the duties of Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaisya (merchant) and Sudra (workers, peasants) provided an orderly framework for the understanding of the interdependence of personal and group relationships. An "untouchable" or outcaste group below the four major classifications included those who performed the least desirable social occupations, e.g. leather workers and agricultural laborers. Theoretically, each caste in successfully undertaking and completing its assigned role contributed to the stability of the whole social fabric. The structure of South Indian society, however, did not conform to this ancient classification (varna) since widespread disagreement existed over the position and status of various castes within this hierarchy. While the South Indian Brahmins constituted a small group numerically, their influence was permanent and far-reaching; the Sudras, composed of the majority of the population, performed most of the major occupations: agriculture, record-keeping, weaving, artistry, etc. The remaining two categories, Kshatriya and Vaisya were more indistinct; a permanent warrior elite never existed in the south and even though involvement in trade and commerce proved a popular and lucrative means of livelihood, designation of some groups as Vaisyas engendered criticism from other caste groups.[3]

Competition among and within non-Brahmin castes constituted an essential element of traditional South Indian societal relationships. The nature of this competitiveness had taken form many centuries prior to the arrival of the British and centered on a basic non-ideological division of society into "Right" and "Left" factions.[4] The "Right" faction comprised agriculturalists and those in the village community directly dependent on crop production for their well-being. The "Left" faction included the migratory artisan castes who relied on procuring employment from other castes as a means of earning their livelihood. While economic factors may have been an important ingredient in the origins of this factional dispute,[5] major differences focused on conflicting claims to certain rights and privileges in relation to religious occasions, marriage ceremonies and festivals.[6] These differences continued to be important during the time of the British territorial consolidation in South India. The legislative and judicial records of the East India Company from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries attest to the intense animosity generated whenever the British attempted to deal with both factions as equals.[7] The vitality of this dispute suggests that in the beginning of direct British control in Madras a highly volatile and fluid caste situation, not a stagnant, unchanging one dominated South Indian society.

Non-Brahmin antagonisms constituted an important part of the Madras caste system. The importance of describing these antagonisms and the caste system in general lies in the overwhelming preponderance of Hindus in the Madras Presidency. According to the 1871 Census more than 92% of the total population of the Presidency consisted of Hindus and not quite 6% was Muslim.[8] Thus blunted any threat of violent communal conflicts but channeled energies into the desire to enhance social status at the expense

of others. The 1871 Census figures also indicate that Brahmins composed 3.5% of the total Hindu population, Kshatriyas 0.6%, and the Paraiyans (or Pariahs), the general designation for outcastes, 15.2%.[9] A vast amorphous conglomeration of Non-Brahmin castes made up the remaining 80.7% and consisted of: merchants, agriculturists, shepherds, artisans, village accountants, weavers, fishermen, potters, and, at the very bottom of the group in terms of status, the barbers and washermen. The potential for mobility in the Non-Brahmin society attracted the attention of the census-taker and his response emphasized the continued viability of the caste system:

> The uneasiness of the lower castes in regard to the social position assigned them by Brahmanical authority is simply an indication that, under British rule, they have increased in wealth and intelligence, and naturally desire to prove that the yoke imposed upon them by the caste system was tyrannical and unjust. They seek to accomplish the latter, not by boldly denying the authorities on which the institution of caste was built up, but by claiming a position under the Hindu system which they have no pretensions to.[10]

The British attributed a central role to the Brahmin community not only because of their ability to conduct religious rituals and ceremonies, but also because of their relatively prosperous economic position. Through the centuries many Brahmins had received gifts of land called inams for their services to local rulers. These lands were not subject to tax and soon acquired a quasi-hereditary status. With the formation of the Madras Presidency the Brahmins sought to maintain their position of authority within the Hindu community and quickly realized that British rule could provide the means to this end. In addition, they remained neutral in the struggles between the right and left factions. This factor combined with their high level of literacy allowed a greater emphasis on exploiting employment opportunities provided by the expansion of British governmental institutions.

All divisions of Brahmins, however, did not react to these changes in the same manner. South Indian Brahmins were divided into worshippers of Siva and Vishnu with the former comprising approximately two thirds and the latter, one third, of the total community population.[11] Subdivisions of these two major groups included such castes as Aiyangar, Madhva, Desasta, and Vaidiki and together they performed a wide variety of functions. Some of their members took an active role in securing government jobs at all levels of administration that remained open to Indian candidates. Others, particularly the Vaidiki, remained closely associated with the more orthodox activities of prayer and ritual observance.[12] Consequently, Brahmins were able to maintain their traditional status as guardians of the social order while at the same time taking advantage of the new employment opportunities.[13]

Despite the various degrees of Brahmin interaction with British culture, those who participated in government service presented a unified image to English observers. According to W. R. Cornish, supervisor of the 1871 Census in Madras:

> . . . it is this one class of the community- a class numbering only about 1-26th of the Hindu population- that practically furnishes the more important of the subordinate officials of the civil administration. The Brahmans for thousands of years past have been the only people of any culture. They have always monopolised the best places in Government employ and when an educational test was demanded for admission thereto, they were the first to awake to the importance of the measure, and to the necessity of educating their youths to qualify for admission into the civil service.[14]

The clanishness and aloofness of the Brahmins remained a constant part of the European imagination and reflected an awareness of the dangers of overdependence on any single group in administering governmental policies. Brahmin representation at all levels of the bureaucracy from clerks to assistants of the Collector strengthened this image as did their propensity

to secure all positions under their control for family and friends.[15] The combination of ritual status, economic strength and employment in government service made the Brahmins a group whose influence far outweighed the paucity of their numbers.

The Non-Brahmin population of the Madras Presidency comprised a wide variety of castes and occupations, but a static relationship between a particular caste and a single occupation did not exist. Desiring at least the maintenance if not an increase of community status, each group attempted to utilize those avenues of social and economic advancement available to them. In this regard the ancient classifications continued to have at least symbolic importance as a method of asserting dominant status. The Chettis, the principal merchant caste of the south, considered themselves as Vaisyas and, since there was no group which could properly be termed Kshatriya, they saw their position as superior to all other Non-Brahmin castes. Other groups within the general division of trading castes included bankers and money-lenders who took their commercial activities very seriously and, for the most part, these castes remained disinterested in government employment.[16] Their position, of course, became a bone of contention among the Non-Brahmin groups and even the Brahmins did not accede to their claims and instead viewed them as ordinary Sudras.[17]

The two dominant peasant castes of the Madras Presidency consisted of the Vellalars[18] in Tamil country and the Reddis in the northern, Telugu-speaking areas. These predominantly agricultural castes formed the central core of South Indian society, and their attachment to their landholdings gave the British an opportunity to view them, in almost Rousseauian terms, as staunch peasants who would evolve into a class of loyal followers of the Raj. The Vellalars, however, resented the status accorded to them by

the 1871 Census since being classified as "Sudra" emphasized a subservient role. In their petition against this determination,

> . . . the Vellalas observed that "it is impossible to imagine that the Vellalas, a race of agriculturists and traders, should have had to render menial service to the three higher classes; for the very idea of service is, as it needs must be, revolting to the Vellala, whose profession teaches him perfect independence. . . . Hence a Vellala cannot be of the Sudra or servile class."[19]

The disenchantment of these castes and the desire to improve their social position began to lead them into newer occupations and, as the nineteenth century progressed, their presence became more and more noticed in government service. The Vellalars also did not neglect educational opportunities either as some individuals received a European-oriented education. By the middle of the century they acquired proficiency in the vernacular languages and literatures (especially Tamil) and acted as preservers of ancient traditions.[20]

The Kanakkan represented a special Non-Brahmin caste who performed the duties of accountant for village headmen all over the Presidency. This hereditary occupation succumbed to the increased educational abilities of both Brahmins and Non-Brahmins alike who sought the financial security of similar kinds of jobs.[21] Where Kanakkans did not appear on the village scene, the British turned to these other groups, predominantly the Brahmins, to settle in these areas and perform the record-keeping duties. But, for the most part, the Kanakkans gave the British a basis on which to build their administrative structure and lessened the need to import any large body of officials from other sections of the Presidency.

Through the nineteenth century it seemed to have been the general trend for most Non-Brahmin castes to become involved with less traditional kinds of occupations. Many of them modified their patterns of work because

of constantly changing economic and political circumstances and, hopefully, to improve their status in the community. For example the Idaiyan (shepherds) caste also included a few landlords and government servants while, as Edgar Thurston, a British ethnographer, has pointed out: ". . . many Kaikolan families have now abandoned their hereditary employment as weavers in favour of agriculture and trade, and some of the poorer members of the caste work as cart-drivers and coolies."[22]

Other Non-Brahmins had attained economic and political power prior to the British consolidation. As local chieftains, or poligars, these men gained power in the sixteenth century under the Vijayanagar Empire. In return for tribute and promises of military support, they acquired control over sizeable territories which often included jurisdiction over a number of villages. With the disintegration of Vijayanagar, the poligars achieved a greater degree of autonomy and acquired virtually absolute power in the areas under their control.[23] In the eighteenth century they also became conscious of the increased revenue they would need in order to maintain and, if possible, extend their spheres of influence. Acting in accordance with the norms established by the local kings in raising revenue to combat the British, they joined in the competitive struggle for maximum financial support from the beleagured peasant classes.

The poligars did not represent any one single caste in South Indian society. Rather their numbers comprised a variety of powerful Non-Brahmin families. In order to maintain their prestige and solidify their position as local rulers, they paid close attention to the orderly transfer of authority from father to son. In some instances, other castes, who were dependent on the poligars, became active in guaranteeing these generational successions: in particular, Brahmins, who held high administrative

positions in the poligar courts, sometimes arranged the transfer of power to an infant or small boy in order to maintain their own influence.[24] The validity of these succession claims caused great problems for the British when they sought to determine which individuals controlled the lands under their jurisdiction.

Determination of land control and defining the concept of property constituted one of the primary ingredients of social change. Prior to the advent of the European powers control over land rested in the hands of royal families and certain individuals who performed services for the ruler: e.g. priests and military chieftains. But since agricultural operations required the cooperation of virtually all members of a community, landholding became associated with groups and entire villages rather than individuals. The land was considered a natural resource to be shared to one degree or another by everyone and not as an abstract economic commodity to be bought, sold and transferred among a relatively small number of people. In South Asia various community interests dominated over any concept of personal ownership. The British could not divorce themselves from the belief that property ought to be "possessed" by individuals and protected through administrative policies and, if necessary, judicial sanctions. In order to justify this view the British asserted that private property constituted a central theme in India's ancient history that became overshadowed by the large number of despotic kings of a later period.[25] Logically, therefore, the next step for the British if they really meant to bring stability and order to the society was to restore the privilege of those individuals who actually cultivated the land.

The status of South Indian agriculture during the eighteenth century encompassed a large and diverse number of castes who held varying degrees

of control over the land which they occupied. Both Brahmins and some Non-Brahmin castes, such as the Tamil-speaking Vellalars and the Telugu-speaking Reddis, played important roles in determining the extent, variety and cultivation practices of each individual crop. The diffuse nature of land control throughout the social structure existed because of the complex set of relationships between the predominantly Brahmin landlords, Non-Brahmin cultivating tenants and landless laborers.[26] Each had some degree of autonomy which varied according to the strength of each caste from village to village. In addition, tenants who had cultivated the same lands over an extended period of time gained communal recognition as permanent occupiers of the land who could only be dislodged in the event of failure to give a share of the harvest to the landholder.[27] The efforts of these tenant-cultivators produced a significant proportion of the total crop production, both of the staple (rice, vegetables and other grains) and cash (indigo, sugarcane, cotton) variety as grown in South India.

Entering into this complex agrarian world of the last decade of the eighteenth century was a generation of administrators who, following in the Burkean tradition, maintained an ideological appreciation for the cultural values and traditions of Indian society. Most prominent of these administrators was Thomas Munro who had arrived in Madras in 1780 as a young army officer. He quickly became an important figure in the 1790's and early 1800's in the initial settlements of the newly-acquired territories, especially Baramahal, the Ceded Districts and Kanara. [See Map 1.] He advanced to the highest executive position in the Presidency, that of Governor of Madras in 1820 and served in this capacity till his death in 1827. That he possessed high regard for the importance of Indian attitudes seems unquestioned: He once said:

> It is one of the primary obligations of a government like ours to suit its rules and forms of local administration to the condition of the people, to provide every establishment which it may require, and not to withhold anything which may be necessary to its efficiency for the sake of avoiding either labour or expence.[28]

At the same time Munro realized that one of his principal duties as an administrative officer centered on the re-establishment of a stable, orderly society that would prove beneficial to both Englishman and Indian alike. He sought to fulfill these goals through a strong administrative apparatus which would maximize efficiency and minimize corruption. Such a bureaucracy, because of the extent and population of the Presidency, required an extensive number of Indian officials particularly on the village level in order to function effectively. Munro, therefore, became a major proponent of significant Indian representation in government service because he saw their inclusion as the most logical way of avoiding the linguistic misunderstandings that would surely result if all government decisions depended on young inexperienced English officers. In purely economic terms having Indians in subordinate positions meant a considerable saving in expenditure since their salaries were so much lower than those of Englishmen with similar qualifications.

Because of his favorable feelings towards Indians, Munro has gained a reputation as one of the most liberal and enlightened administrators in all the history of the British Raj. But the goal behind his policies of more education and government jobs for South Indians centered on his perceptions of the unquestioned legitimacy of the British presence in the subcontinent and the desire to make that presence both economically profitable for Englishmen and culturally beneficial for Indians. Indeed, Munro's view of the British role when he was Governor in 1824 seems very similar to the themes expressed during the heyday of British imperialism later in the century:

> We should look upon India [he wrote] not as a temporary possession, but as one which is to be maintained permanently, until the natives shall in some future age have abandoned most of their superstitions and prejudices, and become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular Government for themselves, and to conduct and preserve it.[29]

Munro emphasized moderation in any attempts to alter the pattern of Indian social and cultural life. He placed great value on preserving local governing institutions, particularly on the village level and on respecting the power and prestige of community leaders.[30] A stable, viable village structure could provide the framework upon which to rebuild the economic order, and, perhaps, a semblance of prosperity once again. The British, however, could not wait for the re-establishment of social stability through any natural process of development. It was imperative to restore an orderly system of tax collection as soon as possible and thereby satisfy the continuous series of demands for additional revenues emanating from the profit-oriented Company in London.[31] Munro visualized the proper use of governmental authority as a means to guarantee economic prosperity for all sections of the population. He did not see any contradiction between centralized decision-making and the continued viability of local centers of power.[32] On the contrary, the restoration of peace and the permanent settlement of landholding rights would create the conditions under which traditional power sources such as village councils (panchayats) and community leaders (headmen) would flourish. But the results of introducing the concept of private property came to contradict his original intentions. Instead of preserving village institutions and providing security for the cultivator, he began the process of their destruction.[33]

The struggle between Western ideological perceptions and Indian social realities made it impossible for the British to establish an administrative

system that would be at the same time profitable and unobtrusive. Even though Munro attempted to preserve local governing structures, he introduced a bureaucratic framework on the district level that negated much of the power of local tribunals. The District Collector, the principal administrative officer in each district, acquired formidable powers as Munro combined both executive and judicial functions in one office. He became the supervisory officer and final arbiter of all legal disputes particularly those regarding land settlements.[34] His power became so strong that, in some cases, he appeared as an almost autonomous figure and began to formulate his own policies. As long as he provided adequate revenue to the Company coffers in Madras, he maintained his personal power and independence from central control.[35]

Munro believed that an orderly system of revenue collection based on individual proprietary rights would insure the taxable surplus necessary to keep the Company Directors content. He justified his beliefs in a report sent to them in 1807 when he was Collector of the Ceded Districts:

> The tendency of the Indian system of casts [sic] and laws of inheritance, always has been, and must be, to keep land divided into small portions among the ryots, and to make the same person labourer, farmer, and landlord. Why, then, attempt to subvert an antient [sic] system, which places the great body of the ryots above want, render them industrious, frugal, and comfortable, and preserves the simplicity of their manners, and their respect for public authority.[36]

He neglected the fact that many Brahmins controlled substantial amounts of land which, because of caste prohibitions, they could not cultivate by themselves. They either hired agricultural laborers from lower castes to perform the actual farming operations or leased out their lands to tenants in exchange for a significant proportion of the crop at harvest time.

Munro's attachment to organization and bureaucratic efficiency is evident in his disagreements with the policies of the East India Company.

His desire for a uniform revenue system in which the rights of all cultivators would be guaranteed sometimes clashed with the more hesitant Directors in London who preferred the loyalty of the high caste elite (landholders and merchants). Theoretically, this literate elite, thankful for the restoration of stable economic conditions, would act as the link of communication between British officer and illiterate peasant.[37] Munro, however, could not perceive any good reason for maintaining special privileges for any particular group no matter what its status. He strongly disagreed with the Company's desire for the continuance of lower assessments on lands controlled by Brahmins and poligars in order to maintain elite support.[38] The poligars, though somewhat reduced in strength, still possessed the ability to attract followers who could present a potentially formidable threat to British rule. Munro wanted to disband them through the revocation of their land tenures for he feared that any continued role as petty chieftains would enable them to continue in their semi-independent status.[39]

In his desire to create conditions of uniformity in land revenue and administrative policies, Munro believed that he was fulfilling the hopes of the population for a stable government, which, at the same time, would be accessible to the problems of all Indians. This could best be accomplished, Munro thought, through the development of a permanent land revenue system which would be determined by extensive land surveys in the newly-acquired territories.[40] This system endeavored to settle all questions about land ownership and control but it only stimulated conflict by introducing new and different concepts of social organization.

Even though they didn't control any land, the Paraiyans, the outcastes of South India felt the effects of the changes brought about by the

British presence as well. While the vast majority of this group continued in a state of near bondage as agricultural laborers to the landowning class, a small segment acquired employment as domestic servants in the growing number of European households.[41] In addition, their degraded status in the community attracted the attention of European missionaries who, besides their proselytizing activities, established a large number of schools which taught basic educational skills to the Paraiyans. Acquisition of these skills did not result in any immediate change in status since Brahmins and Non-Brahmins maintained their attitude of superiority, but it did provide opportunities for economic advancement.

Exploitation of the outcaste community constituted a familiar pattern of Non-Brahmin behavior. Absorbed into the struggles between the right and left factions the outcastes provided the major source of support for both sides whenever disagreements between the two became violent.[42] The Paraiyans defended the right group while other outcastes, such as shoemakers and tanners, remained loyal to the left faction. The upper castes maintained the allegiance of the outcastes through the ability to enforce economic sanctions in regard to employment and moneylending. For example, in North Arcot District, which is south of Madras City, the Desayi Chettis held the power to enact social sanctions and levy fines against Paraiyans and other members of the right faction who transgressed accepted concepts of civil and moral behavior.[43] When the disagreements between the two blocs became irreconcilable and violence occurred, the outcastes stood in the forefront and inflicted the most damage of any single group on the opposing bloc. Both the frequency and intensity of these struggles stayed at a high level in the early nineteenth century. Abbé Dubois, an eighteenth century French missionary commented:

> I have several times witnessed instances of these popular insurrections excited by the mutual pretensions of the two factions and pushed to such an extreme of fury that the presence of a military force has been insufficient to quell them, to allay the clamour, or to control the excesses in which the contending factions consider themselves entitled to indulge.[44]

The whole factional dispute aided the Brahmins in maintaining their superior position in the caste structure for they would be the most likely candidates to act as arbitrators of the questions at issue. This prevented any broad-based movement on the part of the Non-Brahmin castes to usurp some of their powers. The position of neutrality adopted by the Brahmins also suggests a greater potential for flexibility in response to outside influences. They did not have to encounter incessant opposition from any united group of castes that threatened their very existence. Newer economic, educational and occupational opportunities offered by the British at the beginning of the nineteenth century provided one response and many Brahmins, unencumbered with these intense factional antagonisms, chose this approach to further enhance their own prestige and power. Furthermore, if government service required movement of personnel between villages or districts, the Brahmins would not experience as much difficulty in this process as those castes involved in the right-left struggle which required a continuous commitment to a strong organization of like-minded castes.

As the nineteenth century progressed such fundamental social and economic changes occurred in South Indian society that the right-left division no longer played the dominant role that it had in the pre-British period. As a consequence of British rule, new forms of competition emerged as the beginnings of a market economy began to develop. In addition, there were new employment opportunities in government service for anyone who possessed the necessary qualifications.[45] Furthermore,

land became a marketable commodity and, to a far greater degree than ever before, this realization enabled all castes to become involved in its buying and selling and, thereby, vitiated the fundamental conflict between the right and left factions.

The British had viewed the constant factional strife as detrimental to the creation of a stable social order based on property rights and guaranteed through the judicial process. The violent nature of some of the struggles may have disturbed their own sense of security as well. The gradual disintegration of the right-left conflict did not, however, bring any degree of order to intercaste relationships. On the contrary, British administrative policies stirred ancient antagonisms and prevented their amelioration by not providing any substitute which would be understood by all sections of society. Even though sometimes violent the right-left debate proceeded on well-defined and socially accepted differences; all participants understood the rules and grievances centered on specific castes whose behavior affected members of the opposite bloc.

As long as the right-left conflict continued, the Brahmins, acting as mediators, maintained their position of authority. Elimination of the conflict created a vacuum of leadership and increased the fluidity of a social structure which experienced a basic change in the definition of land ownership from community to individual. Anyone, regardless of caste, who had the requisite financial resources could buy any quantity of land. Wealthy merchants and government officials, seeking new ways of investing their money, began to purchase increased amounts of property as a tool for economic profit.[46] But it was a competition that involved both Brahmin and Non-Brahmin alike and produced a situation where the continuance of traditional Brahminical status came under serious question. Once this

process began it became more and more vocal as the Non-Brahmins asserted rights which they felt had been long deprived to them by the Brahmin elite. This struggle suggests a possible early manifestation of the Brahmin-Non-Brahmin conflict that would become the major source of social disorder in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[47] In general these economic developments had far-reaching effects on the whole caste structure and on the Brahmins in particular for they had seemed to remain the least affected by the actions of other castes in the pre-British period.

The intrusion of British ideologies and administrative practices constituted a fundamental shift in the South Indian economic and social structure. That this intrusion originated from many sources (District Headquarters, Madras, Calcutta, London) only added to the confusion surrounding the real purpose behind official and unofficial English behavior. What was clear, however, was the reality of British power and its capacity to alter the ways Indians had been accustomed to do business. Alterations in landholding patterns produced an unstable situation which enabled a number of individuals and caste groups to alter their economic status. Availability of educational facilities began to produce additional opportunities for the alteration of social status. A more detailed analysis of these upheavals and, specifically, how elite groups reacted to the new realities suggests the sophistication of their responses and the ability to take advantage of bureaucratic uncertainities. Combining traditional techniques with the newer lessons learned from the British the elites altered British perceptions and policies and promoted a diversity of action and reaction that no one seemed able to understand.

FOOTNOTES

[1]For a full discussion of British perceptions see George D. Bearce, British Attitudes in India, 1784-1858 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), especially pp. 10-102.

[2]Eric Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. xii-xiii.

[3]Jogendranath Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes and Sects (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1896; reprint ed. [Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1968]), p. 175.

[4]The origin of the division is obscure but legends abound. One example: ". . . it arose out of a dispute between the Kammalans [artisans] and Vellalas [agriculturists]. The latter claimed the former as their Jati-pillaigal or caste dependents, while the former claimed the latter as their own dependents. The fight grew so fierce that the Chola king of Conjeevaram ranged these two castes and their followers on opposite sides, and enquired into their claims. The Kammalans, and those who sided with them, stood on the left of the king, and the Vellalas and their allies on the right. The king is said to have decided the case against the Kammalans, who then dispersed in different directions." Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, 7 vols. (Madras: Government Press, 1909; reprint ed. [New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965]), III, p. 117.

[5]Brenda E. F. Beck, "The Right-Left Division of South Indian Society," Journal of Asian Studies, XXIX, No. 4 (August, 1970), 779. See also C. S. Srinivasachari, "The Origins of the Right and Left Hand Caste Division," Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, IV (1929), 79.

[6]For example, these rights and privileges pertained to such things as wearing apparel and the use of a particular street for a procession.

[7]Brenda E. F. Beck, "The Right-Left Division of South Indian Society," 790.

[8]Census 1871, Madras, I, pp. 71-72. This was the first official census of British territories in South Asia.

[9]Ibid., p. 42.

[10]Ibid., p. 118.

[11]Ibid., p. 132.

[12]"Pen and Ink Sketches" of Native Life in Southern India, Being a Collection of Contributions to the "Madras Mail" and the "Madras Times." By A Native (Madras: C. Foster and Co., 1880), pp. 13-22.

[13]Another Brahmin sub-division which resisted English education throughout much of the nineteenth century while attempting to maintain their dominant status in the Malayali-speaking areas along the Malabar coast was the Namboodiri Brahmins. For a full discussion see: Joan P. Mencher, "Namboodiri Brahmins: An Analysis of a Traditional Elite in Kerala," Journal of Asian and African Studies, I, No. 3 (July, 1966), 183-196.

[14]Census 1871, Madras, I, pp. 195-196.

[15]Abbé Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, Third Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), pp. 289-290. This behavior soon became a pattern for all castes in government service.

[16]Census 1871, Madras, I, p. 144.

[17]Bhattacharya, Hindu Castes, Sects, p. 175.

[18]A variant spelling of Vellalas.

[19]Quoted in Edgar Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, pp. 366-367.

[20]Census 1871, Madras, I, p. 147.

[21]Ibid., p. 153.

[22]Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, III, p. 37.

[23]See Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India (1765-1857) (Calcutta: The World Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 36-37.

[24]Appendix No. 26 to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1812, British Parliamentary Papers [hereafter B.P.P.], Vol. III (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press Series, 1970), pp. 835-836. Appendix No. 26 which includes pp. 835-874 gives a brief summary of the family histories of 80 poligars in the Ceded Districts up to 1802.

[25]For a good overview of the role of British ideas in the South Asian world and the concept of 'private property' in particular see Ainslie T. Embree, "Landholding in India and British Institutions," in Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed., Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 33-52.

[26]For a detailed discussion of the various types of landholdings and cultivation practices see Brian J. Murton, "Key People in the Country-side: Decision-makers in Interior Tamilnadu in the Late Eighteenth Century," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, X, No. 2 (June, 1973), 157-181.

[27]Ibid., p. 175.

[28]A. J. Arbuthnot, Selections from Minutes and other official writings of Munro (1886), p. 255, quoted in K. N. Venkatasubba Sastri, The Munro System of British Statesmanship in India (Mysore, India: University of Mysore, 1939), p. xxvi.

[29]Minute of Munro, 31 December 1824, quoted in T. H. Beaglehole, Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras, 1792-1818 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 121.

[30]Stokes, The English Utilitarians in India, pp. 141-143.

[31]See A. Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850 (Madras: University of Madras, 1941), pp. 46-52.

[32]Eric Stokes emphasizes the role of the legislator in rectifying social ills in early nineteenth century English attitudes: "The Utilitarians completing the work of their intellectual ancestors, abolished God and substituted human for Divine Justice," Stokes, The English Utilitarians in India, p. 55.

[33]Ibid., p. 26.

[34]Ibid., p. 143.

[35]Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India," in Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p. 204.

[36]Extract from Report of Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts; dated 15th August 1807; proposing a Plan for permanently settling those Districts on the Ryotwar principle; and on the Advantages of that Mode of Settlement compared with Zemindarry Assessments, Appendix No. 31 to the Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1812, B.P.P., Vol. III, p. 947.

[37]Stein, pp. 202-203.

[38]Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, pp. 26, 64-65.

[39]Ibid., p. 67. See also "Sir Thomas Munro and the Land Tax," Calcutta Review, XV, No. 30 (January-June, 1851), 365-366.

[40]A literary analogy: "For Munro, as for the Romantic poets at home, the peasant embodied the pastoral virtues of an uncorrupted society, whose traditional simple way of life it was the duty of the Government to preserve," Thomas R. Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857-1870 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 38.

[41]Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VI, p. 114.

[42]Census 1871, Madras, I, p. 168. The intensity of outcaste feeling is indicated by the fact that the wives sometimes opposed their husbands and took the opposite side in these disputes, see Ibid., p. 130.

[43]Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VI, p. 91.

[44]Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, pp. 25-26.

[45]Beck, "The Right-Left Division of South Indian Society," 791.

[46]Ibid., 790.

[47]For an extensive discussion of this issue see Eugene F. Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

CHAPTER II

LAND SETTLEMENTS: CONFUSION AND INSTABILITY

The expansion and consolidation of British power in the nineteenth century has engendered much scholarly debate regarding the impact of new policies and administrative practices on the economic structure of the subcontinent. While the paucity of accurate demographic and statistical data renders any study more an exercise in speculation rather than meaningful analysis,[1] continued discussion serves to re-emphasize the importance of British machinations and the character of Indian responses. The patterns of revenue collection stand preeminent among all those areas affected by British policy because they altered, either directly or indirectly, fundamental relationships between virtually all segments of the population. Agricultural production provided the keystone for the prosperity and stability of the South Indian economic order. All castes, from the outcaste laborer in the fields to the merchant who bought and sold agricultural commodities to the Brahmin priest who received payment for his ritual services in the form of grains and other produce, depended on a good harvest for their livelihood. It is this institution which the British as a governing power first encountered and sought to manipulate. The effects of their policies reverberated throughout the South Indian world changing the basic perceptions of how Indians viewed themselves and the society in which they lived.

Theoretically, the British had the option of preserving the old system of taxation or instituting a new one to satisfy their aims of political stability and economic profitability. Traditional forms of revenue collection accented the viability of the village community as the unit of assessment. In this system the government and the chief cultivator or village headman (very often the same person) agreed to a level of taxation based on the issuance of triennial or decennial leases.[2] In effect, the whole village was taxed, and it became the responsibility of the individual who controlled the most land in the village to collect the revenues from small cultivators and tenant farmers and to submit them to government authorities. This system had the advantage of a minimum amount of interference in local affairs by the ruling power. Furthermore, even though this system produced a multitude of opportunities for corruption and aggrandizement of power, it still provided an understandable and easily accessible authoritarian figure for the small cultivator. Since the individual who collected the land revenue was known throughout the community, ample opportunity also existed for compromises over the amount each cultivator would have to pay and, if need be, the issuance of loans during times of economic hardship.

These wealthy landholders constituted the local elite in the village since they acted as the central link between the government and the cultivators.[3] The Government rewarded them for their services as familiar, recognizable symbols of power and influence in the community structure through land grants that were either free or only slightly taxed. Additional components of the village administration included accountants, moneylenders, police, watchmen and craftsmen. These individuals received payments in cash or kind from an additional annual levy on all of the

cultivators.[4] The duties exercised by these officials did not separate them from their community. Village councils met periodically, deliberated and sometimes resolved important questions; the extent of land to be cultivated and the amount of tax to be paid in the upcoming year were also subjects that required attention by a larger number of people than just the local bureaucratic elite.[5] The continuing efficacy of the "village system," as the British called it, depended upon generally stable political conditions and reasonable demands regarding land revenues and the subsidy required for the administrative personnel.

The informality and lack of organization of this system did not appeal to British conceptions of order and efficiency. They particularly disliked the power of the village headman and feared his capacity to deceive and swindle the government.[6] Members of the Madras Board of Revenue, however, who were responsible for the collection of land revenues, argued for the retention of the village system as the simplest, most familiar and least obtrusive method of guaranteeing an adequate income.[7] But the Home Government did not agree with the interpretation and began a long period of experimentation in order to determine the type of land settlement which would prove most profitable for the Company treasury. Even though this period was largely confined to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it produced economic and social dislocations which affected the character of the entire century.

Uncertainties developed at the outset in establishing an acceptable revenue collection system because of the degree of geographic diversity that existed within the boundaries of the Madras Presidency. A series of fertile delta areas fed by the waters of the Krishna, Godavari and Cauvery Rivers dominated the eastern coast and achieved fame as centers of rice

production. The interior included hilly, less fertile tracts where cultivation centered on vegetables, ground nuts and, at the higher elevations, tea and coffee. Landholding patterns varied considerably also. In addition to the small cultivators, hereditary landlords (mirasdars) controlled extensive territories--portions of which were directly cultivated with the help of agricultural laborers. They leased the remainder to a wide variety of tenants who may or may not have been permanent inhabitants of the village. Migratory tenants usually leased a small piece of land for a limited period of time. Closely following the cultivating instructions of the landlord they were more reminiscent of ordinary laborers than independent farmers. Upon completion of their lease they moved elsewhere, consequently, their influence on local politics and village social life in general was minimal. Permanent residents of the village also held tenancy rights but the lease was of indefinite duration. After a number of years on the same property they gained a quasi-hereditary status and could only be displaced in the event of failure to meet revenue payments.[8] These village tenants provided a cohesiveness to the community because of their relationships with both the rich landlords and landless laborers whom they hired. The gradations of land control between landlord, tenant and laborer presented a complex picture to the British as they attempted to determine the rights and responsibilities of each group.

The perceptions and actions of East India Company officials in London further complicated the tasks of the early Madras administrators. Cornwallis had introduced his Permanent Settlement in Bengal in 1793, and initially the Home Government assumed that an extension of this settlement to Madras would provide the most uniform and efficient system of revenue collection possible for the entire country. The heart of Cornwallis'

system was the zamindar--a combination landlord and tax collector who had acquired his rights and privileges over many generations. His position of long-standing authority in the north Indian village community made it possible for the British to negotiate an agreement with him for a specified annual payment in exchange for guaranteeing his place in the social structure. The Madras Board of Revenue, however, during the first decade of the nineteenth century contained a number of officers trained in Bengal who strongly advocated a type of permanent settlement.[9] This led to attempts to create a class of zamindars in the southern presidency also. Such efforts focused in the Northern Circars and areas of the Tamil country where poligars were particularly strong.[10] Madras-trained administrators, especially Alexander Read and Thomas Munro, realized that a zamindari settlement was inappropriate for South India and began to introduce a new system which, they felt, more closely satisfied the needs of the Presidency.

The success of any permanent system of revenue collection in Madras had to deal with the extensive amounts of lands which had been given to temples, priests and officeholders as payment for their services to local rulers. By the end of the eighteenth century these inam grants existed in all the districts of the Presidency.[11] At issue for the British was whether or not to continue these rent-free holdings and preserve the loyalty of this elite or attempt to assess these lands as being no different than those of the actual cultivators. To make matters more difficult this problem involved the question of caste favoritism since most of the inam lands and other hereditary (mirasi) holdings came under the purview of Brahmins and high Non-Brahmin castes.

The evolution of the new land system began in Baramahal, which first experienced the effects of the changing British attitudes. After the

upheavals of war and its economic dislocations both Read, the newly appointed Collector, and his assistant, Munro, realized the immediate importance of determining the social and material conditions of the population if they were to restore order and stability to the area. They carried out extensive surveys in order to gather as much information as possible regarding individual occupations and cultivation practices. At the very outset of their investigations, the British encountered opposition from apprehensive Brahmin landholders who feared both an increase in revenue demands and any possible inquiry into their proprietary status.[12] Completion of the survey revealed the many varieties of landholdings and the potential corruption in the patterns of tax collection. Village headmen and other large cultivators had ample opportunity to extract as much revenue as possible from the mass of tenants and agricultural laborers.

The act of surveying the lands in the Baramahal reflected the ideological perceptions of both Read and Munro. They had a deep empathy for the small cultivator and thought it the duty of a government interested in a genuinely fair and equitable revenue system to protect the rights of these farmers from all possible sources of oppression. As a remedy they suggested a system that would provide a fixed payment from each cultivator directly to the government. It would be based on the assessed long-term value of the land under cultivation and not on its agricultural output in any one particular year. Such a system would have an additional benefit of guaranteeing that all of the revenue collected would reach the government coffers and not be channeled into the hands of already rich landlords. Known as the ryotwari settlement it was an agreement between the government and each individual farmer or ryot to pay a tax on those fields under actual cultivation.[13]

The fundamental character of the ryotwari system that had begun under the authority of Read in Baramahal became further clarified when Munro held the position of Collector in the Ceded Districts from 1800-1808. During that time he advocated the use of the ryotwari principle as a permanent solution for revenue collection. His assumptions, though, demanded a delicate balance in revenue assessments that, in reality, proved impossible to attain. He wanted, at the same time, to realize a substantial income for the Company and provide each cultivator with the opportunity to improve his land or sell it at a profit should he so desire.[14] For Munro government was the benign servant of its subjects, guaranteeing personal property rights and a stable political order in exchange for a moderate annual tax. Moreover, through the supervision of the economy conditions favorable to individual 'progress' and prosperity could be achieved.

These hopes and dreams floundered on a sea of conflicting policies. Acquiring property rights was a relatively simple matter since surveys demonstrated that significant amounts of land remained uncultivated. All one had to do was merely promise to pay the stipulated revenue for a particular plot in order to be its 'owner.' But, theoretically, this should also give the cultivator the unrestricted right to dispose of his property as he saw fit. Such privileges would not present any great hindrance to the restoration of social stability if revenue policies were both equitable and uniform throughout the Presidency. Unfortunately, they were not.

From the outset of British rule in Madras, the primary objective of the East India Company Directors was the maximization of revenue collections. Acting on this belief, the British government assessed the land at very high rates--the average came to be 45-50% of the annual produce, particularly in the fertile rice-growing wetlands.[15] Government officials

claimed that such an assessment simply followed the precedents established in the eighteenth century by local kings and poligars.

Munro's experience in Baramahal convinced him that high assessments frustrated the development of a stable agricultural class. Cultivators would be eager to give up their land and move on to other areas of the Presidency which operated under a different revenue system and a different rate of assessment. But, as Collector of the Ceded Districts, he also recognized the hazard of advocating a lower rate:

> If I leave room for my successor to raise the revenue, it would be said that I allowed the inhabitants to defraud Government. If I raise all that the country can pay, and he could raise no more, it would be said that I had oppressed the people for the sake of exhibiting a high settlement. However this may be, I have no thoughts at present of precipitating matters, though I shall, for the sake of assisting the public want of money, press the rayets rather more than I ought to do.[16]

In an 1807 report recommending the introduction of the ryotwari system as the basis for a permanent land settlement, Munro stated that a decline in the assessment rate from 45 to 33 3/4 percent was imperative for the continued viability of small cultivators and an adequate revenue collection.[17] But his pleas went unheeded; the government continued demanding exorbitant rates and, instead of producing a stable and prosperous agricultural sector, created increased economic turmoil and social disorder.

Excessive social mobility was particularly distasteful to Munro because it would prevent the realization of an orderly, village-centered society. Munro took steps to make certain that this did not happen. First of all, he changed his conception of the property rights of local cultivators. In 1797, in describing the ryotwari system, he stated: "Settlements to be annual; that is to say, every man to be permitted to give up, or

take, whatever land he pleases every year."[18] In a similar statement ten years later a qualification is added:

> Every Ryot shall be at liberty, at the end of every year, to throw up a part of his land, or to occupy more, according to his circumstances; but whether he throw up or occupy, shall not be permitted to select, but shall take or reject proportional shares of the good and bad together.[19]

Secondly, he involved the whole village in the responsibility of revenue collection:

> No remission shall be made, on ordinary occasions, for bad crops or other accidents. Should failure occur, which cannot be made good from the property or land of the defaulters, the village in which they happen, shall be liable for them, to the extent of ten per cent additional on the rent of the remaining ryots, but no farther.[20]

The maintenance of high assessments remained an integral part of British policy in Madras through the first half of the nineteenth century. But not all administrators agreed that the ryotwari system was the most lucrative and efficient method of realizing these assessments. Munro completed his tour of duty in the Ceded Districts in 1808 and departed for England not to return again until 1814. In the interim, George Barlow, a civil servant trained in Bengal, became Governor of Madras and rejected Munro's notion that a lower assessment would, in the long run, increase total revenues.[21] Barlow's efforts to adopt new methods did not gain the support of the District Collectors who had been accustomed to dealing with revenue problems in their own way. Sentiment for the ryotwari system had always been strong among these officers because it gave them considerable personal power as tax regulators for an entire district. These men had followed the basic principles of the ryotwari settlement but varied the speed of its implementation. Instead of an all-encompassing system

enforced hierarchically, the revenue systems of Madras represented a haphazard quilt of experimentation, rejection and further experimentation.[22]

During Munro's stay in England, Company officials expressed concern about the unsettling effects that different revenue systems would have on the collection of taxes. James Cumming, head of the Revenue and Judicial Department of the Board of Control, which supervised Company activities, studied the positive and negative aspects of the various land settlements operating in South India. Highly influenced by Munro, Cumming advocated the extension of the ryotwari system to all sections of the Presidency. His recommendations received support from other East India Company officials. In 1812 the Company informed the Madras Government that the ryotwari system should be introduced in all districts that had not been permanently settled.[23] During the period of government indecision the strength of the District Collectors was crucial in maintaining the efficacy of Munro's basic principles. His return to Madras in 1814 and promotion to the Governorship in 1820 reinvigorated the ryotwari system to the point that it became the most common land settlement in the Presidency. By 1852 it encompassed approximately 85 percent of the total cultivable area.[24]

Besides the high assessments the British manipulated other economic variables and thereby made agriculture a much less appealing avenue of employment. Subsidized government loans (tuccavie), a traditional device to aid the cultivators, attracted immediate attention. The British Government determined that these loans to farmers at the beginning of a growing season should be gradually phased out in order that individual initiative could become the sole criterion for success. In this same manner the Government remained unwilling to engage in any extensive land improvement projects such as the extension of irrigation facilities. A more serious

problem involved the growing propensity of British policy to demand increasing amounts of specie and bullion from her colonies. Simultaneously the introduction of a money economy in South India in the first quarter of the century required an expanded amount of currency to deal with the increased number of transactions which took place.[25] This shortage of a medium of exchange in a newly-created money economy sent grain prices plummetting, and they remained at low levels through the whole second quarter of the century.[26]

The hardships of agricultural life was reflected in an article written in 1839 by a Madras Civil Servant, John Thomas, when he described the state of cultivation in Tanjore, one of the most fertile and prosperous areas of the Tamil country for cultivating rice, the staple of South India:

> The gross produce of the wet land in Tanjore irrigated by Government works, is divided upon an average nearly as follows; 50 per cent, the Government tax or assessment, 25 per cent charges of cultivation or an allowance to the actual cultivator. . . . 12 per cent, village cesses; total 87 per cent, leaving about 13 per cent as the merasidar's [mirasdar] or proprietor's rent."[27]

In some areas the Government introduced new cash crops such as indigo, sugarcane, tea and cotton, but they proved only moderately successful since they depended primarily on government demand. Unprofitability remained a central ingredient in Madras agriculture for the whole half-century; by 1856 the portion of the total cultivable land actually producing crops was still only 20 percent.[28]

Because discussion of the efficacy of the ryotwari, zaminari and village land settlements formed such a central part of British indecision, corruption and deception became common practices throughout the Presidency. The degree of British vacillation in Guntur District in Telugu country gave much scope for the continued viability of local politicians through the

mid-nineteenth century.[29] One such example of Indian manipulation of British institutions was Venkatadri Naidu, a Guntur Zamindar who perpetrated a fraud against the British administrators by deceiving them as to the extent of his actual resources.[30] Similar behavior occurred within the bureaucracy as well as is evidenced in the case of Causy Chetty, a minor official in the Coimbatore Collectorate who embezzled considerable sums of money before he was finally discovered and dismissed by his British superiors.[31]

Such behavior cannot be considered unusual in the chaotic economic circumstances of the first half of the nineteenth century. Excessive assessments resulted in a substantial diminution in the amount of land under cultivation. Since these assessments were not uniform throughout the Presidency, small farmers and laborers began to move between districts in hopes of finding better conditions. Larger landholders and government employees took advantage of this instability to increase their local influence and enlarge their material reserves. All castes participated in these upheavals and grew more and more discontented. As some of them began to acquire additional education they saw substantial differences between British policy and British rhetoric. Yet another element of instability entered into the South Indian world.

FOOTNOTES

[1]One of the most famous anti-British studies is Romesh Dutt, The Economic History of India, 2 vols., 2d ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1906; reprint ed., New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1963). Conflicting views regarding the value of British policy in nineteenth century India can be seen in a series of articles in The Indian Economic and Social Review, V, No. 1 (March, 1968). Morris D. Morris' contribution, "Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History," is reprinted from The Journal of Economic History, XXIII, No. 4 (December, 1963), pp. 606-619 and represents a revisionist interpretation stressing some of the positive aspects of British rule in the economic sphere.

[2]Sir J. W. Kaye, The Administrator of the East India Company: A History of Indian Progress (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), p. 222.

[3]Robert Eric Frykenberg and Nilmani Mukherjee, "The Ryotwari System and Social Organization in the Madras Presidency," in Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p. 219.

[4]Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions of the Madras Presidency, 1800-1850, pp. 15-19. "The share of the crops which was appropriated for the village servants varied generally from 5 to 12 per cent of the gross produce . . . ," p. 19.

[5]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[6]Ibid., p. 46.

[7]Nilmani Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System in Madras, 1792-1827 (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), p. 77.

[8]Murton, "Key People in the Countryside: Decision-makers in Interior Tamilnadu in the Late Eighteenth Century," 175.

[9]B. S. Baliga, "Home Government and the end of the Policy of Permanent Settlement in Madras, 1802 to 1818," Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings, XIX (1942), 8.

[10]Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, p. 7.

[11]Dharma Kumar, Land and Caste in South India: Agricultural Labour in the Madras Presidency During the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 13.

[12]Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System, p. 130.

[13]Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, p. 8.

[14]Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, pp. 81-82.

[15]Plan of Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts Munro, for a Permanent Ryotwar Settlement, 15 August 1807, Appendix No. 31 of the Fifth Report from the Select Committee, 1812, B.P.P., Vol. III, p. 942.

[16]Munro to Cockburn, 5 September 1802, quoted in, The Rev. G. R. Gleig, The Life of Major General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart. and K.C.B., Late Governor of Madras, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colborn and Richard Bentley, 1830), I, 361.

[17]Plan of Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts, p. 942.

[18]Munro to Read, 5 September 1797, quoted in Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, p. 29.

[19]Plan of Principal Collector of the Ceded Districts, p. 944.

[20]Ibid., pp. 944-945.

[21]Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System, p. 39.

[22]Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions, p. 41. See also, Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India," in Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p. 197.

[23]Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, pp. 89-93.

[24]"The humble Petition of the Madras Native Association, and other Native Inhabitants of the Presidency of Madras" in Appendix No. 7 to the First Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, B.P.P., 1852-53, Vol. XIII, p. 451.

[25]P. J. Thomas and B. Natarajan, "Economic Depression in the Madras Presidency (1825-54)," Economic History Review, VII, No. 1 (November, 1936), 75.

[26]The fall in prices reached their nadir in 1843-44 when they dropped to 50 on an 1816-25 base price of 100. See Ibid., p. 67.

[27]John F. Thomas, "Notes on Ryotwar, or Permanent Annual Money Rents, in South India: and on the duty of Government in Periods of Famine," Journal of Literature and Science, IX, No. 22 (January, 1839), 57-58.

[28]Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions, p. 64, Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System, p. 221.

[29]Robert Eric Frykenberg, Guntur District 1788-1848; A History of Local Influence in South India (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 10.

[30]Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Traditional Processes of Power in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, I, No. 2 (October-December, 1963), 129.

[31]See Ibid., p. 138 and Sarada Raju, Economic Conditions, pp. 23-24.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION: CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS

The development of educational policies in the Madras Presidency in the early nineteenth century involved three distinct sources of influences and control. Government policies emanated from East India Company officials in India and England and illustrated the diversity of British perceptions regarding the purposes of education in the subcontinent. A second group, the Christian missionaries, arrived in ever-increasing numbers during the century and became more and more vocal in their demands for government sanction and support for their proselytizing activities. Early administrators regarded these missionaries as potentially disruptive of an orderly system of government and offered them little if any encouragement. Towards the middle of the century this situation changed as the visions of the two groups more and more began to coincide. A third source of influence was composed of that relatively small proportion of Indians who had come into contact with the educational system, developed opinions regarding its advantages and disadvantages, and suggested newer policies to improve its efficiency and availability for a larger segment of the population. The perceptions and actions of these three groups not only determined the patterns of educational development, but their interactions suggest the complexity of the social fabric and the instability brought about by the lack of a viable central authority.

In addition to the diversity of potential decision-makers political conditions in Madras in the early nineteenth century hindered any long-range plan of educational development. British administrators concerned themselves with immediate problems of land settlement patterns and an adequate revenue income. Providing an education for the local inhabitants remained a minor theme of British policy--more to be debated and argued in the House of Commons rather than enacted with great enthusiasm throughout the Presidency. Even though the Charter Act of 1813 had stipulated that an annual sum of 100,000 rupees should be spent specifically on education, i.e. for ". . . the revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India"[1] [Section 43], very little had been accomplished in the years immediately following the Act to implement its directives. In Madras, government officials, anxious to gain the allegiance of the upper caste elites, directly supported the continuation and expansion of Hindu traditions and festivals. In this regard the Madras Board of Revenue issued Regulation VII of 1817 which established the Board as the body responsible for the supervision of Hindu temples and their activities.[2] Those officials who saw value in local cultures wished to incorporate their beliefs into government policy. This came to be called the 'Orientalist approach' and remained an important element in the development of educational facilities. For instance, the British government decided in 1819 to establish institutions of learning that would concentrate on mass education through the extensive use of vernacular languages.[3] This decision, although more speedily implemented in north India, set the tone of official policy for the whole subcontinent. Some opposition did emerge from another group of

officials, Anglicists, who advocated a primary position for the English language in any scheme of educational improvements.

During the period 1813-1822 Madras officials faced serious obstacles in the development of a coherent educational policy. Most of their actions consisted mainly of responding to the burgeoning activities of the missionaries, who during this period began to establish both Tamil and English elementary schools in the southern district of the Presidency.[4] Government officials desiring a less religious orientation for the education of their Indian subjects formed the Madras School Book Society in 1819 in order to insure the availability of a wider variety of reading material.[5] But the low priority afforded to education meant that little effort was expended in the expansion of educational facilities or in the improvement of teacher training techniques. Governmental involvement in the educational process continued to be minimal.

The appointment of Sir Thomas Munro as Governor of Madras in 1820 resulted in an extensive re-evaluation of the entire educational apparatus. 1824 financial figures suggest how far Madras lagged behind the other two Presidencies in total expenditures on education: 53,820 rupees as compared to 95,795 in Bombay and 223,222 for Bengal.[6] Besides being dissatisfied with the comparatively weak position of the Madras Presidency, Munro wished to create an educated class which could understand that his system of land settlements and bureaucratic rule would, in the long run, prove beneficial for the whole population. But Munro insisted that education should not be overtly Christian in tone but predominantly secular and, therefore, controlled by government and not by missionaries. As usual his reasons, as is evidenced in an official statement of November 15, 1822, were eminently practical:

> In every country, but especially in this, where the rulers are so few, and if a different race from the people, it is the most dangerous of all things to tamper with religious feelings: . . . they may be set in motion by the slightest casual incident, and do more mischief in one year, than all the labours of missionary collectors would repair in a hundred.[7]

But he also emphasized the dangers of religious instruction in hindering the creation of an unbiased administrative apparatus and, possibly, inciting civil disobedience:

> . . . it would also tend to produce an injurious effect on the administration of the revenue. . . . The employment by the collector of men as his confidential servants, merely on account of their supporting his plans of conversion, would create suspicion and discontent among the inhabitants; and this spirit might easily be excited to acts of outrage, either by men who were alarmed for their religion, or by men who had no fears for it, but were actuated solely by the hope of facing the revenue servants out of office, and succeeding them.[8]

Munro's investigations culminated in 1826 with the issuance of a Minute on Native Education in which he set forth his findings on the state of education in the Presidency and his views on its future development. He recognized that although public instruction was still in its infancy, private tutors gained employment with great frequency, especially among the upper classes in the city of Madras.[9] He recommended the expansion of the public school network through the establishment of an increased number of schools and trained teachers to staff them. Careful to indicate that schools should cater to the needs of both Hindus and Muslims, he stressed the importance of a central school in Madras to increase the quantity and improve the quality of teachers throughout the Presidency. His vision remained typically pragmatic in its outlook:

> Whatever expense Government may incur in the education of the people, will be amply repaid by the improvement of the country; for the general diffusion of knowledge is inseparably followed by more orderly habits, by increasing industry, by a taste for the comforts of life, by exertions to acquire them, and by the growing prosperity of the people.[10]

He advocated the appointment of a Committee of Public Instruction which would oversee and plan all the educational activities in the Presidency. Such a body came into existence in 1827, the year of Munro's death, and formulated plans for the creation of the Madras training school. The Committee recommended that instruction should be conducted in both English and vernacular languages and include the humanities and some basic science subjects as well. Madras officials hoped that the newly-trained teachers would be most beneficial to pupils on the elementary level--thus following Munro's belief in a slow, evolutionary process of educational improvement for the entire Presidency.

Governmental involvement in education had begun in a spirit of reluctance and caution, and this attitude continued through the first half of the century. Madras administrators did not want to become embroiled in the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy, and their actions in the 1820's suggest an attempt to find a balance between the two conflicting ideological viewpoints. Attitudes in London, however, rendered the continuation of this form of a 'balanced' policy increasingly untenable. In 1830 the Court of Directors of the East India Company instructed the Madras Government to concentrate their budgetary allocation on the improvement of the upper classes in order to produce a greater supply of potential employees. They justified their decision in social terms by emphasizing the indirect, long-range effects such a policy would have on all segments of the population:

> By raising the standard of instruction among these [upper] classes, you would eventually produce a much greater and more beneficial change in the ideas and feelings of the community than you can hope to produce by acting upon the more numerous masses.[11]

The dominance of the Anglicist position over the Orientalist became quite evident in the early 1830's when the General Committee of Public

Instruction in Calcutta disagreed with the Madras Government's emphasis on elementary education. In 1835 they advised Madras to expend their finances for education on the immediate development of an English college and to use the English language exclusively as the medium of instruction in all Government-sponsored schools.[12] Implementation of such a far-reaching scheme required the existence of a forceful, cooperative governor and an agreeable bureaucracy. But Madras officials moved slowly, emphasizing the limited degree of familiarity of the population with English science, literature and method of instruction. Instead they stressed the development of local inhabitants to fill the subordinate judicial positions which required a thorough understanding of Hindu and Muslim law and the necessary competency required in the vernacular to explain their decisions to the populace. By the mid-1830's, through the efforts of both private tutors and a small amount of government aid, a continuing supply of Indian law officers was beginning to be produced within the Madras Presidency.[13]

To a certain degree the pragmatism of a few of the Madras administrators clashed with the idealistic conceptions of other British officials particularly in Calcutta and London who sought a uniform educational system for the entire subcontinent. This official disagreement over the nature of government participation in education became further complicated with the strong involvement of the missionaries in both urban and rural areas. The two principal missionary groups active in South India were the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society and by the 1830's each had established an extensive network of elementary and secondary schools all over the Presidency. The influence of the missionary educational structure became evident in 1833-34 when George Norton, who was Advocate-General of Madras from 1828 to 1853, gave a series of lectures to

learned Indians on the basic composition of British law and how it applied to the citizens of Madras.[14] His audience, composed mostly of younger people interested in politics, knew enough English to understand his lectures. Since formal government instruction did not begin until 1841, this linguistic proficiency could only be attributed to the success of the missionaries in the Presidency but particularly of those in Madras City.[15]

Despite the increasing pressure from high East India Company officials and the missionaries, Madras officials remained hesitant in upsetting the relationships they thought existed between themselves and the Indian people. Government non-interference while perhaps viable in the formative days of the expansion of the Madras Presidency at the beginning of the nineteenth century became less so in the 1830's and 40's when the full effects of changes brought by the British in such basic areas as caste, landholding patterns, tax payments and employment practices began to take hold. By that time Indians themselves became active politically and began to seek ways by which they could take full advantage of the English presence. Greater access to western education provided an immediate objective. The arrival of Lord Elphinstone as Governor in 1837 brought a more energetic personality to the Presidency who favored an expansion of the government's role in the field of education. He clearly perceived the needs of the people in Madras when they presented an address to him in 1839 which contained 70,000 signatures and indicated a large segment of popular support.[16] The address urged the Governor to implement a broadly-based educational system that would provide instruction in both European subjects (e.g. literature, science, philosophy) and vernacular languages. The signatories stressed that such instruction would not have to infringe on traditional religious beliefs: "We pray that your Lordship will not

impose as a condition for any measure of National Education that the people should act as if they renounced the religious faith in which they have been brought up. It is no toleration of the religion of a people to visit it with the pains of ignorance."[17]

Elphinstone also found support among the signatories for his contention that educational opportunities should cater primarily to the aspirations of the wealthier classes:

> We look to the mental improvement of the upper classes of the Native Community, who have the leisure and means to pursue the higher branches of study; and from them, it may be most reasonably hoped, that the blessings of knowledge will be gradually spread abroad amongst the inferior classes of our native fellow subjects.[18]

This general agreement on the need for a more extensive and advanced form of instruction convinced Elphinstone that the development of a university in Madras should receive immediate consideration. In his proposal he suggested that the new university be divided into two sections: a high school, which would give instruction on a broad range of literary and scientific subjects and a college, which would concentrate on such specialized fields as medicine, engineering and advanced study in literature and philosophy. Elphinstone also advocated the establishment of provincial schools throughout the Presidency which would ultimately develop into colleges and function under the jurisdiction of the central university at Madras.[19] The Governor's grandiose scheme, however, encountered the realities of the levels of educational achievement in the Presidency. Since such a relatively small number of students participated in the public system, Elphinstone's initial efforts centered on the high school in Madras which opened in 1841. This marked the beginning of higher education in the Presidency--the first step that would culminate with the incorporation of the University of Madras in 1857.

Despite the deviations and inconsistencies in the development of a coherent government-sponsored educational system, the process of learning continued unabated in the 1830's and 40's in the ever-growing number of missionary schools. The Madras Christian College began advanced classes in 1841 providing a continuation of study for pupils from the elementary and secondary schools. By 1854 the missionaries were responsible for the education of approximately 30,000 students of whom about 3,000 received instruction in the English medium.[20] The practical importance of the missionary schools became clearly evident in 1844 when the Company Government, under the leadership of Lord Hardinge, passed a resolution giving preference to those candidates for employment in the public service who had excelled in English-speaking schools.[21] As the century progressed a knowledge of English became a critical prerequisite for Indians desiring to participate in the British administrative system.

Indian awareness of the value of a knowledge of English as an aid in procuring government jobs stimulated greater local interest in the improvement of educational facilities. Due to a large gift from a wealthy eighteenth century Indian merchant, Pachaiyappa Mudaliar, citizens in Madras were able to start a local school, named after their benefactor, which offered instruction in both English and the vernacular. But this effort would benefit only a very few of those who sought increased educational opportunities; upper class Indians realized that they must depend on both the government and the missionaries to provide the necessary facilities at all levels of instruction.

But support for additional facilities did not mean an acceptance of new religious beliefs. Western education was indeed available at the missionary schools but attendance exposed the students to Christian

teachings and always involved the danger of possible conversion. By the 1840's the missionaries gained additional strength and influence and became more vocal in demanding that government officials adopt a more "Christian" approach in the public schools as well. Feeling the pressure of this threat even more acutely, South Indians formed a society to propagate Hindu beliefs and warn the populace against the encroachment of Christianity.[22] Its establishment evinced sarcastic comments from the governing body of the Church Missionary Society:

> They have a society called the Chatthur Veda Saddanta Sabei, i.e. the Society for establishing the four Vedas they print and circulate Tracts in the Native language against Truth and Preachers of it- they profess to have opened a Girls School for the higher class of Females in Black Town [section of Madras City where Indians resided] and they keep up a correspondence through the country, and threaten to establish Schools for instruction in the English language from which Christianity shall be excluded.- We are not apprehensive of the effect of these efforts, as the natives of this country in their heathen state have neither the elements of combination, nor moral principle nor a disposition in incur expense to render any of their measures successful.[23]

Fear of conversion was compounded by the growing view that missionaries and administrators cooperated in an effort to spread Christian doctrines. This fear became particularly acute when the Marquis of Tweeddale assumed the Governorship of Madras in 1842. Generally more conservative than his predecessors, he did very little to implement Elphinstone's educational policies and seemed more at ease with the ideas and attitudes of the missionaries.[24] He took advantage of the differences of opinion between officials in Madras and London regarding the proper role of governmental involvement in the educational process to delay improvements of facilities. During his administration (1842-1848) a major point of conflict between home and colony revolved around the extent to which a prospective candidate for government employ should have knowledge of English. Both Elphinstone and Lord Hardinge, in his Resolution of 1844,

sought to establish a direct link between successful educational achievement measured through examinations and preference in securing important government positions. Tweeddale sought the advice of the Court of Directors before he would give Madras Government support to any of these measures. The Court was more reluctant to establish a specific set of rules and regulations to govern employment of Indians and much preferred the older system of personal patronage.[25] This conflict dragged on through the 40's and 50's and added to the uncertainty and confusion Indians felt about the basic nature and direction of British policy.

Tweeddale's relations with the missionaries gave the Hindu community even more cause for alarm. Christian influence in the southern districts of the Presidency, especially with the Nadars, a caste of low status whose members cultivated the palmyra tree and processed the juice into a kind of sweet liquor, had made significant advances by the middle of the century. Taking advantage of the opportunities for education provided by the missionaries, many newly-educated Nadars began to leave their traditional occupations, migrated to cities and established business enterprises. In their new environment the Nadars looked to the strong organization of the Church for establishing their own communal solidarity.[26] Their early success encountered the hostility of the more conservative landlord class who resented their growing wealth and concomitant demands for greater social acceptance. In 1845 this hotility took a violent turn as Hindu mobs attacked and destroyed a number of Nadar villages. The missionaries demanded that the perpetrators be punished for their deeds but while many were arrested and convicted the English judges who heard the appeals overturned many of the lower court decisions.[27] It was the subsequent dismissal of one of the judges, Malcolm Lewin, that aroused the antagonism of the

Hindus against what they perceived as the biased policies of the Tweeddale Administration.

If the Hindu community felt threatened in 1845 by the strength of the missionaries and their seeming collusion with Madras authorities, they could not feel but totally persecuted with the publication of the Lex Loci Draft Act in that same year. The Act, designed to protect persons not under the jurisdiction of Hindu, Muslim or English laws, included a provision to safeguard the property of Christian converts. Traditional Hindu and Muslim law had prohibited any inheritance of family property if an individual changed his religious persuasion. The missionaries demanded that this law be abrogated so that complete religious toleration could be enforced throughout the subcontinent.[28] Missionary protestations met with a variety of responses from the Government in India and the Court of Directors in London whose officers were somewhat less anxious to meddle with the religious beliefs of Hindus and Muslims.[29] The missionaries gathered support from recent converts and a European community which desired more uniform policies regarding treatment of religious groups throughout British India. The ensuing debate delayed action for a few years, but because of their more effective organization, the missionaries succeeded in having their way in 1850 with the passage of Caste Disabilities Removal Act.

The British justified passage of the 1850 Act on two far-reaching doctrines. First, they stated that at no time had they forfeited their right to interfere in local laws and customs if these proved unjust to other segments of the population. Second, they affirmed their action on the ". . . higher ground of the inherent and inalienable right of every Government to regulate the law of property."[30] Munro's emphasis on private

property at the beginning of the century became an instrument to sanction changes in official British attitudes and policies by the middle century.

The Lex Loci episode convinced many Hindus that the missionaries and administrators at all levels cooperated in a conscious effort to disrupt their religious beliefs and spread the doctrines of Christianity to as wide an audience as possible. But below the surface the long-standing antagonism between the missionary ideal of conversion and the bureaucratic ideal of efficiency continued to simmer. The missionaries remained upset about the lack of overt Christian teachings in the curriculums of the new schools:

> The Government has established its High School in Madras in which by statute, instruction in Christianity is wholly excluded- they have contemplated establishing an University, and have proposed to set up Schools in some of the principal towns in the Presidency similar to the Madras High School; but the attempt has happily failed in consequence of the Civil and Military servants of the Company . . . to lend any assistance.[31]

Furthermore, the clergy cited conflicts between different levels of the East India Company Government as an indication of administrative divisiveness:

> We have reason to believe the Court of Directors have given instructions that no further attempt shall be made, at least for the present [referring to the establishment of provincial schools]. To this end we may add that the Madras High School meets with very little encouragement from any portion of the Community, that the Judges of Her Majesty's Court, and the principal servants of the Government Civil and Military, decline taking any part in it.[32]

Events of the next few years would disprove the assumptions of the missionaries. When Sir Henry Pottinger was appointed Governor in 1848 he ended the period of stagnation in the educational sphere that had characterized the Tweeddale Administration. His long term (1848-1854) witnessed a marked expansion in facilities and, finally, the commencement of collegiate-level classes at the University.[33] By 1850 the variety of small teaching institutions in Madras City alone indicated the number of educational

opportunities available and the lack of a cohesive supervisory mechanism. In this city of approximately 450,000,[34] 81 schools taught 3307 pupils in English while 29 schools instructed 2867 students using both English and vernacular languages. Institutions dealing only with vernacular subjects numbered 679 and trained 13,014 pupils.[35] These facilities made the city of Madras the focal point of education in South India. This became clear in the Census Report of 1871. [See Tables 1 and 2.] Pottinger's emphasis on higher education and the expansion of the University system should not detract from the significance of a similar increase in the number of more traditional institutions as well. The diversity of facilities and types of instruction emphasized the plurality of forces at work and the lack of any overriding method of control.

Direct Government support of missionary activities constituted a minor theme in the Madras Presidency in the first half of the nineteenth century. Any cooperative efforts which did occur depended more on the personality of an individual governor, e.g. Tweeddale, than on any conscious conspiracy by Christians to subvert the ideas of Hinduism. Administrators rarely lost sight of their primary function of insuring a profitable undertaking for the Company while maintaining friendly relationships with local governments and, if possible, improving the material conditions of the population. Officials continued to oppose missionary activities even in mid-century if they threatened to infringe on stable political relationships. Such a case occurred in 1859 in the princely state of Travancore, a predominantly Malayali-speaking area along the Malabar coast on India's western side. General Cullen, who oversaw British affairs in the area, was faced with an increasingly vocal Nadar community which sought greater privileges within the caste hierarchy. The

TABLE 1: Percentage of caste populations able to read and write or under instruction, Madras Town, 1871

Europeans	80.1	Kammalan	18.4
Eurasians	60.4	Mahomedans	18.1
Other Races	53.5	Other Castes	17.9
Brahmans	40.7	Weavers	12.1
Kanakkans	37.2	Potters	11.6
Vellalars	28.2	Shanars [toddy-tappers]	11.5
Chetties	25.9	Fishermen	11.1
Kshatriyas	23.8	Vannian [laborers]	10.4
Satanis [mixed castes]	23.4	Pariahs	10.4
Kavares	21.3	Barbers	8.8
Idaiyars [shepherds]	19.7	Washermen	4.1
		Total	72,865 or 20.5 percent

Source: Census 1871, Madras Town, p. 97.

TABLE 2: Percentage of population by religion able to read and write or under instruction, Madras Presidency, 1871

	Population	Literates	Percentage Literates
Hindu	28,736,648	1,395,547	4.9
Mahommedan	1,866,363	92,420	5.0
Christians Natives	480,186	35,328	7.4
Europeans, Eurasians and Others	43,493	23,180	53.3
Christians Total	523,679	58,508	11.2
Buddhists and Jains	21,254	2,735	12.9
Others	4,328	797	18.4
Total	31,152,272	1,550,007	5.0

Source: Census 1871, Madras, II, pp. 252-254.

issue in dispute at this time centered on the demand of the Nadar women to wear breast cloths--a custom which had been traditionally reserved to the higher castes who reacted strongly and sometimes violently to Nadar pretensions. Having gained the support of missionaries in the area, the Nadars petitioned Cullen for official approval of their disputed right, but were politely refused. He considered the maintenance of good relations between the British and Travancore to be his primary concern. Interfering in local caste matters could easily upset these relations. Because of his stance he gained the enmity of the entire missionary community in Travancore State.[36]

Though aware of some of the political and social dangers involved in missionary activities, Madras administrators did not fully comprehend the effects of their own policies in the field of education on the Hindu community. Ever since the British became the governing power in much of the south at the beginning of the nineteenth century, education policy largely remained under the personal supervision of the Governor. This kind of decision-making led not to an orderly system of expansion and improvement in quality of facilities and personnel but a policy of fits and starts which bewildered those castes concerned with better educational opportunities. Government indecision resulted in a balance of over 300,000 rupees of allocated educational funds by 1853 which had not been spent.[37] Further confusion resulted as bureaucracies established to supervise expenditures and plan improvements changed personnel and titles with great rapidity: from 1836 to 1854 alone, the principal governing body overseeing educational policy in Madras Presidency had the following names: the Board of Public Instruction, the Committee on Native Education, the University Board, the Council of Education, the Board of Governors and, finally, the Department of Public Instruction.[38]

Out of the disarray in educational policy through the first half of the century arose a class of educated Indians and other groups seeking similar opportunities. Using missionary, official and private channels greater numbers of Indians became involved in the quest for knowledge, expertise, jobs and the processes of social change which accompanied it. The development of these elite groups would be critical in the struggles of the 1870's and 80's, but their genesis took shape in mid-century and illustrated their diversity, political acumen and depth of concern for the future well-being of South Indian society.

FOOTNOTES

[1]A. B. Keith, Speeches and Documents: 53, Geo. III, C. 155, quoted in History of Higher Education in South India, Vol. I; University of Madras 1857-1957 (Madras: University of Madras, 1957), p. 4.

[2]Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Uprising, p. 34.

[3]Bimanbehari Majumdar, Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature (1818-1917) (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p. 4.

[4]Bruce Tiebout McCully, English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 53.

[5]History of Higher Education, p. 4.

[6]Majumdar, Indian Political Associations, p. 5.

[7]Munro, Minute regarding officials and missionary activity, 15th November 1822, quoted in Gleig, The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart and K.C.B., 2 Vols., II, p. 42.

[8]Ibid., p. 43.

[9]Thomas Munro, Minute on Native Education, 10th March, 1826, quoted in Rev. G. R. Gleig, The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, Bart and K.C.B., 3 Vols., 2nd ed. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), II, pp. 415-419.

[10]Ibid., p. 418.

[11]Quoted in McCully, English Education, p. 35. See also, History of Higher Education, p. 5.

[12]McCully, English Education, p. 119.

[13]"On Native Education" (extract from a minute of Mr. Campbell, senior member of the College Board of Madras), Journal of Literature and Science, III, No. 11 (April, 1836), 102-104. See also Memoirs of the Committee of Public Instruction at the Presidency, Appendix I of the Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1831-32, B.P.P., Vol. VI, p. 416.

[14]Majumdar, Indian Political Associations, p. 18 and Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Uprising, p. 37.

[15]Majumdar, Indian Political Associations, p. 18.

[16]See History of Higher Education, p. 7, Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Uprising, p. 37 and McCully, English Education, p. 121.

[17]Public Address to the Governor of Madras, 1839, Appendix I of History of Higher Education, pp. 221-222.

[18]Ibid., p. 222.

[19]Ibid., p. 7 and McCully, English Education, pp. 120-122.

[20]Majumdar, Indian Political Associations, p. 17.

[21]Ibid., p. 4.

[22]See R. Suntharalingam, "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization," Indian Economic and Social History Review, IV, No. 3 (September, 1967), 234.

[23]Minute on the expediency of taking measures for bestowing Christian education on the natives of South India through the medium of the English language by the Madras Corr. Com., Madras, April 9, 1845, Church Missionary Society Records, South India Mission Book 20 (1844-45), pp. 536-542.

[24]History of Higher Education, p. 9 and Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 39.

[25]See Alexander J. Arbuthnot, Selections from the Records of the Madras Government No. II: Papers Relating to Public Instruction (Madras: H. Smith at the Fort St. George Gazette Press, 1855), pp. 64-73.

[26]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "The Breast-Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore," Indian Economic and Social History Review, V, No. 2 (June, 1968), 175-176.

[27]See Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Uprising, pp. 42-43.

[28]M. Mohar Ali, "Religious Toleration in British India and the Genesis of the Lex Loci Act, 1850," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, IX, No. 2 (December, 1964), 47.

[29]Ibid., pp. 56, 58.

[30]Minute by J. E. D. Bethune, concurred in by F. Currie, I. H. Littler and I. Louis--Indian Legislative Consultations, 11th April 1850, No. 83, quoted in Ibid., p. 61.

[31]Minute on the expediency of taking measures for bestowing Christian education on the natives of South India . . . Church Missionary Society Records, South India Mission Book 20 (1844-45), pp. 536-542.

[32]Ibid.

[33]History of Higher Education, p. 9.

[34]This was only an estimate but a better one than that given in 1852 by the Madras Board of Revenue of 720,000. See Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, pp. 120-123 for more details.

[35]Figures from "Remarks on the amount of Education in Madras by Assistant Surgeon Edward Balfour, Body Guard," The Journal of Literature and Science, XVI, No. 38 (July-December, 1850), 381. He uses the 720,000 figure.

[36]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., The Nadars of Tamilnad; The Political Culture of a Community in Change (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 63.

[37]Majumdar, Indian Political Associations, p. 18.

[38]Ibid. and History of Higher Education, pp. 9-10.

CHAPTER IV

A PLURALITY OF ELITES

The greater availability of education provided the catalyst for the politicization of various Hindu caste elites by the middle of the nineteenth century. These elites intercaste associations were formed, borrowing extensively from British organizational principles regarding their form and method of presenting grievances. But the processes of change and social mobility had commenced at the very beginning of the century when the British began experimenting with systems of revenue collection and making available employment opportunities for Indians within their own administration. Castes of varying social and economic status became involved with British notions of law, taxation, administration, trust and loyalty. Discussion of their reactions purely in terms of 'caste,' however, gives only a very general indication of their nature. Because of the more widespread use of the printing press and the affinity of the British for keeping meticulous records of their problems and proceedings, individual representatives of these castes gained considerable notoriety throughout the Presidency. As the nineteenth century progressed, Indians participated more and more actively in the political process, taking advantage of the opportunities the British afforded them and gradually demanding an even greater role in the formulation of policy.

Initially, though, the British wanted to solidify their position by creating a new elite, composed of well-to-do literate castes: Brahmins,

merchants, accountants, which would act as a link between the Government and the peasantry either as official employees in the bureaucracy or as private traders.[1] Desiring to restore stability in order to insure profits for Company shareholders, but stymied by the meagerness of their resources and manpower the British sought the cooperation of the local power structure. Situations continually arose which illustrated the dependency of British administrators on Indian 'subordinates' for the establishment of land rights, assessment of revenues and basic communication with village areas. This dependence meant that British administrative effectiveness was very much in the hands of local leaders all over the Presidency. Compromises had to be made based on economic realities and the patterns of control that existed in each particular location. In many areas discontents were still voiced through traditional village leaders. For example, in Cuddapah, one of the divisions of the Ceded Districts [see Map 1], the Head Assistant Collector commented on the power of certain cultivators called Pedda Reddis. In 1822, they had the support of the agricultural community and exercised considerable influence in determining the extent to which the farmers would cooperate with the government in the collection of land taxes.[2]

At the same time these castes began to use high caste titles in order to take full advantage of the upper caste privileges.[3] The Sudras began to realize that they could manipulate their rulers in the same manner as the Brahmins had done for generations. For instance, many low castes, e.g. weavers, washermen, oil pressers, wood carvers, fishermen, toddy-tappers, goldsmiths, salt workers and some nomadic tribes used the title "Chetti" in describing themselves to the census enumerators in 1871.[4] This caused

widespread uncertainty in gathering accurate returns. According to the 1891 Census Report,

> the name Chetti is used to denote a distinct caste, and also a title, and people bearing this title describe themselves as belonging to the Chetti caste. . . . This use of Chetti has caused some confusion in the returns, for the subdivisions show that many other castes have been included as well as Chetti proper.[5]

To complicate matters even further some Vellalars used the title Chetti on occasion.[6] Decreased use of a caste name and increased use of a title clouds an understanding of just which groups participated most actively in the process of social change. The widespread utilization of titles would also seem to indicate the constant desire of Non-Brahmin castes to strengthen their position within the community and an awareness of how to achieve official sanction for their claims.

A particular caste's proclamation of a higher status did not necessarily result in its acceptance by the entire community. Their claims would be opposed by groups higher in status who saw a threat to their own position. A significant increase in economic power, while helpful in these struggles, did not always prove to be conclusive. A tightly-knit organization to maintain caste interests, strengthen solidarity and enhance prestige was an indispensable aid in the quest for upward mobility. This became increasingly important as the British administrative and judicial structure gained in its influence on the society. Caste leaders, aware of the potential for increase in status through political manipulation, wielded extensive powers in deciding the appropriate course of action. The Kammalans, composed of five traditional caste occupations--goldsmith, brass-smith, carpenter, stone-mason and blacksmith, each with their own elected leader, chose one individual to mediate all major intercaste disputes. In order to prove their claims of being Brahmins, their

organizational capabilities enabled them to adopt the strict Brahminical patterns regarding marriage ceremonies.[7] The Nadars, concentrated in the southern districts of the Presidency, provide one of the clearest instances of upward mobility through organizational unity in the early nineteenth century. Migrating from rural villages in search of better opportunities, the Nadars settled in the growing cities of Tamilnad. Their organization, called uravinmurai, provided unity and allowed them to employ the customs of the higher castes in hopes of advancing socially.[8]

Besides the various Non-Brahmin castes the British faced the growing power of the Brahmin community throughout the Presidency. Even though conditions varied widely from place to place in South India, the Brahmins had always been one of the most important castes. Their strength was due not only to their ritual status in the caste hierarchy but also to their superior economic position resulting from substantial landholdings and employment as powerful administrators and revenue collectors in the small poligar states of the eighteenth century. The strong economic and social position of the Brahmins permitted a high degree of exploitation and corruption--a fact quickly realized by such early British administrators as Read and Munro when they were in charge of the Baramahal region in the 1790's.[9] But the British felt that they must secure the cooperation of this elite in order to insure a minimum revenue collection. As a result they assessed Brahmin-controlled land at a much lower rate than other holdings.

While local Brahmin groups, particularly the Tamil and Telugu communities played a significant role in their own village power structures, another migratory caste had acquired control of the highest positions of

power in government. Desastha (Maratha) Brahmins had migrated to the south from their homeland in the Western Deccan during the time of expansion of the Maratha Empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They soon learned the Dravidian languages and became indispensable as the most qualified governing elite in the Madras Presidency. Having been successful in ingratiating themselves with local princes and warriors in the south during the eighteenth century, the Desasthas looked upon the British as another in a series of overseers who expected loyal service and reciprocated with material benefits. Their primary loyalty always remained with their own community and seemed to transcend any regional or local considerations. In Guntur, north of Madras, they played an important as well as independent role within the governing structure of the district: since no single caste was politically dominant in Guntur, the Desasthas had no difficulty in acquiring the top positions in the district administration.[10] Their stature, capability and absence of any deep emotional loyalty to the South Indian caste system provided British officials with a valuable source of expertise for use in the development of their own administrative techniques.

As the British began to employ more and more Desasthas, they came to view this elite as the cutting edge in the establishment of stable relations within their new territories. Such was the case in western India when after Mountstuart Elphinstone had succeeded in subduing the Marathas in 1818, he faced the problem of re-establishing order without restoring unchecked power to the same groups which he had defeated.[11] Since Elphinstone and Munro were good friends he sought the advice of his colleague in Madras who had experienced similar problems in the Tamil country two decades previously. In a long letter he wrote to Elphinstone in August of 1818, Munro evaluated the conditions of the Maratha country

and offered some specific suggestions about revenue settlements and administration.[12] Elphinstone, however, emphasized the importance of acquiring an Indian officer elite that would inculcate simple, clear and efficient patterns of government action. He looked to Madras for this elite in order to act as a counterweight to the indigenous Maratha officials and thereby keep corruption to a minimum.[13]

The independence of the Desastha Brahmin community became clearly evident in the actions of the officers whom Elphinstone was able to procure from the Madras territories. Two of the chief figures who came to the Deccan were Hanumant Rao and Lakshman Rao, and they brought a whole retinue of subordinates, who, of course, were also relatives, with them. Their style was distinct and, according to Elphinstone, far different from that of the indigenous elites:

> "They are more active, more obedient to orders, more exact and methodical than the Marrattas [a variant spelling of Marathas]; but they introduce forms of respect for their immediate superiors quite unknown here, while they [the indigenous elite] show much less consideration for the great men of the country; and are more rough, harsh and insolent in their general demeanour."[14]

The migratory Desastha Brahmins, accustomed to pleasing their employers, put the British at ease with their quiet demeanor and efficient manner. But their loyalty remained with their own community and not with the British bureaucracy nor with any conception that they had become involved in rebuilding their original homeland. They continued their pattern of exploitation and corruption wherever they saw an opportunity. Lakshman Rao engaged in these practices in 1819 and was dismissed from Company service[15]--an indication that while the Desasthas might have been indispensable, the rather low salaries provided by the British only further stimulated their feelings of independence and quest for financial security.

Desastha manipulation of British bureaucratic techniques became so widespread in the 1820's that even the House of Commons developed a definite opinion as to their character: "The Mahratta Brahmins, the class employed in the Deccan to conduct the public business, are intriguing, lying, corrupt, licentious and unprincipled, and when in power cooly unfeeling and systematically oppressive."[16] The Desastha community elicited such a strong response because of their caste cohesiveness and wide representation throughout the south. Another ingredient which contributed to Desastha power and influence was the use of the Marathi language which, even though foreign to the inhabitants of the Presidency, had been introduced in pre-British times as the language of administration. As the Desastha hold of major positions continued into the nineteenth century Marathi was employed for record-keeping purposes in regard to all the revenued transactions of the Presidency. Another bureaucratic office, the Mahratta Dufter, provided additional avenues of employment and entrenchment for the Desastha Brahmin community since translations into the four major Dravidian languages and English was a necessity.[17]

This migratory non-Dravidian elite constituted a critically important segment of the administrative elite in Madras. By 1855 of the 305 principal Indian officers in the Presidency 154 were Maratha Brahmins, 83 other Brahmins, 50 other Hindus, 5 Native Christians and 13 Muslims.[18] The lack of any extensive caste or kin support within the Presidency placed a tenuous quality on their authority and, as a result, depended to an extent on friendly cooperative relationships with local groups. The power of the village administrative elites cannot be underestimated for they performed the critical tasks of surveying land, collecting revenues from individual cultivators and adjudicating community and caste disputes. Most often they

were Dravidian Brahmins and in a few cases, Non-Brahmin groups, e.g. Kanakkan (accountants). The status and influence of these village elites became enhanced with the implementation of the ryotwari system because, in order to ascertain the extent of all local landholdings, they instigated and maintained direct contact with all cultivators and tenants.[19] An accommodation, formal or informal, at the district and Presidency levels of administration would prove beneficial and profitable to both the Desasthas and local farmers at the time of submitting revenue statements to the British. H. Ricketts, a mid-nineteenth century official commented on the Presidency as a whole:

> . . . in every district, in a greater or lesser degree, the whole body of public servants form a combination, bound together by strong ties of interests (not only out of hope of gain but out of fear of injury) and often of family or caste connexion, to maintain abuses.[20]

Despite deep British intrusion into the agricultural sector of the Madras economy, the village remained the level of focus for the solution of individual problems in the early part of the century. Cultivators still preferred to have their grievances debated by local panchayats and respected village leaders than some unknown British court using an unfamiliar system of judicial laws.[21] Their dependence on local councils, while providing a measure of security and familiarity for local taxpayers, exposed them to these same elites whose position in the British administrative system created substantial opportunities for enrichment through withholding revenues. Both Desasthas and village elites were actually involved but in this process Desasthas gave their allegiance to local concerns: family, caste, village and not to the population of Madras Presidency as a whole.[22] As the century progressed, the extent of corruption became more serious and widespread. By the 1830's and 40's, and

especially during the term of Collector Hudleston Stokes (1842-45) in Guntur District, the Desasthas and their village counterparts collaborated to embezzle substantial amounts by forging records, false reports and other forms of deception. Estimates of loss of revenue to the Presidency amounted to more than 74 lakhs (7,400,000) rupees over a twelve year period.[23]

While the Brahmins generally dominated the highest Indian administrative positions and came into close contact with the British on an official level, substantial numbers of Non-Brahmins became involved in British commercial activities. Primarily traditional merchant castes such as Chettis and Komaties but also other mobile groups (Vellalars, Naidus and Mudaliars) began to take advantage of the increased economic opportunities of British rule. Acting first as interpreters and middlemen between village and city they evolved into traders and small entrepreneurs in their own right, investing in such diverse enterprises as land speculation, the weaving industry and cash-crop cultivation.[24] They soon began to learn the strengths and weaknesses of Company policy and in which ways they could best manipulate it for their own benefit. In addition their activities in a number of agricultural and commercial fields broadened their awareness so that they began to become concerned with problems and issues that affected a majority of the population in the Madras Presidency.

The limited number of investment and employment opportunities available to the elites of early nineteenth century Madras came about largely because of British experimentation with some of the basic forms of South Indian societal organization. The introduction of the ryotwari principle, strong in some areas and weak in others, expansion of a money economy, establishment of individual property rights and formation of British

judicial and educational systems drastically affected the potential rate of social mobility among a wide variety of castes. The same Chettis and Komaties, who had so expanded their commercial and entrepreneurial activities under British rule, employed whatever surplus capital they might have had in extensive moneylending operations--particularly to those agriculturists who had difficulty meeting the high revenue demands placed on their holdings.[25] Those cultivators who held substantial holdings maintained their high status in village communities and received the allegiance of the small cultivators in the annual attempt to pay the government as little of the required revenue as possible. This largely Non-Brahmin 'agricultural' elite, along with the tax collectors and other revenue officials, became the most important and influential participants in the increasingly complex set of interrelationships between Englishmen and Indians.

Upper caste groups in active government service, commerce and agriculture were not the only ones to feel the affects of social change. The number of missionaries and their churches and schools followed in the footsteps of British administrators. Proselytization efforts found most success with the lower castes--many of whom responded favorably to an opportunity to improve their economic and social status. Rev. J. Thomas residing in the Tamil country emphasized their importance in a letter to a colleague: "I have not experienced the slightest inconvenience in the exercise of my Ministry from the operation of caste. We have under instruction Vellalar, Shepherds, Maravar 5 different castes of them; 5 different castes of Shannaar, Paller and Pareiyar etc."[26] Among these groups the Shannaar or Shanar (Nadars) gained particular notoriety because of the advances they made under the guidance of the Christian missions. Their economic success, achieved as traders and merchants in the cities of the

south of the Tamil country, made them somewhat of an "elite" because other low castes could emulate their methods.[27]

The number of castes which actively participated in the processes of economic change and social mobility transcended the very small portion who had some familiarity with the English language. While terms such as "middle class" have been frequently employed to explain the result of Indian encounters with Western ideas and institutions,[28] its use excludes the lower caste groups and agricultural elites who did not directly come into contact with British officials on a day-to-day basis. Their strength lay below the administrative level; they manipulated the British structure of government and caused that structure to bend, mold and blend itself into local environments. The particular nature of the South Indian social system stressed the intensity of intercaste rivalries for non-mobile agricultural castes in particular and kept the focus of attention on the local level. The continuation of traditional disputes between 'right' and 'left' caste groups added another dimension which tended to focus changes in caste status in purely village terms rather than on major shifts in occupation or movement of residence from village to city.[29] If the accent in the Madras Presidency in its early development was on local affairs and a wide variety of responses by many different castes, it indicates the force of the British intrusion which affected the wordly Desasthas as well as the most provincial villager.

The emphasis on local concerns surrounding the uncertainties brought by the introduction of the ryotwari system and its prohibitive revenue assessments did not prevent a burgeoning interest in the effects of some British actions on the region as a whole. This awareness began in the 1830's and 40's and from this time a steady stream of <u>individual</u> South

Indians spoke out and wrote down their ideas and opinions on how best to provide a more equitable relationship between ruler and ruled. Questions which had normally been dealt with in village forums and caste meetings were gradually expanded into organized meetings which were both intercaste and interdistrict in representation. The process of politicization began to exhibit regional concerns as well as a sense of immediacy that meaningful change should occur soon.

A major stimulant to the development of an organized Hindu political opposition in Madras was the growing threat of conversions to Christianity. The activities of the missionaries made local Hindus realize the importance of acquiring at least some knowledge of the English language. This ability could have many potential benefits: greater employment opportunities with the British administration, improved economic status and, perhaps most importantly of all, growing familiarity with the English character and, thereby, a clearer understanding of the decision-making process. Such expertise would make it easier for Hindus to know what kind of arguments would appeal to the government officials in order to elicit favorable decisions. In this regard they especially looked to the more enlightened British officials to protect them from missionary threats. This informal link between influential Hindus and government administrators had a direct effect in the 1830's with the formation of one of the earliest Hindu secular organizations in the Madras Presidency, the Hindu Literary Society. Its membership was composed of both Brahmins and Non-Brahmins and in their meetings they discussed everything from the ancient history of India to contemporary political questions.[30] The guiding lights of the Society included an Englishman, George Norton, the Advocate-General, who stressed

the importance of Western education and C. Srinivasa Pillay, a wealthy Non-Brahmin who was a great advocate of Western values and ideals.[31]

The rather genteel, relaxed atmosphere which surrounded the Hindu Literary Society was more appropos for intellectual discussions concerning the future of the Madras Presidency than any detailed assessment of the realities of British rule. For while the magic promise of "progress" seemed close at hand, particularly in education and employment, the danger always remained of governmental interference in religious issues. Indians found jobs in greater numbers and a policy did exist from the early part of the century indicating a distinct separation between administrators and missionaries. This thread between the English bureaucrats and the Hindu elites became noticeably strained in 1842 when Tweeddale succeeded Elphinstone. His friendliness if not open support for the missionary cause engendered deep concern within the ranks of Madras Hindus over the supposed "neutrality" of the government in religious matters. This spectre loomed so large because the administrators were the only hope that the Hindus had to protect them from Christian proselytization and allow them to pursue Western education without having to convert to Christianity.[32] With the passage of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act in 1850, the Hindus began to realize that the initiative for action must come from within their own ranks and not depend on any outside influences. An internally-established political organization seemed a likely alternative.

Fear of missionary-government collaboration to convert the Hindu masses to Christianity represented the latest and most serious item in a long list of grievances against the British government that had accumulated over the decades. An occasion to voice these grievances came when Parliament began to discuss the renewal of the East India Company's Charter

in 1853.[33] Hindu leaders understood the importance of presenting a united front to the English legislators. Leading the drive to establish an organization that would provide this unity was a Madras merchant, Gazulu Lakshminarasu Chetty (1806-1868). His father, Sidhulu Chetty, had made his fortune as an indigo trader and his son had the benefit of at least some rudimentary instruction in the English language.[34] Amassing considerable wealth from his family business, Gazulu took an active interest in politics and since 1844 had acted as the proprietor of an English-language newspaper, the Crescent. Because of its promotion of Hindu interests and grievances against government policy, he quickly became recognized as one of the most knowledgeable Indians in the Madras Presidency. His leadership capabilities made him a principal figure in the founding of the Madras Native Association in 1852.[35] It became one of the first political organizations in South India which formulated specific grievances against the government.

The predominance of the merchant castes in the Native Association emphasizes its basically Non-Brahmin membership. Besides merchants the organization included a number of representatives of the agricultural community such as C. Yagambaram Mudaliar who became its first president. While Brahmins were not purposefully excluded, only a few highly educated men like V. Sadagopah Charlu,[36] a graduate of the Madras High School, became members. The vast majority were more concerned with securing jobs and influence within the British administration rather than with the task of criticism and formulation of alternative policies. The composition of the Native Association indicates that it was more issue-dominated than preoccupied exclusively with the caste designation of its members.

British officials, long under the assumption that caste antagonisms provided the most logical explanation of political and social events in the Presidency, had great difficulty in coming to terms with the character of the Association. These officials transformed the enunciation of regional grievances into petty caste squabbles. When the Association complained that instances of torture continued to exist in order to collect maximum revenue, commissioners, who had been sent from England to investigate the charges, scoffed at the seriousness and actual motives of the Association:

> Like . . . many young societies, composed of partially educated men, it has displayed more sail than ballast, and has been remarkable for exaggeration, and a seeking after notoriety. . . . It was to assail the Government and its rivals of the Brahmanical order, who are the largest, though by no means the exclusive holders of the higher appointments in the provinces, that it revived accounts of obsolete tortures and acts of oppression, and brought them forward, as if still in active existence.[37]

British accusations could not subdue the basic thrust of the Association. Perhaps for the first time in the history of the Presidency, an organization dealt with regional concerns and began to understand how British policies affected the entire Presidency and not only each individual caste. This broader attitude by South Indians in the 1850's offered an alternative to the village-dominated relationships of the past which had emphasized the isolated, independent manipulation of British policies by specific individuals or castes.

Greater concern over regional issues had been stimulated by the growing use of newspapers and other printed materials. Lakshminarasu Chetty's stature in the Presidency had become enhanced because of his activities as owner of the Crescent and, while the newspaper had incessant financial difficulties, he managed to continue publication for some twenty years. By doing so he provided a vehicle for discussion and debate and a

symbol for the Madras elites of their growing power and influence. The genesis of the rapid expansion of printing activities in mid-century had originated in 1835 with the passage of a new press law which, for the first time, allowed Indians to own printing establishments. Passage of this law affected one South Indian culture quite strongly. For the Tamils, inheritors of an ancient literary tradition, began to publish ancient works which in turn stimulated the development of modern prose and poetry.[38]

Individuals who took part in the formation of the new Tamil 'literary elite' soon became involved in a myriad of activities (journalism, poetry, prose), but there was also an emphasis on the reaffirmation of traditional Hindu ideals. Interestingly many of the figures involved in writing and publishing, like Lakshminarasu Chetty, were Non-Brahmins. It might have been that Brahmins showed more concern over securing government jobs or, perhaps, that the new technological advance was an inappropriate mode of disseminating the wisdom of the ancients which had customarily been transmitted through the oral tradition. Whatever the reason Non-Brahmin authors were plentiful in the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the more significant was Meenakshisundaram Pillai (1815-1876) who wrote a number of books advocating love for the god Siva as the proper path for human action.[39] More scholarly activities took place under the auspices of the College of Fort St. George which had been established by the English in 1812. This institution published a number of books, among them Tamil grammars and even a Tamil dictionary, authored by one Muttusami Pillai. In addition, another Non-Brahmin, Tandavaraya Mudaliar in 1825 translated some tales from the Panchatantra from Marathi into Tamil.[40]

These literary figures provided yet one more group of South Indians who had been affected by British policies. Merchants, agriculturists,

government employees, authors and low castes affected by the missionaries constituted a plurality of elites in the Madras Presidency. Each group had its own particular experiences, qualifications and appeal to the remainder of society and, often worked independently of each other. They had no common bond, neither the English language nor any vision concerning the future of the Madras Presidency. Their pronouncements were often ambiguous and their relations with the British confusing, but their social and political activities indicated an awareness of the turmoil of British rule and their place in it. How these elites went about some of their activities reflects the kinds of issues they considered crucial in the mid-nineteenth century and the type of actions the British deemed appropriate in response.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System of South India," in Frykenberg, ed., Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, p. 203.

[2]Mukherjee and Frykenberg, "The Ryotwari System and Social Organization in the Madras Presidency," in Ibid., pp. 222-223.

[3]Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System, pp. 343-344.

[4]Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, pp. 94-95.

[5]Quoted in Ibid., II, pp. 91-92.

[6]"Pen and Ink Sketches," pp. 60-61.

[7]Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, III, pp. 107-109.

[8]Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., "Varieties of Political Behavior Among the Nadars of Tamilnad," Asian Survey, VI, No. 11 (November, 1966), 615.

[9]T. H. Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, p. 21. Even though Munro disagreed with Read's policy of favoritism to the Brahmin community while in Baramahal, he adopted a similar policy when he assumed authority in the settlement of the Ceded Districts in 1800. See Nilmani Mukherjee and Robert Eric Frykenberg, "The Ryotwari System and Social Organization in the Madras Presidency," in Frykenberg, ed., Land Control and Social Structure, pp. 223-224.

[10]Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Elite Groups in a South Indian District: 1788-1858," Journal of Asian Studies, XXIV, No. 2 (February, 1965), 262.

[11]Kenneth Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 91.

[12]"On the State of the Southern Mahratta Country," Munro to the Honourable M. Elphinstone. 28th August, 1818 in Rev. G. R. Gleig, The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, 2nd ed., II, pp. 356-368. See especially pp. 365-367.

[13]Ballhatchet, Social Policy, pp. 91-92.

[14]Quoted in Ibid., p. 100.

[15]Ibid., p. 216.

[16]"Evidence given in the Second Report of the Commons' Committee on East India Affairs, in 1830; and in the Reports of 1830-1, and 1831; on subjects relating to the Public Department," in B.P.P., Vol. VI, p. 312.

[17]See the testimony of James William Ballantine Dykes, Esq. in the Minutes of the Fourth Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories 1852-53, B.P.P., Vol. XIV, p. 191 [Irish University Press, p. 369].

[18]Reprinted in Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Elite Groups in a South Indian District: 1788-1858," Journal of Asian Studies, XXIV, No. 2 (February, 1965), 276 and in the author's book, Guntur District 1788-1848, p. 77. Also: Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 18.

[19]See Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System in Madras, Chapter 13, pp. 348-373.

[20]Quoted in Robert Eric Frykenberg, Guntur District, 1788-1848, p. 235.

[21]Mukherjee, The Ryotwari System in Madras, p. 370.

[22]Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Traditional Processes of Power in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence," Indian Economic and Social History Review, I, No. 2 (October-December, 1963), 134.

[23]Ibid., p. 133. Frykenberg suggests that similar cases occurred in other districts of the Presidency at the same time. See his "Elite Groups in a South Indian District, 1788-1858," 278.

[24]Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 27.

[25]B. M. Bhatia, "Growth and Composition of Middle Class in South India in Nineteenth Century," Indian Economic and Social History Review, II, No. 4 (October, 1965), 345.

[26]Letter from Rev. J. Thomas to Rev. J. Tucker, November 28, 1844, Records of the Church Missionary Society, South India Mission Book, Vol. 20 (1844-45), p. 558.

[27]The Vanniyars, a South Indian caste principally composed of agricultural laborers, attempted to improve their caste status with the help of British administrators: "As early as 1833, the Pallis, as they were then called, had ceased to accept their status as a humble agricultural caste and tried to procure a decree in Pondicherry that they were not a low caste. In anticipation of a census-taking in 1871, they petitioned to be classified as Kshatriyas." Lloyd I. Rudolph and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 50.

[28]Charles H. Heimsath in his book, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) defines 'middle class' as "a fairly well recognizable group where Western institutions have been established." (p. 63 footnote.) See also B. B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) for an extensive discussion of this concept.

[29]B. M. Bhatia, "Growth and Composition of Middle Class," 349.

[30]Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 45.

[31]Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[32]See Public Address to the Governor of Madras, 1839, Appendix I of History of Higher Education, pp. 220-222.

[33]Suntharalingam, "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization," 236.

[34]Govinda Parameswaran Pillai, Representative Indians, 2nd ed. (London: W. Thacker and Co., 1902), p. 193.

[35]For much of the material on the Madras Native Association I am indebted to R. Suntharalingam, "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization" and his latest work, Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891, pp. 32-57. He is perhaps one of the only historians who has done detailed research in this area and defines the importance of the Native Association as the first step in the involvement of South Indians in the 'nationalist' struggles of the 1880's.

[36]Although bibliographic information on V. Sadagopah Charlu is scarce, another important nineteenth century figure with the same title, C. V. Runga Charlu is definitely classified as "a high-class Brahmin." See Parameswaran Pillai, Representative Indians, p. 131.

[37]"Report of the Commissioners for the investigation of alleged cases of Torture at Madras," Calcutta Review, XXIX, No. 58 (December, 1857), 463.

[38]Kamil Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 267-268. "Tamil Renaissance" is a general term applied to the reinvigoration of all forms of Tamil writing from classical literature to modern prose, poetry and journalism, particularly in the last half of the nineteenth century.

[39]Mu. Varadarajan, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru [History of Tamil Literature] (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1972), p. 214.

[40]Ibid. and Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan, p. 265.

CHAPTER V

A PLURALITY OF RESPONSES

As British involvement in the structuring of land revenue patterns, educational practices and employment procedures became more pronounced, the South Indian view of the role of government in their society underwent considerable change. Indians reacted in different ways to policies which in some cases they viewed as threats and, in others, as opportunities. The possibilities for coordinated responses among various castes were severely limited not only by the diversity of peoples and languages that comprised the Madras Presidency but also by the multiplicity of laws, regulations, statements and understandings that emanated from the Raj. Some South Indian groups rejected the validity of these administrative devices while others accepted the legitimacy of British rule and sought to manipulate it for personal gain.

The poligars constituted one of the first groups in the south who experienced the upheavals brought by British power. Some disagreement existed concerning the influence the poligars had in South Indian society. The Madras Board of Revenue, for instance, in an 1818 Minute offered reasons why the status of these individuals should be maintained:

> The . . . Poligars were, in fact, the nobility of the country, and though the origin of some of their tenures would not bear too minute a scrutiny, they were connected with the people by ties by which it was more politic, more liberal, and more just to strengthen them than to dissolve.[1]

On the other hand, both the Company Government in London and certain

administrators, like Munro, who played a key role in the initial stages of British rule in the south, viewed them as a significant military and economic threat to the development of an orderly administrative system.

The poligars, determined to preserve as much of their power and privileges as possible, resented the British attempts to alter the land-holding patterns. They quickly mobilized their followers and, in a number of areas, violent conflicts occurred. A major battle took place in Tinnevelly [see Map 2] in 1801 when British troops and Indian sepoys attacked a fort held by local poligars and their followers. The British triumphed only after reinforcements arrived from the west coast but in the struggle suffered 47 dead and 187 wounded.[2] These conflicts affected significant portions of the population, not only because of the reinstitution of a war-time atmosphere, but also because each side realized the importance of securing maximum revenue from the agricultural sector. Munro saw this clearly when he assumed control of the Ceded Districts in 1800: ". . . a 'revolting poligar exacted contributions by every species of violence in order to enable him to raise a numerous rabble to defend himself.'"[3] This struggle against the poligars remained active in one form or another throughout the first half of the century--a constant source of the instability and uncertainty that British ideology so assiduously tried to avoid. For example, Narasimha Reddi, a Telugu poligar rebelled against the British in 1846 when the government refused to grant his family any pension whatsoever.[4] Since he was able to collect a number of followers, his attacks on villages and a local treasury brought about a strong British military response and, after a number of skirmishes, Narasimha Reddi was captured and executed in 1847.

The ability of the poligars to attract loyal adherents to their cause raised the question as to what degree the masses supported their actions against the government. But no matter what degree of support they received on specific occasions, the potential for general uprisings at any time was sufficient reason for the British to take a serious view of any and all poligar activities. Disagreements, however, continued to exist between London and Madras over how best to accomplish the task of bringing this class under control: the Court of Directors wanted to honor their claims to certain landholding rights while eliminating their military capability while Madras officials were more inclined to subdue the poligars completely through whatever method that was necessary. Armed struggle rather than diplomacy proved the norm but there was no indication that the British visualized this group as the vanguard of any broad social climate of disapproval of Company policies. Rather Munro stressed their isolation from the wealthier classes in the Ceded Districts and the hopelessness of trying to transform them into a loyal landowning elite:

> . . . they were despised and detested by all the better classes of their subjects, and that as they can command no support but through the exercise of power they can never be converted into private landowners who would devote their whole attention to the improvement of their Estates, but will always maintain bodies of armed men and endeavour as far as they can to act as petty Sovereigns. . . .[5]

The extensive number and violent nature of the poligar uprisings indicate a measure of popular support not fully appreciated by government officials. Village inhabitants had learned about the capriciousness of political power from the instability of the eighteenth century and soon became accustomed to its successful manipulation. Those who had supported the poligar cause assumed that by doing so their economic and social status would improve just as the Desastha Brahmins had made a similar assumption

when they decided to work for the new British rulers. Self-interest rather than any coordinated movement of discontent stimulated elite as well as lower class responses to the rapidly changing environment of early nineteenth century Madras.[6] Self-interest also played a key role in determining the nature of poligar behavior towards the British. Realizing that their very livelihood was being jeopardized by changes in landholding patterns, the poligars employed the same violent measures that they had used throughout the eighteenth century to preserve those lands and villages which had come under their authority. Their actions provided one type of response to the British presence but soon thereafter other elites decided that a knowledge of British administrative principles and methods of reform were less hazardous and far more effective ways of producing desired social and economic changes.

At the same time that the British engaged in violent conflicts with the poligars, they realized the necessity of hiring local officials to conduct land surveys if they wished to expand the ryotwari settlement. This task could only be accomplished by Indians who had knowledge of the areas to be surveyed and the ability to communicate directly with the cultivators. Besides these practical considerations, certain British officials like Munro saw definite political and moral advantages to be derived by both cultures from the inclusion of more Indians into government service. The presence of Indian officers and clerks in towns and villages would indicate to the peasants that decision-making was not a purely British affair done in a purely arbitrary manner. Involvement in the administrative structure, the British felt, was also a necessary prerequisite for the formation of that community spirit and sense of unity indispensable to both good

government and the creation of a fundamental loyalty and trust in the policies of the Raj.[7]

The entrance of Indians into government service illustrated the paternalistic and exploitative nature of British attitudes in the early nineteenth century. Participation in the governmental process was limited to subordinate positions under the authority of a British supervisor for certain specific purposes. As stated by a House of Commons select committee in 1830:

> Until the natives are raised (and they can be so raised with great advantage) to participate largely and actively in the government of themselves, India never will be justly or securely ruled under any European sovereignty. . . . They ought to be admitted to the revenue and judicial departments: from the chief political offices they should always be excluded. By permitting the natives to fill a few of the high situations, we shall gradually raise a native aristocracy of our own, who being indebted to our government, will feel an interest in maintaining it; they would consider the security of their own fortunes identified with the safety of the government.[8]

South Indian resentment over the paternalistic attitude of government officials became clear when the British established a distinct separation between job categories in the civil service. The covenanted[9] service included European officials exclusively who worked at high-level positions in the bureaucracy while the uncovenanted service was composed of those Indians who worked as clerks or subordinate officials in the revenue and judicial departments. Most British officers wanted to maintain the separation, but this distinction became a very tenuous one to Indians aware of Parliamentary directives on this matter. Clause 87 of the Charter Act of 1833 stated:

> And be it enacted, That no Native of the said Territories, nor any natural-born Subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason only of his Religion, Place of Birth, Descent, Colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any Place, Office, or Employment under the said Company.[10]

British officials had a difficult task in explaining to Indians seeking

more prestigious positions that these were still the preserve of Englishmen. Lord Elphinstone, appearing before a select committee of the House of Commons in 1852, illustrated the continuance of the paternalistic attitude regarding the capabilities of the Indian officials:

> I believe that a native is eligible, under the Act of 1833, to any appointment in India; if they were appointed to the civil service, it might give rise to the idea that only those natives who were in the civil service were eligible to higher appointments, I would prefer taking any native whom I found qualified, and placing him in a higher appointment, without his being necessarily in the civil service.[11]

The British would arbitrarily decide on who was or was not qualified for these unspecified "higher" appointments. The early nineteenth century offers a picture of steady growth in the number of uncovenanted civil servants and an increase in their powers especially in the judicial sphere,[12] but the major sources of power still remained securely in the hands of the British.

By mid-century South Indians were familiar with British attitudes and policies occurred on many levels. Merchants and large landholders had experienced the taxation and revenue schemes and government employees had not only increased in number but assumed more important positions in the revenue and judicial departments as well. Competency in English was more widespread and Indians had begun to appeal for changes in policies through means familiar to the British. Formal petitions to Parliament constituted one of the major techniques used by the Madras Native Association to influence English policy-making. This technique had been employed by similar Indian associations in Calcutta and Bombay also and, even though the petitions stressed issues which had a wide effect on the Presidency as a whole, officials continued to view elite arguments as predominantly

determined by individual greed and caste loyalties. An anonymous English commentator, writing in the Colonial and Asiatic Review stated:

> The petitioners seek power- that is, they desire, by having a majority of offices held by themselves, to be the rulers of the land. . . . Would not the prejudice, the animosity of caste, inherent in their nature from their birth, and fostered by their religion, seriously militate against the fair and conscientious discharge of their duties one towards another?[13]

Petitions became a favorite means of communication immediately preceding the debate surrounding the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1853. Organizations from all three Presidencies sent their lists of grievances and plans for reform to the House of Commons for consideration and possible incorporation into the new Charter. The Madras Petition, dated December 10th, 1852, included 122 paragraphs and ran to some 35 folio pages in length. While its style suggested possible European collaboration,[14] its content and tone demonstrated a broad competency with the major issues which affected the Presidency and indicated many of the problems brought about by the advent of British rule. The Petition dealt in detail with such topics and problems as: land systems and revenue, local taxes, licenses, the salt monopoly, the inefficiency of the post office, government sanction of indigenous liquor consumption in order to boost revenues, the use of Marathi for keeping revenue accounts, irrigation, roads, law courts, education, missionaries, Indian employment in government service and the power of the Supreme Court. These issues suggest that the Petition can be viewed as a survey of British policy in Madras through the first half of the nineteenth century as well as a plan for improvement--an informal history with immediate political relevance.

Of all the issues discussed the petitioners devoted most of their efforts to the most important and far-reaching issue of all: land revenues. They made direct comparisons between the ryotwari, zamindari and "village"

systems and included tables of revenues collected by the Company and earlier government reports as to the profitability of each of the systems. Reminding the government that the baneful effects of overassessments which had been introduced at the beginning of the century continued to exist, they urged a return to the traditional village system as the most effective way of guaranteeing at the same time adequate revenues and some measure of profitability for the cultivator. According to the petitioners, this system avoided the pitfalls of both its competitors:

> . . . the village system, or the collection of the revenue from the land by means of villages instead of individuals, without the interference of zamindars or middlemen in one hand, and free from the harassing oppressions of Government servants on the other.[15]

Furthermore, the administrative expense of collecting the revenues would be considerably lessened and the viability of the village community could once again be restored so that a semblance of unity and stability might return to the lives of the harried cultivators.

The ryotwari system was destructive not only for its effects on the cultivators but also because of the ideology which lay behind its inception. Since the British felt that they had created a class of independent, free landowners whose economic advancement depended solely on individual initiative, they kept government involvement in social improvement programs to a minimum. Thus, the state of the road network in the Presidency depended more on village interest than on government action. The petitioners, who realized the impossibility of this type of self-help because of the poor condition of most of the farmers brought on by the same British government was severely critical:

> . . . your petitioners submit that it is the bounded duty of the State, which reduces them [cultivators] to their miserable condition and keeps them in it from charter to charter, to spend a far larger portion of the resources upon the improvement of the country

> whence they are derived than it does at present. It can find money to carry on wars for self-aggrandisement, to allow immoderate salaries to its civil service, to pension off the whole of its members on 500£ a year each, and to pay interest at 10 per cent. to the proprietors of East India Stock, all from the labour of the ryot; and when he requires roads by which he might find the means of bettering his condition, and that of the revenue, he is told that he must make them for himself.[16]

A self-reliant agricultural population required sufficient opportunities to earn a profitable income but these hopes floundered because of excessive revenue demands.

In those social areas where government support had been recognized as a matter of policy the petitioners were dissatisfied with its motives and performance. These feelings applied particularly to the field of education. They lamented its comparatively inferior position as opposed to Bombay and Bengal in the amount spent on education and urged a substantial increase in expenditures to bring about the availability of more equal opportunities in all three Presidencies. They emphasized the importance of vernacular instruction so that the benefits of education could reach a larger portion of the population but, also, because of their fear of the growing link between official policy and missionary activity. The existence of such a link seemed indisputable when a Madras Government proposal that a portion of state grants be given ". . . to . . . institutions which are now or can be made the instruments of imparting a sound and liberal education, whether conducted by missionary bodies or others. . . ."[17] In addition, passage of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act in 1850, by subverting their traditional law of inheritance, convinced the Hindu elite that the Government was engaged in a coordinated policy of Hindu persecution and Christian proselytization. Their response to this provocation indicated the seriousness of their concerns:

> . . . conduct like that to which your Petitioners have been referring being calculated to inflict great misery upon the Hindu community in their social relations, and to create public disturbances, leading to the most mischievous consequences, among a people patient and submissive under every change of government, and roused to the open expression of their feelings only by what they consider to be grossly insulting and cruelly oppressive towards a religion of some thousand years' establishment, and which has been handed down to them as the most sacred deposit from their ancestors.[18]

The petitioners also felt the deficiency of governmental support in the area of employment opportunities as well. They emphasized the efficiency and competency with local conditions that separated trained Indians from all the young writers and officers who arrived from England upon completion of college. In most cases within the Collectorates of the Presidency, the British officer frequently followed the advice of his Indian subordinate before making administrative decisions. Citing official reports which affirmed the ability and fairness of the Indian civil servants, particularly in the judicial department, the petitioners demanded greater access to more responsible and prestigious posts. They reaffirmed Section 87 of the Charter Act of 1833 which guaranteed that Indians would not be subjected to any discrimination in employment practices regardless of the position involved.[19] Since its passage this clause had acted as a symbol for South Indians of the English liberal spirit and the potential opportunities for advancement. Unfortunately the clause only remained a symbol; higher positions continued to be reserved for Englishmen, thereby producing a continuing sense of dissatisfaction among educated South Indians.

The struggle between Indian expectations and bureaucratic realities formed part of the basis of argument in the Native Association's Petition of 1852. Having listened for decades to the official rhetoric of providing equal employment opportunities, expanding educational facilities,

establishing orderly land revenue and tax systems under the umbrella of a stable, efficient administration, the Hindu elites of the 1850's began to enunciate for the first time the successes and failings of these ideals from an Indian viewpoint. Their aim in doing so was not to overthrow British authority but to offer suggestions for a more equitable policy in its application. Their efforts created an opportunity for a genuine dialogue between ruler and ruled--an occasion that should have been welcomed by the British because it indicated a growing familiarity with the new forms of education and administration. But the prevalent feeling during the Charter debates was one of contempt and shock at the 'arrogance' of those individuals in all three Presidencies who had been involved in formulating these arguments. The government view as it appeared in the Colonial and Asiatic Review was that:

> The petitions are couched in language not very respectful towards those who certainly have been, upon the whole, very considerate masters, and not very conciliatory towards those whom they wish to supplant in all places of trust and responsibility. They show the animus of bigotry, of intolerance, of envy, and impatience of control that actuate the writers, whilst they give the Government of India no credit whatever for the progressive and various benefits that it has conferred on the general population of India. . . .[20]

That this attitude reflected the view of the vast majority of members of Parliament became clear with the quick and easy passage of the Charter Act of 1853. A small minority of the members of the House of Commons had been sympathetic to some of the Native Association's demands and suggestions, particularly in regard to the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry which the petitioners had strongly advocated as a method for substantiating the accuracy of their arguments.[21] The lack of support that this motion received reflected English attitudes as to the unquestionable legitimacy of their power, privileges and responsibilities in the colonial

territories. In particular the question of governmental interference with the structure of South Indian society, while not explicitly discussed, became the critical dispute in the whole Charter controversy. Government recommendations for improving conditions in the Presidency inevitably centered on efficient administration in order to set a standard for the gradual enrichment in the 'morals' of the Indian population. To the old administrators of the early nineteenth century like Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone this meant a paternalistic policy of limited government jobs at the lower levels with a strong disaffection to become involved in religious questions. By mid-century this attitude changed as the British became more secure as a ruling power and, hence, more willing to allow Indians to 'enjoy' the benefits of Christianity. The more experienced elites also realized the value of British aid and interference in certain social and economic areas. They wanted more education, jobs and participation in the decision-making process but not at the expense of fundamental shifts in their religious beliefs and traditional patterns of social organization. Such issues, paramount to the vast majority of South Indians, had little effect, though, on the floor of the House of Commons.

The failure of the Native Association to bring about any meaningful change during the Charter negotiations did not mean an end to its political importance. One of the Association's supporters in Parliament, Danby Seymour, paid a visit to Madras in 1853 to assess local conditions for himself. He visited important cities throughout the south and, upon completion of his tour, found himself in agreement with many of the arguments set forth in the Petition.[22] During the following year Seymour pressed for a thorough official investigation in Parliament of the effects of the whole revenue system with particular reference to instances of actual torture

during the periods of revenue collection. British authorities finally agreed to establish a Commission in 1854 which received hundreds of complaints from all sections of the Presidency. In their report the Commission attempted to satisfy both the government and the petitioners but they only succeeded in antagonizing both. The following appeared in the Calcutta Review:

> The opinion at which the Commissioners arrive, is that the European servants of Government are known throughout the land to abhor torture of all descriptions, and that under their active exertions its practice has greatly diminished; but they then proceed to remark (Para. 63) [of their Report] that it is most frequently exercised in the revenue department, though in a less aggravated form than in the Police; and in Para. 55 they express "a sweeping declaration of their belief in the general existence of torture for revenue purposes." Thus two entirely incompatible things have been enunciated; the exculpation of the European servants of Government, and the general prevalence of torture in collecting the revenue.[23]

Members of the Native Association were disappointed over the findings of the Commission since they felt that while Indian officials performed the actual acts of torture, the ultimate responsibility lay with British administrators who placed extreme pressures on their subordinates to collect the maximum amount of revenue possible.[24] While the Native Association caused no major shifts in British policy, its arguments illustrated the growing desire of Indian elites to play an active role in articulating governmental policies and in offering their own suggestions for its improvement.

The pace of British legislative action and Indian reaction accelerated considerably during the decade of the 1850's. The hope that an efficient British administration and increased social expenditure could rectify many of the discontents that the Torture Commission had uncovered stimulated this favorable attitude to change.

> At least, Danby Seymour declared: "If education was spread, if justice was rendered cheap and easy, and mercantile enterprise was spread over the country, it was to be hoped that every blot would be removed from the administration of the revenue, every illegal exaction done away with, and every case of torture made to cease, and that a new day would dawn on India. . . ."[25]

Steps were taken to include a wider representation of castes in government service positions to counteract the intrigues of the Desastha Brahmin community. In order to accomplish this goal educational facilities were expanded throughout the Presidency stimulated by the Wood Despatch of 1854 which advocated a coordinated approach among primary, secondary and collegiate institutions, both public and private. This expansion reached a high point with the establishment of the University of Madras in 1857 as the degree-granting body for the whole Presidency. Furthermore, the Government recognized the importance to the Desasthas of the use of Marathi as the exclusive language for keeping revenue accounts and abolished its use in 1854.[26] Competitive examinations for government jobs began in 1858 with the shift of control of Indian affairs from the East India Company to the Crown. This led to a change in emphasis from old-style patronage which had long been manipulated by the Desasthas to a system of merit based on competency in using the English language. As an additional measure to prevent inter-family domination of jobs on the district level, the British issued orders which prevented members of the same family or caste from monopolizing important jobs at the district level.[27]

Passage of the Indian Councils Act of 1861 introduced another administrative institution, a local legislative council, into the politics of the Madras Presidency. Its powers were severely limited and directly subservient to the Viceroy. No issues relating to the public debt, taxes, currency, or penal codes could be discussed without the approval of the

Viceroy.[28] By reserving a certain number of places on the Madras Legislative Council for "non-officials," the Madras Government seemed to encourage a greater amount of Indian participation in the decision-making process. The first two Indian members on the Council, V. Sadagopa Charlu and Gazulu Lakshminarasu Chetty were appointed in 1862 and 1864 respectively. Having received no assurances of continued Hindu support for their activities as leaders of the Native Association,[29] these men sought other opportunities through which to make their opinions known to the Government. Unfortunately the Madras Legislative Council did not provide that opportunity, but, nevertheless, focused Indian political activity in the 60's on working from within the system rather than criticizing from outside of it as had been done during the previous decade. This decline in the intensity of Hindu agitation acted as a respite until the highly Western-educated, predominantly Brahmin elite of lawyers and journalists of the 1870's and 80's began to voice their concerns.

The growing awareness of South Indian elites which had characterized the decade of the 50's was not solely limited to political affairs. Social problems acquired considerable attention as well. In fact, the issue over whether politics or social reforms should constitute the major focus of activity caused a split in the Native Association in 1852. A separate body, the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society, rejected the predominantly political interests of the Association and concentrated on such issues as widow remarriage, increasing female education and giving special consideration for low caste groups.[30] Lakshminarasu Chetty was also concerned with such questions,[31] but thought that they could best be resolved within the Hindu community itself and not with any governmental interference. Social reform activity did not attract a great deal of support from within the

Presidency because Hindu elites were more interested in seeking ways to understand British political and economic practices and take advantage of them for their own benefit. The momentum necessary to bring lasting reforms would have to wait until later in the century.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Quoted in S. B. Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India, 1765-1857, p. 37.

[2]Ibid., p. 128.

[3]Bellary District Gazetteers, p. 48.

[4]Ibid., p. 152. Frequently the British offered annual pensions to the poligar families as a means of compensation for the takeover of their lands.

[5]Munro to Bentinck, 12 May 1806, Bentinck Papers, quoted in Beaglehole, Thomas Munro, p. 67.

[6]See Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances, pp. 201-202.

[7]Sastri, The Munro System, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

[8]Evidence given in the Second Report of the Commons' Committee on East Indian Affairs, in 1830; and in the Reports of 1830-1, and 1831; on subjects relating to the Public Department, Appendix A of Minutes of Evidence Before the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, 1831-32, B.P.P., Vol. VI, p. 312.

[9]This refers to the fact that English civil servants entered into an agreement with the government regarding pension funds and other benefits while Indians did not. See, L. S. S. O'Malley, The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930 (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 84.

[10]Quoted in Panchananda Mukerji, ed., Indian Constitutional Documents (1600-1918), Vol. I (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1918), p. 101.

[11]Lord Elphinstone, 11 June 1852, Minutes of Evidence from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, 1852, B.P.P., Vol. XII, p. 212.

[12]For details see, "The Efficiency of Native Agency in Government Employ," Calcutta Review, IX, No. 17 (January-June, 1848), 240-266.

[13]"Native Petitions from India," Colonial and Asiatic Review, I-II, No. 10 (April, 1853), 302.

[14]See testimony of Malcolm Lewin in the Minutes to the First Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, 1852-53, B.P.P., Vol. XIII, p. 285.

[15]"The humble Petition of the Madras Native Association, and other Native Inhabitants of the Presidency of Madras" in Appendix No. 7 to the First Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories, B.P.P., 1852-53, Vol. XIII, p. 451.

[16]Ibid., pp. 457-458.

[17]Ibid., p. 464. See also Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 49.

[18]"The humble Petition of the Madras Native Association . . . ," p. 468.

[19]Ibid., p. 471.

[20]"Native Petitions from Madras," 303.

[21]Suntharalingam, "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization," 242.

[22]Ibid.

[23]"Report of the Commissioners for the investigation of alleged cases of Torture at Madras," 443.

[24]See Suntharalingam, "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization," 246-247 for a specific case of such pressure which occurred in Chingleput District in 1855.

[25]Hansard, The Parliamentary Debates, cxliii, 1/65-8, 21 July 1856, quoted in Bearce, British Attitudes Toward India, 1784-1858, p. 230.

[26]Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, p. 71.

[27]Frykenberg, "Traditional Processes of Power in South India: An Historical Analysis of Local Influence," 135.

[28]K. C. Markandan, Madras Legislative Council: Its Constitution and Working Between 1861 and 1909 (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1964), p. 4.

[29]Suntharalingam in "The Madras Native Association: A Study of an Early Indian Political Organization" suggests several possibilities for the demise of the Native Association in the early 60's: the hostility of local officials, failure to attract Muslim support, factional quarrels among the members themselves and the absence of a significant Western-educated elite in the 40's and 50's. See pp. 250-253.

[30]Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist Awakening, pp. 50-51.

[31]Parameswaran Pillai, Representative Indians, p. 207.

CONCLUSION

The expansion of British power into the South Indian peninsula at the beginning of the nineteenth century brought vast, new territories under the purview of the East India Company. With this expansion came an end to the widespread military conflicts of the previous century. Since profitability was a key concern of the British, the introduction of their own ideas and attitudes into the social and economic structures of the population was almost inevitable. At the outset the British attempted to create an administrative system that would guarantee an efficient government and adequate revenue collection while maintaining a degree of independence from religious customs and traditions. This balance, however, proved impossible to achieve and the British, despite all of their protests to the contrary, began slowly but inexorably to affect all of the basic institutions of South Indian society: economic patterns, education, religious practices, caste and political organizations.

Viewing the establishment of rational order as an essentially administrative problem, those officials who first came to Madras concentrated their efforts on defining the rights and responsibilities of landholders. This was a most difficult task because of both the diversity of indigenous landholding patterns and the inability of British administrators to decide on a uniform system for the Presidency as a whole. Considerable experimentation occurred during the first half of the nineteenth century in the search for the most effective way of deciding how much land a

particular cultivator controlled and how much tax he was required to pay. Since agricultural production constituted the key segment of the entire South Indian economy, British policies in this area had far-reaching effects on the whole society.

In many ways the political, economic and social uncertainties brought by the British into early nineteenth century Madras transcended the importance of their largely successful efforts to restore general peace. Major fighting had indeed stopped but the new methods of rule fundamentally altered patterns of political and social organization. Those South Indians who had worked for previous rulers, Hindu and Muslim, needed time to adjust to the bureaucratic styles and personal idiosyncracies of their new successors. But the detailed land settlements desired by the British required an extensive number of trained servants who could survey fields and communicate with village leaders. The bureaucracy expanded; its appetite growing quickly with the introduction of the ryotwari settlement into a larger and larger area. Its demands became more stringent; prompt payment of all revenues irregardless of personal circumstances being the accepted practice. The uncompromising attitude of the British in regard to the regularity of assessments and collections engendered an obvious desire on the part of cultivators, large and small, to avoid the required payments. The struggle continued through the first half of the century and exposed a greater number of individuals and caste groups to new ideas and methods of rule than had ever previously been involved in the political process.

Those Indians who had become increasingly aware of British governing attitudes began to reflect on the differences between pronouncements and policies. The verbal emphasis placed on the equitable treatment of all castes was often contradicted by administrative actions. Favorable

treatment given to Brahmins in educational and employment opportunities as well as in lower land settlements convinced many Non-Brahmins that the British defined "equality" only in terms that would be favorable to the Company's treasury. This realization combined with the growing threat of Christian proselytization stimulated a wide variety of Non-Brahmin responses in rural and urban areas. These varied from intracaste solidarity as a means of protection to intercaste cooperation as a means of pressuring the new rulers into following those standards of justice which they so eloquently expounded in the written and spoken word.

Greater Indian participation in politics reflected the substantial economic and social changes that had been introduced into the Madras Presidency. The British did not create a stable, efficient bureaucratic structure that made governing more simple and direct but instead produced a series of upheavals that the elites of South India found difficult to comprehend. These upheavals manifested themselves in a number of ways: new religious teachings, the confusion over 'private property,' new kinds of learning and greater opportunities to utilize it profitably in the civil service. Most importantly, these ingredients of change and mobility within the caste system a much more feasible possibility. But because policies varied with time and place a considerable amount of experience and effort was required before these ingredients could be fully understood. As with the British, the first half of the nineteenth century represented a time of experimentation for South Indian elites to determine which form of behavior would prove most advantageous for individual and caste advancement.

The variety of elite responses encompassed both the violent activities of the <u>poligars</u> and the constitutional subleties of the Madras Native Association. Neither was completely successful but together they

illustrated the broad and deep effects that the British had on the lives of important sections of the South Indian populace. The decade of the 1850's resulted in the dominance of the reasoned argument, the quest for the new law or educational institution and the more prestigious job. Madras turned its back on the uprisings of 1857 seemingly content that more could be accomplished with petitions than with bullets.

The Hindu elites had become dissatisfied because their vision of those rights, privileges and opportunities available to them rarely coincided with the outlook of Madras administrators. Both groups in a way were seeking a similar goal: general economic advancement within a stable social framework. This quest for stability, however, meant different things to each. For the British it suggested complete obedience to all doctrines and policies and a fundamental acceptance that they knew what was best for the people of South India. For the elites stability suggested minimum interference in their personal beliefs and maximum freedom to develop their skills to the fullest and employ them either within the bureaucracy or in some private endeavor. Neither quiet nor explosive, the first half of the nineteenth century was a time when these two visions provided ready evidence that the quest for 'stability' remained a distant and, perhaps, unreachable goal.

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A PLURALITY OF ELITES:
SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY, 1800-1855

by

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After a long series of military and political struggles the British gained control over extensive portions of South India in the early nineteenth century. In assessing the beginnings of early British rule, historians have stressed their success in restoring order and stability. This thesis analyzes major British policies, some important spokesmen and the effects of both on the local population. It concludes that, on the contrary, the first half of the nineteenth century was a time of great uncertainty and instability throughout the entire South Indian economic and social order.

With the seat of government established in the port city of Madras the early administrators turned to their first priority: the determination of who owned the land and how much tax they would have to pay to the government. These administrators soon developed their own opinions concerning the type of land settlement appropriate for South India. Since these views frequently differed from those in London and Calcutta, the British were not able to agree on any uniform settlement. Instead, they experimented with different kinds of land systems. Throughout the period of experimentation, however, they maintained one common denominator in their land policy: a high level of taxation. It frequently amounted to one-half of the total production of each field and equivalent to the rate prevalent before the British takeover.

The subject of land control and taxation policy was only one aspect of British involvement in local affairs. Some officers took an active role in establishing elementary and secondary schools which provided instruction in both English and the vernacular languages. In addition they furnished employment opportunities for South Indians as subordinate government

officials in all major towns and villages. Those who were able to attend school or acquire a government job discovered that they had the chance to alter their economic and social status in ways that were not previously possible.

These new opportunities predominantly benefited the upper castes. But the lower castes, overwhelmingly illiterate, also experienced the effects of social change through non-official channels. Christian missionaries, who arrived in considerable numbers in the early years of the nineteenth century, established primary schools in the villages and provided the rudiments of reading and writing to lower caste children. They also advised the parents that under the umbrella of Christianity all castes were equal and should have equal opportunities for jobs and education.

Basic changes in the traditional economic and social order affected South Indians in many diverse ways. A second goal of this paper is to identify those who experienced these changes and describe the responses they made. In the early part of the century these reactions centered on particular castes located predominantly in villages. By 1850 the effects of education produced a broad spectrum of individuals who began to articulate their views and present grievances in formal petitions to both local administrators and officials in London. Their numbers included English and non-English speakers, writers, merchants, agriculturists and government servants. These men created the first political organization in South India, the Madras Native Association, in 1852. Its purpose was to unify the Hindu community against the inroads of Christianity, but it also sought to influence government policy through a direct appeal to the House of

Commons. The arguments of the Association emphasized the unsettling social and economic effects of British rule in the first half of the nineteenth century. Politicization had begun.