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Debate

Adivasi and Peasant: Reflections on Indian Social History

SHASHANK KELA

This essay looks at recent historical approaches to tribal societies in India and examines their political implications. Building on this criticism, it synthesizes a range of secondary literature in history and anthropology, in an attempt to formulate an alternative approach that locates tribal societies within the wider framework of south Asian history and is capable, at the same time, of marking changing patterns for different periods of the past. Finally it examines the way the word peasant is used in historical writing in order to show that the special history of tribal societies and their conversion into peasants in the colonial period is fundamental to an understanding of contemporary Indian society.

Every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to . . .

Montaigne

A small grove massacred to the last ash
An oak with heart-rot give away the show
This great society is going smash;

Shashank Kela. E-mail: skela_ngp@sancharnet.in. Shashank Kela worked as an organizer in a trade union of adivasi peasants in western Madhya Pradesh during much of the 1990s. He's currently working on a book length study of adivasi history and politics in the region from the colonial period. Acknowledgements: to D.W Karuna, my collaborator in an ongoing book length study of which this is an edited extract. To the New India Foundation, Bangalore, for a fellowship that made some of the research and all the writing on the larger project possible.

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They cannot fool us with how fast they go,
How much they cost each other and the gods.

W.H. Auden

I

The encounter between the colonial state and tribal societies in India was one of opposites. On one side stood soldiers and administrators steeped in classic bourgeois principles, concerned above all to maintain an empire which, it was recognized from the very beginning, rested on collaboration as much as force. This sense of realpolitik coexisted comfortably with an aggressive idealism. The moral justification for colonialism was derived from the conviction that it was good, all in all, for the colonized – a belief was rooted in a theory of racial superiority and a variety of inductive arguments that can be summarized, crudely, as follows: British conquest had saved the country from political anarchy, restored it to peace, replaced despotism with the rule of law, and created a system of modern communications. Indians were believed to be both grateful and loyal (except, of course, when they were not, as in 1857, but appropriate explanations could always be found: the oriental character, errors of policy, discontented rulers). This combination of hard-headed realism and ideological belief is a leitmotif of the nineteenth century.

Facing this dispensation were tribal societies, inhabiting vast regions beyond the shifting frontiers of a stratified, caste based agrarian order against which they had, generally speaking, contrived to hold their own. Their economies were subsistence oriented, combining a range of cultivating techniques with raiding, pastoralism, hunting and gathering. Their cultural, social and political arrangements were distinct from those of the agrarian order although there were reciprocal channels of influence.

The Maratha campaign of 1818 closed the circle of military conquest that began in *Karnataka* in the first half of the eighteenth century – the contours of the Company's Indian empire were firmly established. From the seventeenth century the British had been trading, negotiating, collaborating and fighting with Indian elites and ruling groups. Now for the first time they were faced, in addition to the fiscal reorganization and administration of town and countryside, with the problem of integrating vast tracts of hill and forest, largely outside the ambit of pre-colonial states, into their domains, and dealing with the strange people that lived in them. The history of this brutal integration is an essential element in the wider history of colonialism.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the major adivasi regions comprised *stretches of land in the centre of the subcontinent* – the great

central Indian forest belt spread over much of the modern states of Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. There were hill ranges and forests in western India – principally the Satpudas and the Vindhya – as well as the western and eastern Ghats *were* inhabited by tribal groupings as large as the Bhils and as small as the Varlis. From west to east across the breadth of the country, the various sub-groups of the Bhils, the Gonds, the Mundas and the Santhals formed a more or less continuous belt of tribal settlement, infiltrated by trade routes and cultivation. These regions remained largely outside the ambit of pre-colonial empires although the Mughals in their heyday invaded indigenous states – Garha-Katanga in 1564, Chanda in the 1630s, the Chero kingdom of Palamu in 1641, and again in 1661, imposing tribute payments.¹ Organized adivasi polities in *Vidarbha and the Jabalpur-Mandla region*, *there were* ramshackle Rajput principalities here and there, exercising formal sovereignty in partnership with adivasi clans.

Colonialism integrated these regions into a centralized and unified state structure, a historically unprecedented event. Shifts of population and internal migrations *for which indications exist*, and the impossibility of tracing the history of specific tribal groups deep into the medieval period – *which* make discussions of territorial antiquity a matter of more or less plausible inference – nevertheless regions of productive agriculture in the pre-colonial period corresponded more or less roughly to the borders of large scale, organized states. This integration was both cause and consequence of a key element in the history of colonialism – the appropriation of natural resources and their conversion into property. Where pre-colonial absolutisms claimed limited rights to forest the legal appropriation of forest wealth and its organized extraction was an essential element in the development of the colonial state and its lineal descendant, the modern Indian nation.

For all these reasons the history of adivasi societies is an integral part of south Asian history. However it's far from being seen as such, although there've been a number of works in recent years focusing on patterns of change in tribal regions in or from the colonial period.² Yet key conceptual issues remain unresolved. The term adivasi in particular remains a subject of acrimony. Its meaning – original inhabitant – is close to what is signified by indigenous people, although historians and anthropologists have long pointed out that adivasi societies are not exact analogues of the pre-Conquest societies of the new world. It's been adopted by political supporters and sympathizers of adivasi movements as a synonym for tribal, preferable by virtue of being a self-description, used by adivasi activists to describe themselves, their societies and struggles. Although some historians and sociologists have begun using it as well, there're sharp disagreements over whether it constitutes a valid, analytically useful category. These are grouped around its semantic and political implications – whether adivasis are really

original inhabitants in any sense, and the use of this belief in political struggles. Another criticism has to do with its usefulness as a category: whether groups and communities described as adivasi were separable in terms of mode of production and cultural beliefs from farming castes. In other words, runs this argument, adivasi groups were not original inhabitants of the subcontinent, or even necessarily of regions inhabited by them since the colonial period; and all adivasis were and are essentially peasants. Therefore adivasi societies have never been a structurally distinct element of Indian society. Sumit Guha's work on western India completes the transition from a theory of more or less complete isolation to one of more or less complete integration.³

II

What are adivasi societies? Let's begin with a provisional definition, based on ethnographic descriptions of tribal societies in peninsular India in the first half of the twentieth century. These were placed within, or very near to, forests. Their modes of production were either anterior to settled agriculture, comprising hunting and gathering or swidden or, more usually, consisted of heterogeneous elements of these modes combined with forms of settled cultivation. Their cultural beliefs although inflected by Hinduism were autonomous, as were their patterns of social and cultural organization. They tended to be spatially distinct even when immigration was plainly disrupting an earlier balance. But, paradoxically, in this period groups like this constituted a minority within larger groupings (the Gonds, the Bhils) whose resemblance to agrarian Hindu castes was much closer. Since it appeared that this majority had been similarly distinct at some point in the past, anthropologists tended to classify them as acculturated or Hinduized adivasis.

What was the historic relationship of adivasi societies to the agrarian order? David Hardiman has adopted the position that since the colonial period at least, their modes of production and cultural beliefs have been more or less identical to those of farming castes.⁴ This view led Ranajit Guha to subsume all tribal revolts under the rubric of peasant insurgency in his work on peasant consciousness.⁵ Ajay Skaria in his monograph on the Dangs argued that adivasi groups were distinct from the caste structure only insofar as they occupied forest areas and are therefore best referred to as forest folk or forest jati for the pre-colonial period.⁶ Sumit Guha uses the same terminology with a different conceptual paradigm, positing the complete occupational interchangeability of categories such as peasant and tribesman.⁷

From the existence of tribal polities and their interaction with agrarian states Guha infers that 'forest folk' were completely integrated into the

agrarian order. Not only were their choices and values equivalent to those of aristocratic castes, *and that* the categories of tribesman and farmer were essentially interchangeable for the pre-colonial period. In other words, the consensus of social scientists that ‘the transitions from forest to field and forager to farmer have been continuous and irreversible from early historic times’⁸ is, simply, wrong. However the political history, of groups like the Bhils and Kolis, fail to disprove the interrelationship between settled agriculture, productive surpluses, complex patterns of stratification and developed state systems. *The transition from tribesman to farmer involves a complex cultural adaptation – Guha fails to show that it has occurred often enough in reverse to serve as a valid explanatory model.* The fact that tribal polities were caught up in political flux of pre-colonial history tells us nothing about the *kind* of polity, the mode of production of its society, its cultural systems, the nature of the relationship between ruler and ruled, or military organization, on all of which any judgement of values and choices must be based. Since the corpus of ethnographic data that testifies to concrete differences between tribal societies and farming groups is elided in silence, Guha’s central conclusions remain unproved assertions.

From the post-modernist point of view ethnography can be criticized as the representation of autonomous cultural systems by a gaze that seeks to fit them into its own universe of discourse, which is accurate enough in one sense. But to examine is to represent in one way or the other: the ability of the best *field* ethnographers of the first half of the twentieth century – men like Elwin, Grigson, Fürer-Haimendorf, Hutton and Roy – was supplemented by genuine empathy with the societies they studied. Elwin’s imaginative identification took him in the end to the northeast where he played a key role in formulating Indian policy towards tribal groups in modern Arunachal Pradesh. In the end we’re left with a mass of detailed observations on the empirical differences between tribal societies and agrarian castes: these can only be refuted empirically, not by throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Which is not to argue that the relationship between adivasi societies and the Indian ‘mainstream’ – a deeply stratified, primarily agrarian social structure – was ever static. The great sedentarization of the nineteenth century, carried out under the aegis of the colonial state, steadily narrowed the range of differences between the two. By the first quarter of the twentieth century, tribal societies over much of the peninsula had been peasantized in varying degrees. However patterns of settled agriculture were supplemented by elements from anterior modes of production – hunting and gathering, swidden, forest use: a mixed economy based on peasant agriculture with a diversified resource base and distinctive patterns of land use. Hardiman’s argument that a large majority of adivasi groups have been settled agriculturists for centuries, ‘cultivating the land in a wide range of

ways ... Some have practiced slash and burn, using only hand tools, while others have used a plough drawn by bullocks,⁹ misses the essential point, namely that different *kinds* of societies have historically been organized around different *methods* of cultivation. Cultivation by itself is not, and never has been, a sign of equivalence. The Baiga who refused to cultivate with a plough were a different group from the Gond who did, although intermixed with the latter. Societies that practised cultivation with a hoe, those that practised swidden, or modified versions of swidden whether with plough or without, were very different from an agrarian society comprising settled agriculturists with its complex social differentiation and class and caste structure. Skaria's argument that settled agriculture had elements of mobility in that farmers moved from field to field in the same village¹⁰ is misleading. Fallow was integral to pre-modern agriculture – the three-field system in Europe is an example. In India, an attenuated version of the technique survived until after 1947 in western Madhya Pradesh where non-*adivasi* cultivators had regular cycles of *lea* for wheatfields as late as 30 years ago. There's a huge difference in terms of technique and productivity in moving from field to field in regular cycles on one hand and clearing and firing undergrowth in a cycle of years (*or cultivation based essentially on ash manure*) on the other. Grigson's account of the Maria Gonds of Bastar in the 1920s contains one probable model of pre-modern tribal agriculture. The Bison horn Maria combined permanent rice fields with forest clearings around the village called *erka*. The wood was burnt on the spot and the ashes ploughed into the soil before sowing. These clearings were usually cultivated for two years in succession and then left fallow. Where the gradual shortening of the fallow cycle meant that the forest was unable to grow back sufficiently, timber cut from elsewhere was spread over the *erka* field and burnt before sowing. Pure swidden, called *penda*, predominated deeper in the Abujhmar hills amongst the Hill Maria, another branch of the tribe. In it, forest on hill slopes was burnt, the ashes spread by hand and seed scattered broadcast. According to Grigson, hardly one in 300 of the Hill Maria used the plough even on their permanent rice fields although the Bison horn Maria employed it everywhere. – *in rice fields and erka fields obviously, but also in the lower slopes of their swidden clearings.*¹¹

Finally, patterns of fixed cultivation bound up with forest use tend to produce different cultural patterns from those associated with settled agriculture per se. The agricultural technique for unirrigated land in *adivasi* villages all over western Madhya Pradesh is basically the same. Yet in areas where the forest survives, cultural patterns differ recognizably from those where it vanished 20 or 40 years ago.

The religious side of the question is harder to resolve. Hardiman, as we've seen, believes that the religious practice of farming castes and *adivasi* groups was essentially the same at a conceptual level, based on a shared belief that

'nature was controlled by various deities and spirits which had to be propitiated through ceremonial rites. In many cases these supernatural forces were very localized, although there was a tendency among caste peasants to give Brahmanical names to such deities'¹² – a view of religion so general as to be virtually meaningless.

The influence of Hinduism on adivasi societies was traditionally expressed in the proliferation of sub groups with the familiar prohibitions on commensality and intermarriage, and the appearance of motifs and stories from Hindu religious literature in the myth and folklore of adivasi societies (the Bhils of the Khedabrahma area have a version of the Mahabharata¹³). Verrier Elwin called his collection of adivasi folklore from Central India an 'aboriginal purana.'¹⁴ Although some folktales show traces of Hindu influence, their mythic content is recognizably different. In western Madhya Pradesh, Bhil and Bhilala singers in villages in the southern part of Jhabua district sing a unified cycle of myths about their deities and the creation and peopling of the world. This cycle, called the *gayana*, was once widespread throughout the region. Whereas the acculturated adivasi villages below the hills, intermixed with Hindu castes, seem always to have celebrated the cycle of Hindu festivals – *navratri*, *Divali* and *Holi* – adivasi villages in the hills of Alirajpur celebrated their own version of *holi* and ripening festivals such as the *navai* and the *divasa*. The major festival of the plains is *gangaur*, essentially a post-harvest festival in the traditional agricultural calendar (*it occurs after Holi*), and has no counterpart in the hills where the most important religious ceremony – the *navai* – is built around the first ripening, before the new crop is eaten.

In any case, it makes no sense to reduce adivasi religions to an epiphenomenon of popular Hinduism *because* that's what they have (mostly) become *by the close of the twentieth century*. Sontheimer defined traditional Hinduism as an aggregate of different levels – the orthodox scriptural tradition created by Brahmins, sects or sectarian movements based on asceticism and renunciation, tribal religion, folk religion and *Bhakti*.¹⁵ There were certain cults or cultic practices in which all these elements were held in tension, for example in the development of Saivism and popular Saivite cults. Sontheimer sees tribal religion as one pole of Hinduism. Thus

tribals are mentioned from the earliest times in texts and they stand in relationship to the social and ritual order of the plains if only with an antithetical function as the necessary evil. As such they are referred to as robbers and even as demons. At the same time we find seemingly paradoxical references to their honesty, gratitude and innocence . . . The forest is as ambivalent as the tribal: fearsome and at the same time the source of renewal and 'the seed of dharma'.¹⁶

A definition as wide as this places adivasi religions within the boundaries of Hinduism. If, however, Hinduism is defined more narrowly, as a set of (region specific) festivals, beliefs and patterns of worship held together by an overarching theology from which regional or sectarian streams see themselves and are seen as descending, embodied, above all, in a social organization based on caste, then adivasi religions were distinct from it. Caste-like groupings in adivasi society were not identical to castes in the agrarian order and interacted differently *in many ways* with each other. For Sontheimer of course tribal religion was the religion not only of the forest tribes but also of 'the great, often nomadizing pastoral groups who live in Rajasthan and the Deccan', like the sheepherding Dhangars of Maharashtra.¹⁷

The spatial limits of pre-colonial agriculture preserved tribal societies and tribal religions cheek by jowl with different varieties of Hinduism. Colonialism inaugurated a radically new process of acculturation, in part by altering the material context in which Hinduism operated. Its accelerating homogenization eroded the distinctiveness of Dhangar beliefs for example. Cultural standardization is an essential element of nationalism, as Hobsbawm demonstrated.¹⁸ In India, its gradual development homogenized patterns of worship as much as language, exemplified in the invention of modern Hindi by an emerging Hindu bourgeoisie from the late nineteenth century. It's also an analogue of modernity which imposes a grid of uniformity through a mass communications network (television, radio, print) inconceivable in the past, a uniformity strengthened and spread by an increasingly aggressive right intent on creating a narrow and sectarian national culture.

III

Theories for the integration of adivasi societies into the agrarian order tend to pass over anthropological data in silence – an elision that affects the debate over adivasi identity as well. The term adivasi was coined in Chhotanagpur in the 1930s. It was born, as both Hardiman and Skaria point out, out of a common experience of oppression, impoverishment and resistance during the colonial period.¹⁹ How did it become the denominator of common identity?

Like every collective idea it has its mythology. Adivasi intellectuals and activists tend overwhelmingly to accept the view that tribal people were the original inhabitants of the subcontinent, pushed back into hills and forests by an Aryan invasion, a mythology echoed in Dalit thought since Jyotirao Phule at least. Antiquity of settlement implies a superior right to land. Thus adivasi demands for the lands from which their ancestors were dispossessed (*as in Kerala*), to use forests and cultivate forest land, or even to express their prescriptive rights in a region altered demographically by immigration, are expressed in terms of rights flowing from prior occupation.

There's no difficulty in disproving this view of social history at the level of the subcontinent as a whole. So is this perception false? More, is it pernicious, as Guha suggests, because it embodies a retrogressive and dangerous view of entitlements and rights?

Human rights and freedoms exist for the present generations, and cannot be extended to the lost denizens of the charnel-house of history . . . The past is irredeemable, and the price of even the attempt to redeem it will be much blood . . . Furthermore, no freedom is lost if we accept that rights exist solely in the present: cultural expressions, ethnic or national identities, have rights irrespective of the length of their genealogies . . . Nor indeed, is it desirable that entitlements be extended according to length of genealogy rather than equality of right. Societies that move down the former path are unlikely to ever evolve into successful political communities that safeguard the rights of all.²⁰

I suspect that this minatory caution is beside the point. For one, it articulates a classically liberal view of the rules of political struggle, rules thrown out of the window long ago in the actual practice of liberals and conservatives, the right as well as the left, as the bloody history of the twentieth century demonstrates. Myth is an essential component of collective identity. Political struggles, whether progressive or retrograde, tend to be grouped around identity if only in reaction to each other. As the extreme right in India peddles a myth of what Hinduism is – a myth into which it seeks to draw the adivasi, a counter myth tends to be counterpoised to it. The academic viewpoint that for technical reasons deliberately abjures the use of the term adivasi ends up by substituting the same description for them that's used by the right – vanvasi or forest folk. The right uses the term in order to buttress the (imaginary) homogeneity of Hindu society. From this point of view adivasi societies were never structurally distinct from Hinduism. They formed an integral part of the agrarian order and could not have been exploited by non-advansi immigrant groups who did not/do not, form a separate category. This ideology is deployed to switch attention from a real process of impoverishment and exploitation and to direct popular anger towards a mythical enemy outside the Hindu faith – the Muslim or the Christian. For the firmest support base of the right in adivasi regions usually consists of immigrants supplemented by a growing sector of the adivasi middle class.

Let's turn from the semantic implications of the term to its application in concrete historical situations. New patterns of immigration and settlement in the colonial period produced radical dislocations in traditional adivasi societies. They brought a flood of settlers – moneylenders, landlords, state functionaries, liquor dealers, shopkeepers, traders, farming castes – face to

face with tribal societies with very different patterns of resource use and social organization. The result – inevitably – was a steady process of expropriation through chicanery and force. Impoverishment bred revolts and protest movements, in the crucible of which an adivasi identity was forged. It was in contrast to this class of non-*adivasi* settlers that the term *adivasi* was coined: it corresponds therefore to an empirical and verifiable social reality. In other words, whether *adivasi* groups were or were not the original inhabitants of the subcontinent, they were certainly the original inhabitants of the regions they occupied in the colonial period (and occupy today) vis-à-vis immigrant groups against whom the great nineteenth century *adivasi* rebellions were overwhelmingly directed.

The utility of the term was demonstrated by the speed with which it passed into common usage, being adopted without fuss or bother by non-*adivasi* groups as well. In common conversation, members of tribal groups are usually referred to by the generic term *adivasi*. A Hindu speaking of another Hindu would be likely to say, *he's a Brahmin* or *he's a Patidar* but speaking of Santhal, a Munda, a Bhil or a Barela, just, *he's an adivasi*.

I don't think, *pace* Guha, that the use of the term by *adivasi* movements represents a retrograde form of politics. He appears to conflate the politics of the Hindu right with the politics of *adivasi* identity, implying that both viewpoints have a common basis. However *adivasi* identity was born in a very different crucible. *It's used because it resonates in popular consciousness and the reason it resonates is because it embodies an actual historical process.* Relative length of occupation matters because immigration and its consequences are not, in this case, neutral. *Adivasi* struggles are struggles over land, resources and rights. Expropriation, impoverishment and subordination were the result of patterns of immigration and new policies of resource use. To argue in the language of individual rights, that a poor *adivasi* peasant and a prosperous settler are equal and deserve equivalent access to the resources of the region is to support the status quo by slurring over the process that produced inequality in the first place.

In any case, since Scheduled tribes comprise less than a tenth of the republic's population, it can be doubted whether identity based movements amongst them have anything like the explosive potential of the Hindu right whose concept of identity derives from a very different view of history. G.S. Ghurye anticipated the RSS in classifying tribal societies as regressed or backward Hindus. He's quoted with approval by historians nowadays²¹ but there's something more than a little ignoble in an attitude that saw the seeds of assertion contained in the term as a threat to nationalism and the imagined unity of Hindu society. We know that this society is gorgeously pluriform, one in which caste and class intersect in all sorts of ways and it's at this

intersection that the real problems associated with adivasi identity lie. In other words, while the image of the adivasi as original inhabitant is both logical and legitimate, some of the political positions derived from it are ambiguous, not because they echo right wing thought, but because they tend to inhibit transformative struggles.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century as forest areas shrank, the material basis of an adivasi identity was steadily eroded. Today the majority of adivasis, like the majority of Dalits and the poorest Hindu castes, are marginal peasants and/or landless labourers forced into a crushing cycle of migration and labour. There are pockets where forest based subsistence economies still exist, cracking under the tide of contemporary capitalism. While adivasis and Dalits form a disproportionately large part of the rural underclass, a unified class consciousness or national class organizations in the countryside cutting across caste have yet to develop. One of the reasons is an exclusive emphasis on identity. *Adivasi and Dalit struggles are in a sense becoming ghettoized*. This is because the natural leaders of identity based movements are members of the adivasi (or Dalit) middle class – products of a process of internal stratification that gained pace after 1947 with new channels of upward mobility created by reservation policies. Since this class is largely a creation of restricted political and economic opportunities available within the system, its economic interests tend to differ from the mass of ordinary adivasi peasants. Although its position in relation to the ruling groups and elites that run the republic is tenuous enough, it tends to see its economic interests as linked to theirs. Movements based on identity reach their logical terminus in campaigns for the extension of reservation policies, a demand important in itself but tangential to the concerns of the majority of adivasi poor, denied access to even these limited opportunities. The debate over reservation policies tends to drown out radical economic demands, such as community control over natural resources.

The absence of rural class organization combining marginal small holders and landless labourers, primarily adivasi and Dalit, across groups and castes reflects the historic failure of the Indian left to deal in any adequate fashion with the problems of caste and adivasi identity. The strongest bases of Maoist guerilla movements in the peninsula overlap adivasi regions, due largely to their willingness to undertake economic struggles rather than any appreciation of the distinctive cultural and social organization of adivasi societies. Adivasi mass movements in western India and Jharkhand have tried to build on these since the 1970s. One of the reasons why few describe themselves as Marxist is that the questions they tend to be interested in – the viability of subsistence modes of production and patterns of cultural and social organization – however difficult the answers may be, don't fit into frameworks of Marxist theory.

IV

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

If recent theories about the integration of adivasi societies into the agrarian order in one way or the other are wrong, what was the precise relationships between the two? Eurasian history can be seen, from one viewpoint, as a series of interactions between developed agrarian civilizations directed from urban centres, and pastoral and agricultural societies with very different modes of organization. The river valleys of Mesopotamia and Egypt were the earliest examples of the former. As were Greek and, later, Roman society, both based on agriculture and maritime trade. But beyond the floodplains of Asia and Europe's Mediterranean littoral lay very different kinds of peoples with pastoral or primitive agricultural modes of production. The classic European example of the latter were the pre-Roman societies of Gaul and Germania. Perry Anderson has argued that west European history in the first millennium AD can be seen in terms of the interaction between 'a disintegrating tribal communal mode of production based on primitive agriculture and dominated by rudimentary warrior aristocracies, and a dissolving slave mode of production with an extensive urban civilization based on commodity exchange, and an imperial state system', that eventually fused into feudalism.²² The original structure and economy of the Germanic tribes began to be modified with Roman expansion north of the Alps, and much of subsequent European history is a series of reciprocal interactions between the institutions of Greco Roman antiquity and the peoples of the European heartland. Central Asia was a reservoir of *large scale* societies of the pastoral type until much later. It produced successive waves of conquering peoples (the Scythians of Herodotus, the Yeu-chi who swept into eastern Iran and Parthia in the second century BC, the Huns and finally the Mongols). Nomadism as a mode of production generated social structures geared to warfare and conquest, each wave establishing its rule over the older agricultural heartlands before being sedentarized and/or amalgamating into the structure of the conquered society, and being displaced in turn by fresh incursions from the steppe. This pattern echoes Indian history, a palimpsest of migrations, beginning with the Aryans, a pastoral people themselves, whose very different outcome was determined by the ecological geography of the subcontinent.

The association of mountain and steppe with military conquerors is a very old one. Herodotus closes his history with the tale of Cyrus advising the Persians to remain in the highlands of Iran (from where they had conquered the Medes) rather than the rich plains of Mesopotamia since the soil that produced fine fruits rarely produced fine soldiers as well. *However although*

the expansionism of one kind of tribal society, whether predominantly agricultural (the Germanic peoples of antiquity, the Vikings of Scandinavia in the middle ages) or nomadic (the Huns and the Mongols), forms a coherent pattern – the survival of smaller scale tribal societies in parts of Asia, the Americas and Africa forms another. These usually remained for the most part localized *and small scale*. *Is there a universally valid explanation for the inherent expansionism of certain tribal societies culminating eventually in sedentarization and the tendency of others to remain small scale and localized? Apparently not, for this contradiction isn't restricted to Eurasia:* The complex and highly stratified civilizations of the new world – the Aztec, the Inca and the Maya – coexisted with smaller *scale* tribal societies in other parts of the continent (while no society in north America appears ever to have developed stratification on a comparable scale).

D.D. Kosambi was the first historian to show that the absorption of tribal societies into an expanding agrarian civilization was a *vital and* persistent element of south Asian history.²³ The theory of an Aryan invasion has been questioned, abandoned or transmuted (*into a slow process of immigration*). The debate by its nature can never be conclusive, but it seems clear that a pastoral people whose culture is described in the Rgveda encountered a range of local cultures up to and beyond the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Amongst them were both stratified agricultural societies (successors to the Harappan civilization) with sophisticated circuits of trade *and* pre-agricultural and primitive agricultural societies. A composite Indo-Aryan order evolved from this interaction, producing increasing degrees of stratification.

The assimilation of tribal societies into the agrarian order followed different patterns at different times and places. The interaction between the two involved both separation *and* assimilation, conflict and subordination; complex patterns of symbiosis. In regions favourable for agricultural colonization adivasi societies were absorbed into an evolving agrarian order at different levels: as servile or subordinate castes, as peasants,²⁴ as elements of aristocratic elites.

Tribal regions saw indigenous state formation – the medieval kingdom of the Cheros in Jharkhand and the Gond politics of central India for example. In both cases a ruling elite separated itself from the mass of tribesmen, eventually claiming Rajput status. But most Cheros and Gonds retained their tribal identity, a distinct social organization and mixed subsistence strategies.²⁵ Patterns of stratification did not always lead to assimilation. The Bhil chieftains of the Dangs encouraged Kunbi (Kokna) immigration into their territories but refused to practice settled agriculture themselves.²⁶ *In other regions, an elite became thoroughly assimilated even to the superimposition of feudal structures, patronage of Brahmins, temple building etc.,*

but the cultural impact on the mass of tribesmen was less profound. Patterns of kingship differed. Fürer-Haimendorf pointed out that in Adilabad, Raj Gonds, till well into the twentieth century, remained tribal peasants with chiefly lineages, a pattern of kingship that bore no resemblance to Indo-Islamic models.²⁷

Group transformation from tribe to caste did not always take place even when a fully crystallized elite succeeded in assimilating itself into the caste structure. It's been conjectured that surpluses in polities of this kind were largely generated by non-advansi farming castes encouraged to immigrate into the region by ruling elites.²⁸ But state formation ipso facto encouraged a certain degree of peasantization. The Mahtos of Bihar, settled peasants who were once tribesmen, had themselves classified as a Hindu caste in the colonial period in order to cement their social status.²⁹ The Chero state forced the Ujjainiya Rajputs of eastern UP to acknowledge Chero overlordship and ultimately enabled a sector of the Chero elite to become Rajputs.³⁰

Is it possible to determine the conditions under which some tribal groups became castes in the past while others maintained their autonomy from agricultural civilization while interacting with it in a variety of ways? Only provisional answers are possible. The primary determinants would appear to be ecological geography and agricultural technique, or the pull exerted by the agrarian order, ideological, technical and military. (*The extension of agriculture in southern India from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries was driven by the southward immigration of Telgu speaking groups skilled in dryland cultivation*³¹) Where full scale agricultural colonization was possible and profitable, tribes were assimilated and absorbed as castes at different levels in the system depending on specific historical circumstances – the Mahtos became peasants, the Halpatis of southern Gujrat, a caste of agricultural labourers. Other groups, for example the Bedars of the Deccan, were absorbed as military specialists.³²

Where the agrarian order intersected with unstable forest frontiers – in Vidarbha and the border between modern Jharkhand and Bihar for example – full-blown tribal polities evolved. There was state formation as well in the core advansi regions exemplified in Rajput kingdoms and tribal chieftaincies in Bastar and the Satpuda hills along the border of Malwa and Khandesh, but these were much smaller in scale and structure.

We've seen already that even in regions of developed state formation the mass of tribesmen were not necessarily converted into castes. Some groups – the Bhumij, the Mahto, a section of the Chero – made or almost made the transition. Others did not. It's important to discover why in both cases: replacing a view of more or less complete isolation with an equally schematic one of more or less complete integration is to falsify a complex historical process.

Lines of cultivation and trade ran through adivasi regions dominated by pre- and primitive agricultural modes of production. As long as their material basis remained undisturbed, these patterns of resource use meshed with social organizations and cultural systems adapted to forest wildernesses. In other words, absorption of adivasi societies stopped short at a natural frontier in the pre-colonial period. The limits of agrarian expansion were determined on the one hand by geographical and demographic factors – there were simply not enough people to colonize the vast forest expanses of central India, the returns were not worth the effort in an age where cultivable waste in *the* agricultural heartlands was relatively abundant;³³ and dictated on the other by the limited coercive capacity of pre-colonial absolutisms outside their agrarian cores, in the difficult terrain of hill and forest. The technical resources of Indian agriculture did not change noticeably from the sixteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. Irfan Habib has pointed out that the major factor in the dramatic increase in cultivated area between circa 1595 to 1910 in eastern and central India was forest reclamation (mainly in the nineteenth century) and since ‘forests were far more extensive in the 17th century than in the early years of the 20th...this suggests that...*jhum* cultivation...was generally far more extensive than it is now’.³⁴ In other words, the great sedentarization of the colonial period was accomplished through novel political and economic structures.

Colonialism produced far-reaching dislocations in adivasi regions. These included the breakdown of traditional systems of land use and ownership, social and cultural dislocation, immigration on a hitherto unprecedented scale, impoverishment, novel forms of stratification, new patterns of social dominance and political control. The response was resistance on an astonishing scale given the odds and the mathematical certainty of failure. Since K. S. Singh’s pioneering study of Birsa Munda’s rebellion and the early work of the Subaltern Studies group we know that of all the sectors of Indian society, adivasi societies display the most sustained tradition of hostility to the colonial state, expressed in an unbroken sequence of revolts and uprisings beginning from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The hallmarks of this period were *sedentarization* and *peasantization*. Before turning to it however, it’s necessary to examine more closely the catch-all category of peasant in the Indian context.

V

We’ve seen already that primitive agricultural modes of production in India included a wide range of sub types and variants. All of them entailed types of social and cultural organization recognizably distinct from the classical mode of settled agriculture in a caste-based social structure. From the colonial

period tribal societies were forced to adapt to patterns of settled agriculture: they tended however to remain culturally and socially distinct from adjacent farming castes. Mixed subsistence strategies based on settled agriculture combined with extensive forest use (hunting and gathering with, at times, an attenuated pastoral element) preserved important elements of the old culture, carried over into a modified economic setting. It was only when the material basis of the old culture vanished entirely that the cycle of peasantization completed itself. The tail end of this process can be observed: the spread of Hindu reform sects amongst adivasi communities of Alirajpur is in inverse proportion to the disappearance of the forest.

An identical process can be mapped for south Gujrat based on David Hardiman's data, supplemented by more recent sociological studies. Hardiman's work is scrupulous, subtle and stimulating whether or not one agrees with its conceptual categories. Dealing with a socio-religious movement amongst the adivasi communities of south Gujrat, *Devi* shows how these communities were sedentarized by forest enclosures in the second half of the nineteenth century; how they retained in the 1920s distinctive social and cultural traditions expressed in exchanges of labour and a strong sense of egalitarianism in spite of internal economic differentiation.³⁵ 'Community consciousness was reinforced by a firm refusal by the adivasis to allow their beliefs and practices to be unduly influenced by those of the non-adivasis' ... 'the contrast with the traders, moneylenders and artisans who made up the class of "ujliats" was only too striking.'³⁶

Equally striking was the contrast between these peasant communities and the dominant farming group of south Gujrat, the Patidars, whose trajectory has been mapped by Jan Breman.³⁷ At the beginning of the twentieth century the Patidars were already a socially dominant, politically powerful cultivating caste using forms of tied labour. Their workforce consisted of Halpatis, a caste of landless labourers, bound to individual farmers through debt bondage in conditions close to agrestic serfdom. Thus the essential feature of the rural order in Surat district was 'not a rather homogeneous mass of cultivating farmers, but rather a population which separated out into classes of the landowners and the landless, the latter for the large part bound to the former in an unfree state', a structure that Breman traces back to the nineteenth century.³⁸ Dominant in the organizational structure of the Congress in Gujrat, Patidars played a key role in electoral politics after 1947 and were at the vanguard of agrarian capitalist development in southern Gujrat based on the brutal exploitation of immigrant adivasi labour. 'Peasants' who, in the 1920s, calculated farming costs in terms of maintenance of their agricultural labourers, depreciation of stock implements *and* Dubla servants and interest on advances made to them,³⁹ clearly occupied a different social universe from peasant communities that at roughly the same time were exchanging

unpaid labour services and in which there was no stigma attached to manual labour. Subsuming them under a common category makes no sense, for it explains neither their relative positions in the 1920s nor their subsequent trajectories. The peasantry becomes an omnibus category that ceases to be analytically useful when deployed in this fashion.

Eric Wolf in his study on twentieth century peasant revolutions makes a fundamental distinction between farmer and peasant:

The major aim of the peasant is subsistence and social status gained within a narrow range of social relationships. Peasants are thus unlike cultivators, who participate fully in the market and who commit themselves to a status game set within a wide social network. To ensure continuity upon the land and sustenance for his household, the peasant most often keeps the market at arm's length, for unlimited involvement in the market threatens his hold on his source of livelihood. He thus cleaves to traditional arrangements which guarantee his access to land and to the labour of kin and neighbours. Moreover he favours production for sale only within the context of an assured production for subsistence . . . In contrast the farmer enters the market fully, subjects his land and labour to open competition, explores alternative uses for the factors of production in the search for maximal returns, and favours the more profitable product over the one entailing the smaller risk.⁴⁰

In the Indian context, this semantic distinction enables us to separate groups of socially subordinate smallholders, oriented towards subsistence, usually forced to supplement agriculture with physical labour from medium to large landholding groups employing agricultural labour. The latter are socially dominant in rural society (although their dominance is qualified by other groups – traders, professionals, merchants, moneylenders, liquor dealers etc.) and are partly the stratum from which these groups are derived. Their relationship to the state is complex – in the past they were revenue payers but also formed in effect the lowest bloc of the extractive system through their subjection of agricultural labour. Conflicts usually arose over the state's revenue demand – the share of surplus appropriated by it – whenever opportunities arose of correcting the disequilibrium between social dominance and political power.

The Jat revolts of the seventeenth century offer the clearest example of this relationship. The Jats were a 'pastoral Chandala-like tribe in eighth century Sind, who attained Sudra status by the eleventh century (Alberuni), and had become peasants par excellence (of vaisya status) by the seventeenth century.'⁴¹ They were entered as a zamindar caste in some areas as early as Akbar's reign – using data from the *Ain i Akbari*, Habib plots Jat zamindaris

in the Agra region towards the end of the sixteenth century. The Jat rebellion in Aurangzeb's reign was led by (Jat) zamindars. One of its results, *according to Habib*, was 'a great extension of Jat zamindari in the Braj speaking area.'⁴²

This rebellion is described as a peasants' revolt. Yet, *as we've seen*, the Jats were far from passive objects of exploitation. On the contrary they exercised considerable social and economic power. The strength of their zamindars derived from clan solidarity. In the eighteenth century traders were regularly plundered by zamindar led levies – the Jats, Gujars and Badgujars of UP were amongst the most powerful of these groups. Satish Chandra argues that Banaras became an important trading entrepot because it lay on the trade route from Lucknow to the east via Malwa and Indore, a route that it skirted the Jat dominated Braj area.⁴³ The Jats were not just the 'dominant cultivating castes' but the 'settled and most respected hereditary cultivators.' They were *in short upwardly mobile* – powerful and cohesive enough to end up by replacing most of the old Rajput and Gujar zamindars in the Agra Mathura region. Churaman's descendants succeeded in creating the Jat kingdom of Bharatpur. In spite of Jat egalitarianism, a hierarchy 'analogous to... Rajput ruling houses' slowly crystallized. But clan solidarity remained strong – 'Jat clans and village bodies could not be lightly disregarded.'⁴⁴

None of this fits the usual definition of the peasantry in Latin American and East Asian societies where the stress is overwhelmingly on economic subjection. Nor were the Jats a very unusual case. With the military victories of the Maratha polity in the eighteenth century, the soldiery of the Maratha heartland, recruited from an array of subordinate and middle castes, gradually crystallized into a distinct caste of landowning farmers – Maratha Kunbis – within which emerged a warrior aristocracy that appropriated Kshatriya status. The Gujars were another group that rose from their original pastoral status to become socially powerful landowners – Gujar zamindaris predated Jat zamindaris around Agra. The struggle between the Jats and the Sikhs on the one hand and the Mughal state on the other was at bottom a struggle led by the most prosperous sector of rural society. The rural gentry was an important element of the Mughal state, collecting and transferring revenue over much of the empire and maintaining the subjugation of unfree labour on which agrarian production in the heartlands depended. Agrarian society in the north is conventionally divided into two broad categories – a privileged stratum consisting roughly of the upper castes, an elite amongst the traditional landholders (usually a caste group that held land on some form of communal ownership) with superior rights (compared to immigrants who held land on a semi-tenurial basis) and holders of village offices.⁴⁵ The second category comprised the mass of farmers squeezed dry by the revenue demand. But another zone of differentiation can plausibly be posited – between the latter and landless Dalit groups.

If Marathas and Jats were not peasants in the way that the term is usually understood, the rebellions they led were not peasant uprisings. They were revolts of a powerful rural class against the Mughal state: groups at the lowest end of the social structure were not involved. The tribal uprisings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a very different affair in terms of technique, desperation and outcome.

Andre Beteille argued long ago that the only true peasants in India are tribal peasants – it makes no sense to speak of farming castes as peasants in the absence of economic (and social) homogeneity and cultural patterns that devalue manual labour. Since family labour is an essential element of peasant agriculture, farming castes in India are not peasants insofar as upward mobility involves the withdrawal first of women's, then men's labour from cultivation and its substitution by hired workers. Although Beteille dismisses the theory that tribal peasants form a distinct category by virtue of their transition from anterior modes of production to settled agriculture (on the grounds that this shift took place far back in the past), he points out that adivasi societies – subsistence oriented, relatively egalitarian, and exploited by elements from outside the tribal group – fit the definition of peasants better than any other sector of rural society.⁴⁶

The distinction between farming castes and peasants helps us see contemporary developments in sharper perspective. The social and political dominance of Jats over the countryside of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Haryana becomes easier to understand once its historical roots are exposed to view. Contemporary tensions between farming castes and landless labourers are expressed in the communal lynching of Dalit men who marry Jat women. The large assemblies that endorse these murders are an example of caste solidarity cutting across internal differentiation. The unbroken line of major Jat politicians from Charan Singh to Omprakash Chautala testifies to the strength of their political influence. Chimanbhai Patel and his successors are their Patidar analogues in Gujrat – different caste, same class.

While economists and sociologists are able to use the term peasantry with more differentiated categories – rich peasant, middle peasant and poor peasant respectively – the historian, working with larger time-frames, and condemned by the structure of Indian society to speak mainly in terms of closed (at any rate inelastic) groups, notwithstanding degrees of internal stratification that appear in specific contexts, might find it more productive to use different terms for different *kinds* of agrarian groups. None of them are homogeneous. There were, and are, a great many marginal smallholders amongst farming castes just as there is a tiny middle class amongst adivasi communities. The solidarities of caste and group identity ensure that political and social behaviour continues to subvert economic logic some (but not all) of the time.

VI

The whole-scale peasantization of adivasi societies in the nineteenth century was an outcome of colonial conquest. For the obverse of any analysis of the inherent limits of pre-colonial agrarian expansion was the capacity of adivasi societies to maintain their positions by force. Raiding in bad years and seasons of dearth supplemented diversified subsistence strategies. In western Madhya Pradesh, in a folk legend of the Bhil insurrection of 1857–58, it's related that the muster of starving Bhils near the capital so terrified the king that when Bhima, the Bhil chieftain, met him, he agreed that they were entitled to loot whoever refused to give them at least one meal. When the Bhils approached Anjad, its Brahmin jagirdars hurriedly arranged a feast in order to forestall them from sacking the town.

Seasonal raiding was *thus* an integral feature of the economy of adivasi societies. At the frontier of forest and settled agriculture there was, at times, almost endemic conflict as tribesmen raided and pre-colonial states, when they felt themselves strong enough, tried to push them back. Khandesh in the eighteenth century was a frontier region of this type with Bhil bands face to face with an assertive Maratha polity. Sumit Guha has argued that colonial accounts describing Maratha butcheries were designed to show British pacification in the best possible light, and that in actual fact Maratha commanders followed a coherent policy of negotiation and compromise.⁴⁷ Yet negotiation was backed, in the ultimate analysis, by force. We can assume a natural antagonism between non adivasi cultivators subject to the normal uncertainties of weather and taxation and a rural elite dependent on their production on the one hand, and raiding tribesmen seeking to wring supplementary subsistence on the other. Under these circumstances it would be logical to expect a certain amount of brutality. It's unlikely that the Maratha commander who reported an action in which 'one to two hundred Bhils were killed, and one or two hundred leaped over cliffs to their deaths'⁴⁸ meant to describe an actual episode of mass suicide. Savagery played a large part in the suppression of rebellious subordinate groups, witness the wholesale massacres and slave taking of a Mughal nobleman during the pacification of eastern UP in the 1620s and 1630s.⁴⁹

Like other post-Mughal polities, the Marathas proved ineffective colonizers. Adivasi societies in central India – a huge arc from Jharkhand to a little beyond Bastar – and Bhil territories in the west maintained mixed modes of production, distinctive cultural systems and a cohesive and relatively egalitarian social organization while interacting with the agrarian order in different ways.

Colonialism exploded this delicate equilibrium, inaugurating new lines of development. It achieved, to begin with, the demilitarization of the Indian

countryside. Armed levies were a structural component of pre-colonial society ranging all the way from organized armies of king or emperor through clannic levies, warbands, zamindar followings, down to the individual mercenary or professional soldier who set himself out for hire. Rajputs, Afghans, Arabs and Makranis were amongst the groups who specialized in soldiering. There were armed cultivators as well, like the Jats and Gujars of the doab, and plebeian soldiers like the Kolis of the west coast.

Since pre-colonial states lacked both the means and the ability to enforce a monopoly of arms, they sought to draw as large a proportion of soldiers and potential soldiers into their structures as they could while mediating alliances with others through traditional channels of caste and patronage.⁵⁰ In the countryside upward mobility tended to be a coefficient of armed strength and/or wealth. This channel was largely closed to the agrarian workforce, an enormous reservoir of disarmed labourers comprising Dalit castes.

The colonial state sought and achieved a monopoly of coercive force. The demilitarization of the countryside had very different effects on different sectors of society. The traditional elite largely adapted to colonialism, which, as C. A. Bayly shows for north India, tended to work with the grain of preexisting structures of *dominance and* exploitation.⁵¹ The economic and political dislocations of the first half of the nineteenth century as a new type of economy was established accompanied by rapid territorial expansion of the colonial state produced the mutiny of 1857. But the traditional alliance of the *traditional* upper caste elite and colonial rulers held even after the emergence of a proto bourgeoisie recruited from upper and middle (agrarian) castes. The elimination of social banditry – a structural feature of pre-colonial society – abolished the main channel of upward mobility for plebeian groups. Colonialism in a sense congealed the social structure before the social effects of the colonial economy began to take hold, producing an upward rise in the status of cultivating castes.

The demilitarization of adivasi regions eliminated the method by which adivasi societies had traditionally maintained their autonomy from the agrarian order. To administrators intent on increasing revenues, tribal modes of production were inefficient and wasteful. Mobile and lightly armed, they represented a threat to law and order, the state's monopoly of coercive power and its ability to mould nature and the rural economy in rational and profitable ways. The disarming of adivasi societies combined with an unwavering bias towards settled agriculture and the wholesale appropriation of natural resources opened adivasi regions to agrarian colonization on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The social consequences of that process are still working themselves out.

VII

CONCLUSION

The history of adivasi societies – their absorption into and their distance from a caste based agrarian order at different times in the past – forms a crucial element of south Asian history. The double process of assimilation and separation eventually produced a fluctuating equilibrium. This was disrupted by colonial conquest, which launched adivasi societies on a cycle of peasantization and change in a dramatically altered setting. The earlier relationship between adivasi societies and the agrarian order had been marked by conflict *and* coexistence. Colonialism altered the terms of conflict to the advantage of groups belonging to the universe of settled agriculture, a process that continued beyond 1947. Adivasi societies had borne the brunt of colonialism. After decolonization they bore the brunt of the new republic's strategy of development. The steady haemorrhaging of adivasi land has barely been affected by protective legislation. At the same time the integration of the adivasi middle class into the political structures of the republic reflects the process of class formation and co-option that keeps it going. Adivasi regions remain the locus of resistance to contemporary capitalism, the sites of guerrilla warfare, autonomous popular struggles and mass movements. It's not, let's be honest, a battle that looks remotely winnable – not now at any rate. It should however redirect our attention to the complex patterns of adivasi history in the making of contemporary south Asian society.

NOTES

- 1 See Richards [1993: 17, 130 and 169].
- 2 For example Singh [1966], Hardiman [1987], Sundar [1998], Skaria [1999] and S. Guha [1999].
- 3 See S. Guha [1999].
- 4 Hardiman [1995: 13].
- 5 R. Guha [1983].
- 6 Skaria [1999: 38–40].
- 7 S. Guha [1999].
- 8 S. Guha [1999: 201].
- 9 Hardiman [1995: 12].
- 10 Skaria [1999: 149].
- 11 Grigson [1991: 125–30].
- 12 Hardiman [1995: 12].
- 13 Patel [2000].
- 14 Elwin [1949 (1991): xiii].
- 15 Sontheimer [2004: 401–19].
- 16 Sontheimer [2004: 409].
- 17 *Ibid.*

- 18 See Hobsbawm [1990].
- 19 Hardiman [1995: 15–16] and Skaria [1999: 273–8].
- 20 S. Guha [1999: 202–3].
- 21 S. Guha [1999: 5].
- 22 Anderson [1974: 213].
- 23 See Kosambi [1956 (1975)].
- 24 See for example Sharma [1958 (1990): 332–45].
- 25 For the Cheros, see Singh [1985: 39–40 and 79–80]; for the Raj-Gonds, see Fürer-Haimendorf [1979: 122–51].
- 26 Singh [1985: 45].
- 27 Fürer-Haimendorf [1979: 122–51].
- 28 Singh [1985: 44].
- 29 Singh [1985: 102, 212].
- 30 Kolff [1990: 59, 184].
- 31 Subrahmanyam [2004: 16–17].
- 32 See Wink [1986: 193–4].
- 33 See Kumar [1968: 162, 172] for the dramatic increase in cultivated area in western Maharashtra in the nineteenth century.
- 34 Habib [1999: 21–4].
- 35 Hardiman [1995: 68–85].
- 36 Hardiman [1995: 81].
- 37 See Breman [1985 and 1994].
- 38 Breman [1985: 72].
- 39 Breman [1985: 134].
- 40 Wolf [1969: xiv–xv].
- 41 Habib [1995: 175].
- 42 Habib [1999: 392–4].
- 43 Chandra [2003: 86].
- 44 Chandra [2003: 100–101].
- 45 Chandra [2003: 107].
- 46 Beteille [1974: 40–74].
- 47 S. Guha [1999: 116–17].
- 48 S. Guha [1999: 119].
- 49 Kolff [1990: 12–13].
- 50 See Kolff [1990] for an extended discussion.
- 51 Bayly [1983].

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